

**POLITICAL AND NON-POLITICAL BLOGGERS
IN THE 2004 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION:
MOTIVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES**

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When I began working on my dissertation two years ago, I told myself that writing it would not be too hard – I said to myself that it would be simply a bigger project than numerous research papers I have written before. I quickly realized that completing a dissertation was the toughest academic work I have ever done, in which I learned the value of discipline, patience, and persistence.

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ABSTRACT

EUNSEONG KIM

POLITICAL AND NON-POLITICAL BLOGGERS IN THE 2004 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: MOTIVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

With the reported growth per day of 100,000 blog sites as of January 2006, web logs – frequent, reverse-order chronological online publications – have become an important communication medium to millions of Americans. During the 2004 presidential campaign, many interested citizens used blogs to express their ideas and opinions and share them with others.

This dissertation adds to the body of literature on the blogging phenomenon by examining the bloggers themselves. During the 2004 U.S. presidential campaign, 290 bloggers participated in an online survey to answer questions about their blogging activities, the reasons why they keep a web log, their traditional and new media use, their political activities, and others. The content of the 78 political blog sites whose URL was provided in the survey was analyzed to further examine blogging activities.

The findings indicate that although bloggers in general are intense Internet users who actively seek to express themselves and share their ideas with others, differences exist between political and nonpolitical bloggers in many areas, including blog use, motivation of blogging, and the use of media.

A content analysis of political blog sites shows that bloggers and blog readers engaged in political discussion using this new form of communication technology, such as linking and comments. Bloggers frequently expressed their ideas and opinions about the presidential election and the war in Iraq, and blog readers responded to authors’

perspectives in their comments sections. Although about half of the time blog readers expressed their agreement with the author's viewpoints, readers also often expressed disagreement with the author's points and introduced new perspectives. In particular, the analysis shows that the more frequently a blogger discusses national or international issues such as the election or the war in Iraq, the more likely readers of these entries were to dispute the blog author's viewpoints.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Ch.1 Introduction	1
Ch.2 Related Studies	14
Research Questions	42
Ch.3 Methods	48
Ch.4 Political and Nonpolitical bloggers	67
Ch.5 Content on the Political Blog Sites	110
Ch.6 Discussion & Conclusion	126
Bibliography	139
Appendix I. Email invitation	149
Appendix II. Survey Questionnaire	150
Appendix III. Content Analysis Codebook	159
Appendix IV. Examples of Political Blog Sites	164
Vitae	166

Chapter 1

Introduction

For those who started blogging as early as 1997, when bloggers first appeared on the Internet, what political bloggers did during the 2004 presidential campaign was not a complete novelty. After all, they had been selecting information available on the Internet and providing links to it with short commentary for the previous seven years.

To many ordinary Americans, however, the 2004 presidential campaign was perhaps the first opportunity to hear the words “blog” or “web log.” Although former Vermont Governor Howard Dean’s campaign ultimately failed, his success with using the Internet and his blog to mobilize his supporters and raise campaign funds drew both the media’s and, by extension, the public’s attention to blogs (Trippi, 2004). Many Internet users became avid readers of the highly opinionated content of some political bloggers, and these bloggers came to be known as ‘A-list’ bloggers (Klam, 2004). In addition, overall blog readership among Internet users increased 58 percent in 2004 alone (Rainie, 2005). Some mainstream media outlets named political bloggers “people of the year,” (ABC News, 2004) and Merriam Webster Online chose, based on online lookups, the word ‘blog’ as 2004’s word of the year, indicating the widespread popularity of blogging.

Since the 2004 presidential election, blogs have continued to grow at a dramatic rate, and, though numbers vary, some reports indicate that as many as 35 million blogs existed as of April 2006, and that on average 75,000 new blog sites are created every day (technorati.com). Journalists, researchers, and pundits alike have paid close attention to the role of bloggers and their logs in American politics and journalism, but blogging is in such

an early stage of development that no one knows exactly how it may evolve in the future. However, what is clear is that blogging will be an important campaign tool in future political campaigns, bloggers will continuously put pressure on traditional journalists to cover some overlooked issues or events, and communication among Internet users using new technologies such as blogging will continue to increase.

Although researchers have paid close attention to the blogging phenomenon in recent years, the subject still lacks empirical studies investigating various issues related to blogging, including what might be the role of blogging in politics and journalism, what drives Internet users to read or become authors of blogs, and what effects blog reading and/or authoring have on people. This dissertation study attempts to shed light on the potential of blogging as a mode of public discourse, and by extension, the potential of the Internet to foster deliberative democracy. Specifically, this study examines what activities bloggers were engaged in during the 2004 U.S. presidential campaign and what they tried to achieve by these activities. Because I am concerned about the potential of the Internet as a medium of political communication, the focus of the dissertation is political bloggers. Throughout the dissertation, the activities and motivations of political bloggers and the content of their blogs are reported in comparison to those of nonpolitical bloggers.

In this chapter, I briefly introduce the issues relevant to the topic of this dissertation. I discuss the role of bloggers in American politics, the debates over the influence of bloggers and their logs on politics and journalism, and the potential of blogging to facilitate deliberative democracy.

Blogging and Online Campaign in the 2004 Presidential Race

The 2004 presidential election was the first national campaign during which candidates adopted blogs as a campaign tool. Presidential candidate Howard Dean's campaign led this trend and demonstrated savvy and innovative ways to use the Internet to

facilitate the campaign. Many agree that what was notable about the Dean campaign was that it ignited enthusiasm in young Americans, who have traditionally been known to be uninterested in politics, and successfully included them in the campaign (e.g., Rice, 2003; Shapiro, 2003; Trippi, 2004).

It seems that the Howard Dean campaign achieved this by creating a sense of community among Dean supporters and by giving them ownership of the campaign. As Joe Trippi (2004), the campaign manager for Howard Dean explained, the sense of community and the ownership of the campaign were the products of effective communication between the campaign and the supporters using interactive features of the Internet. For example, in an interview with National Public Radio's *Fresh Air with Terry Gross*, Trippi (July 6, 2004) introduced an episode about downloadable signs on Dean's website to explain how the campaign strived to respond to supporters' input as immediately as it could:

“One of the simple things was we had signs up on our site, you know, Iowans for ‘Iowa for Dean,’ ‘New Hampshire voter for Dean’—that people could download. We put up all 50 states. And the first mention on the blog was, ‘Hey, you forgot Puerto Rico. You screwed up.’ And we immediately, you know, realized that, yeah, Puerto Rico votes for Democratic nominations, so we put up a ‘Puerto Rico for Dean’ sign within a minute or two and got a protest from a guy in London saying that he was an American abroad who was going to vote in the presidential and we didn't have an ‘Americans abroad for Dean’ sign. So we put that up immediately, and the thank-you came from Spain. All this happened in a 10-minute part of time that was an amazing exchange between us and our supporters, and they saw the mistakes we made and we plugged them.”

One might imagine how individual supporters felt invested in this campaign as they communicated to their candidate and watched their ideas get incorporated.

The Dean campaign also helped supporters communicate and connect among themselves by providing the *Meetup*, a feature through which the supporters who discussed campaign ideas online set up times and places for offline meetings in their own community. Dean supporters got together every month to plan specific campaign activities they could do in their precincts.

The official campaign blog, *DeanforAmerica.com*, played a critical role in his campaign as the center of online communication between supporters and campaign staffs and as the liaison for online and offline activities. Many ideas about meetups, fundraisers, rallies, etc. were discussed online and communicated to the campaign through the blog. Dean's blog was the venue through which the supporters communicated to the campaign and the place the supporters convened to share their thoughts.

Impressed with what the Dean campaign achieved using the Internet, other candidates such as John Kerry, George W. Bush, and Wesley Clark adopted some of the same methods in their own campaigns (Hindman, 2005; Williams, et al., 2004). Both the Democratic and Republican National Committees invited some of the influential bloggers to cover their convention, a privilege granted only to traditional journalists until the 2004 campaign. Throughout the campaign, candidates closely followed what was debated in the political blogosphere and used their own campaign blog to respond and spread their own messages (Klam, 2004).

In addition, political bloggers, independent of particular candidates' campaigns, influenced the presidential campaign by utilizing their own blog sites. Political bloggers provided oftentimes highly partisan commentaries on their blog sites, and millions of Internet users followed them religiously. Some of the political blogs reportedly attracted higher number of readers than that of a major newspaper (Klam, 2004). They closely followed the campaign and the media's coverage of the campaign and provided highly opinionated commentaries and analyses. Their commentaries on the mainstream media's campaign coverage provided a starting point of further discussion, and the interactive nature of blogging (through link and comment features) further facilitated the debate. Some of the so-called 'A-list' blogs attracted such high numbers of readers that the authors of these blogs became influential opinion leaders (Institute for Politics Democracy & the Internet, 2004).

Political bloggers further boosted their influence by scrutinizing mainstream media's coverage of the campaign. The so-called *Rathergate*, in which conservative bloggers were said to be responsible for the resignation of Dan Rather as the anchor of the *CBS Evening News*, was perhaps most notorious incident during the 2004 campaign. When CBS's *60 Minutes* reported that Bush received preferential treatment while serving in the Texas Air National Guard during the Vietnam War, conservative bloggers questioned the authenticity of the documents used in the report, and later proved that some of the documents were forged. In the following week, Dan Rather acknowledged that the documents might be "not what they (CBS news) were led to believe" (Kurtz, 2004). CBS fired three news executives and a producer involved in this incident, and Dan Rather stepped down as the anchor of *CBS Evening News* (Associated Press, 2005).

As bloggers garnered attention from the media and the public, the debate over bloggers and their logs intensified among politicians, researchers, and pundits. The influence of blogging on journalism and the role of blogging and interactive communication technology in fostering democracy have been two actively debated topics.

Blogging and Journalism

In the past several years, blogs, an easy-to-use Web publishing tool, have risen as the newest threat to traditional journalism. Unlike traditional Web publishing, so-called 'push button publishing' allows those users without knowledge of Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) to create and update a Web site within matter of minutes. Accordingly, millions of people have created their own personal blogs to keep a journal about the events revolving around their lives and to have their reflections recorded (Lenhart, Horrigan & Fallows, 2004; Rainie, 2004). Among those, a large number of

bloggers are participating in some form of amateur journalism, challenging the role of traditional journalists (Blood, 2003; Kramer, 2004; Lasica, 2003).

The contentious debate among traditional news media journalists and bloggers converged on the question, “Is blogging journalism?” or “Are bloggers journalists?” (Andrews, 2003; Blood, 2003; Regan, 2003). Perhaps not surprisingly, news reporters and editors in the mainstream media have often disregarded blogging for its lack of credibility, for failing to be objective, and for the lack of professional training of the bloggers to practice journalism (Kramer, 2004; Lasica, 2003). Bloggers, on the other hand, countered this criticism by arguing that mainstream media journalists are often arrogant elitists who do not want to include the public in deciding what’s important and what’s not (Lasica, 2003).

An empirical study conducted among 406 randomly selected adults in a U.S. metropolitan area sheds light on the consequences of audience participation in journalism processes such as blogging. Following the sociological framework of occupations, Lowrey and Anderson (2005) found that news audiences’ perception of what is news has broadened, and thus, they tend to use both traditional news media sites and nontraditional news sources when seeking news information. Lowrey and Anderson concluded that traditional journalism will be increasingly challenged by audience participation activities, such as blogging, with the perceived authority exclusive to traditional journalists declining.

In the pursuit of ground on which both can survive, both traditional journalists and bloggers seem to have realized that the debate over blogging and journalism is not very useful. Jay Rosen, Journalism professor at New York University, declared on his

blog (www.pressthink.org) that the argument between bloggers and journalists is over. Pundits point out that blogging can benefit traditional journalism by providing different perspectives, by helping regain the trust traditional news organizations have lost, and by increasing interactivity in the journalism process (Lasica, 2003). Bloggers themselves also recognize that they need to learn traditional news values, the benefits of editing, and the importance of original reporting from the mainstream journalists in order to be perceived as credible sources of news information (Blood, 2003; Kramer, 2005; Regan, 2003).

Blogging, Public Discourse, and Deliberative Democracy

The potential of information communication technology (ICT) to foster deliberative democracy has been widely debated among researchers in several disciplines, and this dissertation study is largely based on this debate.

When the Internet and the World Wide Web became accessible to many citizens in the mid-1990s, scholars with utopian views argued that the characteristics of the Internet are inherently different from those of the existing communication media, and they predicted that the Internet would become the medium that truly fosters democracy (e.g., Rheingold, 1993; Dahlberg, 2001). Utopians argued that citizens would arm themselves with information about social and political issues boundlessly available on the Internet, talk about the issues they care about with anyone interested without being constrained by time and place limits, and actively express their ideas and opinions to their representatives using electronic communication tools (Glass, 1996; Johnson et al., 1999; Margolis et al., 1997; Mrosek, 2000; Revvy & Perlmutter, 1997).

Although scholars quickly realized that the Internet did not automatically bring social, economic, and political transformation,¹ utopians understood that the Internet, unlike traditional media, allows the users to become active information seekers, content producers, and virtual community members. The unique characteristics of the Internet such as interactivity gave utopian scholars enough reason to envision a society where informed citizens communicate with one another to share and mobilize efforts to realize their causes, using communication technology (Barber, 1998; Dahlberg, 2001).

Seeking information, producing content, and participating in an online community have not been very easy, however. An unlimited amount of information was a boon to technology-savvy people, but it was an overload of useless information to those without the ability to evaluate the quality of information. Although space for content was available on the Internet, people who did not know HTML could not create a website to store and present the content. A small number of highly vociferous people who dominated online discussion often made a civil, democratic discourse very difficult to achieve.

In some sense, blogging software freed people of these limitations. Blogging software such as Blogger, LiveJournal, and MovableType has various ready-to-use templates freely available for the users to create a weblog site by simply pointing and clicking on templates. Blogging software often has interactive features such as links, search, archive, and comments. The procedure of loading texts and images is equally simple. An Internet user who wishes to create a venue to express his or her ideas and

¹ See the literature chapter for further discussion of critical views regarding utopian perspectives.

share them with others, even if s/he does not have any knowledge of HTML, can create a blog site and start communicating with others in matter of minutes (Blood, 2002b; Williams et al., 2005). Accordingly, millions of Internet users have created blog sites and used these sites to record the events in their lives, express their thoughts, and share their ideas with others (Haas, 2005).

Two features of blogging, linking and comments, are especially worth noting. Linking is one of the most essential features of blogging, and it encourages bloggers to be connected with other bloggers and with information available on the Internet. Bloggers list other blog sites they frequently follow under ‘blogroll,’ and this reinforces bloggers’ linking to and from each other. Looking at typical blog sites, one often finds dozens or sometimes hundreds of sites listed under blogrolls.

Bloggers also use the linking feature to direct readers’ attention to particular information available on the Internet and often include a short commentary on the information they are presenting with a link to the website containing that information. Sometimes, they include inserts of the linked information (e.g., sentences or paragraphs of an article or a story) in their blog post in order to indicate toward which information their comments are directed. This act of specific reference helps the discussion in the comments section stay on topic.

The comment feature allows blog readers to respond to what they read. Blog posts are most of the time – but not always – accompanied by ‘comments,’ and the readers who wish to express their thoughts on the entry can click on ‘comments’ to bring up a small window where they can type the comments. This feature invites readers to engage in interactive discussion between the blog author and readers and among blog readers.

Although it is not very common for each and every blog entry to generate numerous comments (Herring et al., 2004), one can often notice that blog authors and readers do reply to each other's comments using this feature, and sometimes, a further discussion emerges from the discussion among blog readers. Similar to the linking feature, the comment feature at the end of each blog entry has the potential to keep readers' discussion focused on the issue discussed in the entry.

Scholars agree that blogging will remain influential in American politics in at least two ways. First, as was the case in the 2004 presidential campaign, bloggers will play the role of watchdogs of the mainstream media. They will closely monitor what is covered in the mainstream media and try to ensure that adequate coverage is given to the issues important to them. As an increasing number of media outlets start allowing reader input, it is possible that bloggers will affect how the issues are covered (Gillmor, 2004).

Second, scholars believe that blogging technology makes deliberation easy and that blogging experience empowers citizens to become active participants in deliberative democracy. For example, Fromkin (2004, 9) is especially impressed with blogging technology and he argues, "They (blogs) illustrate how ease of publishing can stimulate debate: bloggers often read and react to one another's work, creating a new commons of public, if not necessarily always deeply deliberated, debate." In addition, Blood (2002, 13) indicates that the act of keeping a blog helps individuals become closely engaged with their own thoughts:

As he enunciates his opinions daily, this new awareness of his inner life may develop into a trust in his own perspectives. His own reactions – to a poem, to other people, and, yes, to the media – will carry more weight with him. Accustomed to expressing his thoughts on his website, he will be able to more fully articulate his

opinions to himself and others. He will become impatient with waiting to see what others think before he decides, and will begin to act in accordance with his inner voice instead. Ideally, he will become less reflexive and more reflective, and find his own opinions and ideas worthy of serious consideration.

Blood (2002, 14) further describes how conversation among many may be enabled by blogging technology:

(Blog) readers will remember an incident from their own childhood when the blogger relates a memory. They might look more closely at the other riders on the train after the blogger describes his impressions of a fellow commuter. They will click back and forth between blogs and analyze each blogger's point of view in a multi-blog conversation, and form their own conclusions on the matter at hand. Reading the views of other ordinary people, they will readily question and evaluate what is being said. Doing this, they may begin a similar journey of self-discovery and intellectual self-reliance.

What Fromkin and Blood explain in the above quotes is closely related to what this study attempts to examine. This study investigates whether blogging technology empowered citizens to publicly express and discuss political issues. The 2004 U.S. presidential campaign served as the prime opportunity to study the motivations and activities of bloggers. I asked political bloggers who they are and why they are engaged in a potentially demanding activity. I also asked them about political activities they are engaged in and which (news) media they rely on to get information about politics and/or public affairs. I tried to further our understanding of bloggers, their activities, and the interaction between authors and readers by examining the content of their blog posts and the comments.

In this chapter, I have introduced the significance of bloggers in American politics by using the example of the 2004 presidential election. The role of blogging in American

journalism was also briefly introduced. I began discussing the potential of blogging to foster deliberative democracy in this chapter as the theoretical background of this dissertation. Further discussion on blogging's role in deliberative democracy is continued in the second chapter.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature on the role of communication technology in fostering democracy. I first review both utopian and dystopian perspectives on the potential of the Internet to facilitate democracy. I then discuss potentials and limitations of computer-mediated communication (CMC), including blogging, in the light of deliberative democracy. Chapter two also includes reviews of research studies on blogging currently available.

In Chapter 3, I detail methods used in this dissertation. In order to examine the potential of blogging as a mode of public discourse, I conducted a survey among bloggers during the 2004 U.S. presidential campaign. Bloggers were asked to report their demographic characteristics, their blogging activities, and motivations behind blogging. I also examined their political attitudes, political activities they were engaged in on and off line, and their media use. I followed the survey with content analysis to cross examine the information offered by bloggers and to better understand the content bloggers produced in light of what I learned from the survey. The content analysis examined features on political blog sites, content of blog entries, and comments to those entries. The reasoning behind the online survey and content analysis and measurements used to answer each research question are explained in detail.

In Chapter 4, I report the survey findings. Ten research questions examining bloggers' motivations and activities were answered by analyzing the data collected from

the survey. First I describe bloggers' demographic characteristics, blogging activities, and motivations behind their blogging. I also provide information about bloggers' political attitudes and their political activities. I then examine if blogging history (how long one has kept a weblog) and frequency can predict the variance in political efficacy and participation using regression analyses.

In Chapter 5, the findings of the content analysis are reported. I describe interactive features and links available on political blog sites, in addition to providing blog author information. I report the findings after analyzing the topics of 340 blog entries. Also reported are: the relationships between the number of links on blog sites and the number of comments received, the relationship between the number of interactive features and the number of comments received, and the relationship between the topic of blog entries and the degree of diversity existing in discussions.

In Chapter 6, I provide discussions on the main findings of the survey and the content analysis and conclusions. I review the main findings of this dissertation in relation to utopian and dystopian perspectives of the Internet and offer my thoughts. I also discuss the limitations of the study and future directions for the research on this topic.

Chapter2

Related Studies

The debate over the potential of the Internet as a facilitator of democracy has been with us for a long time, but it seems to be a more relevant topic today than any other time in the past. As the Internet becomes a main communication medium to an increasing number of people, and as its technology advances, researchers claim that the potential of the Internet to empower people to participate in democracy is growing stronger (Blood, 2002a; Froomkin, 2004; Shane, 2004).

In this chapter, I discuss the issues regarding the Internet as a medium that fosters democracy. I review utopian and dystopian perspectives of the Internet while focusing on the model of deliberative democracy, which considers political communication a core part of democracy. I close this chapter by surveying existing research on political and nonpolitical blogging.

The Debate

Is the Internet a revolutionary medium that can empower ordinary citizens, change the nature of politics, and thus truly foster democracy? This question has been at the center of the debate among scholars in political science, mass communication, sociology, and computer science, and others since the early 1990s.

Responses to the question of the Internet's potential to facilitate democracy vary greatly. Optimists such as Howard Rheingold (1995) say "We can run bulletin board systems and town hall meetings to talk with each other about the issues and candidates.

When a candidate comes up on the television and says one thing, well we can call up the voting record and see whether they really mean that.” On the other hand, critics such as Richard Davis (1999, 168) argue against what utopians predict the Internet would engender and say, “None of that will occur.” Still other researchers investigating Internet users and the content of online political communication argue that utopians and dystopians alike failed to correctly understand the nature of the Internet as a communication medium to foster democracy (e.g., Hill & Hughes, 1998)

Perhaps competing viewpoints among scholars about the Internet’s ability to facilitate democracy might not be surprising, considering the relatively short history of the Internet as a mass medium. Although the Internet as an idea of connected computers was conceived more than 40 years ago (Kleinrock, 1961), Internet use from late 1960s to late 1980s was largely limited to the military and academia (Leiner et al., 2003). Use of the Internet among general public did not begin until 1995 when the private sector, instead of the U.S. government, started developing Internet infrastructure. Even then, the Internet was relatively new to the general public. For instance, a Pew Internet & American Life project survey conducted in 1996 showed that only four percent of the general public went online to get information about politics and elections (Rainie, et al., 2005).

The prospect of the Internet’s potential to foster democracy seems to reflect the Internet’s evolution as a communication medium. While early Internet scholars argued that the digital divide is a major obstacle for the Internet to become a mass medium of the public (Street, 1997), and thus to foster democracy, falling computer and Internet connection prices suggest that the concern might not be as serious of a problem as early

scholars foresaw, though it has not disappeared. While observations of websites for political campaigns and elected officials in the early 1990s showed that candidates and elected officials often used their web sites as a virtual bulletin board to dump endless amounts of self-promoting information without having any venues for citizens to contact them (Diamond, et al., 1993), candidates' and elected officials' websites for the past five to eight years have started to deliver information via audio and video in addition to texts (Schneider & Foot, 2002). Also, more political candidates and elected officials in recent years have engaged in communication with citizens in the form of emails, bulletin boards, or discussion rooms available on their campaign sites.

Political communication among Internet users also reflects the evolution of the Internet. Researchers investigating online political discussion in the early 1990s found that online political discussion rooms were often dominated by a small number of participants and that political discussions resemble a rambling amongst like-minded people rather than dynamic exchanges of diverse ideas (Davis, 1999; Hill & Hughes, 1998; Wilhelm, 1998). They concluded that a small number of vociferous, provocative individuals dominated online political discussion rooms so often that creating a 'virtual public sphere' where everyone participate in discussion with equal standing is not possible. However, recent phenomenon such as web logging suggests that Internet users might indeed be able to engage in diverse political discourse with equal standing. Technological features available in web logging make it possible for anyone to start a new conversation thread whenever she or he is worried about being isolated by those who dominate discussion.

Whether political blogging, one of the newest developments in computer-mediated communication (CMC), suggests a new possibility for the Internet to facilitate democracy is an open question. Blogging technology is far more promising than existing communication technology in respect to its interactive nature. By radically simplifying the process of publishing content, blogging technology helps people produce and share content with other Internet users. Representative features of blogging such as links and comments naturally encourage blog authors and readers to interact with information available on the Internet and with other Internet users.

With the increasing popularity of blogging among Internet users, those with utopian perspectives argue that technology empowers ordinary people and fosters democracy.

Utopian Views

We often think of a new communication technology as a means to liberate and empower the public. Movable-type printing press, telephone, radio, and television, especially at the early stages of invention, were all heralded as revolutionary developments that would bring dramatic social changes by empowering ordinary people. The Internet is no exception to the pattern. Researchers, pundits, and politicians alike adopted the Internet's potential with enthusiasm and predicted that the new communication technology would bring a 'whole new democracy.'

