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**Transnational Convergence or National Idiosyncrasies of
Web-based Political Communication: A Comparative Analysis of
Network Structures of Political Blogospheres
in Germany, Great Britain, and the United States**

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Web-based Political Communication: A Comparative Analysis of
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in Germany, Great Britain, and the United States**

by

Ki Deuk Hyun , B.A.; M.A.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents

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Web-based Political Communication: A Comparative Analysis of
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Ki Deuk Hyun, Ph.D.

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New media technology has brought heated debate about its power to transform existing structures and relations in national and international communications. It is expected to either democratize or reproduce current political communication processes. At the same time, new media technology raises concerns that it may promote a global convergence of communication cultures to the American model. Political blogging, online personal publishing of observations and comments about news and politics with frequent links to other Web sources, provides a useful ground to test these competing theses since political blogging emerged as a citizen-based, alternative media in the U.S. and has subsequently been diffused internationally.

This dissertation compares political blogs in the U.S., the U.K., and Germany to investigate how national political systems and communication cultures shape the structures and practices of political blogging across the three countries. Based on the

media's relative power in the public sphere and communication processes, political communication culture is distinguished as a mediatised culture in the U.S., a politicized culture in Germany, and a culture-in-between in the U.K. Different systems and cultures are predicted not only to foster political blogging to varying degrees but also to shape different fabrics of relations among political bloggers and other participants in political communication in each country.

Using the rankings of political blogs in the three countries, the 106 top political blogs from each country were collected to analyze network structures of political blogospheres and linking patterns of individual political blogs to various websites in the countries. Findings from this dissertation reveal both cross-national commonalities rooted in general human tendencies and national particularities emerging from different structural factors internal to the three countries.

Across the three countries, bloggers make more communicative ties to politically like-minded blogs and websites than to those with opposing perspectives. Blogging networks of the three countries represent very unequal spaces, with a few blogs having a disproportional number of incoming links. Also, blogs are highly insulated geographically with bloggers making links mostly to other bloggers and sites within their own countries.

There are also notable cross-national differences in network structures and linking patterns. The U.S. blogging network has more dense interconnections among its members compared with British and German networks. Also, America's mediatised culture increases the probability that political blogs choose to link more to news media sites compared to British and German bloggers. On the other hand, British and German blogs in politicized cultures make links to government websites more frequently than do American blogs. Additionally, the U.S. political blogosphere shows greater segregation

between blogs of competing political perspectives, compared with U.K. and German blogospheres.

Findings are discussed in light of two key questions about the nature of political blogging (1) as a new technology-enabled medium facilitating cross-national convergence in communication practice, and (2) as a revolutionary venue revitalizing the public sphere and democracy.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has created intense transnational interconnectivity in multiple spheres of the economy, politics and culture, blurring existing, local relations and producing a new complex set of relationships among both local and global actors and units. In the realm of political communication, the globalization process has brought about a fundamental transformation of media systems and cultures of nation-states. The development of global communication systems intensifies transnational contacts and linkages and breaks down national barriers in the production and communication of news and information. New media technologies are believed to facilitate this global process by connecting people, organizations, and nations in new ways. New communication technologies associated with the World Wide Web have sparked heated debates about their promise and limitations in the transformation of existing social relations for the production and circulation of news and information in both national and international arenas.

Considering the transformative potential of new technologies in political communication, two major themes stand out in current discussion. First, new media technology has been considered a driving force in the homogenization of media structures, content, and processes across countries. The homogenization thesis is often translated into the concept of Americanization, global convergence of media and communication toward the form originating in the U.S. Second, global expansion of network communication, represented by the Internet, has raised hopes that it may open up new spaces for citizen deliberation and participation at both national and international levels. Due to its decentralizing features, the Internet has been expected to disrupt existing relationships between ordinary citizens and dominant actors, such as state

institutions and media. On the international level, new communication technologies are seen as likely to facilitate cross-border access to news and information and the transnational organization of world publics around issues of global consequences (Bimber, 2000; Davis, 1999; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Morris & Waisbord, 2001; Rheingold, 1993).

Political blogs are the most recent example of technology that might disrupt current relations in the realm of political communication at national and international levels. Political blogs are online personal publishing of observations and comments about news and public affairs with frequent updates and links to other Web sources. Scholars and commentators observe that blogs tend to blur traditional boundaries in news production and consumption, for example, in the geographical, political, and professional spheres (Reese et al., 2007). Blog enthusiasts argue that political blogs revitalize the public sphere as an alternative, citizen-based form of journalism and facilitate transnational conversations about important global issues (Matheson, 2004; Rosen, 2005; Rothenberg, 2004; Tremayne, 2007).

Political blogs that first emerged in the United States are becoming diffused throughout many parts of the world, providing a useful testing ground for competing theses about the impact of new communication technologies and of political blogs *per se* relative to national and transnational political communication. Although researchers have begun to study blogging phenomena in specific national contexts, cross-national comparative analyses of blogs are rare. Like much of media and communication research in general, discourse about political blogs is largely U.S.-centered. A comparative approach may sensitize the parochial perspective leading to “false generalizations” that extend the idiosyncratic experience of an individual country or culture to others or, in the

alternative, “false particularizations” that misinterpret the common experience as particular (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Esser & Pfetsch, 2004).

Comparative analyses of political blogs address questions mainly related to international diffusion and the interdependence of communication systems and practices, with such concepts as Americanization, globalization, and modernization. Although some argue that communication technologies tend to lead to common forms and practices in political communication across different national settings, others believe that social and political contexts largely determine patterns of adoption and implementation of technologies and related practices. Because “indigenous conditions” both maintain national particularities and facilitate changes from “outside” sources towards homogenization of practices (Blumler & Gurevitch, 2001; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Negrine & Papathanassopoulos, 1996), multi-level influences rooted in national and transnational forces need to be explored to examine the global convergence of political communication culture (Esser, in press; Reese, 2001).

PURPOSE OF STUDY

From a comparative perspective, this dissertation aims to broaden the mostly American discourse of political blogs and to explore to what extent political blogs have emerged as a new element in Western political communication systems and processes. This dissertation, which concentrates on political blogospheres in the U.S., Britain and Germany, suggests and tests a model that national political communication cultures associated with political and media settings influence the relative significance of the political blogging community in national political communication systems. This research also examines culture-specific explanatory variables that affect micro-level linking patterns--an individual blog’s linking decision to other web sources--as well as

macro-level network structures--overall integration and stratification of a blogging community as a whole.

Not only cross-national commonalities and national particularities of political blogging in Western societies are considered but also taken into account is the thesis of “democratizing” or “revolutionary” effects of new technology on national and transnational political communication. Communications scholars have noted that mainstream journalism, through institutional and routinized exchange relations, tends to restrict the range of sources and perspectives to dominant social and political players, thus contributing to the reproduction of existing power structures in society (Gans, 1979; Reese, Grant, & Danielian, 1994; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1978). By focusing on the formation of communicative and social relations through hyperlinks in the political blogospheres of the three countries, this study seeks to examine to what extent blogospheres signal a radical departure from “old patterns” of relationships in political communication: institutionalized linkages between dominant social actors, such as government officials and powerful interests, and journalists through the exchange of information subsidies and privileged access to the media.

To reveal the nature of relationships formed in the political blogosphere, this study employs a social network approach. This approach seeks to examine social structures through the analysis of patterns of relations among constituents of social systems rather than their individual attributes and categories (Rogers & Kincaid, 1981; Scott, 1997; Wellman & Berkowitz, 1977). As a comprehensive intellectual paradigm rather than as a set of methods, social network analysis does not take existing social systems for granted. Wellman (1983) epitomizes the analysts’ main research focus in the study of social systems: “By analyzing complex hierarchical structures of asymmetric

ties, they study power, stratification, and structural changes” (p. 155). Thus, a social network approach enables us to explore whether the political blogosphere represents revolutionary space or structure woven through new relations among actors, as distinguished from the connections found in a traditional, mass-media mediated sphere. Researchers have emphasized especially that social network analysis can be easily applied to describe the structures of ties linking actors on the Web. Since the organization of the Internet itself is a network of networks (Barners-Lee, 1999), a social network approach can be employed as a strong analytic tool to identify and interpret communication structures of the Web (Garton, Haythornthwaite, & Wellman, 1997; Jackson, 1997).