Howard Rheingold (1993, p.279), one of the most influential Internet optimists, said that the Internet, "if properly understood and defended by enough citizens, does have democratizing potential in the way that alphabets and printing presses had democratizing

potential.” Similarly, Klein (1995, in Davis, 1999) called the Internet a powerful technology for grassroots democracy and said that the Internet can strengthen democracy by facilitating discussion and collective action by citizens. Other scholars argued that the Internet’s potential to provide an unprecedented amount of information and space to discuss and exchange ideas promised a new political environment to citizens, scholars, and politicians (Glass, 1996; Johnson et al., 1999; Margolis et al., 1997; Mrosek, 2000; Revvy and Perlmutter, 1997).

Researchers were not the only ones excited about the potential of the Internet. The Clinton-Gore administration, for example, in the White House from 1992 to 2000, emphasized the power of information calling the Internet the “information superhighway” (Johnson and Nissenbaum, 1995). Vice President Al Gore argued that the Internet would enable us to solve economic, social, and political problems and urged a “global information infrastructure” (Johnson and Nissenbaum, 1995). Newt Gingrich (1995), then the speaker of the House, also highly praised the potential of the Internet and indicated that the Internet might be able to overcome differences in social status by saying, “Everybody is insider as long as you are willing to access (the information on the net).”

Examples of citizens using computer networks in the early to mid 1990s seemed to confirm that optimistic visions that the Internet facilitates participatory democracy. For example, in 1993, a group of Californians were able to force Bill 1624 to become law and require government to provide free comprehensive online access via public networks to information about state statutes and legislation-in-process. Participants of this campaign utilized electronic mail and an Internet mailing list to mobilize their effort and to

distribute information (Bonchek, 1995). A group of Internet enthusiasts also initiated *Minnesota E-Democracy* project in 1994 and hosted online debates between candidates for the U.S. Senate (Browning, 2001). In England, *UK Citizens Online Democracy* project was established in 1996 and became a virtual space where citizens can get information, deliberate with each other, and consult experts and government officials on social, economic, and political issues (Coleman, 1999).

Much of the optimistic perspectives have been based on the unique characteristics of the Internet. Firstly, the Internet has made unprecedented amount of information readily available to ordinary citizens. Government data, research papers, and elected representatives' voting records are stored in HTML or PDF format on the Internet, and interested citizens can access these documents at any time. As Howard Fineman (1997) put it, the Internet has “radically democratized the access to political information.”

The potential outcome of the Internet's unlimited amount of information was exciting news to optimists. They envisioned politically active citizens gathering information online, debating political issues with each other, and contacting government officials with their concerns (Glass, 1996; Johnson et al., 1999). The active citizen involvement facilitated by the Internet, positivists argued, would create a whole new political environment (Margolis et al., 1997; Mrosek, 2000). Further, proponents contended that the result of the access to unlimited amount of political information may be “a revitalized democracy characterized by a more active and informed citizenry” (Corrado and Firestone, 1996, in Davis, 1999, 21; Glass, 1996; Johnson and Kaye, 2003; Sunstein, 2004).

Some of the empirical investigations of political websites further advocated Internet optimists' contentions. For example, after examining political party and candidate web sites during the 1996 presidential election campaign, Kern (1997) concluded that the Internet helps building solidarity for social engagements and civic efforts and makes it easier for these efforts to become actions.

Secondly, the Internet has made distribution of information much easier and cost-effective (Browning, 2001). People can instantly send and receive messages using computer-mediated communication (CMC) modes such as electronic mails, instant messaging, and/or short-messaging service. Using current technologies such as blogging, people can publish their ideas and opinions in matter of minutes and share them with, potentially, millions of readers and viewers (Sunstein, 2004). Politically active citizens can publicize their cause and organize like-minded people much more effectively with much less cost than they could in the past (Bimber, 1998; Schwartz, 1996). Welch (2003, 22) summarizes the significance of the blogging technology to empower people to write and publish their editorial products: "... technology has, for the first time in history, given the average Jane the ability to write, edit, design, and publish her own editorial product – to be read and responded to by millions of people, potentially – for around \$0 to \$200 a year. It has begun to deliver on some of the wild promises about the Internet that were heard in the 1990s."

Thirdly, to a certain degree, the Internet gives users anonymity. A cartoon in *the New Yorker* once described anonymity on the Internet: a dog surfing on the Internet turned to the other dog and said, "On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog" (Steiner, 1993). Anonymity in CMC environments is claimed to free people from prejudices and

stereotypes that, in face-to-face communication situations, might hinder open exchanges of ideas and opinions (e.g., Rheingold, 1993; Papacharissi, 1999). Limitations on time and geographic differences can also be overcome in CMC environments.

Finally, a CMC that is free of prejudices, stereotypes, and time and geographic boundaries is thought to create an environment where diverse viewpoints are freely exchanged (Pavlik, 1994). Through free and open dialogues on the Internet, proponents argued, people would be exposed to diverse perspectives and become better informed, and thus the extent and quality of rational debates that are at the center of deliberative democracy can be enhanced (Rheingold, 1993; Dahlberg, 2001).

Research studies examining politically oriented web sites and the content of political discussion groups support proponents' claims that the Internet is conducive to learning and debating about politics. A study of online discussion groups found that the participants were engaged in lively political discussions for years even though they never met face-to-face (Mitra, 1997). Other researchers examining online political discussion groups also point to the information-rich content of online discussions and argue that though the Internet may not be the savior of democracy, it offers greater opportunity for public discourse and discursive democracy (Dahlberg, 2001; Nederman et al., 1999).

This optimistic view seems to continuously grow among those researchers who observed the use of the Internet in the 2000 Presidential campaign. Stromer-Galley (2000), for example, examined Al Gore and Bill Bradley campaigns and found that candidate web sites provided the users with evidenced and credible assertions and helped the voters to better understand where candidates differ. Based on the findings, she further argued that candidate web sites fostered a rich debate.

Although various characteristics of the Internet present promising potential to foster democracy by revitalizing a Habermasian public sphere, utopian perspectives of the Internet have been often dismissed as speculations because of lack of empirical investigations (Davis, 1999). The following section examines criticisms of utopian perspectives of the Internet.

Dystopian views

While proponents trumpeted the possibility of new democracy the Internet can bring, other researchers have raised concern, calling utopian ideas ‘hyperoptimistic technological determinism’ (Shane, 2004, xii). Sunstein (2004) warned that growing technologies enable Internet users to precisely choose the content they want to consume and that the public exposing itself only to the points of view with which it agrees is a danger to healthy democracy.

In his book, *The Web of Politics*, Richard Davis (1999, 23) argued that none of the utopian scenarios would happen because they assume “dramatic changes in human behavior.” Although an unprecedented amount of information is available on the Internet and the access to information is easy, Davis contended, the majority of the public that is less interested in politics would not suddenly acquire an interest in politics simply because technology makes it possible. Rather, Davis argued that the Internet would prove to be a boon to those who are already politically interested and motivated. These individuals can use the Internet to locate various information and data faster than any other times in the past; political activists can use the Internet to publicize their ideas and to organize their efforts; and politicians can communicate directly with potential voters

without having to worry about journalists' interpretations. People already in power, Davis further argued, would learn to use the Internet to serve their interests more effectively than those who are not, and thus, the Internet would more likely to support the status quo rather than social changes.

Critics of an Internet revolution note that the obstacles for the Internet to revolutionize politics and bring about stronger democracy are multifaceted. First, although the number of Americans who regularly use the Internet has grown, the digital divide still is a big concern. Because of digital divide, people without access to the Internet are argued to suffer from a lack of options to learn from information available on the Internet and to communicate with others using various CMC modes, and thus to miss out on various opportunities (Lenhart et al., 2003). Critics argue that the Internet hardly is a democratizing medium because poor, less educated, old, and/or disabled people, ethnic minorities, and those who live in rural communities often are the ones excluded from the so called 'Internet revolution' (Hill and Hughes, 1998; Johnson and Kaye, 2003). Indeed, a survey conducted in 2002 by the Pew Research Center confirms the existence of a digital divide among the U.S. population. "Demographically, the composition of the not online population has not changed dramatically," the researchers concluded (Lenhart et al., 2003, 7). The survey found that African-Americans, families with a household income of \$50,000 or less, those who without college degrees, those who live in rural communities, and those 50 years and older are more likely to be without the Internet access (Lenhart, et al., 2003).

Second, having access to the Internet does not necessarily mean that one would actively seek out educational or political information. Rather, critics argue that people are

more likely to seek information about entertainment rather than political information (Hill & Hughes, 1998). Hill and Hughes (1998) found that sex, television, and movies were most popular search terms in five Internet search engines. Based on Pew Research center's 1996 survey findings that new Internet users are less likely to look for political information and more likely to look for information about sports and entertainment (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 1996), Davis (1999) argued that Internet users' having more control to choose content means they avoid political information and pursue pleasure, if they decide to go online. Other researchers argue that not only does more readily available information and control over that information not necessarily generate a more informed public, it can even exacerbate the current political conditions by fragmenting and confining political news and public affairs information to those who are politically interested (Blumler & Gurevitch, 2001).

Third, increased availability and accessibility of information does not automatically translate to increased participation (Johnson & Kaye, 2003). Although utopians argue that people armed with information found on the Internet will actively contact and communicate their needs to government officials, studies found that new media did not necessarily make people become politically more active and more engaged than before. For example, in an online survey study, Bimber (1999) found that communication media did not necessarily predict more active citizen contact to government officials. In his data, aggregated political behavior (contacting government officials, in his study) was not particularly different between those who contacted officials by new media such as electronic mail and those who used traditional media such as phone and letters. What predicted citizen contact in his study were education, age,

gender, political connectedness (citizens actively engaged in other political activities are more likely than others to contact government officials), and proximity (citizen communication with government increases with the localness of the office).

Fourth, ease of communication does not necessarily guarantee government officials' willingness to communicate with their constituents. Studies found that candidates are reluctant to include technology features in their web sites to encourage citizen input. For example, after observing 1996 presidential and 1998 gubernatorial campaigns, Stromer-Galley (2000, 112) concludes, "Campaigns chose not to use the Internet to engage in deliberations with citizens. To do so would open up the possibility for burdensome exchange among candidates, campaign staffs, and citizens, which could entail losing control over the communication environment and losing the ability to remain ambiguous in policy positions."

Fifth, political discussion in Usenet Newsgroups and other discussion forums does not measure up to genuinely democratic discussions. Advocates of the Internet-assisted democracy have argued that citizens with access to the Internet will be able to share their views with potentially millions of other people and participate in broader public dialogues about politics and elections (Corrado, 1996, 9). Realizing that the Internet may provide a space for citizens to gather and have debates, proponents argued that a Habermasian public sphere can be achieved and deliberative democracy may be revived through the Internet (Corrado, 1996; Dahlberg, 2001). However, researchers investigating CMC environments have found that anonymity, which was believed to free people from prejudices and stereotypes, often resulted in inappropriate and uninhibited behaviors among CMC participants (Dibbel, 1993; Gilbert, 1999; Herring, 2002; Huff et

al., 2003). Various online behaviors such as flaming (verbal attacks on other CMC participants and their ideas), bullying, trolling (distracting the flow of exchanges with intentions to interrupt the discourse), cyber stalking, and/or online harassment have been documented by several researchers.

Studies that made close observation of political discussions on-line found that even groups focused upon issues that are expected to involve diverse opinions often develop into ideologically homogeneous communities of interest (Davis, 1999; Hill and Hughes, 1998; Wilhelm, 2000). For example, Wilhelm (1998) conducted a content analysis of Usenet newsgroups self-identified as political groups and found that the bulk of political messages provided primarily reactive comments, usually less than a hundred words, rather than providing information for other participants. He argued “online political forums are facilitating self-expression and monologue, without in large measure of “listening,” responsiveness, and dialogue that would promote communicative action (p.98).” Wilhelm found that online participants are not responding to the views of other group members. In his analysis, fewer than one out of five messages represented a direct reply to a previous posting. He also confirmed that the newsgroups he observed were virtual gathering places in which those who share a similar interest discuss issues. He argued that “over 70 percent of messages can be characterized as homophilic, that is, demonstrating either strong or moderate support for the dominant position on a political topic or candidate (p. 99).”

Despite the criticism of the quality of online political discussions, many researchers continue to remain hopeful that the Internet will revitalize democracy in many nations by creating a space for citizens to convene and discuss political and social

issues and helping them mobilize the efforts to solve the problems. The following section discusses this topic in detail.

CMC and Deliberative Democracy

Among the several characteristics of the Internet, perhaps the most exciting element to proponents might be the Internet's capability to connect people beyond time and space limitations and help them interact with one another. Clift (2000) argues that "many-to-many communication" is the most transformative aspect of the Internet in democracy. Barber (1984) emphasized the importance of talk in cultivating democracy and argued that innovations in communication can expand the agora in both time and space and thus help us build strong deliberative democracy. Other Internet advocates argue that CMC makes expressing ideas and opinions easy and provides a new possibility for electronic democracy. They further contended that the Internet can facilitate rational and democratic discourse in virtual public sphere and that vibrant political communication among citizens will revitalize deliberative model of democracy (Barber, 1984; Dahlberg, 2001; Rheingold, 1993). An early proponent Howard Rheingold (1993) summarizes the potential of the Internet as a facilitator of democratic discourse:

"The ability of groups of citizens to debate political issues is amplified enormously by instant, widespread access to facts that could support or refute assertions made in those debates. This kind of citizen-to-citizen discussion, backed up by facts available to all, could grow into the real basis for a possible electronic democracy of the future."

Jurgen Habermas's (1962, 1989) book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* is one of the most frequently cited works in discussing the potential of the Internet to create a place for democratic discussion. In his book, Habermas traces the

historic moments during the 17th and 18th centuries when coffee houses, societies, and salons were central places for public debates, and he extends this phenomenon to an ideal of individuals' participation in public forum. Habermas (1989, 315) defines the public sphere as a place for private people to join together to form a public and argues that in the public sphere, the discourse becomes democratic through “non-coercively unifying, consensus building force of discourse in which participants overcome their at first subjectively biased views in favor of rationally motivated agreement.” Adopting this idea, Internet enthusiasts argue that through CMC, individuals free from governmental and institutional coercion, participate in the discourse with equal opportunities, rationalize majority and minority perspectives under mutual respect toward each other, and eventually reach an agreement via rational and democratic discussion.

However, investigations of online discourse reveal a mixed picture. Several electronic democracy projects have been successful in drawing citizens to use the Internet to share their thoughts with other citizens and government officials, whereas other political discussion forums voluntarily created by Internet users are often found to be all but democratic discourse. Electronic democracy projects such as Minnesota's *E-Democracy* project and Santa Monica's *Public Electronic Network* (PEN) have been success stories. Minnesota E-Democracy project has served as online public sphere where people can gather to rationally deliberate upon issues relating Minnesota politics (Dahlberg, 2001). Being a prototype of the projects facilitating electronic democracy, Minnesota *E-Democracy* was modeled by the *United Kingdom Citizen's Online Democracy* project and the Nova Scotia *Electronic Democracy Forum* (Coleman, 1999). As one of the successful CityNet projects, Santa Monica's *PEN* (Tsagarousianou et al.,

1998) and San Antonio's *Electronic Town Meeting* (Buchstein, 1997) also provided citizens a virtual space where they can debate issues and concerns with each other.

On the other hand, political discussion forums voluntarily created by Internet users show both positive and negative practices. Schneider (1997) investigated a Usenet newsgroup discussion on abortion and found that the debate satisfied some of the qualities of democratic discourse but not others. For example, abortion discussion in his study was conducive to democratic discourse in terms of sharing diverse viewpoints and maintaining the conversation reciprocal. As the group size expanded over time, more people participated in discussion with 'diverse' viewpoints. Also, participants were often engaged in talking to each other enhancing 'reciprocity' of conversation. However, the discussion lacked 'equality' as a small number of speakers dominated the debate and was deficient of 'quality discussion' as participants often failed to stay on-topic in their discussion.

Although Schneider's study (1997) and other electronic democracy projects found hopeful signs for CMC's potential to foster deliberative democracy, other investigations often revealed a negative reality of online deliberation. Researchers found that discussion participants repeatedly chanted their own opinions without attempting to listen to what other participants had to say (Buchstein, 1997; Davis, 1999; Hill & Hughes, 1998; Hurwitz, 1999; McLaughlin, 1995; Wilhelm, 1998). Davis (1999) examined 1,666 posted messages across three politically-oriented newsgroup discussions and found that message posters rarely provided external evidence to their argument (Only 11.4% of messages had some sort of references to external sources), that Usenet discussions are reinforcement of certain perspectives rather than exchange of diverse viewpoints, that messages posters

with dissenting ideas were often dismissed, and that personal attacks, or flaming, were widespread (Approximately 36.4% of messages were attacks on message posters). Based on these findings, Davis (1999, 163) argued, “Usenet political discussion tends to favor the loudest and most aggressive individuals. Those who are less aggressive risk vigorous attack and humiliation. Others who might wish to discuss politics in a calmer voice and without bombast exclude themselves from the discussion, thus leaving the field to a minority of noisy partisans.”

Similar reality existed when Dahlberg (2001) compared online discourse to the requirements of Habermas’s ideal speech situations, and he suggested three possible measures for enhancing the quality of online political discourse. He argues that technology should be carefully chosen or developed to promote rational discourse. For example, Dahlberg notes that synchronous communication technologies such as technology used in chat-group promoting rapid exchanges are not necessarily conducive to rational, critical deliberation. He suggests that online discussion groups should institute some form of rules of discourse that enforces netiquette to create and maintain an environment favorable to rational discussion. Finally, Dahlberg encourages online forum management to actively police the rules of communicative exchange.

Recognizing both the importance of deliberation for a healthy democracy and the potential of the Internet fostering democratic deliberation, researchers have argued that increasing interaction among CMC participants and engaging people in “many-to-many communication” is the key to realize the Internet’s potential for deliberative democracy (Barber, 1998-1999; Clift, 2000; Hacker, 1996; Howard, 2001; Langdon, 2003). Hacker (1996) believes that active communication not only among citizens but also between

citizens and their representatives are essential in order to achieve electronic democratization through new communication technology.

Along the similar vein, Winner (2003, 177) argues that “direct, sustained engagement with others in communities of concern” should be assured, if we want to use the Internet to realize the dream of the democratic renewal. Barber (1998-1999) too reminds us that frank, interactive deliberation backed by intervention, education, facilitation, and mediation is needed to achieve deliberative democracy through communication technologies.

As blogging gains popularity among the public, many believe that blogging technology can engage people into democratic conversation. Chris Mooney (2002), a writer for *the American Prospect*, said, “the culture of dialogue and fairness in blogging presents a great opportunity to actually engage the other side.” Calling many-to-many communication mechanism of blogging ‘a major innovation,’ Gelman (2004) argued that technology such as blogging empowers citizens to partake in the democratic process, and it results in online discourse.

Although many electronic democracy advocates tout blogging as innovation that can transform the nature of democracy and of political discourse, few studies have investigated this contention empirically. The following section reviews existing research on blogging and democracy.

Blogging and deliberative democracy

Studies have found that the typical blog is written by teenagers and young adults primarily to express themselves and to communicate with their friends and family

(Herring et al., 2004; Henning, 2003). However, blogs that sprung out after the terrorist attack in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, blogs created after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, and blogs incorporated into the 2004 U.S. presidential election campaigns have led many people to believe that blogging has the potential to become a medium beyond self-expression and will bring a social transformation.

Rebecca Blood (2002), author of *The Weblog Handbook*, notes that because blogging technology has made publishing on the web extremely easy, the communication process has been democratized by giving those who do not know how to code a webpage a channel to have their voices heard. Noting that blogging has empowered individual writers by reducing the costs of publishing, Andrew Sullivan (2002), former editor of *The New Republic* and one of the most popular bloggers today, argues, “the blog revolution has begun to transform the media world.” Equally impressed by blogging technology, Froomkin (2004, 9) touts the potential of blogs to stimulate debate: “They (Blogs) illustrate how ease of publishing can stimulate debate: bloggers often read and react to one another’s’ work, creating a new commons of public, if not necessarily always deeply deliberated, debate.”

Responding to the increasing popularity of blogging as a means of communication and self-expression, many researchers have started investigating various issues related to blogging. Recent research on blogging includes important issue areas: the interaction between blogosphere and mainstream media (e.g., Bloom, 2003), the nature of communication via blogging (e.g., Herring et al, 2004; Herring et al., 2005; Trammel, 2005a), the implications of blogging in politics and political communication

(e.g., Adamic & Glance, 2005; Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Howell, 2004; McKenna & Pole, 2004; Trammell, 2005b; Williams et al., 2005).

Describing the incident of Senator Trent Lott's resignation from the Senate Majority Leader position in 2002 as the case through which bloggers for the first time gained significant attention from politicians, journalists, and the American public, Bloom (2003) illustrated how this particular story was at first ignored by the mainstream media and how bloggers kept the story alive until the mainstream media picked it up. Although Bloom (2003) is certain that bloggers have growing influence on politics and journalism, he is cautious to make a firm conclusion about the future of blogging. The author illustrates the continuing tension between blogging and the mainstream media by presenting both bloggers who believe in a symbiotic relationship between blogging and mainstream journalism and a traditional journalist convinced that his columns in newspapers have much more influence on the public than his blog posts.

Herring et al.'s (2004, 2005) two studies and Trammell's (2005a) study focus on the nature of communication in the blogosphere. But, they are different in that Herring et al.'s studies explore the overall blogosphere, whereas Trammell's study investigates communication in a particular type of blogs. Based on the analysis of characteristics of 203 randomly selected weblogs, Herring et al. (2004) argue that the popular belief that blogs are highly interactive and interlinked is exaggerated. Rather, the authors found that a majority of blogs are "individualistic, intimate forms of self-expression." Extending this study, Herring et al. (2005) undertook to analyze the extent to which blogs are interconnected using social network analysis, visualization of link patterns, and qualitative analysis of references and comments. The study shows that the popularity of

'A-list' blogs is overrepresented in the rhetoric surrounding blogging and that active conversation among bloggers is rare.

Trammell (2005a) investigated the nature of conversations on blogs by examining the motivations of blogging activities (posting, commenting, and creating trackbacks) in celebrity blogs. Trammell found that each blogging activity has different motivations: bloggers (celebrities in this study) posting blog entries were driven by a need to express themselves; the readers of blog entries left comments to fulfill their social interaction needs; and those who created a post that trackbacks to the celebrity's blog sought to share information with their readers.

As I heavily utilized the method of Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, and Wright's (2004) genre analysis of weblogs in content-analyzing political blog sites, the methodology and the findings of their study need to be discussed in detail. Herring and her colleagues examined the characteristics of blogs in order to provide a snapshot of the weblog and an understanding of how technological changes affect genre development. Using a blog tracking site blo.gs's randomization feature, the authors collected 203 blog sites from March to May of 2003 and analyzed the characteristics of the authors, overall purpose of the blog, structural features of the blog, and other characteristics of the blog (e.g., links, comments, and updates).

Herring and her colleagues found that 9 of 10 blogs in their sample were created and maintained by a single individual, slightly over one half of bloggers were male, about half of the time they were students, and about 7 of 10 bloggers in the sample were located in America.

The study also found that the most common type of blog in their sample was a personal journal whose content is composed of blogger's thoughts and reflections on daily life. Filter type blogs that many claimed to be a typical type of blogs were found to be only 12 percent of the sample.

Herring et al. found that bloggers in their study did not update their blog sites as frequently as some claim. The interval between two sequential entries varies greatly ranging from 0 to 63 days, with the average and the mode being 5 days and 1 day, respectively.

Some of the structural features examined in Herring et al.'s study also bear relevance to this dissertation. The authors found that some features such as archives (found in 73.5%), badges (69.0%), and images (58.6%) were more commonly exhibited on blog home pages than other features such as comments (43.0%), link to email the blog author (31.3%), search (18.5%), and guest book (4.5%).

In addition to random blogs, researchers examined blogs with specific topics, such as political blogs. Political blogs written by average citizens and political candidates' use of blogs in the context of the 2004 U.S. presidential election were also examined. Adamic and Glance (2005) analyzed the linking patterns of 40 "A-list" bloggers and discussion topics of over 1,000 blog posts in order to measure the degree of interaction between liberal and conservative blogs. They found that both liberals and conservatives linked primarily within their communities (few cross-linked), that conservatives tended to more frequently have external links than liberals (although those links were primarily to other conservative blogs), and that conservatives were more densely linked than liberals. The study also shows that the pattern of dense intra-

community linking and sparse inter-community linking is extended to their discussions. In their posts, conservative bloggers linked to media outlets known for their conservative viewpoints such as Fox News, *the National Review*, *NY Post*, and *Washington Times*, whereas liberal bloggers predominantly linked to articles in *Salon*, the *LA Times*, *the New Republic*, and the *Wall Street Journal* known for their liberal perspectives.

Two studies done by Williams et al. (2005) and Trammell (2005) examined political candidates' use of blogs. Williams et al. examined the campaign web sites of the two candidates in the 2004 U.S. presidential election and compared the content on the campaign web sites to their blog posts. The study found that the two candidates used web sites rather than their blogs to raise funds; that links on the campaign sites tend not to travel outside of the candidate's web site (to confine visitors within their sites), but when they do have external links, candidates' web sites were more likely than blogs to have links to advocating sources; and that issue agendas the candidates discussed on their web sites were different from the ones they discussed in their blog posts.