Political blogs in the U.S., the U.K., and Germany were chosen for this study. In selecting countries, three theoretical concerns were considered: (1) comparability, (2) generalizability, and (3) potential influence on other countries. First, one of the greatest concerns in cross-national comparative analysis is the multitude of variables and limited national cases (Lijphart, 1971). One of the main strategies for solving this problem is to identify “comparable” cases to reduce and, therefore, control relevant variables. The three nations have relatively comparable levels of social-economic development; they share considerably common cultural and political backgrounds; they have experienced the “information revolution” in similar ways (Kubicek, Dutton, & Williams, 1997). The second consideration is related to generalizability about political blogging phenomena across the three countries. Although the three countries are comparable in historical, structural and cultural aspects, within Western political communication systems, Britain and Germany represent the “most similar” and the “most different” media systems relative to the U.S. media system. For example, Hallin and Mancini (2004) classify the

U.S. and the U.K. in the same North Atlantic model in which highly market-oriented and autonomous press systems flourish. On the other hand, Germany belongs to the Northern European model where the state plays a significant role in regulating the media and the press has a more distinct political orientation compared to the American press. Due to these similarities and differences in political communication systems and cultures, it is expected that comparisons of the U.S. blogosphere and those of Britain and Germany will offer findings that are meaningful for both generalization and particularization of blogging phenomena across Western democracies. Third, the three countries have served as dominant media models for those countries within their geographic, linguistic and political influence and even globally (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). So, they are assumed to exert strong transnational influence on the adoption and implementation of political blogging in other countries.

For the analysis of micro-level linking practices, this dissertation selected about 100 top political bloggers from each country and analyzed their hypertext linking patterns, focusing on the extent to which those blogs link to a range of professional, official, and citizen-based news sources, with varying political, organizational, and national affiliations. For the scrutiny of the network structure of political blogospheres, this study employs concepts and methods developed in social network analysis and examines and compares (1) network density (the extent to which bloggers are interconnected to each other), (2) network centralization (the extent to which blogger relations are equal in the exchange of hyperlinks, that is, whether a few account for a relatively large number of links), and (3) network sub-group densities (the extent to which sub-groups are formed on the basis of shared attributes, such as political and organizational affiliations) at the level of blogging communities in the three countries.

These structural measures indicate whether and to what extent the political blogosphere constitutes a cohesive, egalitarian, and conversational space for political discourse. To paraphrase in network terms, this dissertation asks three key questions regarding the structural characteristics of the political blogospheres of the three countries: To what extent those political blogospheres represent (1) *dense* or closely knit (cohesiveness) social networks, (2) *centralized* or monopolized spaces dominated by the few (equality), and (3) *divisive* or fragmented zones among the groups of political and organizational differences (conversation).

OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation compares political blogging in the U.S., the U.K., and Germany by analyzing network structures of political blogospheres and linking patterns of the top political blogs in the three countries. In doing so, it attempts to shed light on two important questions about the nature of political blogging: (1) what are the commonalities and particularities in political blogging across the countries and (2) does this new venue of political communication constitute a “democratizing” medium for revitalization of the public sphere and democracy.

In Chapter 2, expectations about political blogging are discussed as citizen-based alternative journalism and as an emerging online sphere for public discussion. Proponents and skeptics’ views about the revolutionary potential for political blogging are presented. This study suggests that an analysis of the network of communicative relations made in political blogospheres offers a fruitful way to address the controversy surrounding political blogging. After reviewing studies about linking patterns and network structures of political blogs, general rules found in the formation of various social networks are presented. In particular, tendencies of homophily and hierarchization in the social

network formation are detailed since those two concepts relate directly to two important empirical and normative questions: fragmentation and inequality in interactions in the blogosphere.

Chapter 3 reviews theories and findings of comparative media research and discusses how the idea of *political communication culture* advanced in this area can contribute to explaining commonalities and particularities of political blogging in the U.S., the U.K., and Germany. Political communication cultures in Western societies are divided into the American mediatized culture and the German politicized culture with the U.K. in between. This distinction is based on the relative power of news media in the production, processing, and communication of political messages. In a mediatized culture, the media serve as the primary actor for the interpretation of meaning about public issues and affairs, whereas in a politicized culture, political institutions dominate the public sphere. The distinction elaborates how different communication cultures not only affect the extent and magnitude of blogging activities but also shape the blogging network into different fabrics of relations between the two cultures.

Chapter 4 presents specific hypotheses and research questions based on previous reviews about social network theories and comparative communication research. Those hypotheses and research questions consist of two parts: macro-level network analysis and micro-level link analysis. In the network analysis, the structure of the political blogging community of each country is mapped and cross-nationally compared. In the link analysis, linking patterns of top political bloggers from each country are explored and compared.

Chapter 5 provides detailed sampling and coding procedures employed for this study. Using multiple blog ranking sites, the 106 top political blogs in the number of

incoming links were selected from each country, making a combined total of 318 blogs. The categories for blog and link coding are presented, such as website types, political orientations, and organizational and national affiliations. Key network concepts and their measurements--density, sub-group density, centrality, and centralization--used in this study are elaborated.

Chapters 6 and 7 report results of hypothesis and research question testing. Chapter 6 provides findings about blogging network structures of individual countries and compares them cross-nationally. Chapter 7 presents and compares findings about linking patterns of top political blogs in the three countries.

The final chapter, Chapter 8, summarizes major results found in this dissertation. This concluding chapter returns to the two major questions about political blogging with regard to cross-national commonalities and national particularities in blogging practices. Also, it addresses the question about the potential for political blogging as a revolutionary and democratizing medium for journalism and democracy. Finally, limitations of this study and directions for future research are discussed.

CHAPTER 2. POLITICAL BLOGGING AS A NEW VENUE OF COMMUNICATION

Weblogs or blogs refer to online personal publications with frequently updated contents displayed in reverse chronological order with hyperlinks to information and commentaries on other web sources. Initially, researchers see blogs as an online interactive journal mainly for self-expression or self-presentation. As the functions of blogs have become diversified, however, the definition of blog is getting more elusive. For example, blogs function as personal diaries, community forums, reporting and commentary tools, knowledge collecting and sharing tools, political communication sites, and so on. Accordingly, topical areas blogs deal with range from the private to the public and from the trivial to the serious, including sports commentary, celebrity gossip, news and public affairs or any subjects of interest. Since blogs have various purposes and topical areas, other researchers find the essential nature of blogs from the networking features, mainly through the links to and discussion of others within interconnected and interdependent network, or the blogosphere (Gil de Zuniga & Rojas, 2009). Therefore, this study regards the blog as an online, interactive form of personal publication, with varying functions, topical areas, and styles, but operating within the blogging communities and actively engaging in these virtual communities for expression, information, discussion and association.

The definition of political blog is as troublesome as the definition of blog in general. Drawing the line between the political and the non-political itself is exercise of power in the sense that this distinction itself can effectively exclude the less privileged actors and their interests and concerns from the boundaries of legitimate “common concerns” in the public arena (Fraser, 1989, 1992). Because this study uses the blog

ranking websites for the sampling of political blogs, the decision about which blogs qualify as “political” blogs is made prior to this research. An initial observation of the top bloggers of the three countries indicates that they tend to focus on political issues, events and figures usually defined by political and media systems of the three countries. To give a brief view of the topics emphasized in these top blogs, posts of the conservative Hot Air and the liberal Talking Points Memo of the U.S. were checked on the date of January 17th, 2008. Among the 22 posts in Hot Air, 16 posts were about the 2008 U.S. presidential primary election, followed by two posts about “war on terrorism,” two on “liberal media” criticism and one national economy and one crime issue. Heavy emphasis on the primary was also found in the liberal Talking Points Memo, with 15 topics about the primary election and only one “war on terrorism” and “conservative media” criticism, respectively, out of total of 17 posts for the day. Thus, major topics and objects dealt in top political blogs in the U.S. reflect political contestations occurring between the two major political parties.

Although most blogs deal with personal musings about individual bloggers’ daily lives (Schmidt, 2007), political blogs have drawn great attention for their potential to transform current political communication processes in the U.S. For instance, scholars and commentators suggest political blogging can break down old distinctions between professional journalists and citizens in the production and communication of news and information. However, discussion about the nature of political blogging is quite divisive. While some consider political blogs as a revolutionary medium correcting the wrongdoings of the mainstream news media (Glaser, 2004; Rosen, 2005; Rothenberg, 2004), others view political blogging as a threat to a healthy public sphere by limiting public discussion to only like-minded bloggers (Howard, 2005; Wolfe, 2004).

Considering the controversy surrounding the nature of political blogging, it is necessary to review the rationale behind both optimistic and pessimistic views about political blogging. After this review, the network perspective about political blogs is discussed because network properties largely define the nature of political blogging as alternative journalism and as a counter-space to the mainstream media-mediated public sphere. In the last section of this chapter, two principal rules -- homophily and hierarchy ---that have been observed in various forms of social networks are introduced to show how these rules are applied to the formation of communicative ties occurring in the political blogosphere.

EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL BLOGGING

The blog community in the United States, which started with a small group of people in the late 1990s, has grown exponentially over the past 10 years. Blog search engines like technorati.com and blogpulse.com estimated 50 and 85 million blogs by 2006 (Schmidt, 2007). Although it is difficult to determine the exact number due to the dynamic and decentralized organization of the blogosphere, one study estimates that about seventeen percent of blogs deal with news and public affairs, exclusively or in part (Papacharisis, 2004). The blogs that cover public affairs and news draw a great deal of public attention and have triggered scholarly and professional debates about their impact on established journalism and politics. Scholars and commentators have focused on two related aspects of political blogs in political communication: as a citizen-based alternative journalism and as an emerging online sphere for public discussion.

As a potentially new form of citizen-based journalism, proponents of blogs assert that political blogs reveal the weak points of mainstream journalism. Blogging is viewed as a challenge to the “sovereignty” of the institutional media in the realm of production

and dissemination of public information by providing competing and complementary political information and commentaries (Rosen, 2005). In contrast to highly centralized and elite-source based mainstream journalism, blogging is seen as a decentralized and citizen-based approach to journalism. News reporting on blogs is the process of collaborative efforts among citizens to collect and organize resources and knowledge distributed among the public (Rothenberg, 2004).

The other closely related discourse about blogs is that the political blogosphere can foster open, intelligent, and interactive public discussion among citizens. The term blogosphere itself is reminiscent of Habermas' public sphere concept (1989) that refers to a public arena of rational-critical discussion on public affairs.

Although Habermas's original idea of public sphere provides crucial intellectual resource for theorizing the relationship between public communication and democratic polity, it has been subject to vigorous criticism for its problematic assumptions about the conditions that enable rational-critical debates (See Calhoun, 1992). Fraser (1989, 1992) specified four dubious assumptions underlying Habermas's public sphere concept that might not be applicable in actually existing democracy. First, she criticized that Habermas's assumption of "bracketing" social inequalities in the public sphere is neither possible nor desirable. Even if the formal exclusion of social groups, on the basis of the participant's class, gender and race, etc., is removed, informal protocols of style and decorum and prevailing cultures in public arenas effectively exclude those subordinated social groups and help to sustain the dominant groups' control of public communication. Second, Fraser argued that Habermas's assumption of the single, overarching public sphere serves to maintain both discursive and social inequalities, and instead suggested that separate, multiple public spheres of counterpublics would undermine the existing

system of dominance by allowing the socially disadvantaged groups to articulate their own interests and develop their own discursive strategies and tools. Third, she noted that Habermas's scope of "common concern" as a legitimate domain of public debate is too narrow to encompass self-interest or group interest of the less powerful. She provided issues related to private properties and domestic life as two examples lying outside legitimate public area in Habermas's conception of publicity. The exclusion of the two domains from public communication ultimately serves to reproduce class and gender dominance. Finally, Fraser argued against Habermas's strict separation between the state and the civil society for functioning public sphere and democracy, which inevitably limits the role of public communication only to opinion formation. This limitation produces "weak publics" whose deliberation does not directly translate into authoritative decision-making regarding the use of state power.

In sum, Fraser's criticism of Habermas's conception of the public sphere focuses on its bourgeois character which excludes the subordinated groups and their perspectives in the public arenas and thus serves to perpetuate the existing system of dominance and subordination in societies. The mass media, owned and operated for profit by the powerful, support the existing power relationships by circulating news and views of the dominant and limiting the subordinated groups access to the public arenas. In this respect, proponents of political blogging emphasize that this emerging discursive space would disconnect the traditional linkage between the public sphere and its material base. As critics of Habermas argue, the bourgeois public sphere, especially the mediated spaces like the mass media, necessitates material resources to participate in the discursive interactions. Production and access to public information has been a privilege allowed to powerful social groups and institutions that dominate both material and cultural resources

in societies. Political blogging might weaken constraints that this political economy imposes on the production of public information and knowledge. Simple, easy-to-use technological tools associated with blogging enables non-traditional actors to overcome the structural barriers to entry into traditional, media-mediated public arenas. Low-cost, often free software available to bloggers renders the cost associated with the production and circulation of information and knowledge almost nothing. The structure of the Web itself—often characterized as open, decentralized and unregulated—heightens the expectation that discursive interactions emerging in this sphere would overcome the limitations found in the traditional public arenas.

Unlike the public sphere mediated by the mass-media, this emerging discursive space enables every social actor to engage in discussion so that citizens can become an active public rather than passive consumers and spectators of politics. While traditional mass media restrict the range of sources and voices to political and social actors who are dominant, the blogosphere can facilitate and increase both horizontal conversations among ordinary citizens and vertical communication between citizens and political elites. The blogosphere is also seen as a way to open up a new global communicative space where world publics have the potential to transcend geographical limits and discuss issues of global importance (Reese et al., 2007). In this respect, blogging seems to epitomize what Rheingold (1993) imagined about the positive impact of media technology for democracy, transforming an individual into “a publisher, an eyewitness reporter, an advocate, an organizer, a student or teacher, and potential participant in a world-wide citizen-to-citizen conversation” (p. 193).

However, critics of blogs are skeptical that political blogs actually represent a viable alternative to existing journalism and the public forum. They criticize the lack of

independent reporting by bloggers along with limited perspectives and sources found in commentaries in blogs, despite the fact that the Web provides sources with a wide range of ideologically and politically alternative views. Skeptics point to the power imbalance and fragmentation that exist in this sphere. They observe that a few top blogs, so-called A-blogs, grab most of the public and media attention and that public discussion in the blogosphere tends to lack interaction across different political orientations (Hass, 2005).

Much of the controversy about the reality and potential of political blogs as a citizen-based alternative form of journalism and as a new online public sphere evolves around questions of whether and to what extent political blogs represent radically different forms of relations in the production, processing and communication of public information. Alternative forms of relations in the political blogosphere should lead to the emergence of a cohesive, egalitarian, and conversational space through citizen collaboration and deliberation in the production and communication of political information and opinion. An examination of communicative and social interaction in the blogosphere may offer clues as to whether political blogs function merely as online “echo chambers” that reproduce existing relations in political communication or whether the blogs provide an alternative space for the exchange of public information and discussion. This alternative space should manifest itself both in participating bloggers’ linking patterns and in the network structure of political blogging communities. In network terms, the alternative space should constitute an area of densely interconnected conversations within the blogging community as a whole (i.e., high network density), across lines of political differences (i.e., high between-group density) in a fairly egalitarian manner (i.e., low network centralization). In addition, social and communicative relations expressed by means of linking in the blogosphere should go

beyond established patterns -- privileged media access of governmental and corporate elites and their dominance in a media-mediated public sphere -- with attention being directed instead towards a wide range of politically and geographically alternative sources and perspectives.

This study suggests that the most promising approach to test the “revolutionary” effects of blogging on political communication is to look at the way political bloggers create relations between other social actors and themselves and how the structural nature of this networked community confines political discourse, either facilitating or impeding conversations among competing perspectives in the blogosphere. The networked characteristics of blogs have already drawn much scholarly attention as a defining feature of blogs. In the following section, various theoretical and empirical studies that address this topic are reviewed.

BLOGGING COMMUNITY AS A NETWORK

In form, blogs do not differ radically from other genres of online publishing, such as personal websites. Rather, the distinguishing characteristic is the *social* character, the sense of community, which exists among individual bloggers (Marlow, 2004). Linking, supported by different technical means, serves as the main instrument to signal and maintain social and communicative relations within blogging communities. Blood (2002) argues: “I would go so far as to say that if you are not linking to your primary material when you refer to it...you are not keeping a weblog” (pp. 18-19).

Hyperlinks in an individual blog post may serve different communicative goals and functions. Reese et al. (2007) examined the referral patterns of the “sender” in their linking to other websites and sources, and found that a simple referral to document and elaborate topics and issues at hand was most common (92.6%), followed by a positive

referral to support and reinforce sender's own position (5.8%) and a negative referral to criticize and undermine linked sources (1.7%). Although the analysis of specific functions of hyperlinks is beyond the scope of this study, to provide a brief description of the role of hyperlinks in blogging discourse, all hyperlinks appearing in the posts of the conservative Hot Air and the liberal Talking Points Memo of the U. S. were checked for the date of January 17th, 2008. In regarding the "post" as main unit of analysis, this study follows Reese et al. (2006) coding scheme: among a total of 51 hyperlinks in Hot Air, 39 were simple referrals (76.5 %), followed by 10 positive (19.6%) and two negative referrals (4.0%). Likewise, simple reference was the most common type of hyperlinks in Talking Points Memo, with 18 neutral referrals (90%) out of total 20 hyperlinks. Only one positive (5%) and negative referral (5%) was made, respectively, in the same date. A post in the Hot Air, titled "Jonah Goldberg explains liberal fascism on the Daily Show," exemplified a typical use of simple, positive, negative reference of linked to websites. In this post, Hot Air treated the confrontation between conservative commentator Jonah Goldberg and the show's host Jon Stewart about Goldberg's attempt to make historical connection between "liberalism" and "fascism." Accusing the show of deliberately editing the interview to ridicule and trivialize Goldberg's point, the post made two simple referrals to provide general, background information about the topic: link to Amazon webpage about Goldberg's book, "liberal fascism" and the episode featuring him at the FOX's Hannity & Colmes show. The Hot Air post also made two links to the other conservative blog The Corner, supportive of the original post, accusing Stewart's "unfair", "hostile" treatment of Goldberg. The final link of the post was directed to The Daily Show website with negative assessment that the site was flooded with negative public responses and calls for the full version of the interview.