While Williams et al. (2005) focused on how the two presidential candidates utilized their official web sites in their campaigns, Trammell (2005) investigated the level of interactivity and personalization of each candidate's campaign web site. The study confirms Stromer-Galley and Foot's (2002) finding that political candidates tend to avoid high level of interactivity in their online campaign in fear of losing the control over the content and the frame of the campaign messages. However, the study found that the external links are increasing, and the author reported that the interaction between candidates and Internet users is on the rise. For example, Trammell argues, the Bush campaign site achieved increased source authenticity by including many links to external

sites, and the Kerry campaign site indicated the presence of high level of interactivity by including a feature that requests for reader input. The study also shows that both candidate sites were highly personalized by including family bloggers. The daughters of George W. Bush often posted blog entries during the campaign referring to him as ‘dad,’ and Elizabeth Edwards, the wife of vice presidential candidate of the Democratic Party, posted blog entries describing her experiences in the campaign trail and stating her political viewpoints. According to the study, the two candidates used blogs differently: Kerry’s posts focused on the campaign, whereas Bush’s posts provided a less formal account of the campaign. Discussing opponents and making political statements were the primary topic of Kerry’s blog posts, and the day’s events and feelings were the primary topics of Bush’s blog posts.

As researchers observe blogs’ popularity among politicians and citizens alike, they have speculated on the role that blogs might play in the news coverage, and by extension, in American politics. Bloom (2003) used a critical analysis of the Trent Lott incident to argue that the influence of political blogs on American politics is growing and that time constraints in the journalism environment makes journalists’ reliance on political blogs inevitable.

Similarly, Drezner and Farrell’s (2004) study asked a fundamental question about blogs’ influence on politics and policy – how a collection of decentralized, nonprofit, and discordant websites can result in political outputs. The authors argue that the networked structure of the blogosphere and a skewed distribution of links in blogs highlight widely-read viewpoints in the blogosphere, and this mechanism helps mainstream media easily obtain popular opinions on a given issue. Thus, Drezner and Farrell suggest the agenda

building function of political blogs and assert that the blogosphere influences the content of media coverage, which in turn affects politics and policy.

However, empirical examination does not always support Drezner and Farrell's assertion that political blogs might have an agenda building function in political coverage. Lee (2006) examined the topics of political blog sites and compared the topics to those of the mainstream media's election coverage. The findings in his study suggest that the agendas in both mainstream media and the blog sites were considerably similar to each other. Moreover, the author found that political blogs, regardless of their political leanings, covered the election with the same agenda.

A content analysis of more than 1,000 blog entries from 20 political and civic affairs blogs written and maintained by a journalist associated with a media organization also revealed that political blogs are not likely to influence the content of media coverage (Singer, 2005). The study found that political j-bloggers played the role of traditional gatekeepers and maintained control over the content of blogs, although blogs are considered to encourage citizen participation.

Despite the attention paid to the question if blogging has a potential to transform the nature of politics and foster democracy, few researchers empirically investigated this potential. McKenna and Pole's (2004) study is valuable in that respect. In order to examine blogs' potential to play an important role in improving political participation, the two researchers conducted an e-mail survey among political bloggers. Although this study has limitations, the findings show that political bloggers believe that blogging can play a positive role in furthering political participation and strengthening democracy. The respondents indicated that political blogging is a form of political participation and

increases the sense of efficacy: 27 out of 28 respondents said that they believe blogging is a form of political participation, and 15 out of 28 respondents said that they feel that they have much more influence on politics and political discourse as a result of writing a weblog.

In addition to the review of literature on computer-mediated communication and its potential to foster democracy, the uses and gratification theory provided foundation for this study. In the following section, I provide a very brief review of the theory.

Uses and Gratifications of Media Use

Communication researchers have long inquired why people use particular types of media over others and what satisfaction they gain from consuming the media. Long before the uses and gratifications research was theorized by Blumler and Katz (1974), researchers examined the reasons for the audience's selective media consumption such as reasons for radio listening (e.g., Herzog, 1944) or newspaper reading (e.g., Berelson, 1949) and for the use of particular art genres (e.g., Suchman, 1942; Wolfe & Fiske, 1949). Although early studies were criticized for their descriptive nature, their findings demonstrated that audience members tend to choose different media in order to satisfy specific needs.

Summarizing the early studies on the motivations of and satisfactions from media use, Blumler and Katz (1974) refined the explanation of people's selective media use and proposed the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory. The two assumptions of the U&G theory – that audience is active and that media use is goal-directed – were the opposite of the traditional perspective that audience members were viewed as passive recipients of

media messages. The U&G theory also assumes that media consumption can satisfy a wide range of needs, that people are capable of knowing and articulating their reasons for using the media, and that media content, exposure to media, and the social context affect gratification.

Since Blumler and Katz (1974), researchers have examined audience members' psychological motives of media use and satisfactions both empirically and theoretically. Palmgreen and Rayburn (1979), Eastman (1979), and Ostman and Jeffers (1980) examined exposure to television and investigated motivations and gratifications behind TV viewing. Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973), Rosengren (1974), and Blumler (1979) refined the U&G theory by encouraging researchers to consider media users' personal characteristics and social environment in which exposure to media takes place when examining the relationship between motives and gratifications of media use. The U&G theory was further refined when researchers began adopting a more nuanced understanding of an 'active' audience that indicated the active nature of audience can be variable depending on many factors (Levy & Windahl, 1984).

Uses and Gratifications of Internet Use

With the Internet emerging as a mass medium, communication researchers have relied on the uses and gratifications theory to examine why people use the Internet and what types of gratifications are sought and obtained from using Internet. Morris and Ogan (1996) urged researchers to pay attention to the U&G theory in investigating Internet use because the Internet requires users' active involvement. Ruggiero (2000) reviewed numerous studies relevant to the U&G theory and argued that the U&G theory is a

“cutting-edge” theory that can successfully guide researchers to examine computer-mediated communication.

Researchers examining motivations and gratifications of Internet use have found that the Internet use, as was true with traditional media use, satisfied a wide range of needs. Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) found that people used the Internet to gather information, to pass time, and to engage in interpersonal communication, and/or they used it because computer-mediated communication was easier or cheaper than face-to-face communication, and because using the Internet was entertaining or enjoyable. Similarly, Kaye and Johnson (2002) found that information seeking, entertainment, and social utility were motivations for Internet use among politically interested people. Stafford and Stafford (2001) also found in the analysis of commercial web sites users that their motivations included searching, socialization, and entertainment.

In addition, researchers found that motivations for Internet use were rooted in the needs that individuals sought to satisfy. In other words, individuals’ desire to satisfy different needs works as motivation to select a particular media source that they believe will realize their expected gratifications. Researchers have used five needs categorized by Katz, Gurevitch, and Hass (1973) to investigate motivations of Internet users. They include: cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs, social integrative needs, and escapist needs (Hunter, 1996; Stafford, Stafford, & Schkade, 2004). Cognitive needs refer to the needs related to strengthening of information and knowledge or understanding of our environment. Affective needs are the needs related to aesthetic, pleasurable, and emotional experience. Personal integrative needs are the needs to strengthen an individual’s confidence, authority, or credibility. Social integrative needs

refer to the needs to maintain and strengthen relationship with family, friends, and the world. Escapist needs are related to the desire to release tension or escape.

As I was primarily interested in bloggers themselves rather than blog readers, I did not explore the reasons why they consume blog content. However, the reasons why authors keep a blog and what kinds of satisfactions they gain from blogging were examined. Specifically, the analysis of the satisfactions the participants gained from blogging was guided by Katz et al.'s (1973) five needs.

The review of current literature became the base of the research questions presented in the next section. The first 10 research questions are examined using the data collected from the survey, and the next six questions are answered by analyzing the content of political blog sites.

Research Questions

The main goals of this dissertation are to examine political bloggers' motivations for publishing commentaries on the Internet and to gauge the level of their blogging activities. The survey part of the dissertation investigates bloggers' demographic makeup, their motivations for blogging, their political attitudes and participation, bloggers' media use, and the relationship between blogging (history and frequencies) and the level of political efficacy and participation. The content analysis examines political blog sites to determine whether what's delivered through political blog sites are similar to or different from what's found in random blogs. More specifically, author information, interactive features, the frequency of posting, the topic and nature of blog entries, and the degree of interaction between blog authors and readers are examined in the content analysis.

Some studies of bloggers found that an almost equal number of men and women Internet users blog (Herring et al., 2004; Lenhart & Susannah, 2006), but others have complained about the lack of female political bloggers in the blogosphere and speculated why that would be (Drum, 2005). The first research question provides empirical evidence bearing on these conflicting accounts.

RQ1. Are there any differences in the demographic characteristics of political and nonpolitical bloggers? If so, how are the two groups different?

Investigating why people use a particular medium has been the goal of many studies following the uses and gratification research tradition. Many researchers studying the new media such as the Internet have investigated the motivations of Internet use (Mings, 1997; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). With an emergent medium such as blogging, it is important to examine why people use the new medium, as well as who use it. Research questions two and three examine the motivations and the level of activities of bloggers.

RQ2. What drives people to keep a weblog? What are their motivations? How are the motivations of political bloggers different from those of nonpolitical bloggers?

RQ3. What are their blogging activities? Do political bloggers post entries more or less frequently than nonpolitical bloggers? Has an average political blogger been blogging longer or shorter than a typical nonpolitical blogger?

It has been found that those who frequently use news media and pay attention to what they learn from news have a high level of political efficacy (Buckingham, 1997; Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986; Chaffee et al., 1994; Leshner & McKean, 1997). Some researchers (e.g., Bucy & Gregson, 2001) argue that communication media requiring a high level of interactivity contribute to enhancing the level of self-efficacy (what some call internal efficacy) and trust in government (what some call external efficacy).

In general, political bloggers should be aware of current political issues and pay attention to what they learn from mainstream news media in order to publish political commentaries in their blog sites. Moreover, it is logical to believe that the linking mechanism considered to be the most unique feature differentiating blogging from other communication modes might provide high levels of interactivity Bucy and Gregson refer to. Thus, research question four asks whether political bloggers have a higher level of efficacy than nonpolitical bloggers.

RQ4. Do political bloggers have a higher efficacy level than nonpolitical bloggers?

Scholars agree that determining a causal relationship between media use and political activities is extremely difficult. Some argue that those who are already politically active rely on media to stay informed or to express their viewpoints (e.g., Boyle, 2001). Others agree that the media and political activities probably affect each other. Those who are already politically active rely on media to stay informed, and what they learn from the media sometimes encourages them to be politically active (e.g., Ramos Vielba, 2006). The fifth and sixth research questions examine political activities and media use in which bloggers are engaged in to provide further information to address this debate.

RQ5. What political activities did bloggers engage in online and offline? Are there any differences between political and nonpolitical bloggers in their political activities?

RQ6. To what degree do bloggers consume traditional and nontraditional news media to get information about elections and presidential candidates? Do political bloggers use news media differently from nonpolitical bloggers?

In the next four research questions (RQ7-10), I attempt to further examine the relationship between blogging and political efficacy and participation. Although I tend to

agree that the relationship between news media and political attitudes and participation is reciprocal rather than one-way, I think that examining the relationship while holding other variables constant will provide meaningful information.

RQ7. When other variables are controlled, is there any relationship between blogging (blogging history and frequency) and the level of political efficacy?

RQ8. When other variables are controlled, is there any relationship between blogging (blogging history and frequency) and the level of political participation?

RQ9. Can blogging predict the variance in the level of efficacy among those who have blogged more than one year?

RQ10. Is there a relationship between blogging and the level of political participation among those who have blogged more than one year? When other variables are controlled, can blogging history and frequency predict the variance in political participation?

The research questions 11 through 16 would be answered by analyzing the data gathered from the content analysis of political blog sites. Although blog enthusiasts argue that blogs are a highly interactive mode of communication, previous studies analyzing random blogs found that bloggers reveal considerable information about themselves but use few technological features to interact with others (Herring et al., 2005). Quite contrary to the blog enthusiasts' accounts, Herring and her colleagues emphasized that their study findings indicated that blogs are "an individualistic, intimate form of self-expression" (Herring et al., 2004, p.1). The research questions 11 and 12 examine the amount of author information political bloggers reveal on their sites and the potential for interaction between authors and readers to determine if, compared to what Herring and others found, political bloggers are engaged in interacting with other bloggers and their readers to a different degree.

RQ11. What types of author information are revealed on the political blog sites?

RQ12. What types of technical and interactive features are available on political blog sites compared to random blogs?

Herring and her colleague's study (2005) of random blogs found that bloggers do not post entries on their blog sites as often as popular belief suggests. At the time of their data collection, the recency of update was an average 2.2 days, and the average interval between two sequential entries was 5.0 days. Would this be true in political blog sites? Research Question 13 provides further information to inform this debate.

RQ13. How frequently do political bloggers post entries? When posting entries, how long are their entries? Do they link other sites to their blog entries? What do they link it to?

Research questions 14 and 15 examine the topic and nature of political blog entries. The topics of discussion in the political blogosphere during the presidential campaign period were examined to learn what political bloggers, arguably claimed to be opinion leaders (Singer, 2005), were concerned about.

The nature of blog entries was analyzed in research question 14. With both the Republican and the Democratic parties extending invitations to cover their national conventions to some prominent political bloggers, some argue that political bloggers have become as influential as political journalists in American politics (Drezner & Farrell, 2004). However, many argue that the lack of factual accuracy and professional ethics in political blogs are the challenges political bloggers have to overcome (Bosman, 2004). The 15th research question provides further information to address this debate.

RQ14. What are the main topics of the blog entries?

RQ15. What is the nature of blog entries? Are they mainly composed of factual information, personal opinions, or a mix of both fact and opinions?

One of the touted characteristics of blogging is its linking mechanism that is supposedly conducive to interaction among blog authors and readers. Many have argued that the linking feature of blogging makes the exchange of ideas and opinions so easy that it fosters deliberative democracy (e.g., Froomkin, 2004). However, empirical examination of these claims has been rare. Examining how often blog authors and readers exchange comments with each other and how diverse their discussion is (RQ16) provides evidence for this debate.

RQ16. What is the degree of interaction between blog authors and readers? Do people exchange diverse viewpoints in the comments section?

Chapter 3

Methods

The data for this dissertation are from a survey of bloggers and a content analysis of their blog sites. To understand the bloggers' activities, their motivations of blogging, their political activities, and their news media consumption, I conducted an online survey of them. In an email invitation, I requested both political and nonpolitical bloggers to participate in an online survey during the 2004 U.S. presidential election campaign, and 290 bloggers completed the survey in October and November 2004.

In order to independently assess the answers provided in the survey and to compare the content of blog sites to what's found in the survey, I followed up the survey with the content analysis of blog sites. I asked the survey respondents to provide me with the URL of their blog sites. Seventy-eight of 160 bloggers who provided me with the URL of their blog sites said the main topic of their blogs is politics or political issues, and this study includes the content analysis of those 78 political blog sites.

(1) Survey

In order to provide a snapshot of the characteristics, attitudes, and orientations of political bloggers, a survey was conducted during the 2004 U.S. presidential campaign period. I was interested in determining the basic characteristics of political bloggers, their motivations for blogging, the frequency of blogging, their (news) media consumption, political orientations, and their online and off-line political activities.

The survey research method was a particularly useful tool for this study, because describing the characteristics, attitudes, and orientations of an emerging group of people was one of the main purposes. Researchers have acknowledged that survey research is the best method available to researchers who are interested in collecting original data to describe a population too large to observe directly (Babbie, 2001; Shoemaker & McCombs, 2003; Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). They also agree that a survey is a useful method to use when measuring attitudes and orientations existing in a large population.

Online Survey

An online survey was used to reach political and nonpolitical bloggers. Because the questions this study attempts to answer are closely related to the nature of an online population, their Internet use, and online behavior, it was reasonable to believe that the Internet was the medium through which I could most effectively reach this group of people.

An online survey has advantages and disadvantages as a social science research method. Compared to the traditional survey, online surveys may save time and cost for researchers (Kaye & Johnson, 1999; Wright, 2005). Once potential survey respondents are identified, a researcher may be able to recruit participants in a relatively short time by posting an invitation on the website of Internet-based communities, sending out email invitations through a listserv service, or recruiting participants through an online research service (Wright, 2005). In addition, a researcher can save time in collecting data, because online survey responses can be automatically entered in database files (e.g., Microsoft EXCEL). Thus an online survey utilizes electronic documents that save cost for

researchers. Paper-based surveys are considerably more expensive, once the cost of copies of a survey questionnaire and mailing expenses are taken into consideration.

In addition to time and cost effectiveness, an online survey can be particularly useful to those who are interested in collecting data from Internet-based populations. As the Internet has become a major communication medium to a growing number of people, the need to examine their Internet use and online behavior has also increased. Researchers studying these topics have often relied on online surveys to reach their subjects, and they have found that online surveys may be superior to traditional surveys in accessing unique populations (Wright, 2005). For example, when a researcher is interested in investigating characteristics of a particular Internet-based group, a random sampling of a general population may not generate enough people relevant to the purpose of the study and may result in a failure to collect an adequate number of responses for analysis.

Although the online survey is a popular method among researchers who wish to reach a unique Internet-based population in relatively short time, it poses several challenges as a social science research method. One of the biggest problems of online surveys is related to the issue of sampling. Because online-based groups do not necessarily have a list of members and/or membership is not necessarily required to participate in online groups, establishing a sampling frame is often difficult and problematic (Andrews et al., 2003; Dillman, 2000; Wright, 2005). It might be difficult for researchers to obtain online community membership lists even if they do exist, because not all groups make their membership lists available to the public.

Self-selection bias is another concern for online surveys (Wright, 2005; Wu & Weaver, 1997). Although a paper-based survey is not completely protected from self-selection bias, since some people will participate in a survey while others ignore it, an online survey can be more vulnerable to this bias because it is easier than a paper-based survey for respondents to fill out the survey questionnaire several times. Researchers have to make sure to have some way of preventing this problem by distributing to potential respondents unique codes that allow them to access the survey site and by eliminating multiple questionnaires filled out by the same respondent(s).

Unsolicited commercial advertising that is prevalent on the web makes online survey research difficult in the same way that telemarketers make telephone surveys very difficult to conduct. Because some commercial entities send out unwanted and unsolicited emails in such large quantities, when Internet users find an email or posting (including those requesting participation in a mass media study) irrelevant to their specific purpose, they are likely to consider it spam and ignore the request.

Although there are several disadvantages in using an online survey, I chose this method to reach a unique population of political bloggers. As mentioned above, it was reasonable to believe that the Internet is the most effective way to reach this population, considering that blogging requires intensive use of the Internet among respondents of this study. In order to counter the weaknesses of an online survey, I strived to make sure that the respondents in this study were selected through a random sampling method and that self-selection bias was minimal.

Institutional Review Board Approval

Two steps were taken to ensure the protection of human subjects in this study. I documented that I am trained to involve humans in the study by taking and passing the Indiana University test for using humans in research (Test ID: 1032504822), and the study was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before I started collecting any data. An application for Human Subjects Committee approval was submitted in order to comply with the federal regulations and university policy on human subjects research (45 CFR Part 46). The IRB at Indiana University granted “exempt review” status to this study (#04-9428), because no respondents would be identified by their names in reporting the findings of this study, even though the respondents in the survey and their answers could be identifiable by matching their answers to the URL of their blog sites.

Sampling

The population in this study was sampled using a stratified sampling method. First, 850 blog sites (regardless of whether a political or a nonpolitical site) were selected using the randomization feature of a blog tracking web site, blo.gs. In order to ensure that a sufficient number of political bloggers were included in the survey, another 190 political blog sites were randomly selected from Yahoo’s political blog directory. After checking political blog directories available in other search engines, including Google, MSN, AOL, Ask, and Earthlink, I concluded that political blog sites listed on various search engines are more or less the same and decided that Yahoo’s political blog directory would serve the purpose of this stage of sampling as well as any other directories.

After collecting 1,040 blog sites, I accessed each blog site to harvest email addresses to reach blog authors. When email addresses were available on a blog site in the form of “Email me,” “Contact me,” or “Contact the author,” it was the most preferred method to contact the author. When e-mail addresses were not available, I looked for other computer-mediated communication (CMC) modes available on blog sites. CMC modes available on the blog sites besides email included various features allowing readers or visitors to make comments on blog entries or to leave a note to the blog author(s) such as ‘comment’, ‘guest book,’ and/or ‘mailing list’. Among 1,040 blog sites, 989 sites (about 95 percent) had some kind of CMC modes (at least one or more of the following features: email, comments, guest book, or mailing list) available. I contacted the owner/author of each blog site via available CMC mode and requested for participation in my online survey.

Email requests for participation² were sent out on October 20 and 21, 2004, and reminder emails were sent out 10 days later, on October 30 and 31, 2004. A link to the survey site was included in the email invitation. The link took potential respondents to the first page of the survey³ where study information was available. After reading study information and agreeing to participate in the survey by clicking the link saying, “I read the above study information and agree to participate in this survey,” respondents were taken to the pages with the survey questionnaire. Of 989 political and nonpolitical bloggers contacted, 290 bloggers filled out the survey, yielding the response rate of 29.3 percent.

² For the full text of email invitation, please see appendix I.

³ For the survey questionnaire, please see appendix II.

Measures

i. Blogging activities

Political and nonpolitical bloggers' activities were measured by asking (1) how often they post entries in their own blogs, (2) how often they read other blogs, and (3) how often they post comments in other blogs. The frequency of posting entries in their own blogs was measured with a detailed scale ranging from 'less than once a month' to 'more than twice a day.' The frequencies of reading other blogs and posting comments after reading other blogs were measured on a scale of 'never, rarely, sometimes, and frequently.' I chose to measure bloggers' entries on their sites by using a more detailed scale, and I assessed their reading and commenting on other blog sites with less detailed scales. I did so because not only would one be more likely to post entries on one's own blog site, but one also would more accurately remember posting entries on his or her site than on others.

ii. Motivations for blogging

In order to understand why these people are involved in blogging, a potentially demanding activity, I asked several questions based on uses and gratification theory. Respondents were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: Blogging helps me understand certain topics or areas; blogging is a fun and emotional experience; blogging makes me feel confident and authoritative; blogging helps me stay connected with friends and family or make new friends; and blogging is a means of releasing tension in my life.

iii. Content of Blogs

Respondents were asked to indicate the main content of their blogs by answering the question, “what is the main content of your weblog?” This was an open-ended question, and the respondents were allowed to write down more than one topic of their blogs, if needed. This question was used as the variable that distinguished political bloggers from nonpolitical ones. Those who wrote down “politics,” “political issues,” “election,” or “presidential campaign” as the main topic(s) of their blogs were considered “political” bloggers in this study.

iv. Political Efficacy

The level of political efficacy among bloggers was measured in order to examine the relationship between blogging and political efficacy. Respondents were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the following six statements: (1) I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country; (2) I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics; (3) I feel that I could do as good of a job in public office as most other people; (4) I think that I am as well-qualified about politics and government as most people; (5) People like me don't have any say about what the government does; and (6) Public officials don't care much what people like me think.

The first four statements get at internal efficacy, the beliefs about one's own competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics. The remaining two statements attempt to measure one's external efficacy level, which refers to beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to the demands of ordinary citizens (Converse, 1972; Craig et al., 1990). Three summated rating scales were developed for the analyses: Political efficacy (using all six statements), internal efficacy

(using the first four statements), and external efficacy (using the remaining two statements). In building the scales, reliability coefficients were computed through item analyses. The reliability coefficient Alpha for internal efficacy was .82 and for external efficacy was .73. The Alpha for the scale of political efficacy that includes all six items was .59.

v. *Media Use*

To find out whether or not blogging activities are correlated with other media use, bloggers' news media use was measured in this study. Exposure to traditional media news, new media news and attention paid in using news media were examined. Exposure to news media questions asked respondents how many days in a typical week they read newspapers [watch television news, listen to radio political talk shows, and access Internet news sites] for news about politics or public affairs. Respondents were also asked to indicate how much attention they paid when they read, watched, and/or listened to political news from each medium.

Also asked were how often respondents talked to friends and family about politics and public affairs, how often they participated in on-line political discussion such as Usenet newsgroup or listserv, and how often they used candidate web sites to learn about a candidate's issue stances.

vi. *Political Interest*

The level of political interest among bloggers was measured using three questions. Respondents were asked (1) how much they were interested in the 2004 presidential election, (2) whether they were registered to vote, and (3) whether they expected to vote in November 2004.

vii. Political activities

Seven questions were asked in the survey to measure bloggers' online and offline political activities. Respondents were asked whether (1) they have written a letter to a politician in the past year to express their ideas or concerns, (2) they have attended a political rally for any political candidate(s), (3) they have campaigned for any political candidate(s), (4) they have participated in any online discussion/forums with a politician, (5) they have donated any money to any political candidate's campaign, (6) they have contacted any politician via e-mail, and (7) they have called in to talk shows on radio or television to discuss politics. These variables were used to examine the relationship between blogging and political participation.

viii. Demographic Information

Respondents' basic demographic information measured in this study included age, gender, race, highest education completed, total personal income in the previous year, and political party identification.