This study assumes that hyperlinks in the political blogs signifies the inclusion of certain actors and voices to the exclusion of others from interaction and communication in the blogosphere. The inclusion of certain actors is regarded as bloggers' willingness to engage in discursive interactions with linked to sources and actors whether they represent supporting or opposing viewpoints regarding the issues and topics of sender's interest. In the mainstream news media, the inclusion and exclusion of certain groups and voices has served to police the legitimate boundaries of public debate and deliberation (Gitlin, 1980; Hallin, 1986, Reese, Grant, & Danielian, 1994). Hallin (1986), for example, showed how mass media fulfill their ideological function by celebrating certain issues, groups and their viewpoints, and at the same time by rejecting others unworthy of being heard in the news.

This boundary-setting function of the mass media has been a major reason for criticism of bourgeois public sphere in late capitalistic society (Fraser, 1889, 1992). To constitute alternative, counterpublic spheres to mainstream public arenas, the political blogosphere should encompass more diverse social groups and their perspectives outside the attentions of mainstream media and politics. Although this study does not explore what specific function individual hyperlink signals in the blogosphere, the analysis of linking patterns and network structure of this study will reveal which social groups are regarded as legitimate participants, and which perspectives worthy of being debated in this sphere.

As a building block of a larger structure, an individual blogger's links contribute to constructing a network of a blogging community, or the blogosphere. Several scholars have suggested that micro-level linking patterns as well as macro-level network structures of those relations define the essential characteristics of political blogs as

journalism and public forum (Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Herring et al., 2005; Tremayne, 2007).

Linking characterizes news discourse of blogs as a form that is essentially different from the one established in mainstream journalism. Matheson (2004) argues that the heavy use of hyperlinks in blogs places blogging epistemologically on a different ground than that of institutionalized forms of news, and characterizes political blogging as “journalism of connection.” He suggests:

The news weblog engages in a different communicative endeavor to the dominant news practice, making less of a claim to know what readers want or to know what an event means. It depends upon a different model of its authority, establishing itself as a site of multiple knowledge and of breadth of knowledge of the world” (p. 460).

While traditional forms of news tend to assume a single, authoritative interpretation of events, hyperlinks on blogs allow for “multiperspectival,” “multivocal” and “intertextual” forms of news discourse and expose blog readers to a multiplicity of competing truth claims (Bruns, 2003; Gallo, 2004; Gorgura, 2004).

Also, hyperlinks give blogs power which emerges from their communal nature. Even if individual blogs have marginal readership compared to mainstream media, the collectivity of blogs can create a loud “buzz” among the public and media (Drezner & Farrell, 2004). Hyperlinks act as communicative and social strands that weave together otherwise individual and atomized political blogs, and the networking property of hyperlinks renders distinctive characteristics to the blogging community in the production and communication of public information. Instead of the hierarchical news-making process of mainstream journalism, one argues, “The editorial process of the blogs takes

place between and among bloggers, in public, in real time, with fully annotated cross-links” (Rosenberg, 2002). Thus, blog enthusiasts argue that individual bloggers’ credibility and accuracy are of less concern because each blog acts as a check for errors on the others. Even concerns about the fragmentation of the blogosphere across existing political differences deserve less merit because bloggers’ practice of linking tends to direct their links to competing bloggers, thereby allowing blog readers to compare and contrast the validity of competing arguments. Moreover, the networked structure of the blogging community itself influences the way news and opinions spread through the blogosphere in terms of both speed and the range of their spread. For instance, conservative bloggers very promptly and strongly responded to a forged CBS document about the military experience of President George W. Bush possibly because the densely-knitted network structure among the conservative community enabled rapid diffusion of the news and mobilization of opinion (Drezner & Farrell, 2004).

Taken together, linking patterns of political blogs reflect the extent to which they depart from traditional forms of news. Overall network structure signifies how this new sphere is configured with specific relations as well as how it shapes and constrains the nature of public discussion occurring in this forum. Several studies have explored linking patterns and networked structures of blogospheres mainly in the context of the United States. At the micro-level of linking patterns, they found that political bloggers tend to link to the traditional news media more than to other bloggers or alternative news sources (Adamic & Glance, 2005; Reese et al., 2007; Wall, 2005). At the community-level, the network structure of a blogosphere is characterized by “power law” where there are relatively few blogs with a high number of incoming links and most blogs have only a limited number of incoming links. (Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Herring et al., 2005; Shirky,

2003) Studies have also found fragmentation within the political blogosphere: liberal and conservative blogs link primarily within their own separate communities, with fewer interactions across political differences (Ackland, 2005; Adamic & Glance, 2005; Hargittai, Gallo, & Kane, in press; Tremayne et al., 2006).

Although these empirical results provide an initial picture of political bloggers and their community, earlier studies do not address questions about what factors are related to individual political bloggers' linking practices and the overall network structure of their community. This study suggests that the political communication culture associated with political and media structure influences the significance of a blogging community in political communication processes, and those variables together affect both individual practices and the larger structure of relations within a blogosphere. Although only comparative analyses can verify this thesis, current studies are almost exclusively limited to U.S. political blogs. Prior to exploring comparative perspectives to explain blogging across countries, general rules found in various forms of social networks are discussed in the next section. Since these rules are associated with general human predispositions and social conditions, they are assumed to affect the formation of social and communicative ties in the blogosphere, as well.

RULES OF SOCIAL NETWORK: HOMOPHILY AND HIERARCHY

In this study, the political blogosphere is considered as a network of individual blogs connected by social and communicative ties expressed through hyperlinks. Social scientists have suggested several regularities in the formation of connections in a social network. This study assumes that general rules found in various forms of social networks also affect ways that political bloggers make ties with other bloggers and websites in the political blogosphere. Since equality and fragmentation in the political blogosphere have

been major normative interests, two related concepts of homophily and hierarchization that appear in the social network literature are discussed.

Homophily

Scholars have observed the general human tendency of making social and communicative ties on the basis of similarities of key demographic, psychological, and behavioral characteristics. McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook (2001) describe homophily as the “principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people” (p. 416). In their study, Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) identified two major sources of similarities in social interaction: status homophily and value homophily. Status homophily refers to major socio-demographic variables shaping the nature of social network ties, including age, gender, race, education, and social class. Value homophily, on the other hand, represents people’s shared inner states, such as beliefs and attitudes, which facilitate social connectivity among them.

Similarity has many positive functions in social interactions “to ease communication, increase predictability of behavior, and foster trust and reciprocity” (Brass, 1995, p. 51), and “(to) smooth the coordination of activity and communication” (McPherson et al., p. 435, 2001). Although these psychological and social benefits of homophily stress social actors’ ability to select their partners in various forms of social relations (e.g., friendship, marriage), social contexts in which people are located greatly affect the patterns of social ties. For instance, geographical proximity increases the likelihood of making social and communicative ties simply by raising the chance to encounter other people in proximate areas. Families, occupations and formal and informal associations are other social contexts that might facilitate or hinder homogenous social ties (McPherson et al., 2001).

In political communication research, the homophily tendency has been discussed mainly in the area of people's political conversation networks and with regard to the impact of size and heterogeneity of those networks on the quality of democratic life. In normative political theory, communication across lines of political difference has been regarded as an essential element to maintain an effective democracy (Barber, 1984; Calhoun, 1988; Habermas, 1989). Exposure to dissimilar views enhances the quality of public deliberation by increasing awareness of rationales for their own viewpoints and opposing perspectives (Mutz, 2002; Price, Cappella, & Nir, 2002), expands tolerance towards oppositional views (Mutz, 2002), and, therefore, establishes legitimacy of ultimate political decisions (Fearon, 1988; Manin, 1987).

Despite the benefits of cross-cutting political interaction for democratic citizenship, scholars note that people tend to limit the network of their everyday political talks to those who are politically like-minded (Calhoun, 1988; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995). Using network terms, Mutz (2006) summarizes that interpersonal communication in the U.S. represents the "dense, close-knit social networks" of like-minded people, with few "weak ties" to groups with different political orientations. In this respect, communication technology has been expected to reduce the division of communication networks due to contextual constraints like geographic distance and political differences. News media have been valued as an important venue through which people are exposed to cross-cutting political perspectives in America (Mutz & Martin, 2001). The advent of new media technologies, like the Internet, has brought about scholarly interest in the technological potential to change and reconfigure existing patterns of social networks (Monge & Contractor, 2003). New media technologies may enhance people's selection capability in making social ties beyond the traditional bounds

limited by geography and social systems (Hampton & Wellman, 2000). Social use of the Internet (e.g., e-mail and chatting), in contrast to non-use, has been found to relate to more social connections (Zhao, 2006) and to foster social and communicative ties both within the user's own group and across groups (Kavanaugh, Reese, Carroll, & Rosen, 2004).