Data Analysis

Whether or not there are any differences between political and nonpolitical bloggers in terms of blogging and the motivations for blogging was examined using t-test analysis. More specifically, the means of the two groups for their blogging activities, motivations for blogging, level of (internal and external) political efficacy, news media use, and online and off-line political activities were compared to see if the two groups exhibit any differences with statistical significance.

Correlation analysis examined if the nature of blog sites (whether they are political or nonpolitical) is correlated with variables such as political efficacy, media use, and political activities. Correlation analysis examined the relationships:

- between history of blogging (how long one has been blogging) and political efficacy
- between frequency of blogging (how often one posts entries, reads other blogs, and comments on other blogs) and political efficacy
- between history of blogging and media use
- between frequency of blogging and media use
- between history of blogging and political activities
- between frequency of blogging and political activities

Last, hierarchical regression analysis examined, while other variables were controlled, if the history of blogging and level of blogging are factors that can predict the level of political efficacy and political participation with statistical significance. Control variables such as demographic information, political affiliation, campaign interest, and traditional media use will be entered accordingly, then history of blogging and level of blogging will be entered in the later blocks to examine their own contribution in explaining variance in the dependent variables (political efficacy and political participation). In order to find out any difference between political and nonpolitical bloggers, hierarchical regression was separately run for each group.

Although inferential statistics were used to analyze the data in this study, one should be warned that generalization of the findings should be done with care. Using a random probability sampling method, I asked around 1,000 bloggers to participate in the survey. However, the study suffers from a relatively low response rate (29.3%), and thus,

the readers should be aware that the participants of the study are only a small portion of the entire sample of bloggers.

(2) Content Analysis

I followed up the survey of bloggers with a content analysis of their blog sites in order to independently assess the answers provided in the survey and to relate the survey answers to actual blog content. Because political bloggers and their blogging activities in the 2004 presidential election were the main foci of the study, nonpolitical blog sites were not included in the content analysis. Political blog sites whose URLs were provided by the survey participants were accessed and content analyzed.

As the Internet has become one of the major means of communication to increasing number of people, researchers have analyzed the communication messages disseminated and exchanged on the web using content analysis. While many communication researchers agree that content analyzing communication messages on the web can provide us with an important understanding of the nature of the Internet as a communication medium, they also recognize that the Internet poses both opportunities and challenges to using content analysis as a research method (McMillan, 2000; Weare & Lin, 2000).

While content analysis of materials on the web poses several challenges to researchers, two issues most relevant to this study are related to the issue of sampling. Deciding the universe of the study (specifying the boundaries of the body of content to be considered) is one of the most challenging issues in content analysis of web materials. Because the content of a web site is continuously updated throughout a day, it is quite

challenging to decide which updated version will be analyzed. What would be considered to be the universe of the study has to be specifically decided before beginning to collect the data.

Related to the issue of the universe of the study, a researcher has to decide how many layers of pages will be analyzed. Because the Internet's hypertextuality allows many articles on the homepage of, for example, a newspaper website to be linked to other pages of the site (through internal links) and to different sites (through external links), it is important to decide what would be a manageable number of layers in the analysis.

Content analysis of political blog sites⁴

As mentioned earlier, the main purpose of the content analysis was to provide a way of cross validating the answers provided in the survey. The survey respondents were asked to provide the URL of their blog sites. Based on the variable, "what is the main content of your blogs?," 78 blogger respondents were classified as political bloggers.

Although the sites to be analyzed were decided rather quickly, which content on the blog site would be analyzed also had to be decided. To resolve this issue, I selected five blog entries starting one week before a respondent filled out the survey. The templates for blog sites stayed more or less the same throughout the period of analysis, which made it easier to analyze the features (e.g., CMC mode available on the site, links, etc.). However, selecting blog entries for analysis posed a different problem. Because bloggers vary in terms of the frequency of posting entries, sometimes five entries were captured over less than 12-hour period from the starting point, but other times, it took several days to capture five blog entries.

⁴ For the content analysis codebook, please see Appendix III.

In addition, I had to decide how many layers of blog sites would be analyzed for this study. Sometimes the information useful for this study was available on the first page, but other times it was on the second or third pages (in other words, two or three clicks away from the first page). Therefore, I was unable to apply a uniform rule in deciding how many layers of a site would be analyzed. I decided to analyze different layers of pages depending on the items of interest. Blog author's demographic information was analyzed only if it was on the first and second page (one click away from the first page). Technical features (blog software, CMC modes, links) on the first page were analyzed. The content of blog posts was analyzed up to four layers in order to include the analysis of the links included in the blog entry.

Measures

Various information on political blog sites was analyzed to compare it with the answers provided by bloggers who participated in the survey. This included: blog authors' demographic information, activity level of blog, technical features, overall content, entry content, and comments.

i. Demographic information

In coding demographic information, only that on the first two layers of pages was included. If a blogger made the name, gender, age, occupation, and/or geographic location available, the information was coded accordingly. Although gender was not always clearly indicated, I tried to find clues indicating the gender of blog author(s). For example, even if a blog did not specifically note the author's gender, if the author talked about his wife in blog entries, I coded the gender as male.

ii. *Activity level of blog*

How often one posts blog entries was measured to gauge bloggers' activity level. Starting with the time of sampling, I used the date and time of the current entry, the date and time of the next-most-current entry, and the date and time of the oldest entry to estimate the level of activity of blogs. The more frequently one updates his or her blog site by posting blog entries, the more active one is considered in his or her blogging.

iii. *Technical/interactive features*

Blogs are claimed to be a highly interactive mode of communication because of various technical/interactive features easily available on a typical blog site. Some technical features are similar to what is available on other personal and commercial web pages and intended to make the site more interactive (e.g., use of audio and video clips). Others are inherent to blog sites and designed to encourage interaction among people (e.g., comments, links, trackback, etc.). However, it is an individual blogger's decision about how many of the technical features would be used in his or her blog site.

As one way to gauge how much interaction or feedback blog authors allow their readers and other bloggers, technical features on the blog sites were analyzed. I analyzed whether or not leaving comments on entries were allowed, whether blog entries were archived for readers to go back to entries in the past, if there were any CMC modes that were available for readers to contact the author(s), and how many links blog authors provided on their sites and to which sites they linked.

iv. *Overall content*

Overall content of each blog site was also recorded. Whether a blog site was a personal journal, filter, K-log, or mixed was analyzed following Blood's (2002)

definition of each type of blogs. The overall endorsement of a blog site was also recorded: Each blog site was categorized as pro-Bush, anti-Bush, pro-Kerry, anti-Kerry, not favoring either candidate, or not clear.

v. *Entry content*

The content of each blog entry was analyzed to examine the linking pattern and the topics of discussion in political blog sites during the 2004 presidential campaign. The number and type of links a blogger included in an entry were used in the analysis to evaluate whether bloggers tended to include relevant links in their entries to provide further information to readers, and if they did, to determine their major sources of information.

The topic of entry was recorded to determine the main topics of discussion that went on among bloggers during the 2004 election campaign. Specifically, each blog entry was examined to determine if the main topic of an entry was about “political candidate(s)” (e.g., George W. Bush, John Kerry, Dick Cheney and John Edwards), “national and international issue(s)” (e.g., war in Iraq, economy, health care, education, etc.), “evaluating the current administration” (e.g., criticizing or endorsing the current administration’s stance on issues), “evaluating a candidate’s campaign” (e.g., Bush & Cheney’s or Kerry & Edwards’s campaigns), “campaigning for a candidate” (e.g., endorsing or encouraging others to oppose to a particular candidate), or “a combination of these.”

The nature of the entry was also examined to find out the kind of information bloggers disseminated through their blogs. Whether the information provided in each

entry was based on factual information, personal opinion, quoting other source's information, or the combination of these was analyzed.

vi. Comments

Each blog entry on a typical blog site is accompanied by a feature called comment, a clickable icon which opens to a small window where readers of blogs can leave their reactions and feedback to the entry. Many claim that the easy-to-use comment feature encourages interaction between blog authors and readers and provides a space for discussion among bloggers and blog users. As one way to examine the level of interaction between bloggers and blog readers, comments on each entry were analyzed. The number of entries that garnered (any) comment(s), the entry that prompted the most comments and the least comments, and the average number of comments were recorded. In addition, the topic of comments and whether commenter(s) agreed or disagreed with blog author's viewpoint(s) were analyzed.

Inter-coder reliability

A doctoral student majoring in mass communication served as the second coder in testing inter-coder reliability. Ten percent of all blog sites used in the content analysis were sampled, and two coders independently coded them. The variables in which a coder's subjectivity was not expected to play a role (e.g., date of entry, whether or not a blog site has a 'search' feature, number of links under blogrolls, etc.) were not included in testing inter-coder reliability. The items where coder reliability was measured were: general endorsement of a site, topic of a blog site, and the nature of an entry.

Scott's Pi^5 , which takes the percentage of agreement expected by chance into consideration in obtaining inter-coder reliability, was used to test the degree of agreement between the two coders. Overall, the percentage of agreement⁶ between the two coders was 84 percent ($pi = .839$).

Data Analysis

The features on the blog sites and the content of blog posts and comments were analyzed using mainly descriptive statistics. Frequency analysis collected information about political blog author, history and activity level of blog, technical features, topic(s) of blog entries, external links available on the blog sites, and the number of comments on entries.

Additional information was provided in several ways. First, a comparison between blog author information found in the content analysis and demographic information of the survey participants was examined. Second, correlation analysis was used to examine if the topic of blog entries and author descriptions are related in any way. Third, the relationship between the variable assessing the overall content of a blog site (general endorsement) and the links on the blog site and within blog entries was examined using correlation analysis. This analysis helped determine if bloggers with any particular political affiliation (liberal, conservative, or independent) are (1) more (or less) likely to include links on the blog site and within blog entries, and (2) more (or less)

⁵ $pi = (\% \text{ observed agreement} - \% \text{ expected agreement}) / (1 - \% \text{ expected agreement})$

⁶ Inter-coder reliability (figures are pi statistic): General endorsement (1.0); Topic of entries ($M = .85$ [political candidates (.888), national & international issues (.865), evaluating current administration (.822), evaluating candidate's campaign (.854), campaigning (.825)]); Nature of entry (.621)

likely to link their sites and their blog posts to a particular source of information. Last, overall endorsement was also examined in relation to the number of comments and the level of diversity in comments (whether commenters tend to exchange diverse ideas and opinions) to see if any particular type of political bloggers are more (or less) likely to be engaged in diverse political discourse.

Chapter 4

Political and Nonpolitical Bloggers

Both the survey of bloggers and the content analysis of political blog sites provided valuable information to answer this dissertation's research questions, and the findings are reported in the next two chapters. In this chapter, I report the survey findings, which includes the information about political and nonpolitical bloggers' history, frequency, and motivations of blogging, their demographic details, political attitudes, political activities, and media use. Of the 293 respondents who participated in the survey, 255 people fully completed the questionnaire. Of them, there were 112 political and 143 nonpolitical bloggers. Survey findings are reported for individual research questions.

RQ1. Are there any differences in the demographic characteristics of political and nonpolitical bloggers? If so, how are the two groups different?

As one might notice from Table 1a, the demographic characteristics of bloggers seem to resemble those of active Internet users: young, highly educated white males. Of those who indicated their age, 62 percent were between 18 and 34 years old. Another 22 percent of respondents indicated that they were 35-to-44-year-olds, making 84 percent of those who indicated their age between 18 and 44 years old.

Bloggers in this study were a highly educated group of people. About 67 percent of the respondents said that they have at least a Bachelor's degree. When those who had received some college education were included, the percentage went up to 94 percent.

The number of Caucasians in this study was more than 7 times higher than all other minority groups combined. About 88 percent of the bloggers were Caucasians,

leaving only 12 percent to Blacks, Asians, American Indians, Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics combined. And, of those who indicated their gender, roughly 7 out of 10 bloggers were male.

Table 1a. Demographic characteristics

	<i>Political Bloggers</i>	<i>Nonpolitical Bloggers</i>
Age		
15-17	3 (2.7%)	3 (2.2%)
18-24	17 (15.5%)	36 (26.5%)
25-34	41 (37.3%)	57 (41.9%)
35-44	24 (21.8%)	25 (18.4%)
45-54	18 (16.4%)	11 (8.1%)
55 and older	7 (5.4%)	4 (2.9%)
Total	110 (100.0%)	136 (100.0%)
Gender		
Male	93 (83.0%)	80 (56.3%)
Female	18 (16.1%)	62 (43.4%)
Total	111 (100.0%)	142 (100.0%)
Race		
White Caucasian	87 (87.0%)	119 (87.5%)
Black or African-American	2 (2.0%)	4 (2.9%)
Asian or Asian-American	7 (7.0%)	8 (5.9%)
American Indian	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Pacific Islander	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Hispanic	2 (2.0%)	5 (3.7%)
Total	100 (100.0%)	136 (100.0%)
Education		
Grades 1-11	4 (3.6%)	3 (.21%)
Completed high school	2 (1.8%)	6 (4.3%)
Some college	26 (23.2%)	40 (28.6%)
Graduated from college	36 (32.1%)	38 (27.1%)
Some graduate work	15 (13.4%)	21 (15.0%)
Master's degree	20 (17.9%)	18 (12.9%)
Doctorate, law, or medical degree	9 (8.0%)	14 (10.0%)
Total	112 (100.0%)	140 (100.0%)
Income		
Less than \$20,000	22 (22.7%)	34 (28.3%)
\$20,001 – \$30,000	16 (16.5%)	24 (20.0%)
\$30,001 – \$40,000	13 (13.4%)	14 (11.7%)
\$40,001 – \$50,000	12 (12.4%)	7 (5.8%)
\$50,001 – \$60,000	7 (7.2%)	13 (10.8%)
\$60,001 – \$70,000	2 (.21%)	6 (5.0%)
More than \$70,000	25 (25.8%)	22 (18.3%)
Total	112 (100.0%)	120 (100.0%)
Political Affiliation		
Democrat or leaning toward (D)	49 (49.0%)	57 (45.9%)
Republican or leaning toward (R)	33 (33.0%)	30 (24.2%)
Independent/ no party	18 (18.0%)	37 (29.8%)
Total	100 (100.0%)	124 (100.0%)

An examination of the characteristics of political and nonpolitical bloggers reveals that the two groups have different demographic characteristics. First, although over 90 percent of both political and nonpolitical bloggers fall into the 18-to-54-year-olds group, political bloggers are more spread through all the age groups than nonpolitical bloggers. While about five out of 10 political bloggers are 18-to-34 years old, roughly seven out of 10 nonpolitical bloggers belong to this age group (see Table 1a). A contingent analysis shows that bloggers' ages are associated with the nature of their blogging (political vs. nonpolitical) with a statistical significance ($\Phi = .22$, $p = .05$) (see Table 1b).

Table 1b. Age Difference among Political and Nonpolitical Bloggers

Age Nature of Blog		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Total
Nonpolitical	<i>N</i>	36	57	25	11	4	133
	%	27.1	42.9	18.8	8.3	3.1	100.0
Political	<i>N</i>	17	41	24	18	7	107
	%	15.9	38.3	22.4	16.8	6.5	100.0
<i>N of total bloggers = 240</i>							
Pearson Chi-Square = 11.047 (df=5)*							
Phi = .22*							
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$							

Second, political bloggers seem to be composed of men in large proportion, whereas both men and women seem to participate in nonpolitical blogging. About 56 percent of nonpolitical bloggers were men, and 43 percent were women. However, fewer than two out of 10 political bloggers were women. This finding is different from what previous studies of random blogs have found. Previous studies found that about the same

number of men and women maintained blog sites (e.g., Herring et al., 2004). Bloggers' gender had a moderate relationship with the nature of their blogging ($\Phi = .29$) with a statistical significance at .000 level (see Table 1c).

Table 1c. Gender difference among Political and Nonpolitical Bloggers

Gender		Male	Female	Total
Type of Blog				
Nonpolitical	N	80	62	142
	%	56.3	43.7	100.0
Political	N	93	18	111
	%	83.8	16.2	100.0
<i>N of total bloggers = 253</i>				
Pearson Chi-Square = 21.704 (df=1)***				
Phi = -.293***				
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001				

Third, both political and nonpolitical bloggers in this study were highly educated groups of people. Over 90 percent of bloggers in both groups answered that they have received at least some level of college education.

Fourth, the average income of political and nonpolitical bloggers at the time of the survey was between \$30,000 and \$40,000. Political bloggers' income (close to \$40,000) was a little higher than that of nonpolitical bloggers (close to \$30,000), but the difference was insignificant.⁷

⁷ Bloggers' personal income was measured using income category instead of a specific dollar amount. Respondents were asked to choose an income category that is appropriate to their personal income. The categories were: (1) less than \$20,000 (2) \$20,001 – \$30,000 (3) \$30,001 – \$40,000 (4) \$40,001 – \$50,000 (5) \$50,001 – \$60,000 (6) \$60,001 – \$70,000 (7) \$70,001 or more. The mean for political bloggers was 3.7, and it was 3.4 for nonpolitical bloggers.

Examining the characteristics of bloggers reveals that a typical political blogger is 25-to-44-years old, highly educated, white man who identifies himself with Democratic values. The highly skewed gender distribution among political blogging is a striking finding. While both men and women were engaged in nonpolitical blogging, only 16 percent of political bloggers were women. This finding provides empirical evidence to the discussion about the lack of women political bloggers in the blogosphere.

That more than 87 percent of both political and nonpolitical bloggers are Caucasians is another interesting finding. Although researchers argue that technology has democratizing effects and empowers ordinary people, the people who were using blogging technology at the time of this survey appear to share the characteristics of those who are already in power.

There were more liberal than conservative bloggers in this study. In both political and nonpolitical blogger groups, nearly one half of them were identifying themselves as Democrats. This finding is different from other study findings showing that there are more conservative bloggers in the blogosphere (Ackland, 2005).

RQ2. What drives people to keep a weblog? What are their motivations? How are the motivations of political bloggers different from that of nonpolitical bloggers?

Bloggers seem to be engaged in this potentially demanding activity for more than one reason. Although more than half of the bloggers (n=159, 60.4%) in this study said that they blog to express their ideas and opinions or to share their ideas with others, another 36 percent of respondents said that they blog to achieve all of the following purposes: to express their ideas, to share them with others, to provide others with

information, to get information from others, and to persuade other bloggers (see Table 2a).

This trend seems to be consistent with both political and nonpolitical bloggers. A slightly higher percentage of nonpolitical bloggers said that the main reason for their blogging is to express their ideas and opinions and to share their ideas with others compared to political bloggers. But, a higher percentage of political bloggers indicated that they blog to achieve multiple purposes, more than nonpolitical bloggers.⁸

⁸ Although the main reasons for blogging seem to be slightly different between political and nonpolitical bloggers, the difference was not statistically significant.

Table 2a. Reasons for blogging

<u>Main reason for Blogging</u>	<i>Bloggers Overall</i>	<i>Political Bloggers</i>	<i>Nonpolitical Bloggers</i>
To express my ideas and opinions	105 (39.9%)	45 (40.5%)	56 (49.1%)
To share my ideas with others	54 (20.5%)	19 (17.1%)	33 (28.9%)
To provide or get information	7 (2.6%)	4 (3.6%)	2 (1.8%)
To persuade other bloggers	2 (.8%)	1 (.9%)	1 (.9%)
All of the above	95 (36.1%)	42 (37.5%)	22 (19.3%)
Total	263 (99.9%)	111 (100.0%)	114 (110.0%)
<u>Blogging makes me feel that</u>			
	<i>Bloggers Overall</i>	<i>Political Bloggers</i>	<i>Nonpolitical Bloggers</i>
I'm connected with my friends and family	37 (14.4%)	7 (6.5%)	30 (26.8%)
I am conversing with potentially millions of others	76 (29.6%)	24 (22.4%)	47 (42.0%)
What I say can influence other people	51 (19.8%)	36 (33.6%)	9 (8.0%)
All of the above	93 (36.2%)	40 (37.4%)	26 (23.2%)
Total	257 (100.0%)	107 (100.0%)	112 (100.0%)
<u>Bloggers somewhat or strongly agree with the following statements</u>			
	<i>Bloggers Overall</i>	<i>Political Bloggers</i>	<i>Nonpolitical Bloggers</i>
Blogging helps me understand certain topics or areas	174 (69.9%)	78 (78.8%)	88 (64.7%)
Blogging is a fun and emotional experience	206 (82.8%)	88 (88.9%)	108 (78.8%)
Blogging makes me feel confident and authoritative	131 (53.7%)	63 (64.9%)	65 (48.1%)
Blogging helps me stay connected with friends and family, or make new friends	176 (71.6%)	67 (67.7%)	103 (76.3%)
Blogging is a means of releasing tension in my life	180 (72.9%)	71 (73.2%)	100 (73.0%)

Understandably, a higher percentage of nonpolitical than political bloggers indicated that being engaged in blogging makes them feel that they are connected with friends and family and that they are conversing with potentially millions of others (n=47,

42.0%). Only 3 out of 10 political bloggers (28.9%) said that blogging makes them feel that they are connected with friends and family or that they are conversing with many others.

On the other hand, about 37 percent of political bloggers said that blogging makes them feel that what they say can influence other people, whereas only 8 percent of nonpolitical bloggers indicated that blogging makes them feel influential. A contingency table analysis reveals that the relationship between the nature of blogging and the subsequent feeling blogging might yield is statistically significant (see Table 2b). A chi-square test shows that in fewer than one out of 1,000 times, this relationship might occur by chance ($p < .000$), and Cramer's V statistic shows that there is a moderately strong relationship between the two variables (Cramer's $V = .39$, $p < .000$).

Table 2b. Feelings bloggers associate with their blogging

Type of Blogging		Feel connected with my friends and family	Feel conversing with millions of people	feel that what I say can influence other people	All of the above	Total
Nonpolitical	N	30	47	9	50	136
	%	22.1	34.6	6.6	36.8	100.0
Political	N	7	24	36	40	107
	%	6.5	22.4	33.6	37.4	100.0
<i>N of Total bloggers = 243</i>						
Pearson Chi-Square = 36.113(df=3)***						
Cramer's V = .39***						
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$						

A large percentage of bloggers indicated that they somewhat or strongly agree with a series of statements intended to gauge the gratification one might gain from

blogging. Bloggers most often agreed with the statement, “Blogging is a fun and emotional experience (affective needs)” (n=206, 82.8%), and least often agreed with the statement, “Blogging makes me feel confident and authoritative (personal integrative needs)” (n=131, 53.7%). Roughly 7 out of 10 bloggers somewhat or strongly agreed with the remaining three statements: ‘Blogging helps me understand certain topics or areas (cognitive needs),’ ‘Blogging helps me stay connected with friends and family, or make new friends (social integrative needs),’ and ‘Blogging is a means of releasing tension in my life (tension release needs).’

A contingent analysis was conducted to determine if political or nonpolitical blogging is associated with different types of needs gratified. The analysis reveals that gratifying cognitive needs (Phi = .23, $p < .05$), personal (Phi = .21, $p < .05$) and social integrative needs (Phi = .24, $p < .01$) was associated with whether one is engaged in political or nonpolitical blogging (see Table 2c). Specifically, political bloggers were more likely than nonpolitical bloggers to say that blogging helps them to understand certain topics or areas and that blogging makes them feel confident and authoritative. However, nonpolitical bloggers were more likely than political bloggers to say that blogging helps them stay connected with friends and family, or make new friends.

The analysis of main reasons for blogging reveals that the motivation for blogging is multifaceted: they want to express their ideas and opinions and have others hear about them at the same time. As blogging technology enables people to express and share their ideas, bloggers seem to satisfy their intended needs through blogging. Bloggers agreed that they feel that they are connected with friends and family and that they are conversing with other people. Understandably, political bloggers often appear to have more of a

desire to influence other people than nonpolitical bloggers do. Keeping a blog about politics, compared to nonpolitical topics, appears to give the authors the feeling of confidence and authority and the sense of influencing others.

Table 2c. Type of Blogging and the Needs Gratified

Blog Type		Blogging helps me understand certain topics or areas					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	
Nonpolitical	N	11	9	28	59	29	136
	%	8.1	6.6	20.6	43.4	21.3	100.0
Political	N	3	6	12	38	40	99
	%	3.0	6.1	12.1	38.4	40.4	100.0
Pearson Chi-Square = 12.352 (df=4)* Phi= .23*							
Blog type		Blogging makes me feel confident and authoritative					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	
Nonpolitical	N	11	17	42	47	18	135
	%	8.1	12.6	31.1	34.8	13.3	100.0
Political	N	2	5	27	46	17	97
	%	2.1	5.2	27.8	47.4	17.5	100.0
Pearson Chi-Square = 10.124 (df=4)* Phi= .21*							
Blog type		Blogging helps me stay connected with friends and family, or make new friends					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	
Nonpolitical	N	13	4	15	45	58	135
	%	9.6	3.0	11.1	33.3	43.0	100.0
Political	N	6	11	15	41	26	99
	%	6.1	11.1	15.2	41.4	26.3	100.0
Pearson Chi-Square = 12.991 (df=4)* Phi= .24** *p< .05; **p< .01; ***p<.001							

RQ3. What are their blogging activities? In what ways are political bloggers similar to or different from nonpolitical bloggers?

Bloggers in this study were found to be actively engaged in all three venues of blogging: posting entries on their own blog sites, reading other blogs, and leaving comments on others blogs (see Table 3). Respondents reported that on average they post entries on their blog sites four or five times a week. About 40 percent of respondents said that they post at least one entry a day, and 19 percent said that they post entries more than twice a day.

In addition to maintaining their own blog sites, bloggers seem to monitor other blog sites and interact with other bloggers by reading other blogs frequently (n=221, 81.9%) and leaving comments on other blogs (n=207, 76.7%).

Bloggers also appear to have been blogging for some length of time. At the time of the survey, respondents had been blogging an average of 20 months (SD=16.15). Five out of 10 respondents said that they have been blogging between 14 and 84 months, and roughly half of the respondents said that they had blogging 13 months or less.

There is some difference between political and nonpolitical bloggers in terms of frequency of posting entries, but not much difference was found in the frequency of reading other blogs, leaving comments on other blogs, or how long they have blogged. Specifically, 74.1 percent of political bloggers said that they post entries on their blog sites once a day or more, while 45.5 percent of nonpolitical bloggers did. T-test analysis shows that the difference between the two groups is statistically significant ($p<.000$). Political bloggers reported that in a typical week, they post entries on their blog sites at

least five or six times, whereas nonpolitical bloggers said they do so three or four times on average.⁹

However, the difference between the two groups in the frequency of reading other blogs and leaving comments on others' blogs was not found to be statistically significant. Just about the same percentage of political and nonpolitical bloggers said that they sometimes or frequently read other blogs (98.2%, 97.9% respectively). A slightly higher percentage of nonpolitical bloggers (77.6%) than political bloggers (75.1%) reported that they sometimes or frequently leave comments on others' blogs, but again, the difference was not significant.

Both political and nonpolitical bloggers were found to have blogged for a similar length of time. About half of political and nonpolitical bloggers in this study said that they had blogged between 14 and 84 months (52.2%, 49.6% respectively), and the other half said that they had blogged less than 13 months (47.7% of political bloggers and 50.3% nonpolitical bloggers). Not surprisingly, the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant.

Although political and nonpolitical bloggers are similar in that they often write their blog and read other blogs, political bloggers appear to engage in blogging more intensively than nonpolitical bloggers. Political bloggers are found, though not in a statistically significant way, to post entries and read other blogs more frequently than nonpolitical bloggers.

⁹ Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of posting in the following categories: (2) less than one a week (3) once or twice a week (4) three or four times a week (5) five or six times a week (6) once or twice a day (7) one or twice a day. The mean for political bloggers was 5.33 and 4.41 for nonpolitical bloggers.

Table 3. Blogging activities

<u>Post Entries on My Own Blog Site</u>			
	<i>Bloggers Overall</i>	<i>Political Bloggers</i>	<i>Nonpolitical Bloggers</i>
Less than once a week	24 (8.9%)	7 (6.3%)	16 (11.2%)
Once or twice a week	42 (15.6%)	8 (7.1%)	33 (23.1%)
Three or four times a week	47 (17.4%)	14 (12.5%)	29 (20.3%)
Five or six times a week	47 (17.4%)	23 (20.5%)	23 (16.1%)
Once or twice a day	60 (22.2%)	32 (28.6%)	25 (17.5%)
More than twice a day	50 (18.5%)	28 (25.0%)	17(11.9%)
Total	270 (100.0%)	112 (100.0%)	143 (100.0%)
<u>Read Other Blogs</u>			
	<i>Bloggers Overall</i>	<i>Political Bloggers</i>	<i>Nonpolitical Bloggers</i>
Never or rarely	6 (2.2%)	2 (1.8%)	3 (2.1%)
Sometimes	43 (15.9%)	16 (14.3%)	26 (18.2%)
frequently	221 (81.9%)	94 (83.9%)	114 (79.7%)
Total	270 (100.0%)	112 (100.0%)	143 (100.0%)
<u>Leave Comments on Other Blogs</u>			
	<i>Bloggers Overall</i>	<i>Political Bloggers</i>	<i>Nonpolitical Bloggers</i>
Never or rarely	75 (23.3%)	28 (25.0%)	32 (22.4%)
Sometimes	129 (47.8%)	49 (43.8%)	73 (51.0%)
frequently	78 (28.9%)	35 (31.3%)	38 (26.6%)
Total	270 (100.0%)	112 (100.0%)	143 (100.0%)
<u>History of Blogging (how long one has kept a weblog)</u>			
	<i>Bloggers Overall</i>	<i>Political Bloggers</i>	<i>Nonpolitical Bloggers</i>
6 months or less	61 (23.2%)	25 (22.5%)	35 (24.8%)
7-13 months	66 (25.1%)	28 (25.2%)	36 (25.5%)
14-26 months	72 (26.7%)	30 (27.0%)	35 (24.8%)
28-84 months	64 (24.3%)	28 (25.2%)	35 (24.8%)
Total	263 (100.0%)	111 (100.0%)	141 (100.0%)

RQ4. Do bloggers exhibit a higher level of political efficacy than the general public? Do political bloggers have a higher efficacy level than nonpolitical bloggers?

Table 4 reports the level of political efficacy of political and nonpolitical bloggers in comparison with that of the general public. The data from the 2000 and 2004 National Election Study were used to gauge the political efficacy level in the general public.

As Table 4 shows, bloggers overall were found to have higher levels of internal and external efficacy than the general public. Among the four statements measuring internal efficacy,¹⁰ the highest percentage of bloggers agreed with the statement, ‘I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country’ (91.5%). Eighty-four percent of the 2000 NES participants indicated that they somewhat or strongly agree with the statement. About 60 percent of bloggers somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘I feel that I could do as good of a job in public office as most other people,’ while 45 percent of the 2000 NES participants did the same.

The level of external efficacy among bloggers was slightly lower than their internal efficacy, with 64 percent of bloggers disagreeing with the two statements measuring external efficacy,¹¹ but it still was higher than that of the general public. About 73 percent of bloggers somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement, ‘People like me don’t have any say about what the government does,’ and only a little over the half of the bloggers disagreed with the statement, ‘Public officials don’t care much what people like me think.’ Surmising from the NES data, roughly five out of 10 Americans (52.5% in

¹⁰ (1) I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country; (2) I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics; (3) I feel that I could do as good of a job in public office as most other people; (4) I think that I am as well-qualified about politics and government as most people.

¹¹ (1) People like me don’t have any say about what the government does; (2) Public officials don’t care much what people like me think.

2000, 47.0% in 2004) said that they somewhat or strongly disagreed that people like themselves don't have any say about what the government does, and about one third of Americans said that they disagreed that the public officials don't care much what people like themselves think (34.5% in 2000, 35.1 in 2004).

Even when the public's efficacy level was compared to that of nonpolitical bloggers alone, one can notice that bloggers' efficacy level is higher than the general public's. With one exception of the statement, "I feel that I could do as good of a job in public office as most other people," the comparison shows that bloggers have higher level of both internal and external efficacy than the general public.

Political bloggers, perhaps not surprisingly, were found to have a higher level of efficacy than nonpolitical bloggers. An average of 87 percent of political bloggers somewhat or strongly agreed with the statements measuring internal efficacy, and about 68 percent of them disagreed with the two statements measuring external efficacy. Of the four internal efficacy statements, 97 percent of political bloggers somewhat or strongly agreed with two statements ('I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country'; 'I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics'). The statement with which the lowest percentage of political bloggers agreed was 'I think that I am as well-qualified about politics and government as most people' (n=71, 63.4%).

As was true among bloggers in general, external efficacy was lower than internal efficacy among political bloggers. About 76 percent of political bloggers somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement, 'People like me don't have any say about what the

government does,' and only 61 percent of them said that they disagreed with the statement, 'Public officials don't care much what people like me think.'

On the other hand, an average of 70 percent of nonpolitical bloggers somewhat or strongly agreed with the statements measuring internal efficacy, and 54 percent of them disagreed with external efficacy statements. The highest percentage of nonpolitical bloggers agreed with the statement, 'I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country' (86.7%), followed by the agreement with the statement, 'I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics' (78.4%). Like political bloggers, the lowest percentage of nonpolitical bloggers agreed with the statement, 'I feel that I could do as good of a job in public office as most other people' (45.5%). Again, external efficacy was lower than internal efficacy among nonpolitical bloggers. Only 64 percent of nonpolitical bloggers disagreed with the statement, 'People like me don't have any say about what the government does' (63.7%), followed by 64 people (44.8%) disagreeing with the statement, 'Public officials don't care much what people like me think.'

An independent sample t-test was run to examine if the difference in efficacy levels between the two groups was statistically significant. The difference between political (mean=25.4) and nonpolitical (mean=22.5) bloggers in overall additive political efficacy was significant at .000 level. In addition, a statistically significant difference existed between the two groups in the internal efficacy scale composed of four items (mean=18.0 for political bloggers and 15.7 for nonpolitical bloggers, $p < .000$) and the external efficacy scale composed of two items (mean=7.5 for political bloggers and 6.8 for nonpolitical bloggers, $p < .01$).

The comparison between bloggers' and the public's efficacy levels shows that bloggers are more efficacious than the public. It is premature, however, to conclude that blogging makes people efficacious. Bloggers share several characteristics that highly efficacious people have, such as high level of education, higher income, and being male. Thus, it may be true that people with high efficacy are more likely to blog, rather than the other way around. Whether one's history and frequency of blogging can predict the increase or decrease of efficacy is examined in Research Question 7 through 10.

Table 4. Political efficacy between political and nonpolitical bloggers
(Numbers represent people who somewhat or strongly agreed (for internal efficacy) and disagreed (for external efficacy) with the following statements)

Statement	<i>Bloggers Overall</i> (N=270)	<i>Political Bloggers</i> (N=112)	<i>Nonpolitical Bloggers</i> (N=143)	<i>NES 2000*</i> (N=1,542)	<i>NES 2004*</i> (N=1,066)
I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country	247 (91.5%)	109 (97.3%)	124 (86.7%)	1,012 (84.2%)	—
I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics	234 (86.7%)	109 (97.3%)	112 (78.4%)	584 (51.9%)	—
I feel that I could do as good of a job in public office as most other people	164 (60.7%)	71 (63.4%)	65 (45.5%)	513 (45.4%)	—
I think that I am as well-qualified about politics and government as most people	211 (78.2%)	99 (88.4%)	101 (70.7%)	—	—
People like me don't have any say about what the government does	196 (72.6%)	85 (75.9%)	91 (63.7%)	812 (52.5%)	501 (47.0%)
Public officials don't care much what people like me think	149 (52.2%)	68 (60.8%)	64 (44.8%)	534 (34.5%)	374 (35.1%)

* The 2000 and 2004 American National Election Study data are used for comparison.

RQ5. What political activities are bloggers engaged in online and off-line? Are there any differences between political and nonpolitical bloggers in their political activities?

Roughly one half of bloggers participated in some form of politically-oriented activities from October 2003 to October/November 2004 (see Table 5). Of 270 participants in this study, 141 people (52.2%) said that they had written a letter to a politician, followed by those who reported that they had emailed a politician in the previous year (n=135, 50.0%). The activities with which bloggers were least likely to be involved were participating in online forum to discuss politics with a politician (16.7%) and discussing politics in TV and/or radio talk show programs (16.7%).

Not surprisingly, politically-oriented activities were a little more prevalent among political bloggers than nonpolitical bloggers. About 70 percent of political bloggers were engaged in politically-oriented activities, including writing a letter to a politician (68.8%), emailing a politician (66.1%), and donating money to candidates (53.6%). Calling to talk show programs on TV and/or radio to discuss politics (25.0%) and discussing politics with candidates in online forums (26.8%) were the two least popular forms of political activity among political bloggers.

Nonpolitical bloggers participated in politically-oriented activities less frequently than political bloggers. Four out of 10 nonpolitical bloggers reported that they were engaged in some form of political activities in the previous year. Like political bloggers, writing a letter to a politician (41.3%), sending emails to candidates (39.2%), and donating money for a candidate (28.0%) were the most popular activities among nonpolitical bloggers. As was true among political bloggers, the least popular political

activities among nonpolitical bloggers were calling to TV or radio talk show programs (10.5%) and discussing politics with candidates in online forums (10.5%).

The contingency table analysis shows that the difference between political and nonpolitical bloggers in frequency of political participation was statistically significant for all of the seven political activity items at the .001 or at .000 level, and Phi statistics ranged from .19 (calling a TV or radio talk show programs to discuss politics) to .27 (writing a letter to a politician) indicating that the nature of blogging is associated with participating in politically-oriented activities.

In addition, the relationship between the two was explored using an additive scale of political participation.¹² A political participation scale (Alpha = .74) ranging from 0 to 7 was created and used to get the crosstab table. A chi-square test shows that the relationship is significant (41.825 (df=7), $p < .000$), and Phi statistics indicates a moderately strong relationship between the nature of blogging and political participation (Phi= .41, $p < .000$).

The analysis of bloggers' political activities reveals that although political bloggers are more frequently engaged in political activities than nonpolitical bloggers, the types of activities are similar in the two groups. The most popular political activities in the two groups were writing a letter to a politician, emailing a politician, and donating

¹² The political participation scale is composed of seven variables: (1) In the past year, have you written a letter to a politician to express your ideas or concerns? (2) In the past year, have you attended a campaign rally for any political candidate(s)? (3) In the past year, have you campaigned for any political candidate(s)? (4) In the past year, have you participated in any online discussions/forums with a politician? (5) In the past year, have you donated any money to any political candidate's campaign? (6) In the past year, have you contacted any political candidate(s) via e-mail? (7) In the past year, have you called in talk shows on radio or television to discuss politics?

money for a candidate. Among both political and nonpolitical bloggers, participating in online debate with a candidate was the least likely activity to be engaged in.

Table 5. Political Participation by political and nonpolitical bloggers

Political Activity	<i>Bloggers Overall</i> (<i>N</i> =270)	<i>Political Bloggers</i> (<i>N</i> =112)	<i>Nonpolitical Bloggers</i> (<i>N</i> =143)	Ranking		
				BO	PB	NPB
Wrote a letter to a politician	141 (52.2%)	77 (68.8%)	59 (41.3%)	1	1	1
Attended a campaign rally	82 (30.4%)	47 (42.0%)	33 (23.1%)	5	5	4
Campaigned for a candidate	84 (31.1%)	53 (47.3%)	31 (21.7%)	4	4	5
Participated in online debate	45 (16.7%)	30 (26.8%)	15 (10.5%)	6	6	6
Donated money for a candidate	101 (37.4%)	60 (53.6%)	40 (28.0%)	3	3	3
Emailed a politicians	135 (50.0%)	74 (66.1%)	56 (39.2%)	2	2	2
Called in TV or Radio Shows	45 (16.7%)	28 (25.0%)	15 (10.5%)	6	7	6

RQ6. To what degree do bloggers consume traditional and nontraditional news media to get information about elections and presidential candidates? Do political bloggers use news media differently from nonpolitical bloggers?

Bloggers in this study said that they turn to Internet news sites most often to get political news (see Table 6a). Roughly one half of the respondents (48%) said that the Internet is the medium they most often rely on for political news, followed by newspaper (15%) and political blogs (12%).

Table 6a. Major Sources of News among Bloggers

Media Type	<i>Bloggers Overall</i> (<i>N</i> =270)	<i>Political Bloggers</i> (<i>N</i> =112)	<i>Nonpolitical Bloggers</i> (<i>N</i> =143)	Ranking		
				BO	PB	NPB
Newspaper	39 (15.2%)	18 (16.4%)	20 (14.7%)	2	3	2

Network TV news	18 (7.0%)	1 (.9%)	16 (11.8%)	6	6	3
Cable TV news channels	26 (10.1%)	10 (9.1%)	15 (11.0%)	4	4	4
Radio news or talk shows	21 (8.1%)	8 (7.3%)	12 (8.9%)	5	5	5
Internet news sites	123 (47.9%)	51 (46.4%)	67 (49.3%)	1	1	1
Political blogs	30 (11.7%)	22 (20.0%)	6 (4.4%)	3	2	6
<i>Total</i>	<i>257</i> <i>(100.0%)</i>	<i>110</i> <i>(100.0%)</i>	<i>136</i> <i>(100.0%)</i>			

Accordingly, online news was found to be the source of news to which bloggers are most frequently exposed and pay most attention (see Table 6b). Sixty-nine percent said that they visit Internet news sites at least five days in a typical week to learn about politics or public affairs. Another 26 percent said that they do so at least once a week but not more than 4 days a week. When they read political news online, they also seem to pay good amount of attention. About 77 percent of bloggers in this study said that they pay quite a bit or a great deal of attention to political news they read online.

Although the Internet is the most frequently used medium among bloggers, traditional media such as newspapers and television are still their news sources, and bloggers often pay attention to what they learn from newspapers and television. Forty-four percent of respondents said that they read newspapers at least five days a week, and 45 percent said that they pay quite a bit or a great deal of attention to campaign coverage in newspapers. About 30 percent of bloggers said that they watch television news at least 5 days a week to learn about campaigns or politics. Also, about 35 percent of bloggers reported that they pay quite a bit or a great deal of attention to the campaign news on TV.

However, radio talk show programs were not found to be a popular source for political news among bloggers in this study. Only 19 percent said that they frequently listen to radio talk shows (5 or more days a week). And, one half said that they never rely on radio talk shows for news about politics or campaigns. About 58 percent of bloggers said that they pay none or very little attention to what they learn from talk shows on radio. Those who said that they pay quite a bit or a great deal of attention to the campaign coverage on radio talk shows were around 20 percent.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Internet news sites and political blogs were the sources to which political bloggers most frequently turn for political news. About 46 percent of political bloggers in this study said they seek political news most frequently from Internet news sites, and another 20 percent said that they rely most often on political blogs for political/campaign news. A little over 15 percent of political bloggers said that they depend on newspapers, and less than 10 percent of them reported television news as their political news source.

On the other hand, more nonpolitical bloggers seem to rely on both traditional and new media. Forty-nine percent of nonpolitical bloggers said that they most frequently go to Internet news sites for political news, while about 38 percent of them said that they rely most often on newspapers, network TV news, or cable TV news channels.

Different media use between political and nonpolitical bloggers persists in the degree to which bloggers use each medium and the attention they pay to them. Close to nine out of 10 political bloggers (89%) said that they go to online news sites at least five days a week to get political news, and 94 percent of them said that they quite a bit or a great deal of attention to what is on the news sites. Nonpolitical bloggers were found to

frequently visit online news sites and pay close attention to what they learn there, but not to the degree political bloggers do. Five out of 10 nonpolitical bloggers in this study (51%) said that they visit online news sites at least five days a week, and 64 percent of them said that they pay quite a bit or a great deal of attention to the news on news sites (see Table 6b).

Table 6b. Media Use between political and nonpolitical bloggers

Exposure (per week)	Newspaper campaign coverage			TV news campaign coverage			Radio Talk show campaign coverage			Online news sites political news		
	BO	PB	NPB	BO	PB	NPB	BO	PB	NPB	BO	PB	NPB
Never	53 20.6	12 10.9	38 27.9	59 22.7	18 16.1	39 27.3	126 48.8	41 36.9	79 58.1	13 5.0	1 .9	12 8.7
1 or 2 days	58 22.6	19 17.3	38 27.9	83 31.9	37 33.3	43 31.2	58 22.5	29 26.1	28 20.6	34 13.1	4 3.6	30 21.7
3 or 4 days	33 12.8	15 13.6	18 13.2	41 15.8	10 9.0	27 19.6	26 10.1	13 11.7	13 9.6	34 13.1	7 6.3	26 18.8
5 days or more	113 44.0	64 58.2	42 30.9	77 29.6	46 41.4	29 21.0	48 18.6	28 25.2	16 11.8	179 68.8	99 89.2	70 50.7
Total	257 100	110 100	136 100	260 100	111 100	138 100	258 100	111 100	136 100	260 100	111 100	138 100
Attention												
None	35 13.4	6 5.4	27 19.6	43 16.6	13 11.8	29 21.0	100 38.9	27 24.3	68 49.6	8 3.1	0 0.0	8 5.8
Very little	39 14.9	10 8.9	26 18.8	59 22.8	22 20.0	31 22.5	49 18.9	25 22.5	22 16.1	12 4.6	0 0.0	12 8.7
Some	69 26.4	25 22.3	41 29.7	66 25.5	19 17.3	46 33.3	51 19.7	26 23.4	25 18.2	39 15.0	7 6.3	30 21.7
Quite a bit	49 18.8	22 19.6	25 18.1	47 18.1	28 25.5	17 12.3	33 12.7	15 13.5	15 10.9	75 28.8	27 24.3	46 33.3
A great deal	69 26.4	49 43.8	19 13.8	44 17.0	28 25.5	15 10.9	26 10.0	18 16.2	7 5.1	126 48.5	77 69.4	42 30.4
Total	261 100	112 100	138 100	259 100	110 100	138 100%	259 100%	111 100	137 100	260 100	111 100%	138 100

Independent sample t-tests indicate that the differences between political and nonpolitical bloggers in the use of online and traditional media use are statistically significant (see Table 6c). Both the exposure to political news in online news sites (mean = 3.83 for political bloggers, 3.13 for nonpolitical bloggers) and the attention paid to what they learned there (mean = 4.63 for political bloggers and 3.75 for nonpolitical bloggers) were found to be significant at .000 level.

Political bloggers appear to be more intense users of news media than nonpolitical bloggers. Almost 6 of 10 political bloggers said that they read campaign coverage in the newspaper at least five days a week, while about 3 of 10 nonpolitical bloggers did the same. While 86 percent of political bloggers said that they pay at least some attention to newspaper campaign coverage, 62 percent of nonpolitical bloggers said that they pay some, quite a lot, or a great deal of attention to it. T-test result shows that exposure to newspaper campaign coverage (mean= 3.18 for political bloggers, 2.49 for nonpolitical bloggers) and the attention paid to it (mean= 3.88 for political bloggers, 2.89 for nonpolitical bloggers) are different between the two groups with statistical significance to the .000 level.

A similar pattern was found for TV news use. Forty-one percent of political bloggers reported that they watch TV news at least five days a week to learn about campaigns, whereas 21 percent of nonpolitical bloggers did the same. About 68 percent of political bloggers said that they pay some, quite a lot, or a great deal of attention to campaign news on TV, but the percentage of nonpolitical bloggers who paid at least some attention to TV news was 57. Again, statistical significance was found between the two groups in the exposure to TV campaign news (mean= 2.75 for political bloggers, 2.34 for nonpolitical bloggers, $p < .004$) and the attention paid to the news (mean= 3.32 for political bloggers, 2.70 for nonpolitical bloggers), both at .000 level.

Radio use between political and nonpolitical bloggers was somewhat different, as well. Thirty-seven percent of the political bloggers said that they listen to radio talk show programs to get news about campaigns compared to 20 percent of nonpolitical bloggers. Political bloggers also tend to pay more attention to what they listen to than do

nonpolitical bloggers. This difference was shown to be statistically significant in a t-test analysis (see Table 6c).

Bloggers are found to be heavy users of media and to be attentive to what they learn from the media. While Internet news sites are the most popular political news source for both political and nonpolitical bloggers, nonpolitical bloggers seem to use traditional media such as newspapers and television news more so than political bloggers. As a source of political news, political blogs were popular among political bloggers, but not among nonpolitical bloggers.

Table 6c. Mean difference of exposure and attention to media between political and nonpolitical bloggers

	N	Mean	S.D.	t	Prob.*
Exposure to newspaper campaign news					
Political bloggers	112	3.18	1.07	-4.90	.000
Nonpolitical bloggers	143	2.49	1.17		
Exposure to TV campaign news					
Political bloggers	112	2.75	1.15	-2.92	.004
Nonpolitical bloggers	143	2.34	1.08		
Exposure to radio talk show campaign news					
Political bloggers	112	2.25	1.20	-3.45	.001
Nonpolitical bloggers	143	1.76	1.02		
Exposure to online campaign news					
Political bloggers	112	3.83	.51	-7.22	.000
Nonpolitical bloggers	143	3.13	1.02		
Attention to newspaper campaign news					
Political bloggers	112	3.88	1.22	-6.20	.000
Nonpolitical bloggers	143	2.89	1.28		
Attention to TV campaign news					
Political bloggers	112	3.32	1.35	-3.77	.000
Nonpolitical bloggers	143	2.70	1.22		
Attention to radio talk show campaign news					
Political bloggers	112	2.74	1.39	-4.10	.000
Nonpolitical bloggers	143	2.07	1.23		
Attention to online campaign news					
Political bloggers	112	4.63	.60	-7.88	.000
Nonpolitical bloggers	143	3.75	1.14		

* Two-tailed significance level.