However, pessimists argue that new media technologies increase rather than reduce people's tendency to form homogenous networks for political discussion. Increased capability of selectivity is more likely to lead to "cyberbalkanization," the segregation of online public spheres along existing social and political affiliations (Putnam, 2000). Sunstein (2001) warns, "New technologies, emphatically including the Internet, are dramatically increasing people's ability to hear echoes of their own voices and to wall themselves off from others" (p. 49). Some observe that political blogs are the most recent manifestation of cyberbalkanization which is full of divisive partisan expressions but void of public deliberation (Howard, 2005; Wolfe, 2004).

Hierarchy

Social scientists have noted that the formation of social hierarchy is an almost universal tendency found in all forms of social groups across a wide range of scales and contexts (Merton 1968; Sherif, 1966). Even social organizations and systems, starting with fervently democratic structures, tend to end up with a concentration of power to a few (*cf.* Michels, 1911), a trend often called the "iron law of oligarchy."

The size of community often facilitates this process of stratification within a community. In a small group context, an actor's status is often decided by group members' evaluation of the actor's individual qualities and approval of his or her position (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961). However, in a large group or organization, decisions

regarding an individual's qualities and status through direct interactions become almost impossible. Krackhardt (1994) termed this situation as the "law of n-squared": As the number of actors in a network increases over time, the number of possible links among them increases geometrically beyond everyone's communication capacity. Therefore, the attainment of social status is decided not solely by an "objective" evaluation of an individual's performance. Rather, status depends on actors' relative positions and perceived relationship to others within the social structure or network. In a large group, people are therefore likely to seek others' guidance for their own judgment of an individual's qualities. Since an individual's judgment relies on social cues from others, the original differences in status among network members tend to amplify over time, with the tendency of "the richer getting richer" (Frank, 1985; Gould, 2002; Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000; Stewart, 2005). Scholars have observed a similar tendency in the so-called "power law" distribution of incoming links on the general Web and in the blogosphere where very few sites have huge incoming links, and most of sites have only a few (Barabasi, 2002; Hindman, Tsioutsoulouklis, & Johnson, 2004; Shirky, 2003).

The two basic rules--homophily and hierarchization--often found in various forms of social networks, as discussed above, are closely related to general human behaviors. However, this study presumes that these general human tendencies are influenced by specific social circumstances. A review of homophily literature, for instance, illuminates two key points for the study of the political blogospheres across countries from a comparative perspective. First, the human propensity to make social ties on the basis of affinities with others will persist across geographic areas due to its general benefits. Second, because selective interactions are constrained by various contextual factors such as social and political arrangement and types of communication platforms, social and

communicative interactions in the political blogospheres of different countries are also likely to be influenced by those structural variables. Similarly, the tendency of social hierarchy occurs within a “defined social network” in which social actors evaluate other network members’ qualities and positions. This social character of the network assumes that the stratification process will accelerate when individuals share an identity as a group and make socially influenced judgments about others’ qualities. Therefore, even if blogging populations of different countries are similar, hierarchization processes may vary depending on the extent of shared identities among bloggers. When political blogging is largely individual endeavors without much connection or relation with others, hierarchization is expected to emerge more slowly.

In this chapter, current discussions are provided surrounding the nature of political blogging as citizen-based journalism and as an online public sphere. To address competing arguments, the network perspective is suggested as a fruitful approach for exploring the political blogosphere as a community of individual blogs connected by social and communicative ties. Two basic rules--homophily and hierarchy--found in the formation of various social networks are introduced to determine how these concepts may be employed to explain the political blogospheres across three countries. The tendencies of homophily and hierarchy in social connections are considered both as a general human inclination and as a context-specific, social characteristic. Because this study considers different political and media systems as important contextual factors shaping blogospheres, the following chapter deals with relationships between structural factors and blogging networks of three countries.

CHAPTER 3. EXPLAINING THE POLITICAL BLOGOSPHERE FROM A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

One of the main goals of this dissertation is to explore to what extent political blogging has become an important venue in Western political communication systems. To do this, a comparative approach is employed to investigate both commonalities and idiosyncrasies in communication systems and cultures (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Graber, 1993; Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990; Pfetsch & Esser, 2004). This dual strategy for seeking similarities and differences enables both generalizations and specifications about communication phenomena across different countries. Because this study focuses on political blogging in Western democracies, one important question is what would be the most systematic method to select countries for the understanding of political blogging. Since Mill (1872), who first proposed systematic comparative inquiry, comparative researchers have suggested two opposing approaches: *most similar system design* which attempts to identify differences and *most different system design* which aims to find similarities across systems and cultures. To emphasize differences, researchers should select countries having the most similar characteristics whereas to reveal similarities, they should choose countries having the most different qualities (Przeworski & Teune, 1970; Wirth & Kolb, 2004). In cross-national political communication research of Western societies, the U.K. is regarded as the system most similar to U.S. practices and cultures while the German system is the most different to the U.S. model. (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Mazzoleni, 1987; Pfetsch, 2001). Therefore, this dissertation assumes that a comparison of the three countries will produce meaningful findings about political blogging in Western societies.

Then, from a comparative perspective, how can the linking patterns and network structures of political blogospheres be explained across different countries? The starting point is an examination of U.S. political bloggers and their community because the U.S. is the epicenter of political blogging and has accumulated the most public and scholarly discussion about the nature of political blogging as a new venue of political communication. In the U.S., observers often attribute the emergence and spread of political blogging to public suspicions of values and discontent with the performance of “big journalism” (Glaser, 2004). Lowrey (2006) argues that internal and external constraints of professional journalism leave out some areas of news and public information, such as partisan expressions and non-elite based news, which is being “poached” by bloggers. These observations imply that the emergence of political blogging in the U.S. is closely associated with the values and practices of the mainstream news media and the underpinning political and social settings. Then, the next logical step seems to be to connect how the political and media “variables” affect particular practices of political blogging and overall structures of political blogospheres from a comparative perspective.

Earlier comparative studies have explored the institutional linkage of political systems and media systems and its relations with norms and practices of participating actors in political communication processes. Focusing on the relative “discretionary power” of the media in the production, processing, and communication of political messages, scholars have suggested two distinct cultures of political communication or journalism in Western democracies: namely, a “mediatized or media-centered culture” and a “politicized or party-centered culture” (Mazzoleni, 1987, Pfetsch, 2001, Semetko et al., 1991). Although the distinction between mediatized versus politicized cultures is

more a gradation than a dichotomy and there is a transnational trend of convergence toward a mediatized culture, comparative scholars have suggested that the U.S. represents the most mediatized culture whereas Germany belongs to a politicized alternative and Great Britain is in between (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Pfetsch, 2004).

The two cultural extremes are associated with contrasting structural settings. A mediatized culture flourishes in a political system where political organizations are so weak that the media becomes the primary actor of the public sphere for the interpretation of meanings of public issues and events. By contrast, a politicized culture thrives in a condition in which strong political organizations dominate the public sphere and provide political interpretation (Hallin & Mancini, 1984; Pfetsch, 2004). As an initial step to clarify system-level factors shaping political blogging across countries, the relationship between political systems and journalism cultures is discussed in detail, based on theories of democracy and pluralism.

POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND JOURNALISM CULTURES

This study employs two closely related concepts about the political system in Western countries: democratic theory, which addresses normative expectations about the role of citizen participation in politics, and pluralism, which deals with organizing rules relating individual citizens with governing institutions in a political process. Since media cultures are strongly defined by normative and institutionalized rules of democracy, these two concepts are expected to help understand distinguishing political norms and structures underpinning politicized and mediatized cultures which, in turn, regulate the basic rules of interactions among participants in political communication processes.

First, dividing democratic theories into two competing models of *participatory* versus *representative* democracy, Ferree et al (2002) argue that the U.S. is based on a

participatory model, whereas Germany is closer to a representative one. This distinction is based on normative assumptions about the role of ordinary citizens in political processes and the public sphere. The participatory model of democracy encourages citizen participation in the public sphere and in political decision-making because self-government is regarded as the essence of democracy. This version of democracy stresses that citizen participation should be extended to every process of policy-making, not limited to elections. Barber (1984) epitomizes the participatory model of democracy: “Self-government is carried on through institutions designed to facilitate ongoing civic participation in agenda-setting, deliberation, legislation, and policy implementation” (p. 151). The history of U.S. democracy reflects many instances of this tradition of direct and participatory model “from Jacksonian Democracy via the Progressive Movement to the modern presidential primaries and the recent popularity of direct democratic forms of participation, such as ballot initiatives and referenda” (Hagen, 2000, p.57).

On the contrary, in a representative model with roots that go back to Burke (1790) and Mill (1861), politics is understood as the business of political leaders and experts although the ultimate political authority lies with the citizens to whom politicians are accountable. Expecting active and positive roles of citizens in the public sphere is neither realistic nor desirable for democracy. Citizens lack motivation and expertise to deal with complex domains of policy-making, and their populism may obstruct and complicate democratic governance (Schudson, 1998). Their main role, therefore, is limited to the periodic selection of political parties and leaders in elections who will represent their political interests and will. Experiencing the failure of the Weimar Republic which had many elements of direct and participatory democracy, the founders of Western Germany deliberately excluded those elements in the basic law. Thus, Hagen (2000) notes, “the

skepticism against direct democratic means on a national level is even more widespread in Germany than in the US and possibly the UK” (p. 63).