RQ7. When other variables are controlled, is there any relationship between blogging (blogging history and frequency) and the level of political efficacy? Does blogging increase or decrease one's political efficacy?

A hierarchical regression analysis (See Table 7a) indicates that blogging history¹³ (how long one has been blogging) and blogging frequency¹⁴ (how intensively one blogs) do *not* significantly predict the variance in political efficacy ($\alpha = .71$) when other variables are held constant. The items that significantly predict the variance in political efficacy were demographic information, campaign interest, and media use, which is consistent with previous findings on political efficacy.

Specifically, when other variables are controlled, being male, being Caucasian, one's campaign interest ($\alpha = .67$), traditional media use ($\alpha = .73$), and new media use ($\alpha = .88$) were predictors of variance in political efficacy. Tolerance values ranged from .70 to .95, indicating no serious collinearity problems.

The model overall explained 28 percent of variance in political efficacy with statistical significance ($p < .000$). Among the variables entered, new media use was the strongest predictor of political efficacy ($\beta = .25$, $p < .000$), followed by traditional media use ($\beta = .22$, $p < .000$). Being white ($\beta = .18$, $p = .001$) and being male ($\beta = .12$, $p < .05$) somewhat contributed to explaining the variance in political efficacy. One's campaign interest was the weakest predictor in this model ($\beta = .11$, $p < .05$). In other words, Caucasian males with higher interest in the 2004 election who frequently use the

¹³ Blogging history is measured by asking respondents to indicate how long they have been blogging (maintaining their blog site).

¹⁴ Blogging frequency is a scale composed of three items: (1) how often one posts entries on his or her own blog, (2) how often one reads others' blogs, and (3) how often one leaves comments on others' blogs. Inter-item reliability of the scale is not high, but acceptable ($\alpha = .54$).

Internet and traditional media for political news were more likely than others to exhibit a high level of political efficacy.

Table 7a. Standardized Regression Coefficients (Betas) and R² for Regression of Political Efficacy on Demographic Characteristics, Campaign Interest, Media Use, and Blogging among Bloggers Overall (N = 270)

Predictor Variables	Regression 1	Regression 2	Regression 3	Regression 4
Age	-.02	-.03	-.07	-.07
Gender (male)	.21***	.21***	.12*	.12*
Race (White)	.20***	.19***	.19***	.18***
Political id (Democrat)	.08	.07	.02	.03
Education	.02	.02	.06	.06
Income	.15*	.13*	.11	.11
Campaign interest		.17**	.11*	.11*
Traditional media use			.22***	.22***
New media use			.27***	.25***
Blogging history				.05
Blogging frequency				.04
R square	.12	.15	.31	.31
Adjusted R square	.10	.13	.28	.28
R square change	.12	.03	.16	.00
Sig. of F change	.000	.003	.000	.496

a. Dependent variable: Political efficacy scale

b. Statistical significance: * p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

To examine if this model explains the efficacy levels of political and nonpolitical bloggers differently, the same hierarchical regression analysis was conducted for the two groups of bloggers separately. Although blogging history and frequency did not predict the level of political efficacy for either the political or nonpolitical blogger groups, each groups' political efficacy was explained by somewhat different variables.

In the political bloggers group, the overall model explained about 15 percent of the variance in the dependent variable (political efficacy) with statistical significance ($p < .01$) (see Table 7b). However, when all variables were entered, traditional media use was the only item that explained the variance in political efficacy with statistical significance ($\beta = .33$, $p = .001$). In other words, the data in this study indicate that among political bloggers, the more one uses traditional media, the more likely he or she is to have a high level of political efficacy.

Table 7b. Standardized Regression Coefficients (Betas) and R^2 for Regression of Political Efficacy on Demographic Characteristics, Campaign Interest, Media Use, and Blogging among Political Bloggers (N = 112)

Predictor Variables	Regression 1	Regression 2	Regression 3	Regression 4
Age	-.04	-.04	.00	-.02
Gender (male)	.17	.15	.18	.17
Race (White)	.18	.17	.14	.11
Political id (Democrat)	.04	.03	.02	.05
Education	.01	-.01	.04	.06
Income	.11	.10	.09	.09
Campaign interest		.10	.07	.06
Traditional media use			.35***	.33***
New media use			.02	-.03
Blogging history				.03
Blogging frequency				.17
R square	.08	.09	.21	.23
Adjusted R square	.03	.03	.14	.15
R square change	.08	.01	.12	.02
Sig. of F change	.169	.332	.001	.226

a. Dependent variable: Political efficacy scale

b. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Compared to the political bloggers group, these variables explained about 10 percent more of the variance in political efficacy among nonpolitical bloggers (Adjusted R square= .25, $p < .000$) (See Table 7c). When other predictors were held constant, two variables were found to be statistically significant predictors of political efficacy in this group: Being white and use of new media. Using new media for political news (beta= .29, $p < .001$) was a slightly stronger predictor than being white (beta= .26, $p < .001$). Income was a predictor of political efficacy with statistical significance ($p = .05$). This means that among those who keep blogs on nonpolitical topics, Caucasians who frequently visited online news sites to learn about political issues and pay close attention to what they learned online tended to have higher level of political efficacy.

Table 7c. Standardized Regression Coefficients (Betas) and R² for Regression of Political Efficacy on Demographic Characteristics, Campaign Interest, Media Use, and Blogging among Nonpolitical Bloggers (N = 143)

Predictor Variables	Regression 1	Regression 2	Regression 3	Regression 4
Age	-.07	-.09	-.11	-.10
Gender (male)	.13	.14	.08	.07
Race (White)	.27***	.26***	.26***	.26***
Political id (Democrat)	.09	.09	.05	.04
Education	.09	.10	.08	.07
Income	.20*	.17*	.15	.16*
Campaign interest		.22**	.14	.13
Traditional media use			.14	.15
New media use			.29***	.29***
Blogging history				.05
Blogging frequency				-.05
R square	.15	.19	.31	.31
Adjusted R square	.11	.15	.26	.25
R square change	.15	.05	.12	.00
Sig. of F change	.001	.007	.000	.683

a. Dependent variable: Political efficacy scale

b. Statistical significance: * p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

How long one has been blogging (blogging history) and how frequently one blogs (blogging frequency) did not predict the level of political efficacy of either political or nonpolitical bloggers. Therefore, at this point, one cannot say either blogging is likely to increase or decrease the level of efficacy. The factors that did predict political efficacy were being white, having high income, and news media use. Traditional news media use predicted political bloggers' efficacy level, and new media use predicted nonpolitical bloggers' efficacy level.

RQ8. When other variables are controlled, is there any relationship between blogging (blogging history and frequency) and the level of political participation? Does blogging increase or decrease one's political participation?

As was the case with political efficacy, blogging did *not* significantly predict the variance in the level of political participation. Although the model overall explained 25 percent of variance in the dependent variable with a statistical significance of $p < .000$, blogging did not increase R square when other variables were controlled (R square change = .003, significance of F change = .544) (see Table 8a).

Predictors of political participation were being a Democrat and exposure and attention to traditional and new media. Of the three, exposure and attention to new media was the strongest predictor (beta = .39, $p = .000$). The exposure and attention to traditional media and the party identification (being a Democrat) were almost equally strong predictors (beta = .12, $p < .05$; beta = .13, $p < .05$ respectively). In other words, bloggers who identify themselves as Democrats and who use both traditional and new media to get political news were more likely than others to be engaged in politically-oriented activities such as writing letters to politicians to express concerns, sending emails to politicians, and donating money to a campaign.

Table 8a. Standardized Regression Coefficients (Betas) and R² for Regression of Political Participation on Demographic Characteristics, Political Efficacy, Campaign Interest, Media Use, and Blogging among Overall Bloggers (N = 270)

Predictor Variables	Regression 1	Regression 2	Regression 3	Regression 4	Regression 5
Age	.14*	.15*	.15*	.08	.08
Gender (male)	.09	.04	.04	-.03	-.03
Race (White)	-.04	-.09	-.09	-.05	-.06
Political id (Democrat)	.18***	.16**	.16**	.12*	.13*
Education	-.06	-.07	-.07	-.02	-.02
Income	.08	.04	.04	.04	.04
Political efficacy		.24***	.24***	.04	.04
Campaign interest			.00	-.03	-.03
Traditional media use				.13*	.12*
New media use				.41***	.39***
Blogging history					.01
Blogging frequency					.06
R square	.06	.11	.11	.28	.29
Adjusted R square	.04	.09	.09	.26	.25
R square change	.06	.05	.00	.17	.00
Sig. of F change	.010	.000	.957	.000	.544

a. Dependent variable: Political efficacy scale

b. Statistical significance: * p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

Blogging history and frequency also did not significantly predict the variance in the level of political participation among political bloggers (see Table 8b). Similar to the above analysis, the overall model explained about 25 percent of the variance in political participation among political bloggers. However, when blogging history and frequency variables were entered last, the model did not make significant changes in the variance of

the dependent variable (R square change= .002, p= .851). The items that predicted political bloggers' engagement in politically oriented activities were exposure and attention to new media (beta= .42, p< .000) and being male (beta= -.18, p< .05). Political bloggers who frequently used the Internet to get political news and who paid attention to online political news were more likely than others to be politically active. At the same time, male political bloggers were slightly less likely to be engaged in politically oriented activities such as sending letters to politicians and donating money for a campaign.

Table 8b. Standardized Regression Coefficients (Betas) and R² for Regression of Political Participation on Demographic Characteristics, Political Efficacy, Campaign Interest, Media Use, and Blogging among Political Bloggers (N = 112)

Predictor Variables	Regression 1	Regression 2	Regression 3	Regression 4	Regression 5
Age	.27*	.27*	.27*	.21*	.20*
Gender (male)	-.19*	-.20*	-.20*	-.19	-.19*
Race (White)	-.06	-.08	-.09	-.12	-.13
Political id (Democrat)	.10	.10	.09	.06	.07
Education	-.09	-.09	-.10	.06	.07
Income	.04	.02	.02	.02	.02
Political efficacy		.11	.11	.01	-.01
Campaign interest			.03	-.00	-.01
Traditional media use				.12	.12
New media use				.43***	.41***
Blogging history					.03
Blogging frequency					.07
R square	.11	.12	.12	.32	.32
Adjusted R square	.06	.06	.05	.25	.24
R square change	.11	.01	.00	.20	.00
Sig. of F change	.057	.256	.750	.000	.731

a. Dependent variable: Political efficacy scale

b. Statistical significance: * p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

Political participation among nonpolitical bloggers was again *not* predicted by blogging history and frequency (see Table 8c). The overall model explained about 13 percent of variance in the level of political participation (p< .01). But, when other variables and scales are controlled, blogging did not significantly predict the variance in

political participation (R square change= .001, p= .917). When all the variables were entered, new media use (exposure and attention to online political news) was the only and strongest predictor (beta= .38, p< .000). In other words, nonpolitical bloggers who frequently rely on online news sites to get political information were more likely than others to participate in political activities.

Table 8c. Standardized Regression Coefficients (Betas) and R² for Regression of Political Participation on Demographic Characteristics, Political efficacy, Campaign Interest, Media Use, and Blogging among Nonpolitical Bloggers (N = 143)

Predictor Variables	Regression 1	Regression 2	Regression 3	Regression 4	Regression 5
Age	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.04	-.04
Gender (male)	.09	.06	.07	.01	.01
Race (White)	.03	-.02	-.02	.02	.02
Political id (Democrat)	.17*	.16	.16	.13	.13
Education	.00	-.02	-.02	-.03	-.03
Income	.12	.09	.09	.09	.09
Political efficacy		.18*	.18	.02	.02
Campaign interest			.01	-.04	-.04
Traditional media use				.07	.07
New media use				.37***	.38***
Blogging history					-.03
Blogging frequency					-.01
R square	.05	.08	.08	.20	.20
Adjusted R square	.01	.03	.02	.14	.13
R square change	.05	.03	.00	.12	.00
Sig. of F change	.301	.048	.868	.000	.917

a. Dependent variable: Political efficacy scale

b. Statistical significance: * p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

Blogging did not predict the level of political participation of either political or nonpolitical bloggers. Thus, at this point, one cannot argue that either blogging is likely to increase or decrease the level of political participation. New media use seems to explain the variance in political participation among bloggers. When all variables are entered, new media use was the only predictor of political participation of both political and nonpolitical bloggers.

RQ9. Can blogging predict the variance in the level of efficacy among those who have blogged more than one year?

Noting that one's blogging history and frequency fail to provide additional explanation in either political efficacy or political participation when other variables are controlled, I started to wonder if this finding is because blogging is at an early stage of development. Thus as a next step, I examined this relationship among those who have been blogging for a while (13 months and more).¹⁵

Predictors of political efficacy were entered in blocks into a hierarchical regression model to see if each block of predictors could explain the variance in political efficacy while other variables were controlled (see Table 9). The model overall explained 23 percent of variance in political efficacy with statistical significance ($p < .000$).

However, blogging history and frequency, when entered as a last block, did not yield any additional prediction in the variance of the dependent variable (R square change = .004).

The predictors of political efficacy for people who have been bloggers for 13 months or more were being male, being Caucasian, education level, traditional media use,

¹⁵ At the time of the survey, about one half had blogged for 12 months or less (48%), and the other half (51%) had blogged for 13 months or longer. Thus, dividing the sample into two groups using this time period seemed logical.

and new media use. When other variables are held constant, exposure and attention to political news on online news sites was the strongest predictor of political efficacy (beta= .25, $p < .05$), followed by being White (beta= .21, $p < .01$), exposure and attention to traditional news (beta= .20, $p < .01$), and level of education (beta= .19, $p < .05$). Being male was statistically significant ($p < .05$) but the weakest predictor of these (beta= .16).

Even among those who have blogged for one year or more, blogging did not predict the level of political efficacy. Based on this finding, it is difficult to say that blogging contributes to increasing or decreasing one's political efficacy. Predictors of political efficacy among those who have blogged for at least one year are similar to the ones found in other studies. Being male, being white, being well-educated, and using traditional and new media for political use were related to high levels of political efficacy.

Table 9. Standardized Regression Coefficients (Betas) and R² for Regression of Political Efficacy on Demographic Characteristics, Campaign Interest, Media Use, and Blogging among Those Who Have Blogged Over One Year (N = 152)

Predictor Variables	Regression 1	Regression 2	Regression 3	Regression 4
Age	-.00	-.03	-.08	-.08
Gender (male)	.18*	.19*	.16*	.16*
Race (White)	.21**	.20**	.21**	.21**
Political id (Democrat)	.05	.04	-.03	-.03
Education	.17	.16	.18*	.19*
Income	.05	.05	.03	.02
Campaign interest		.16*	.09	.08
Traditional media use			.19*	.20**
New media use			.27***	.25*
Blogging history				.05
Blogging frequency				.04
R square	.12	.15	.28	.29
Adjusted R square	.09	.11	.24	.23
R square change	.12	.02	.14	.00
Sig. of F change	.003	.050	.000	.654

a. Dependent variable: Political efficacy scale

b. Statistical significance: * p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

RQ10. Is there a relationship between blogging and the level of political participation among those who have blogged more than one year? When other variables are controlled, can blogging history and frequency predict the variance in political participation?

A hierarchical regression analysis indicates that when other variables are controlled, both blogging history and frequency *are* statistically significant predictors of the variance in political participation among those who have been blogging more than one year (See Table 10). An overall model that includes blogging history and frequency

explained 31 percent of variance in dependent variable ($p < .000$). When other variables were statistically controlled in the regression model, blogging history and frequency explained about five percent of variance of political participation, and the F change was statistically significant ($p < .01$).

Among all the predictors entered, party identification, new media use, blogging history, and blogging frequency were found to be statistically significant predictors of political participation. Exposure and attention to political news in online news sites was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .36, p < .000$), and being a Democrat was the second strongest predictor ($\beta = .22, p < .01$). Blogging history and frequency predicted the variance in political participation with similar strength ($\beta = .14, p < .05$; $\beta = .17, p < .05$ respectively).

How long one has been blogging and how frequently one blogs did predict the level of political participation among those who have blogged for at least one year. Being a Democrat, using new media for political news, having been blogging for at least one year, and frequently blogging (posting blog entries, reading other blogs, and commenting on others' blog entries) were related to high levels of political participation. It is difficult, however, to predict the causal order in this relationship. Being involved in blogging might increase the likelihood of one's political participation, but it might also be true that those who are actively engaged in political activities tend to choose blogging as an additional venue to stay politically active.

Table 10. Standardized Regression Coefficients (Betas) and R² for Regression of Political Participation on Demographic Characteristics, Campaign Interest, Political Participation, Media Use, and Blogging among Those Who Have Blogged Over One Year (N = 152)

Predictor Variables	Regression 1	Regression 2	Regression 3	Regression 4	Regression 5
Age	.18*	.18*	.18*	.11	.12
Gender (male)	.08	.03	.03	.02	.02
Race (White)	-.06	-.11	-.10	-.05	-.06
Political id (Democrat)	.29***	.28***	.28***	.20**	.22**
Education	-.11	-.15	-.15	-.09**	-.06
Income	.09	.08	.08	.06	.04
Political Efficacy		.24**	.25**	.08	.06
Campaign interest			-.02	-.06	-.09
Traditional media use				.04	.06
New media use				.43***	.36***
Blogging history					.14*
Blogging frequency					.17*
R square	.10	.16	.16	.31	.36
Adjusted R square	.07	.11	.11	.26	.31
R square change	.10	.05	.00	.16	.05
Sig. of F change	.013	.004	.797	.000	.006

a. Dependent variable: Political efficacy scale

b. Statistical significance: * p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

Chapter 5

Content on the Political Blog Sites

I followed the survey of bloggers with a content analysis of political blog sites to cross examine the information and to further understand the content produced by bloggers in relation to their characteristics. Among those who participated in the survey, 78 of 112 political bloggers responded to the request to provide the URL of their blog sites. Each of the 78 political blog sites was accessed, and the content was analyzed to examine the basic features available, the characteristics of the authors displayed, the level of blogging activities, and the links available. The topic and the nature of blog entries (e.g., whether a blog entry displays factual information or personal opinion) were also examined. In addition, reader comments on blog entries were analyzed in order to gauge the degree of interaction among authors and readers. This chapter reports the findings.

RQ 11. What types of author information are revealed on the political blog sites? Can one determine who is a political blogger by examining the author information on blog sites?

As Table 11 shows, most of the time political blog sites are maintained by a single author. Eight of 10 political blog sites are maintained by a single author, and about 20 percent of the blog sites have two or more authors contributing to the site.

Often times, political bloggers had some parts of their names displayed on the blog sites. Political blog sites where information about the author's name was not at all available were less than 20 percent. More than six out of 10 political bloggers had their first name, first name and initial, or full name available on their site. Another 18 percent of political bloggers preferred to have a pseudonym on their sites.

While gender oftentimes is known on the sites or could be surmised from the author's name or from the entry content, age was most of the time unknown. In two-third of political blog sites in this study (67%), gender was either known or could be surmised. When the blog author's gender could be determined, 83 percent were male and 17 percent were female. In one-fourth of the sites, gender was not made known. In 8 percent of blogs analyzed, gender was not clear, because there were several authors contributing to the site.

As for age, nine out of 10 sites did not display the author's age. When the author's age was known, a quarter of them were 18-24-year-olds, another quarter were 25-to-29 year olds, and the remaining 50 percent were 30-39 year olds.

What the author does for a living and where he or she lives were generally not clear from their blog sites. In about eight out of 10 blog sites, the author's occupation was not displayed. Among those revealed their occupation, the highest percentage were students at 38 percent, followed by writers and telecommunications employees/ analysts (13.3%).

The geographical location of the author was known only in 24 percent of political blog sites. Of them, 32 percent were in the east region of the U.S., 21 percent were in the U.K., 16 percent were in the Midwest region of the U.S., 11 percent were in the West region of the U.S., 5 percent were in Singapore, and the last 5 percent was in the U.S., without indicating which part of the U.S. they are located in.

The analysis of author information show that a typical political blog site is maintained by a single author who is most likely to be male and 18-to-39 year old. A

political blog site often includes personal information such as author's name, occupation, and geographical location.

Table 11. Author Information on Political Blog Sites

Number of Authors	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Single author	57	81.4
Two authors	5	7.1
Three or more authors	8	11.4
Total	70	99.9
Blogger's Name		
No name available	13	18.3
Pseudonym	13	18.3
First, first + initial, or full name	45	63.4
Total	71	100.0
Gender		
Known	48	66.7
<i>Male</i>	40	83.3
<i>Female</i>	8	16.7
Unknown	18	25.0
Mixed (more than one author)	6	8.3
Total	72	100
Age		
Known	8	11.2
18-24	2	25.0
25-29	2	25.0
30-39	4	50.0
Unknown	64	88.9
Total	72	100.1
Occupation		
Known*	15	19.2
Unknown	63	80.8
Total	78	100
Geographical location		
Known**	19	24.4
Unknown	59	75.6
Total	78	100

* Student (37.5%), writer (13.3%), telecommunications analyst (13.3%), CPA (6.7%), data analyst (6.7%), newspaper editor (6.7%), professor (6.7%), realtor (6.7%), project manager (6.7%), and guard at a psychiatric facility (6.7%).

** East region in the U.S. (31.6%), Midwest region in the U.S. (15.8%), West region in the U.S. (10.5%), U.K. (21.1%), Singapore (5.3%), and U.S.(5.3%).

RQ 12. What types of technical features are available on political blog sites?

Interactive Features

Political blog sites include several features to help readers interact with the site's content and with the author(s) (see Table 12a). The majority of political blog sites (about 70%) had a 'search' function, where readers can search particular information on the entire site. An 'Archive' was also available in most sites, so readers can read and search the blogger's past and present entries (94%).

Political bloggers also allowed readers to comment on their entries in several ways. A 'comment' feature, a small clickable button that opens a window in which readers would leave comments, was available in about 93 percent of political blog sites in this study. A large percentage of the authors (77%) provided their email addresses on the blog sites. Although it was available only in a couple of blog sites, a 'Guest book,' a window/folder looking like a bulletin board, provided readers a space where they can leave comments/feedback anonymously.

The findings suggest that when the venues are available to contact blog authors or to comment on blog posts, blog readers actually interact with blog authors and their entries. The correlation analysis between the number of interactive features available on a blog site and the total number of comments received show that the two variables are positively correlated. The Pearson correlation coefficient was .23 with the probability approaching a statistically significant level ($p = .059$).

Table 12a. Interactive Features Available on Political Blog Sites

Search	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
No	20	27.8
Yes	52	72.2
Total	72	100.0
Archive		
No	4	5.6
Yes	68	94.4
Total	72	100.0
Comment on Entries		
Not allowed	4	5.6
Allowed on some posts but not on others	1	1.4
Allowed	67	93.1
Total	72	100.0
Links to CMC		
None	14	20.0
Guest book	2	2.9
Email address	54	77.1
Total	70	100.0

Links on the First (or Home) page of the Blog Sites

On the first page of the political blog sites analyzed in this study, bloggers had links to other blogs, to news sources, to websites created by others, and/or to websites created by the blogger. Seventy-one of 78 blog sites analyzed in this study had lists of links available on their sites (91.0%) (see Table 12b).

Bloggers often list and provide links to other blog sites that they often read (or they recommend) under 'blogroll.' Bloggers in this study linked their sites to other blog sites with a vast amount of variance, with the number of links to other blog sites ranging from 2 to 946. However, most of the bloggers included an average of 97 links to other blogs ($SD=135.2$), while the median was 47 links. Almost a quarter of blog sites (25.4%)

had 16 or fewer links to other blogs, but the rest of the blog sites had at least 24 links to other sites listed on the first page.

Political bloggers who extensively link to other news sources were found to be minorities. Only 13 percent of political blog sites listed more than 17 links to news sources. On the other hand, 39 of 71 blog sites (55%) did not have any links to news sources, and about one-third of the sites had 11 or fewer links to news sources.

Forty-one of 71 blog sites (58%) had links to Websites created by others. When they did include links to other websites, the average number of links was 10.7 ($SD=18.3$), with the median being 2. About 42 percent of political blog sites did not link to websites created by others.

Political bloggers do not seem to maintain other websites (or have other websites they maintain linked to their blog site) in addition to their blog sites. Only three blog sites in this study had two or more links to other websites created by the blogger himself/herself. Another 12 sites had one link to the blogger's other website.

Interestingly, the intensity of linking to other blogs and websites does seem to be related to how many comments a blogger receives from readers. A bivariate correlation analysis between the total number of links on the first page of a blog site and the combined number of comments on five blog entries reveals that there is a moderately strong positive correlation between the two variables. Pearson correlation coefficient was .35, and it was statistically significant at the .01 level.