The contrasting expectations about citizen participation in democracy in the two theories are directly associated with the idea of pluralism, which addresses the organizing patterns of citizen participation in political processes or mediating structures that connect individual citizens to governing institutions. Pluralism, in general, refers to the political belief that values “diversity and dissent” for society and individual, and political structure that fosters “diversification of power” among social groups in society (Sartori, 1997). Based on works of comparative politics (Lijphart, 1999; Sartori, 1997) about the distinctive forms of social and political arrangements of competing interests, Hallin and Mancini (2004) divided Western democratic societies into *individualized pluralism* and *organized pluralism*. In organized pluralism, like Germany, individual citizens’ interests tend to be institutionalized and represented through close ties with political parties. Since organized pluralism requires institutionalized mediating linkage between social groups and political parties, it tends to be well integrated with a representative model of democracy which assumes a strong role for political parties as mediators of citizen interests.

On the other hand, individualized pluralism, like the U.S., refers to a “competitive and uncoordinated pluralism of independent groups” (Lijphart, 1999, p. 171). This form of pluralism is a better match for the participatory model of democracy in which parties have comparatively weak roles in the public sphere and policy discourse. Since political representatives are more like “independent political entrepreneurs” in the U.S., rather than their own parties, direct and individualized interactions with constituents are more valued than party-route communications, common in Germany (Hagen, 2000; Zittel;

2004) As citizen participation should be an ongoing process in political discourse, civic organizations representing special interests are better mediators of individual citizens than political parties (Ferree et al, 2002).

These contrasting political systems are likely to facilitate the formation of distinctive cultures of political communication across countries: a mediatized culture, which flourishes in a participatory and individualized model, and a politicized culture, which is more likely to thrive in a representative and organized model. The most visible distinction between the two contrasting cultures is, as noted earlier, “media’s relative degree of autonomy” from states and political institutions. From an institutional perspective, the two institutions should have “*conflicting goals and interests*” (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1982) that necessarily require formal and informal negotiations and arrangements between those two actors. However, the degree of institutional conflict and political constraints on the media depend largely on the political systems in which those institutions are embedded. Against these structural backgrounds, the two different political communication cultures not only moderate the norms and rules of participants in political communication but also affect the nature of public discourse on politics. In addition, those cultures are expected to breed specific normative expectations about the role of news media in the public sphere. Taken together, this study predicts that the two different cultures either facilitate or hinder specific patterns of uses and adoptions of new media technology for political communication, including political blogs. The first part of the next section explores four contrasting tendencies of mediatized and the politicized political communication cultures that may affect the general practices and structures of political blogging communities across the three nations.

MEDIATIZED CULTURES AND POLITICIZED CULTURES

The first dimension distinguishing the two cultures is *power distance*, “journalists’ position toward loci of power in society” (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 371), which is represented by the extremes of journalists “adversarial” attitudes or their “loyal” attitudes towards power holders. In a politicized culture, the power distance tends to be more proximate than in a mediatized culture, and, thus, often leads to high “political parallelism” in which the media have close correspondence with political parties and organizations sharing political interests and perspectives. In media systems with high political parallelism, news media tend to have distinct political orientations supportive of particular parties and political interests (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Pfetsch, 2004; Seymour-Ure, 1974). Although both in Europe and the U.S., “party newspaper has lost ground to commercial press forms both as an idea and as a viable business enterprise” (McQuail, 1994, p. 15), the influence of partisan media legacy still can be observed especially in newspapers of European countries (Donsbach, 1983; Kocher, 1986). Instead of direct one-to-one formal, organizational ties between news outlets and political parties and interests, Hallin and Mancini (2004) define political parallelism as “the extent to which the different media reflect distinct political orientations in their news and current affairs reporting, and sometimes also their entertainment content” (p. 28). Using this definition in comparative content analyses, European newspapers, including those in Germany and to a lesser degree in the U.K., still show stronger political parallelism relative to U.S. counterparts in their coverage of politics (Donsbach, 1997; Berkel, 2006).

Table 3.1. A Comparison of Mediatized Culture and Politicized Culture

	Mediatized Culture	Politicized Culture
Political System	Participatory Democracy; Individualized Pluralism	Representative Democracy; Organized Pluralism
Media-Political Power Distance	Distant	Proximate
Media Interventionism in Political Process	Pragmatic (High Media Interventionism)	Sacerdotal (Low Media Interventionism)
Elite Dominance in Media Discourse	Popular-Inclusive Representation	Elite-Exclusive Representation
Public Trust of the Media	Low Media Trust	Moderate Media Trust

The second dimension is related to *media interventionism*, which refers to “professionally motivated behavior by journalists to increase their influence, authority and prestige -- and ultimately, their control over the news” (Esser, in press). Media interventionism leads to two distinct journalistic cultures: “pragmatic” versus “sacerdotal” (Semetko et al, 1991). A mediatized culture cultivates a “pragmatic” journalistic culture in which political news is covered in terms of journalists’ judgments of news values according to professional or organizational goals. In a politicized culture, journalists are more likely to take “sacerdotal” attitudes toward politicians and political organizations, a view that politics is intrinsically important and journalists have a responsibility to convey what the parties or candidates say (Mazzoleni, 1987; Semetko et al, 1991).

A third difference is that in a party-oriented politicized culture, the news media tend to concentrate on elite sources and their arguments, and citizens rely mostly on party-centered routes to make their voices heard in public forums. Ferree and his colleagues (2002) point out that a stronger tendency of elite dominance in the media arena exists in European countries as compared to that of the U.S. Their content analyses of abortion discourse in the German and U.S. media found that the U.S. media included

more diverse social actors from the political periphery, such as social movements and ordinary citizens, and gave more standing to their perspectives as compared to the German media. Based on these findings, they argued that media discourse in the United States is closer to the participatory model in which more diverse actors and arguments of civil society are included, while media discourse in Germany corresponds more to the representative model of democracy where spokespeople of political institutions and organizations dominate venues of political communication.

Finally, regarding public attitudes towards the media, a mediatized culture is more likely to express public concerns about media performance than a politicized culture due to the media's more active role in the public sphere, plus a lower level of political parallelism with social and political organizations. Although U.S. news media are often criticized for their political bias, systematic analyses of news contents generally support the argument that American journalism does not favor either of the two major U.S. political parties (e.g., D'Allesio & Allen, 2000). In the U.S., unlike European countries, it is difficult to map media organizations in terms of their political orientations so that accusations of media bias arise from all sides of political affiliations (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). As Table 3.2 indicates, in the mediatized culture of the U.S., the public tends to have lower trust in media institutions than the does the public in the politicized cultures of European countries, in general.

Table 3.2. Public Trust in Media Institutions in the U.S. and European Countries

	The press	Radio	Television
U.S.	22	43	22
E.U. (25 countries)	47	62	54
Britain	20	59	54
Germany	44	63	59

Source: The Harris Poll, Fewer American than Europeans trust in the media: Press, radio and TV, January 13, 2005

This study expects that varying political communication cultures of the three countries with contrasting structural conditions will affect the viability, practices, and structures of political blogging communities across the three countries. To the extent that the importance of political blogging communities in national political communication systems can be indicated by the size of the blogging community and the intensity of interaction with dominant political actors, the U.S. and British political blogospheres are clearly more prominent than the German blogosphere. In German-speaking nations (i.e., Germany, Austria, Switzerland), the adoption rate of blogs has been slow relative to that of the U.S. Lumma (2005) reported that the number of active blogs on major blog-hosting sites in Germany increased from about 200 in March 2003 to only about 42,000 in March 2005. By contrast, the blogosphere has grown exponentially in the U.S. and the adoption of the blogging form by mainstream media has become common, in terms of sponsoring individual bloggers or developing in-house blogs (Singer, 2005). During U.S. election campaigns, candidate blogs are becoming a common staple. Political blogs are read by journalists, and prominent bloggers are frequently cited and hired by mainstream news media (Drezner & Farrell, 2004). Although there are few empirical studies, initial observations of major German news websites do not show institutional adoption of the blogging form by the mainstream media. The next section discusses specific political, journalistic, and technological factors that facilitate or hinder political blogging in each country, and shape the nature of political blogging in Germany, the U.K., and the U.S.