Table 12b. Links on the First Page of Political Blog Sites

To Other Blogs	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
0	8	11.3
2-16	10	14.1
24-47	18	25.4
58-132	17	23.9
136-946	18	25.4
Total	71	100.0
To News Sources		
0	39	54.9
1-11	23	32.4
17-116	9	12.7
Total	71	100.0
To Other Websites Created by the Blogger		
0	56	78.9
1	12	16.9
2 or more	3	4.2
Total	71	100.0
To Other Websites Created by Others		
0	30	42.3
1-15	23	32.4
16-47	16	22.5
72-104	2	2.8
Total	71	100.0

RQ 13. How frequently do political bloggers post entries? When posting entries, how long do they write? Do they include links to other sites in blog entries? What are the links in their entries?

Frequency of posting

For 55 percent of those who indicated the time and date of each entry, the time lag between two consecutive blog entries was less than 24 hours. This finding is consistent with the survey findings which indicated that 54 percent of political bloggers reported that they post entries at least once a day. Thirty-two percent of political blog sites had

two entries within 25-72 hours, and the other 12.5 percent of them took 72 hours or more to post the next entry (see Table 13a).

It does not seem clear from the analysis what is correlated with how often political bloggers post entries. The contingency table and correlation analysis between the time lag in the two consecutive blog posts and potentially related variables¹⁶ reveal that the frequency of posting entries is not correlated with any variable with statistical significance. How often one posts blog entries was not related to author characteristics, either. Whether a blog site is maintained by a single author or multiple authors, whether the author is male or female, and the author's age were not related to the frequency of posting. It seems that how often a blogger post entries seems to vary greatly by individuals without much pattern among political bloggers collectively.

Table 13a. Time lag between two consecutive blog entries

<i>Time Lag</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Less than 1 hour	8	14.3
1-5 hours	10	17.9
6-24 hours	13	23.2
25-72 hours	18	32.1
More than 72 hours	7	12.5
Total	56	100.0

Length of Entries and Links in Entries

Of the 78 political blog sites analyzed, 68 sites had archives to past entries. Five consecutive entries on each of the 68 blog sites were analyzed (n=340). The average length of a blog entry in this study was about 6 paragraphs (*SD*=4.50).

¹⁶ The variables used were: the number of comments from readers, the number of links on a blog site, nature of entry (e.g., factual information, personal opinion, quoting other, etc.), general endorsement (e.g., whether a blogger is Bush or Kerry supporter), and the topic of an entry.

Political bloggers in this study often included links to other web sites or other blog sites in their entries. The average number of links in each entry was 1.8 ($SD=1.44$). When they included links in their blog entries, they most often made a link to news sources (37%), followed by the web sites created by others (26%) and links to other blog sites (24%) (See Table 13b). Candidate campaign web sites were not a popular choice for links among political bloggers. Only 2 percent of all links were to presidential candidate web sites.

Table 13b. Link Types in each blog entry

<i>Link Type</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
To other blogs	148	23.9	3
To news sources	227	36.7	1
To other sites creates by the blogger	0	0	7
To other sites created by others	163	26.4	2
To candidate websites	14	2.3	6
Internal to blog	48	7.8	4
Not clear	18	2.9	5
Total	618	100.0	

RQ 14. What are the main topics of blog entries?

In 340 entries analyzed in this study, there were 805 occasions of deliberation. Of them, there were 629 identifiable occasions of discussing or deliberating on presidential candidate(s), national or international issue(s), the current administration, and/or a candidate's campaign and an additional 176 occasions of campaigning for a candidate. This means that a typical blogger often wrote more than one topic in an entry when s/he wrote about politics. As one might notice in Table 14, between October and November 2004, political bloggers were most often engaged in discussing the presidential election

campaign by posting entries about the November election, presidential candidates, and/or a candidate's campaign.

The most common topic among political bloggers during the 2004 presidential campaign period was national or international issues. More specifically, 226 out of 629 discussions/ deliberations (36.0%) were on national and international issues. In these deliberation cases, bloggers most often talked about the presidential election, the campaign, and/or political issues (n=142, 62.8%). The second most popular discussion topic within national and international issues was the war in Iraq, weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, U.S. troops in Iraq, and/or the war on terror (n=58, 25.7%). Although not frequently, bloggers were engaged in discussing other domestic issues in their blog posts (n=26, 11.5%) (See Table 14).

The second most common topic was presidential candidates. Political bloggers often posted entries about the presidential campaign (see previous paragraph) and candidates (n=213, 33.9%). In discussing presidential candidates, both George W. Bush and John Kerry were the topic of the discussion with almost equal frequencies (22.1% and 21.3%, respectively). There were 44 entries in which a political blogger discussed both candidates in an entry (11.3%).

Political bloggers sometimes evaluated the current administration's policy and issue stances. There were 81 entries in which they discussed the administration's policy or issue stances and cast their own evaluations. When bloggers evaluated the current administration's policies, it was often the case that the comments were critical of Bush administration (n=79, 97.5%).

There were 111 entries evaluating a candidate's campaign. In their entries, political bloggers criticized a candidate's campaign tactics (76, 69.7%) more frequently than supporting them. There was no incident of supporting a candidate's campaign tactics, and only one entry making suggestions for the campaign. The second most common topic in evaluating a candidate's campaign was a briefing on a candidate's campaign (e.g., campaign rally, poll results, etc.). Political bloggers used their blog sites to report a candidate's campaign event, poll results on a particular candidate, etc. (n=32, 29.4%).

Finally, political bloggers sometimes used their blog entries to campaign for a particular candidate. In addition to the 629 deliberations, there were 176 occasions where a blogger campaigned for or against a particular candidate (21.9%). In these deliberations, blog authors most often encouraged readers to vote for Kerry and against Bush (n=105, 59.7%). The number of entries encouraging readers to vote for Bush and against Kerry was 70 (39.8%).

Table 14. Topic of blog entries

Topic	N	%	Valid %
<u><i>Presidential candidates</i></u>			
Presidential candidate isn't the topic of entry	120	35.3	--
Bush	86	25.3	40.4
Kerry	83	24.4	39.0
Both	44	12.9	20.7
Not clear	7	2.1	--
Total	340	100.0	100.1
<u><i>National or international issues</i></u>			
A Natl. or Intl. issue isn't the topic of entry	108	31.8	--
Presidential election, campaign, political issues	142	41.8	62.8
Iraq war, Iraq, war on terror	58	17.1	25.7
Other domestic issues	26	7.6	11.5
Other/ Not clear	6	1.8	--
Total	340	100.1	100.0
<u><i>Evaluating current administration</i></u>			
Not the topic of entry	259	76.2	--
Supporting Bush admin.'s policy & stance on issues	2	.6	2.5
Criticizing Bush admin.'s policy & stance on issues	79	23.2	97.5
Neutral about Bush admin.'s policy & stance on issues	0	--	--
Total	340	100.0	100.0
<u><i>Evaluating a candidate's campaign</i></u>			
Not the topic of entry	229	67.4	--
Briefing a candidate's campaign (event, polls, etc.)	32	9.4	29.4
Criticizing a candidate's campaign (tactics)	76	22.4	69.7
Supporting a candidate's campaign (tactics)	--	--	--
Mixed (both support and criticism)	--	--	--
Making suggestions for a candidate's campaign	1	.3	.9
Other/ Not clear	2	.6	--
Total	340	100.1	100.0
<u><i>Campaigning for a candidate</i></u>			
Not the topic of entry	161	47.4	--
Encourage to vote for Bush and against Kerry	70	20.6	39.8
Encourage to vote for Kerry and against Bush	105	30.9	59.7
Encourage to donate for Bush	--	--	--
Encourage to donate for Kerry	1	.3	.6
Encourage to volunteer for Bush	--	--	--
Encourage to volunteer for Kerry	--	--	--
Encourage to attend Bush campaign rally	--	--	--
Encourage to attend Kerry campaign rally	--	--	--
Other/ not clear	3	.9	--
Total	340	100.1	100.1

RQ 15. What is the nature of blog entries? Are they mainly composed of factual information, personal opinions, or a mix of both facts and opinions?

The nature of each of 340 entries was also analyzed to examine if a blogger is presenting factual information, personal opinion, or a mix of both facts and opinions. As one might expect, blog entries were most frequently composed of a mix of both facts and opinions (see Table 15). In 127 entries (37.4%), blog authors quoted information put out by other sources and offered opinions on the information. Another 24 percent of entries were expressing personal opinions without providing any evidence (e.g., a link to original sources or further information). But, 19 percent of entries did provide some sort of evidence, such as links to other sources, when expressing personal opinions.

Table 15. Nature of Entries

<i>Nature of entry</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
Factual information	6	1.8	7
Personal opinion without evidence	82	24.1	2
Personal opinion with some sort of evidence	66	19.4	3
Quoting factual information provided by others	25	7.4	4
Quoting other source's opinion	12	3.5	6
Some factual information and some personal opinion	5	1.5	8
Quoting other sources and giving his/her opinions about the information	127	37.4	1
Other	17	5.0	5
Total	340	100.1	

RQ 16. What is the degree of interaction between blog authors and readers? Do people exchange diverse viewpoints in the comments section?

Blog readers made 599 comments (comment entries) on 340 blog entries analyzed in this study (an average of 1.8 comments per entry). As Table 16 shows, about half of comments supported or agreed with the author's viewpoints. About two of 10

comments expressed disagreement with the blog author's perspective(s), and about 30 percent of the comments indicated neither agreement nor disagreement with the blog author. The comments that neither agreed nor disagreed with the author's viewpoints were either simply providing new ideas or perspectives relevant to the given discussion, or introducing a new topic or subject.

The degree of diversity within comments¹⁷ that measured how much readers and blog authors agreed or disagreed during the discussion offers additional information about the interaction between blog authors and readers. In order to examine statistical significance between variables, correlations between the degree of diversity and topic of entries, nature of entries, general endorsement, and links within blog entries were checked. The degree of diversity was *not* correlated with any of these variables with statistical significance, except for the topic of entries. Even among various topics analyzed in this study, only the number of entries whose topic is national or international issues was correlated with the degree of diversity in comments. The two variables were positively correlated with moderate strength (Pearson $R = .37$), and it was statistically significant at .001 level. In other words, the more frequently a blogger discusses national or international issues such as the election or the war in Iraq (compared to presidential candidates, evaluating the currently administration's issue stances, or evaluating a

¹⁷ The degree of diversity in comments was a variable that gauged how much of readers and blog authors agreed and disagreed. Assuming that both blog authors and readers read a reasonable amount of comments posted, it was considered a 'diverse' discourse when both agreement and disagreement with author's viewpoints are introduced and elaborated in comments. Using the number of comments expressing agreement, disagreement, and neither agreement nor disagreement with the author's view, 'degree of diversity' was recoded: Agree only (0), neither agree nor disagree only (1), agree + neither agree nor disagree (2), disagree only (3), Disagree + neither agree nor disagree (4), agree + disagree (5), and agree + disagree + neither agree nor disagree (6).

presidential candidate's campaign), readers of these entries were more likely to agree, disagree, and neither agree nor disagree with the blog author's viewpoints.

Table 16. Comments on blog Entries

<i>Comments</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Number of comments agreeing with author's view	295	49.2
Number of comments disagreeing with author's view	108	18.3
Number of comments neither agreeing nor disagreeing with author's view	196	32.7
Total number of comments	599	100.2
Average number of comments per entry	1.76 (<i>SD</i> =3.37)	

The content analysis of political blog sites and blog entries revealed valuable information. Some findings of content analysis confirmed what was learned in the survey and other findings offered additional information to what was offered by bloggers. The analysis of author information available on blog sites confirmed that there are many more male political bloggers than female political bloggers. Examining the content of blog entries also confirmed that participants of this study tended to have perspectives in line with the Democratic Party.

In addition, statistical analysis showed that the blog sites with interactive features (e.g., search, archive, comments, or CMC modes) did receive more comments than those sites with fewer interactive features. I also found that the intensity of linking to other blogs and web sites was related to the total number of comments received. A blog author who has a high number of links to other blog sites or web sites received a higher number of comments overall.

Finally, the study revealed that the issues related to the election and the Iraq war were the most often debated topic among political bloggers during the 2004 U.S. presidential campaign. It also revealed that the topic of discussion affected the degree of diversity in reader responses. Although readers of political blogs frequently agreed with the author's ideas or viewpoints, they expressed diverse responses especially when a blog entry was about national or international issues.

Chapter 6

Discussion & Conclusion

This dissertation study set out to examine the blogging phenomenon that became popular among many Americans in the 2004 presidential election. Although more Internet users than the general public are familiar with blogging, the widespread popularity of blogging and the surprising rate of its growth have drawn many researchers' attention. Among areas of discussion regarding blogging, this study examined the potential of blogging as a mode of public discourse that can foster democracy.

The inception of this study originated in the claims that blogging promotes communication among many and empowers ordinary people (Froomkin, 2004; Blood, 2002). Blogging advocates' claims rekindled the old debate between utopians and dystopians of communication technology over whether new communication technologies such as the Internet can foster democracy, and this study was intended to provide empirical evidence to address this debate.

Specifically, this study started with a survey among randomly selected bloggers to learn about who they are and how intensively they are engaged in blogging. The survey also examined bloggers' political attitudes, political activities, and media use. A content analysis of political blog sites whose URL was provided was followed to supplement the information offered in the survey and to further understand the content bloggers produced in light of what I learned from the survey. Interactive features available on political blog sites, links on blog sites and entries, and the content of blog entries were examined in the

content analysis. The main findings of this dissertation can be summarized as follows.

The survey among bloggers revealed that:

- A typical political blogger is 25-to-44 years old, highly educated, and a white man who identifies with Democratic values. Political bloggers tend to have higher levels of education and income and are more likely to be male, compared to nonpolitical bloggers whose demographic characteristics are similar to those of Internet users in general.
- Motivations for political blogging are multifaceted; political bloggers intend to express their ideas and opinions and share them with others, as well as to influence others.
- Political bloggers not only post entries in their own blog sites but they also read others' blogs and comment on them. Political bloggers write their own blogs and read other blogs more frequently than nonpolitical bloggers.
- Political bloggers appear to be more efficacious than nonpolitical bloggers and the general public. The comparison of political efficacy levels among political and nonpolitical bloggers and the general public indicates that political bloggers have a higher level of efficacy than nonpolitical bloggers, who were found to have a higher efficacy level than the American public.
- Political bloggers are involved in online and off-line political activities more often than nonpolitical bloggers.
- Political bloggers are heavy users of news media and are attentive to what they learn from the media. Political bloggers rely on new media for political information more than nonpolitical bloggers. Internet news sites and political blogs are the two most popular news sources among political bloggers, while nonpolitical bloggers turn to newspapers and television news as well as Internet news sites.
- How long one has been blogging (blogging history) and how frequently one blogs (blogging frequency) did not predict the variance in political efficacy in either political or nonpolitical bloggers. The predictors of political efficacy were race, income, and new media use (among nonpolitical bloggers) and traditional media use (among political bloggers).
- Blogging history and frequency did not predict one's degree of political participation for either political or nonpolitical bloggers. Rather, new media use was the strongest predictor of political participation.

- Both blogging history and frequency predicted political participation among those who have been blogging at least one year at the time of survey. Being Democrat, using new media for news, and blogging were positively related to high levels of political participation.

The content analysis of political blog sites found that:

- The more interactive features a blogger has available on his/her blog site, the more likely he or she will receive feedback from blog readers.
- The more links to other blogs and web sites a blogger has on his/her blog site, the more likely he or she will receive feedback from blog readers.
- The presidential election campaign and the war in Iraq were the two most popular topics of blog entries.
- When political bloggers discussed the presidential campaign, they tended to endorse John Kerry and be critical of the Bush administration.
- Blog readers appear to often agree with and support the blog author's point of view. When blog entries are on the topic of national or international issues, however, bloggers receive reader comments that agree, disagree, or neither agree nor disagree with their viewpoints.

The findings of this study offer evidence to support both utopian and dystopian perspectives on the potential of the Internet to foster democracy. For example, the positive relationship between the number of interactive features on a blog site and the total number of reader comments confirms that blogging might encourage many-to-many communication. On the other hand, a typical political blogger's profile -- highly educated, young white man -- reveals that people who are already in power are the ones who are most likely to take advantage of the Internet, and thus, the Internet may not be likely to have democratizing effects (e.g., Davis, 1999).

It would benefit us to consider the findings of this study in relation to the promises and constraints of communication technology to better understand the potential

of blogging as a medium of political communication. Below I discuss the main findings of this study before I turn to concluding remarks.

Bloggers as Participants in Democracy

As soon as the Internet and the World Wide Web became more accessible to ordinary citizens, utopian scholars began advocating the Internet as a facilitator of democracy. They argued that the Internet would democratize the political environment and that anyone could be a major player of democracy in the electronically networked society (Johnson et al., 1999; Rheingold, 1993). Critics pointed out that Internet users are often those with high socio-economic status (SES) and claimed that the Internet is more likely to contribute to maintaining the status quo rather than transforming the society, because well-educated people with high levels of income who are already in power are the ones who can afford the time, energy, and money required to stay connected (Blumler & Gurevitch, 2001; Davis, 1999).

The characteristics of political bloggers found in this study offer little basis for the Internet's democratizing effects. Nine of 10 political bloggers in this study said that they have received at least some college education, while the 2004 National Election Study shows that only four out of 10 Americans have bachelor's or higher college degrees. Eighty-seven percent of political bloggers are white, while the 2000 U.S. census report shows that roughly 75 percent of the U.S. population is white. And 83 percent of political bloggers are men, although slightly more than one half of the U.S. population are women (U.S. Census, 2000) and one half of Internet users are women (Fallows, 2005).

Although it is true that blogging is enjoying a growth rate that no other communication media have ever seen, it seems that blogging is largely restricted to certain kinds of people. That bloggers have higher SES levels than both the general public and ordinary Internet users provides evidence for the argument that the ease of use does not always motivate people to become active users of the medium. Perhaps the claims early utopians made may be 'hyperoptimistic technological determinism,' as Peter Shane (2004) writes, or perhaps blogging needs more time to mature as a communication medium.

However, other findings of the study show some positive signs about the potential of blogging to foster democracy. Political bloggers appear to have qualities that active participants in democracy would have. For example, political bloggers were more likely to believe that they are capable and competent to effectively participate in government or politics. They were found to exhibit even higher levels of political efficacy than nonpolitical bloggers, who had higher efficacy levels than the general public. They were also active media users who read and view news media for political information and pay attention to what they learn from the media. Close to a majority of political bloggers in this study said that they turn to some form of news media (whether Internet news sites or blogs or newspapers) to get information about politics or public affairs at least five times a week. In addition, political bloggers are often engaged in online and off-line political activities such as writing a letter to a politician or sending an email to a political candidate to express their concerns.

The questions of whether blogging led people to become highly efficacious and encouraged them to turn to media to learn about issues and participate in political

activities, or whether highly efficacious political participants decided to use blogs as an additional medium, are difficult to answer in one-time cross-sectional studies such as this. The findings that blogging history and frequency did not predict an increase or decrease in the levels of either political efficacy or political participation suggest that in general it is more likely that already efficacious political participants use blogs as an additional medium rather than that blogging makes people efficacious. However, when the relationship between blogging and political participation was explored among those who have been blogging for at least one year at the time of the survey, the study found that the longer and the more frequently one has blogged, the more likely he or she is to participate in political activities. This finding suggests that there is at least a circular effect among the characteristics of people, use of media, and their political activities. In other words, when efficacious people read and write about issues of the day (using communication technology such as blogging), they are more likely to participate in political activities, and engaging in political activities might help people become more efficacious, which in turn encourages them to learn more about the issues.

Blogging and Deliberative Democracy

Despite criticism that the Internet will not necessarily motivate ordinary people to create web sites to express their ideas, and that people will use the Internet for the purpose of entertainment rather than political discussions (Davis, 1999; Hill & Hughes, 1998), utopian scholars believed that when technology allows, people will communicate with one another and be engaged in civic discourse (Dahlberg, 2001; Glass, 1996; Margolis et al., 1997). Blogging enthusiasts share this belief and argue that blogging

drastically simplifies the process of publishing, and it gives citizens tools to express themselves and have their voices heard (Blood, 2002). They further argue that the multi-party communication mechanism inherent in blogging technology naturally encourages people to be connected with one another, to be engaged in many-to-many communication, and to share diverse points of view (Froomkin, 2004).

This study found some support for Internet enthusiasts' claims. Bloggers in this study often reported that they blog because they want to express their ideas and share them with other people. Nearly one half of the respondents also reported that they feel that they are connected with friends and family and that they are conversing with other people through blogging. When political bloggers were examined separately from nonpolitical bloggers, this tendency was even clearer. It seems true at least among the participants of this study that the advances in technology that allow high levels of interactivity do motivate citizens to communicate with one another and engage in civic discourse.

The finding that dialogues often occurred between blog authors and readers or among blog readers is another encouraging result for blogging advocates. Blog readers often responded to the author's ideas or opinions in the comment section, which is often available at the end of each blog entry. Although agreeing with an author's viewpoints was most common (about one half of all comments analyzed), blog readers exchanged diverse perspectives with blog authors or other readers, especially when discussing national and international issues. This finding not only disputes the critics' claim that Internet users are not likely to be engaged in political discussions, but it also clashes with

other study findings that online political discussions are highly homogeneous conversations among like-minded people (Wilhelm, 1998).

Researchers examining online political discourse have found that online political discussions are dominated by a handful of vociferous people and that cultivating a culture in which participants consider other viewpoints is difficult to accomplish (Davis, 1999). This study found that bloggers not only express their ideas on their own blog sites, but they also read other blogs and make comments on them. Political bloggers in particular were found to be more actively engaged in reading and commenting on others' blogs.

However, these findings should be taken with caution. Although blogging technology makes many-to-many communication easy, generating a dynamic discussion that reflects diverse viewpoints on a given topic is difficult to accomplish. The reality is that only a small number of high profile bloggers enjoy numerous comments on their blog entries, and the majority of bloggers have only a small number of people reading their blogs and have even fewer people making comments. Although the findings suggest that public deliberation between blog authors and readers occurred, one should remember that expressing viewpoints disagreeing with the author's occurred in less than 20 percent of all comments. In addition, while bloggers' efforts to stay connected with each other through linking are an encouraging sign, one has to be aware that without knowing the exact nature of the sites to which bloggers link their sites, it is difficult to gauge how many viewpoints the bloggers were exposed to.

Technological Advancement

Critics of the Internet have argued that the belief that people will set up web sites to express and share ideas is naïve, because it is not feasible for those without technological knowledge to create and maintain a web site. Blogging technology has made creating a virtual space for public deliberation much easier than before, and this ease-of-use is largely responsible for blogs' explosive growth rate. The blogging phenomenon demonstrates that when a medium suits its users' needs and when it is easy to use, people actively use the medium and also figure out ways in which they can use it as a tool to effectively achieve/satisfy their needs.

The most essential mechanism of blogging technology that highly encourages users to be connected with each other is linking, another advancement that can potentially facilitate deliberative democracy. Linking makes differing ideas more easily accessible and helps discussants to make specific reference to information relevant to their arguments, which in turn helps discussion among many stay coherent. The most frequent type of blog entry content in this study -- quoting information presented by others (in news media sites or in other blog sites) and giving opinions about the information -- demonstrates this possibility.

This study's findings also offer some support for blog advocates' claim that blogging empowers ordinary people by engaging them in the process of publication. They argue that as bloggers prepare to post entries and read comments -- informing themselves about an issue, making their own observations, writing down their thoughts in an organized way, and revising ideas or opinions based on reader feedback -- they have

opportunities to be connected with their own thoughts, and they eventually become 'less reflexive and more reflective' (Blood, 2002).

The respondents of the survey reported that blogging helps them understand certain topics or areas, and it makes them feel confident and authoritative on a topic. About one-third of political bloggers also said that blogging makes them feel that what they say can influence other people. Perhaps there exists some form of pressure, no matter how small it is, to be correct when bloggers write down their ideas and put them out in the public. This pressure may help them diligently seek information, think more deeply about the issues, and be more willing to listen to different points of view. Thus, fully engaging in the entire process of blogging as an author may give them the feeling of empowerment.

Blogging and other communication technology will continue to advance. With the technology that makes retrieving information, interacting with one another, and mobilizing efforts easier than ever, many are likely to turn to communication technology as a tool to voice their ideas and have their interests represented.

Social Constraints

Before blogging and other communication technology achieves its full potential to foster democracy, several constraints at a societal level have to be resolved. As this study found, blogging appears to be a phenomenon among a rather small range of people. Unless the Internet becomes more easily accessible to the general public, including those who are older, less affluent, less educated, and reside in rural areas, communication technology will always have a limited amount of democratizing effects (Fox, 2005).

The issue of access to technology is not the only obstacle to the democratic potential of communication technology. Using technology to seek information, connect with other citizens, and organize requires time, work, and money. When people are too busy meeting their basic needs, and engaging in political discussion online is a luxury they cannot afford, the Internet will never fully live up to its potential to empower people.