POLITICAL AND MEDIA FACTORS FOSTERING POLITICAL BLOGGING

The relative prominence of U.S. political blogging in political communication processes, compared to those of the U.K. and Germany, seems to be closely associated with the mediatized political communication culture of the U.S. More specifically, three

major factors -- political, journalistic, and technological -- are related to the relative strength of activities and sizes of blogging networks across the three countries. First, greater emphasis on direct citizen participation in the political process and more individualized interaction between citizens and political leaders in a mediatized culture encourage a culture in which individuals express their personal opinions about politics. Hagen (2000) notes that scholarly and policy debates about the “digital democracy” in America focus on the potential of new media technology to reinvigorate and implement direct democracy. Thus, the U.S. has tended to experiment with the idea of electronic democracy in the areas of direct communication and deliberation among citizens, for example, electronic town meetings and local community-building. On the other hand, he argues, in Germany new media technology has rarely been implemented to facilitate citizens’ direct participation in political processes. Instead, in Germany, it tends to be regarded as a tool to enhance the efficiency of established political institutions for public relations efforts and internal communication. In a similar vein, Zittel (2004) suggests that the idea of electronic democracy is an American exception associated with a political context in which members of the U.S. Congress are regarded mainly as representatives of constituents in their own districts rather than as representatives of their political parties. His study, although not dealing with blogging phenomena, found that congressmen in Germany and Sweden, which have party- and elite-oriented political communication cultures, were more reluctant to establish their own personal websites, and even those politicians who have their own sites were less likely to exploit technological opportunities than their U.S. counterparts. Popularizing political blogs as a new platform for direct communication, unmediated by new media, in the U.S. should be understood in this political context, emphasizing participatory democracy.

Second, the prevalence of “media logic” in the public sphere of a mediatized culture tends to lead to greater expectations about the role of the media in the process of political communication. At the same time, however, there appear to be stronger concerns about the quality of journalism that, in turn, may foster active political and popular discourse about an alternative form of journalism. In the U.S., both scholars and the public often point to journalism and the media, in general, as a major villain for the current crisis of democracy, such as low levels of political knowledge, motivation, and participation (Patterson, 1994; Putnam, 2000; Jaimison & Cappella, 1997). As noted in the previous section, public trust in media institutions is much lower in the U.S. and the U.K., compared with other European countries that belong to politicized cultures in which the media role is limited in the public sphere. Concerns about media performance in the U.S. are found in the large amount of meta-coverage by U.S. news media about themselves. Unlike the U.S. where “media reporting” and “media coverage” are common (Fengler, 2003), news media in European countries are much less likely to report on their own performance (Bertland, 2000). In a 1998 survey of media professionals, experts and academics from 17 European countries, seventy-six percent of respondents reported a total lack of “in-house critics” and twenty-four percent of respondents told of only a few critics in their countries. Other studies found that German news media devoted only 1.2% of their election coverage to the role of the media in the 1998 campaign, whereas U.S. media mentioned the journalistic role in 25% of its coverage in 1996. Considering journalists’ self-monitoring as a means of defending their professional authority from outside criticism and regulation, meta-coverage of news media by themselves is an indirect indication of widespread distrust in news media in the U.S. Based on this context of powerful media and public suspicion about media performance, as occurs in

the U.S., political blogs are considered more likely to flourish as an alternative to mainstream journalism.

Third, the different cultural histories of technology in the three countries influence expectations about the role of new media technology, in general, and political blogging, in particular, in the process of political communication. Hagen (2000) contrasts *technological optimism* in the U.S. and *technological pessimism* in Germany and compares different adoption patterns of new media technology for digital democracy in the two countries. Since the founding of America, he argues, technology has been considered as a major instrument for democracy and freedom. The founding fathers understood “the creation of the republic as the creation of a government *technology* (p. 58, italic in original)” to manage and control politics just as science manages and controls “the forces of nature.” On the contrary, he continues, the German public tends to be very skeptical about technology, in general. Historical experience witnesses how media technology served the Nazi dictatorship as a tool of propaganda and control. Therefore, he concluded, the American people’s distrust in mainstream journalism and the lack of alternatives to the U.S. commercial media system heightens the public’s expectations with regard to a new media technology as a “technological fix” to problems arising from current political and media systems.

Due to these factors, political blogging is more prominent in the mediatized cultures of the U.S. and U.K. than in the politicized culture of Germany. This study predicts that the relative prominence of blogging practice of the three countries influences the nature of political blogospheres as networks that, in turn, have important consequences related to key questions about levels of interactivity, equality, and fragmentation in each country’s blogging network.

POLITICAL AND MEDIA FACTORS SHAPING BLOGGING NETWORK

One of the major consequences of intense activity of political blogging in the U.S. is that it may foster the emergence of quasi-professional or organizational identities among political bloggers and lead to more frequent interactions among themselves. To borrow the language of the structural-functionalist approach, the relative strength of the blogging community facilitates the “differentiation” of political blogging from existing forms of political communication and constitutes a new subsystem of political communication. From the systems theory of professions, Lowrey (2006) argues that political blogging has attained the status of a “budding occupation community” of which members share norms and values in doing similar activities. The literature in organizational studies has also noted that the shared sense of identity among members constitutes a key attribute of an organizational form. Shared identity within an organizational form exists where members inside a specific organizational boundary admit particular organizational characteristics and those outside recognize the legitimacy of those properties (Carroll & Hannan, 2000; McKendrick & Carroll, 2001). Anecdotal observations of political bloggers indicate that in the U.S., political blogging has achieved a considerable inside-community identity and outside-community recognition of its legitimacy in political communication processes. For instance, there are many blogging conferences and symposia; discussions about norms and values about political blogging are abundant; bloggers have been granted some legal protections; and dominant actors of public communication, such as politicians and media, have begun to accept the unique function of blogs in political communication (Lowrey, 2006). Promotion of political blogging as a rudimentary form of occupation or organization is expected to lead to highly intense interaction among its members, which manifest itself in dense interconnectedness among its members in a network.

Second, different sizes of networks influence the relative equality among its members in terms of their link exchanges. In a network of large population, judgment about an actor's qualities through direct individual contacts becomes almost impossible. Therefore, people tend to monitor others' evaluations of the actor for their own judgment of her or his qualities. Because an individual's judgment mutually relies on each other, the initial differences in social status among network members tend to increase over time, with the consequence of "the richer getting richer" (Frank, 1985; Gould, 2002; Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000; Stewart, 2005). Since the mediatized culture of the U.S. and to a lesser degree the U.K., is expected to have larger networks of blogs than Germany, the prediction is that there is more inequality in the exchange of ties in the American and British blogospheres, compared with the German political blogosphere.

Third, a mediatized culture not only breeds political blogging, in general, but it also shapes a blogging network mainly as a partisan venue. In its relationship with political institutions, news media in a mediatized culture tend to follow an "objectivity model" with low levels of political parallelism compared to a politicized culture. This model of journalism leaves political bloggers a *niche* for heavily opinionated and partisan expressions (Lowry, 2006). The success of Fox News and talk radio in the U.S shows a market niche for advocacy journalism in a mediatized culture (Halin & Mancini, 2004). It seems to be no coincidence that political blogging in the U.S. started as an explicitly partisan venue. Top U.S. political blogs listed on blog ranking sites are more explicit about their political orientations, compared with top U.K. and German blogs where many are not clearly aligned with any political affiliation.

In addition, cross-national differences in political systems have direct relevance to the shaping of political blogging mainly as a partisan medium in America. Mutz (2006)

found in a comparative study that Americans were least likely to have political discussions with those who hold different political orientations as compared to people from other countries, including both Great Britain and Germany. She attributed this U.S. specificity to the two-party system which makes political distinction much easier than in multi-party systems like the U.K. and Germany. This observation is related to Lijphart's (1999) distinction between two-party majoritarian and multi-party consensus models of democracy. The major difference between the two models lies in the degree of power monopolization by the governing party over the opposing party. In a majoritarian model, like the U.S., the winning party in an election concentrates political power whereas in a consensus model, like Germany, power sharing in governance is the norm. Even if political parties in a consensus political system lose in an election, they often participate in governance as coalition partners. In Germany, even the two major competing political parties, Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD) often form the so-called "grand coalition" in which they compromise and cooperate in governance. As a result, in a consensus model like Germany, the distinction between the governing party and the opposition is much less clear than in a majoritarian model. Also, in the consensus model, political powers are more evenly divided between the legislative and the executive, unlike the majoritarian model in which the administration dominates. In sum, the political structure in a two-party majoritarian model is characterized by the system of "winner taking all." This political system raises the stakes in political outcomes, intensifies political conflicts between competing parties, and thus increases the need for political homophily in communication to avoid social and political discomfort occurring in discussions with those holding opposing political perspectives.

These observations about political and media arrangements in the U.S. relative to other democracies suggest that the adoption of a blogging format need not be necessarily a highly partisan medium in other countries. At the same time, these observations raise questions about whether blogging practices in a politicized culture, which has less demand for partisan expression for political parallelism in the national media, are likely to develop similarly high levels of fragmentation of the political blogospheres along political differences.