Limitations of the Study

Through a survey and content analysis, this study examined the characteristics of bloggers and the content they produced in order to better understand the potential of blogging to facilitate deliberative democracy. It is difficult to examine any effects in a one time cross-sectional survey. This study, thus, intends to provide a snapshot of political bloggers and their activities and motivations during the period when blogging began playing a significant role in a presidential election.

One might argue that political bloggers were found to be highly efficacious and engaged in politics and that they often read and wrote about politics because the study was conducted during a presidential campaign period. Although there is some truth in those claims, it is unrealistic to imagine that large numbers of people are interested in talking about politics all the time, so studying a phenomenon of this nature in a time period when political discussion was abundant can be justified.

This study lacks some questions that might have added valuable information about blogging. For example, questions inquiring respondents' perceived efficacy level before and after they started blogging could have provided additional information to examine the claims that blogging empowers ordinary people. Allowing respondents to

express, in their own words, their perceived roles in a presidential campaign or in democracy could have helped to better understand their motivations for blogging. Asking political bloggers what the future of political blogging is and what the role of blogging will be could have provided additional information, too.

Future Directions

This study examined political bloggers and the content of their logs during a presidential campaign, and it provided empirical evidence to support both utopian and dystopian perspectives of the Internet. The findings of this study suggest that democratizing effects of the Internet and communication technology are often exaggerated, but the findings also illustrate the potential of blogging to promote deliberation among citizens, and thus, facilitate participation in politics.

It is clear that blogging will continue to be an important part of American politics and communication, and further research should be done on this topic to better understand the blogging phenomenon. First, I encourage researchers to conduct longitudinal studies to examine perceptions and attitudes of political bloggers over time. The characteristics of bloggers are closely related to those of active participants in politics, and examining their characteristics will help us better understand what makes people participate in politics. In addition, the study of perceptions and attitudes of bloggers over several years will provide information about how people's attitudes change as technology advances.

Second, I believe the content analysis of political blogs will provide further information to understand bloggers and their activities. Careful analysis of the links

associated with a blogger's site and his/her entries will reveal much about the diversity of discussion and exchanges among bloggers. Analyzing the comments that a blogger receives at the end of each entry can also provide useful information about how cohesive, interactive, and/or participatory the discussion is when several speakers are involved, a quality of democratic discourse.

Finally, efforts to triangulate bloggers, the content they produce, and the readers of blog entries are needed. Although examining the effects of overall blog reading could be useful, investigating the effects of specific information (and the way it was written) on people with different characteristics and on people's learning of the information can offer valuable information to predict the future of blogging and its impact on politics and political participation as well as on society in general.

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APPENDIX I. EMAIL INVITATION

Hello,

My name is Eunseong Kim, and I am a Ph. D student at the School of Journalism at Indiana University. I am currently working on the Ph.D dissertation, and I am emailing you to invite you to participate in my survey.

The primary purpose of the dissertation is to examine blogging and its impact on people. Blogging, especially political blogging, has become a popular and important campaign method in the 2004 presidential election campaign. Supporters of presidential candidates have organized and communicated through blogging so effectively that both Democratic and Republican National Committees granted press credentials to some political bloggers. While blogging rapidly gains popularity among people, empirical examination of blogging and its impact on people has been rare. Information you provide in this survey will help us understand communication behavior (media use), political attitudes, and political behaviors of bloggers and provide useful and important material for empirical examination of blogging and its impact on people.

Your participation in this survey is crucial to the success of this study and to better understanding this new communication phenomenon. The following link takes you to the survey questionnaire. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. After the data analysis, the report will be written in aggregate terms, and thus, no participant will be identified in any forms.

The URL of the survey site is <http://www.hg4u.com>.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Eunseong Kim
Ph.D Candidate
School of Journalism
Indiana University-Bloomington

APPENDIX II. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Which of the following best describes your weblog (blog)?

- (1) Personal journal
- (2) Filter
- (3) K-log
- (4) Mixed
- (5) Other [(explain)_____]
- (6) Don't know

2. In a typical week, how many times do you post entries in your blog?

- (1) Less than once a month
- (2) Less than once a week
- (3) One or two times a week
- (4) Three or four times a week
- (5) Five or six times a week
- (6) Once or twice a day
- (7) More than twice a day
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

3. How often do you read other blogs?

- (1) Never
- (2) Rarely
- (3) Sometimes
- (4) Frequently
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

4. How often do you post comments on other blogs?

- (1) Never
- (2) Rarely
- (3) Sometimes
- (4) Frequently
- (9) Don't Know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

5. Which of the following best describes the main reason for you to keep a weblog?

- (1) To express my ideas and opinions
- (2) To share my ideas with others
- (3) To provide other bloggers with information
- (4) To get information from others
- (5) To persuade other bloggers
- (6) All of the above
- (7) Other (please explain) [_____]
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

6. Which of the following best describes how you feel about blogging?

- (1) I feel that I am connected with my friends and family
- (2) I feel that I am conversing with (potentially) millions of people
- (3) I feel that what I say can influence other people
- (4) All of the above
- (5) Other (please explain) [_____]
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

[Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.]

7. Blogging helps me understand certain topics or areas.

- (1) Strongly disagree (2) Somewhat disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Somewhat agree (5) Strongly agree (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

8. Blogging is a fun and emotional experience.

- (1) Strongly disagree (2) Somewhat disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Somewhat agree (5) Strongly agree (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

9. Blogging makes me feel confident and authoritative.

- (1) Strongly disagree (2) Somewhat disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Somewhat agree (5) Strongly agree (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

10. Blogging helps me stay connected with friends and family, or make new friends.

- (1) Strongly disagree (2) Somewhat disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Somewhat agree (5) Strongly agree (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

11. Blogging is a means of releasing tension in my life.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Somewhat disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Somewhat agree (5) Strongly agree (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

12. Have you [ever] used your blog as a means of informing others about politics or campaigns?

(1) No (2) Yes (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

13. Which of the following best describes the political activity on your blog? (Select all applicable categories)

(1) I don't use my blog to inform others about politics or campaigns.

(2) I encourage [readers] of my blog to register to vote.

(3) I encourage [readers] of my blog to vote in November.

(4) I post entries supporting particular candidate(s).

(5) I post entries opposing to particular candidate(s).

(6) I post entries regarding news about politics or campaigns.

(7) I provide links to candidate web sites.

(8) I provide links to news about politics or campaigns.

(9) Other (please explain) _____

(10) Don't know

(11) Prefer not to answer

14. What is the main content of your weblog?

()

15. How long have you been keeping your weblog?

()

16. Who is the [main] audience for your blog?

()

17. What impact do you think you have on the readers of your blog?

()

18. Have you received any feedback from the readers of your blog? If so, please describe specific examples.

()

Please indicate how strongly [you] agree or disagree with the following statements.

19. I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Somewhat disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4)

Somewhat agree (5) Strongly agree (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

20. I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Somewhat disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Somewhat agree (5) Strongly agree (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

21. I feel that I could do as good of a job in public office as most other people.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Somewhat disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Somewhat agree (5) Strongly agree (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

22. I think that I am as well-qualified about politics and government as most people.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Somewhat disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Somewhat agree (5) Strongly agree (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

23. People like me don't have any say about what the government does.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Somewhat disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Somewhat agree (5) Strongly agree (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

24. Public officials don't care much what people like me think.

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Somewhat disagree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Somewhat agree (5) Strongly agree (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

25. Which of the following media do you rely on most frequently for the news about politics, government, and public affairs?

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| (1) Newspapers | (6) Internet news sites |
| (2) Network television news (ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX) | (7) Candidate web sites |
| (3) Cable television news channels | (8) Political blogs |
| (4) Radio news | (9) Don't know |
| (5) Radio talk shows | (10) Prefer not to answer |

26. How many days in a typical week do you read newspapers for news about politics or public affairs?

- (1) Never
- (2) One or two days a week
- (3) Three or four days a week
- (4) Five days or more
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

27. How much attention do you pay to campaign news in the newspapers?

- (1) None
- (2) Very little
- (3) Some
- (4) Quite a bit
- (5) A great deal
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

28. How many days in a typical week do you watch television news to learn about politics or public affairs?

- (1) Never
- (2) One or two days a week
- (3) Three or four days a week
- (4) Five days or more
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

29. How much attention do you pay to campaign news on television?

- (1) None
- (2) Very little
- (3) Some
- (4) Quite a bit
- (5) A great deal
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

30. How many days in a typical week do you listen to radio political talk shows?

- (1) Never
- (2) One or two days a week
- (3) Three or four days a week
- (4) Five days or more
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

31. How much attention do you pay to radio political talk shows?

- (1) None
- (2) Very little
- (3) Some
- (4) Quite a bit

- (5) A great deal
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

32. How many days in a typical week do you go to Internet news sites to learn about politics or public affairs?

- (1) Never
- (2) One or two days a week
- (3) Three or four days a week
- (4) Five days or more
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

33. How much attention do you pay to the news about politics or public affairs on the Internet?

- (1) None
- (2) Very little
- (3) Some
- (4) Quite a bit
- (5) A great deal
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

34. How often in a typical week do you talk to family or friends about politics or public affairs?

- (1) Never
- (2) Hardly ever
- (3) Sometimes
- (4) Frequently
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

35. Some people discuss politics on-line. How about you? Do you use places such as Usenet newsgroup or listserv to discuss politics with others?

- (1) Never
- (2) Hardly ever
- (3) Sometimes
- (4) Frequently
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

36. How often do you use candidate web sites to learn about a candidate or his/her issue stances?

- (1) Never
- (2) Rarely
- (3) Sometimes
- (4) Frequently
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

37. How much are you interested in presidential election campaigns this year?

- (1) Not much interested
- (2) Somewhat interested
- (3) Very much interested
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

38. Are you registered to vote?

- (2) Yes
- (1) No
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

39. So far as you know now, do you expect to vote in the national elections this coming November?

- (2) Yes
- (1) No
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

40. In the past year, have you written a letter to a politician to express your ideas or concerns?

- (2) Yes
- (1) No
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

41. In the past year, have you attended a campaign rally for any political candidate(s)?

- (2) Yes
- (1) No
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

42. In the past year, have you campaigned for any political candidate(s)?

- (2) Yes
- (1) No
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

43. In the past year, have you participated in any online discussions/forums with a politician?

- (2) Yes
- (1) No
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

44. In the past year, have you donated any money to any political candidate's campaign?

- (2) Yes
- (1) No
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

45. In the past year, have you contacted any political candidate(s) via e-mail?
(2) Yes (1) No (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

46. In the past year, have you called in talk shows on radio or television to discuss politics?
(2) Yes (1) No (9) Don't know (10) Prefer not to answer

47. In what year were you born? _____

48. What is your gender? (1) M (2) F

49. In which one of the following racial groups would you place yourself?

- (1) White (Caucasian)
- (2) Black or African-American
- (3) Asian or Asian-American
- (4) American Indian or Alaska Native
- (5) Pacific Islander
- (6) Hispanic
- (7) Other
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

50. What is the level of education you have completed?

- (1) Grades 1-11
- (2) Completed high school
- (3) Some college
- (4) Graduated from college
- (5) Some graduate work
- (6) Master's degree
- (7) Doctorate, law, or medical degree
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer
- (11) Other

51. What was your total personal income last year?

- (1) Less than 20,000
- (2) 20,000-30,000
- (3) 30,000-40,000
- (4) 40,000-50,000
- (5) 50,000-60,000
- (6) 60,000-70,000

- (7) More than 70,000
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

52. As of today, which of the following best describes your political affiliation?

- (1) Democrat
- (2) Republican
- (3) Leaning toward the Democratic Party
- (4) Leaning toward the Republican Party
- (5) Independent/no party
- (6) Other
- (9) Don't know
- (10) Prefer not to answer

53. Please provide the URL of your blog site. _____

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX III. CONTENT ANALYSIS CODEBOOK

**Coding tips:*

-- *If an entry has an update included, main entry always trumps the update.*

-- *For #23, 27-33, always code the most prominent topic/theme.*

Identification

1. Blog #
2. URL of blog homepage

Blog author(s)

3. Blogger's name (from first page and one click away from first page)
 - (0) None
 - (1) Pseudonym
 - (2) First name (or transparently derived nickname)
 - (3) Full name
 - (4) First name + initial
 - (5) Initial + last name
 - (6) Other
4. Number of blog authors
5. Gender
 - (0) Unknown
 - (1) Male
 - (2) Female
 - (3) Mixed (male + female: multiple blog authors)
6. Age (from first page and one click away from first page)
 - (0) Unknown
 - (1) under 18
 - (2) 18-24
 - (3) 25-29
 - (4) 30-39
 - (5) 40-49
 - (6) 50-59
 - (7) 60-69
 - (8) Over 70
7. Occupation (from first page and one click away from first page)
 - (0) Unknown
 - (Describe) Known
8. Geographical location (from first page and one click away from first page)
 - (0) Unknown
 - (Describe) Known

Activity level of blog

9. Date of current entry (at time of sampling)

10. Time of current entry
11. Date of next-most-current entry (at time of sampling)
12. Time of next-most-current entry

Technical features

13. Blog software
 - (0) Unknown
 - (Give software name) Known
14. Comments on entries
 - (0) Not allowed
 - (1) Allowed
 - (2) Allowed on some posts but not on others
15. Search (on first page)
 - (0) No
 - (1) Yes
16. Archive (on first page)
 - (0) No
 - (1) Yes
17. Links to CMC (on first page; code all that apply)
 - (0) None
 - (1) Email address
 - (2) Guest book
 - (3) Mailing list
 - (4) Other

Overall content

18. Blog type (based on predominant content from entries on first page)
 - (0) Unknown
 - (1) Personal journal
 - (2) Filter
 - (3) K-log
 - (4) Mixed
 - (5) Other

#19-23: Code only the links on the first page

19. Number of links to other blogs (from first page only) _____
20. Number of links to non-blog content: news sources _____
21. Number of links to non-blog content: Other web sites created by the blogger

22. Number of links to non-blog content: other web sites created by others _____
23. General endorsement (code each blog site)
 - (1) Pro Bush
 - (2) Pro Kerry
 - (3) Do not favor either candidate
 - (4) Not clear

(5) Other (specify)

Entry Content

24. Number of paragraphs per entry

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____
- (5) _____

25. _____ Number of links in entry body (put in by blogger)

- (i)_____ (ii)_____ (iii)_____ (iv)_____ (v)_____

26. Type of links (code all that apply)

- (i)_____ (ii)_____ (iii)_____ (iv)_____ (v)_____
- (0) None
 - (1) To other blogs
 - (2) To news sources
 - (3) To other web sites created by blogger
 - (4) To other web sites created by others
 - (5) To a candidate's campaign website
 - (6) Internal to blog

#27-33: code each blog entry separately

27. Topic – political candidates (i)_____ (ii)_____ (iii)_____ (iv)_____ (v)_____

- (0) No
- (1) Bush
- (2) Kerry
- (3) Both
- (9) Other

28. Topic – natl. & intl. issues

- (i)_____ (ii)_____ (iii)_____ (iv)_____ (v)_____
- (0) No
 - (1) Yes (write topic)

29. Topic – evaluating current administration

- (i)_____ (ii)_____ (iii)_____ (iv)_____ (v)_____
- (0) No
 - (1) Yes: Supporting Bush administration regarding natl. or intl. issue(s)
 - (2) Yes: Criticizing Bush administration regarding natl. or intl. issue(s)
 - (3) Yes: Being neutral about Bush administration regarding natl. or intl. issue(s)
 - (9) Other (specify)

30. Topic – evaluating candidate's campaign (i)_____ (ii)_____ (iii)_____ (iv)_____ (v)_____

- (0) No
- (1) Yes: Briefing a candidate's campaign (event or polls)
- (2) Yes: Criticizing a candidate's campaign (tactics)
- (3) Yes: Supporting a candidate's campaign (tactics)
- (4) Yes: Mixed – Containing both support and criticism for a candidate's campaign
- (5) Yes: Making suggestions for campaign
- (9) Other (specify)

31. Topic – campaigning (i)_____ (ii)_____ (iii)_____ (iv)_____ (v)_____

- (0) No
- (1) Yes: encouraging readers to vote for Bush
- (2) Yes: encouraging readers to vote against Bush
- (3) Yes: encouraging readers to vote for Kerry
- (4) Yes: encouraging readers to vote against Kerry
- (5) Yes: encouraging readers to donate money for Bush
- (6) Yes: encouraging readers to donate money for Kerry
- (7) Yes: encouraging readers to volunteer for Bush
- (8) Yes: encouraging readers to volunteer for Kerry
- (9) Yes: encouraging readers to attend Bush campaign rally
- (10) Yes: encouraging readers to attend Kerry campaign rally
- (11) Other (specify)

32. Topic – Other (i)_____ (ii)_____ (iii)_____ (iv)_____ (v)_____

- (0) No
- (1) Other (specify)

33. Nature of entry (i)_____ (ii)_____ (iii)_____ (iv)_____ (v)_____

- (1) Factual information
- (2) Personal opinion without evidence
- (3) Personal opinion with some sort of evidence (e.g., links to other sources) – using evidence (e.g., links to other sources) to support personal opinion
- (4) Quoting factual information provided by others
- (5) Quoting other source's opinion
- (6) Mixed: some factual information and some personal opinion
- (7) Mixed: Quoting other sources and giving his/her opinions about the sources
- (9) Other (specify)

Comments (i)____ (ii)____ (iii)____ (iv)____ (v)____

34. Number of entries garnered (any) comment(s): _____
35. Entry garnered most comments: number of comments _____
36. Entry garnered most comments: number of unique commenters _____
37. Entry garnered most comments: number of comments by blogger _____
38. Entry garnered least comments: number of comments _____
39. Entry garnered least comments: number of unique commenters _____
40. Entry garnered least comments: number of comments by blogger _____
41. Average number of comments (Give number) _____

Coder's note: _____

APPENDIX IV. EXAMPLES OF POLITICAL BLOG SITES

Example A.



happily stuck in ithaca

Sunday, October 31, 2004
What's good for Green Bay is good for Kerry
Cheri and I found the perfect table at our local sports bar, Benchwarmer's. No less than eight television sets were blaring right above our heads. Each one had a different NFL game on it.

To our right, the Houston Texans were playing the Jacksonville Jaguars. To our left, the Green Bay Packers were taking on the Washington Redskins. Cheri, being from Texas, roots on the Texans. But it was this second game that I was most interested in.

Since 1933, the result of the last Redskins home game before the presidential election has accurately predicted the winner. If the Redskins win, the incumbent party maintains the White House. If the challenger wins, the incumbent party is ousted. Could I be such a political junkie that I would spend a Sunday afternoon watching football games?

Apparently.

I wasn't disappointed. Green Bay came out strong from the very beginning, but the game still had some hairy moments... like when Washington scored a touchdown that would have given them the lead by one point, had there not been a flag and subsequent penalty. I sweated that one a little.

In good news for John Kerry (in a superstitious, horoscope-reading kind of way) Green Bay was victorious. The final score was Green Bay-28, Washington-14.

"Oh, yeah, he's going to win. It's guaranteed," said Packers safety Darren Sharper, a Kerry supporter. "I don't have to vote now. Don't even have to go to the polls. Saved me a trip on Tuesday."

Let's hope you're right Darren.

[CNN Sports: Redskins lose, so Kerry should win]
[NFL.com: Beleaguered Favre leads Pack past 'Skins]
 | private feedback | (0) public comments

Hey! I'm Shane... a proud gay progressive Democrat in Ithaca, NY. This blog is about all the funny obnoxious and thought-provoking things that happen in life and politics.

Drop me a line!
shane@happilystuckinithaca.com

the podcast

Ithaca Directory

Ads by Google

Yard Signs Fast Delivery
Manufacture Yard signs, Road signs
High Quality Low Prices Try Us
www.politicalsign.com

NY Politics '06
* Hillary Clinton for U.S. Senate
* Elliot Spitzer for Governor
* Sean Maloney for Attorney General

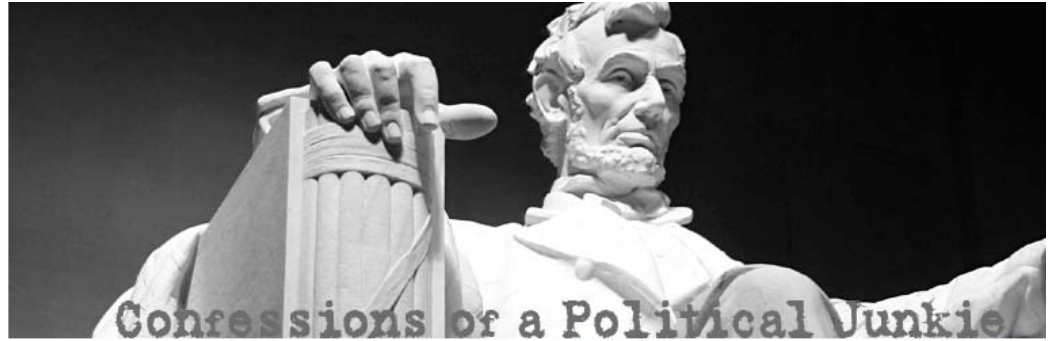
* Tompkins County Dem Committee
* New York State Dem Committee

State/National Politics

URL: <http://www.happilystuckinithaca.com/>

A screenshot of the blog site is presented with the permission of the blog author.

Example B.



October 2004
Monthly Archive

Uncategorized

31 Oct 2004 11:09 am

The Colors of the Presidency

This most likely certifies my status as a political junkie, but the question I have is not who will win on Tuesday, but what color will the states be.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the map colors used by the media varied with the media outlet. In 1980, for example, NBC used blue for Ronald Reagan, the challenger. David Brinkley, then at NBC, said Reagan's victory was "beginning to look like a suburban swimming pool." Time magazine called it "Lake Reagan."

In 1984, the maps varied by network. Some showed Lake Reagan flood the nation, and others showed what could arguably be called (give the outcome) a Reagan slaughter. The map, for some, was covered in red for Reagan, except Minnesota and the District of Columbia.

By the 1990's the media had fairly standardized the color scheme. The challenger was always red and the incumbent was always blue. Notwithstanding that, the National Atlas of the United States, published by the US Geological Survey, maintains that, even in 2000, Bush states were blue and Gore states were red.

The 2000 election might have solidified the red state and blue state distinction. Republicans and conservative voters are now commonly referred to as red state voters

Blogads

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Ads by Google

Republican Revolution?

The Republican Revolution is over. Find out why.
EVOTE.COM

Federal Government Grants

Get \$30,000 in Government Grants Never Repay! Get Your Free Kit.
FedGovernment.FreeGr

Want A Free Grant Today?

Our Experts Uncovered the Top Free Grant Programs Here!
www.paycheckguru.com

URL: <http://www.erickerickson.org/blog/>

A screenshot of the blog site is presented with the permission of the blog author.

VITAE

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Professional Experience

- *Roy W. Howard Research Assistant* for Professor David Weaver, School of Journalism, Indiana University-Bloomington, 2004-2006
- *Instructor*, School of Journalism, Indiana University-Bloomington, 2001-2004
- *Research Assistant*, School of Journalism, Indiana University-Bloomington, Summer 2003
- *Instructor*, Min-Byung Chol Language Institute, South Korea, 1997-1999
- *Technical writer*, Key Publications, South Korea, 1996-1997
- *Reporter*, general assignment, *the Kangnung Herald*, South Korea, 1992-1994

Courses Taught

Instructor, School of Journalism, Indiana University-Bloomington

- Media as Social Institutions (J410), Summer 2004
- Reporting, Writing & Editing II (J201), Spring 2003, 2003-2004 academic year
- Reporting, Writing & Editing I (J200), Fall 2002

Associate Instructor, School of Journalism, Indiana University-Bloomington

- Introduction to Mass Communication (J110), 2001-2002 academic year

Research Interest

New media technologies in political and civic life
Media and democracy
Computer-mediated communication
Media effects, news framing
Research methodology

Publications

- Beam, Randal A., Kim, Eunseong & Voakes, Paul S. (2003). "Technology-induced Stressors, Job Satisfaction and Workplace Exhaustion Among Journalism and Mass Communication Faculty," *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*. 57 (4, Winter), 335-351.
- Rauch, Jennifer, Trager, Kim, & Kim, Eunseong (2003) "Clinging to tradition, welcoming civic solutions: a survey of college students' attitudes toward civic journalism," *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*. 58 (2, Summer), 175-186.
- Conforti, Joseph M. & Kim, Eunseong (2002). "The Chinese Student as Spy: An Emerging Stereotype," *National Social Science Journal*. 17(2), 1-9.

Ongoing Projects

- In collaboration with Deborah Chung (Assistant Professor, University of Kentucky), Lance Porter (Assistant Professor, Louisiana State University), and Kaye Trammell (Assistant Professor, Louisiana State University), "*Uses of and Attitudes toward Blogs among Communication Professionals and Educators*," a survey study investigating uses and perceptions of and attitudes toward weblogs among professional journalists, public relations practitioners, and journalism and PR educators.

Professional Association Memberships

- International Communication Association (ICA)
- Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)
- Midwest Association of Public Opinion Research (MAPOR)