CHAPTER 4: HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the previous chapter, political and media systems and cultures of the U.S., the U.K. and Germany were described as explanatory variables that influence linking patterns and network structures of political blogs in the three countries. Based on that discussion of national-specific, contextual variables, hypotheses and research questions regarding macro-level network structures and micro-level linking patterns of political blogs are presented. First, the macro-level analysis addresses questions about network structures of the political blogospheres of the three countries. It deals with the extent of overall integration (i.e., density), stratification (i.e., centralization), and fragmentation (i.e., sub-group density) of the political blogging community as a whole. Second, the micro-level analysis investigates linking patterns of individual blogs to other blogs and websites. It explores how the attributes of individual blogs--national affiliations, political orientations, and organizational affiliations--relate to their linking decisions to other political blogs and various websites, such as news media, government, interest group sites, and so on.

MACRO-LEVEL NETWORK STRUCTURES

The mediatized culture of the U.S. is likely to encourage blogging activity because the underpinning political system of the culture emphasizes direct interaction of citizens with political institutions and citizen participation in the public sphere. In addition, public concerns about powerful media increase expectations about new media as a “technological fix” to the problems of mainstream journalism. An active community of bloggers may lead to an increased sense of identity that distinguishes political bloggers from other participants, such as politicians and journalists, in political communication. It

is expected that shared identities among political bloggers cause more intense interactions or conversations among community members. Therefore, H1 predicts:

H1: The U.S. political blogging network will show a higher density (i.e., overall interconnectedness of the network as a whole) than the British and German political blogging networks.

Social scientists have observed the general human tendency of making social and communicative relations on the basis of similarity of key attributes among social actors. This tendency, known as homophily, increases the efficiency of communication and fosters trust and mutuality in social exchange and interaction (Monge & Contractor, 2003). Therefore H2-1 is:

H2-1: Sub-group density (exchange of hyperlinks) will be greater within the same sub-groups of (1) political orientations and (2) organizational affiliations (i.e., citizen bloggers vs. journalist bloggers) than between the different sub-groups in political blogging networks across the three countries.

Although the tendency of homophily is presumed to be a common characteristic in the formation of social and communicative relations across societies, the nature of social and political fabrics in different political and media systems are expected to affect the extent to which different political and social groups interact with each other. Both political and media factors of the U.S. are likely to shape political blogging networks as a venue for partisan division and expression. America's two-party, majoritarian system makes political distinction between the governing party and the opposition much easier than in multi-party, consensus systems in European countries (Lijphart, 1999; Mutz, 2006). Since the winning party monopolizes political power in a majoritarian system, political stakes in electoral outcomes are much higher than in consensus systems where governance by power-sharing or coalition is common. More hostile political rivalries in two-party, majoritarian politics is likely to increase the need for homophily in

communication to avoid psychological and social discomfort that may arise in the conversations among people with opposing political perspectives. In addition, news media in a mediatized culture tend to have low political parallelism relative to those in a politicized culture. The “objectivity model” assuming news media as a neutral arbiter is more strongly emphasized in a mediatized culture. This neutral, information-oriented journalism culture leaves a media niche for highly partisan and opinionated expressions outside mainstream journalism that political blogging is able to fill in (Lowry, 2006).

Based on these political and media factors specific in the U.S., H2-2 predicts:

H2-2: Within political sub-group density will be greater in the U.S. political blogging networks than in the U.K and German political blogging networks.

The size of community often accelerates the process of hierarchization among members in a community. A network with many members renders it almost impossible to evaluate other members’ qualities through direct contact and interaction. Therefore, an individual’s judgment relies on social cues about a specific actor from other members, which amplifies status differences among community members over time (Gould, 2002; Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000; Stewart, 2005). Since the U.S. political blogosphere emerged earlier and has more network members, it will likely show higher levels of inequality in terms of incoming hyperlinks than the British and German blogospheres.

Thus it can be predicted as follows:

H3: U.S. political blogging networks will show higher centralization (i.e., overall equality in hyperlink exchanges of the network as a whole) and less equality than the British and German political blogging networks.

MICRO-LEVEL LINKING PATTERNS

H4 is basically a replication of H1 at the level of individual blogs, predicting the mediatized culture fosters blogging activity which, in turn, may increase interactions among political bloggers due to the higher sense of community identity.

H4: U.S. political bloggers are more likely to link to other political bloggers than British and German political bloggers.

In the mediatized political communication culture of the U.S., political actors tend to seek more media attention and focus more on media-centered news-making strategies in contrast to the politicized culture in Germany, and to a lesser degree in Britain, where politicians seek less media attention and concentrate more on internal negotiation and communication within political organizations (Pfetsch, 2001). News media in the U.S. functions as a major arena of policy contests among different interests and the news media plays a more active role in shaping the agendas and frames of public issues. On the other hand, in a politicized culture, political actors and citizens mostly rely on party-centered routes to make their voices heard in public forums. Therefore, the H5-1 is:

H5-1: U.S. political bloggers are more likely to link to the professional news media than British and German political bloggers.

Alternatively,

H5-2: British and German political bloggers are more likely to link to government official websites than U.S political bloggers.

In H2-2, American bloggers are predicted to have a higher tendency to make ties to other bloggers on the basis of political homophily for their two-party, majoritarian political system and emphasis on an objectivity model of journalism. H6 is an extension of this prediction to other websites, beyond political blogs.

H6: U.S. political bloggers are more likely to link to websites with the same political orientations than are British and German political bloggers.

Although political blogging opens up a new communicative space for transnational discussion of international events and issues (Reese et al., 2007), the intensity of cross-national linking has rarely been compared across countries, and thus the first research question is;

RQ1: To what extent do political bloggers in the U.S., Britain, and Germany link to international websites?

As the mainstream news media establish their own in-house blogs, journalist bloggers, those affiliated with professional media outlets, begin to gain prestige and influence in the British and U.S. political blogospheres. Although one study noted that journalist bloggers tend to link mostly to their own outlets or other mainstream media sites (Singer, 2005), the direct comparisons of their linking patterns with citizen bloggers' have not been made. Therefore RQ2 is:

RQ2: Are there any difference in linking patterns between journalist bloggers and non media-affiliated bloggers?

CHAPTER 5. METHOD

SAMPLING

This study conducted a purposive sampling to collect about the top 100 political blogs of each country, using multiple blog ranking sites available for German, U.K. and U.S. political blogs. Political blog rankings provided by wikio.com, a Europe-based news and blog aggregator, was used as the main website to choose top bloggers of each country. Although there were a few web sites providing rankings of blogs in each country, wikio was the only website which ranks blogs from both the U.S. and the two European countries. Using the same blog ranking site reduced concerns about cross-national inconsistency in data collection that might occur when using different ranking sites employing different ranking algorithms. This website had additional advantages for blog sampling of this study, providing an extensive list of the top 100 political bloggers, mainly dealing with news and public affairs, from each country. Also, its ranking system matched well with the design of this study, counting incoming links appearing only within blog posts to decide blog ranking. Wikio monthly updates its ranking, and this study used the ranking of November 2008.

To check the credibility of its ranking system, I compared rankings of the top 10 U.S. political blogs from wikio.com in November 2008 with rankings provided by other websites in the same period (See Table 5.1). With differences in algorithms calculating rankings, there were no exact correspondences among the four web sites. Wikio.com rankings most closely corresponded to technorati.com rankings, with eight overlapping blogs in the top 10 list. Since wikio.com, like other ranking sites, missed some of the top bloggers included in other ranking sites, this study attempted to add those top blogs from other websites. To complement wikio.com, this study checked technorati.com and

truthlaidbear.com political blog rankings down to the top 30 and added 14 blogs that were ranked in either of the two websites but excluded in the wikio.com. After removing seven blogs from the original wikio.com ranking for their incomplete archives and lack of direct relevance to political topics, a total of 106 U.S. political blogs were selected (See Appendix A for the full list).

Table 5.1. Top 10 U.S. Political Blogs in Different Blog Ranking Web Sites

Rank	Wikio.com	Technorati.com	Truthlaidbear.com	Blogpulse.com
1	Huffington Post	Huffington Post	Daily Kos	Daily Kos
2	The Caucus	Daily Kos	Michelle Malkin	Andrew Sullivan
3	The Corner	The Caucus	Instapundit	Hot Air
4	Think Progress	Think Progress	TPM	Think Progress
5	Political Punch	Andrew Sullivan	Little Green Football	TPM
6	Michelle Malkin	TPM	Power Line	The Corner
7	Andrew Sullivan	Crooks and Liars	Real Clear Politics	Red State
8	Political Radar	Political Radar	Think Progress	Michelle Malkin
9	Crooks and Liars	The Corner	Crooks and Liars	Political Animal
10	Daily Kos	Pajama Media	Hot Air	News Busters

A similar sampling strategy was employed to select the U.K. and German political blogs. Since no website provided an extensive ranking list for British political blogs, other than the wikio.co.uk, the British bloggers and readers' online voting of top political blogs in the U.K. conducted in 2007 (Dale, 2008) was used to complement the ranking from wikio.co.uk. In this survey, the British bloggers and their readers were asked to rank the top ten blogs, and the ranking was decided considering a weight in a way the top blog got ten points, the second blog nine points, the third blog eight points and so on. This online voting was not based on the systematic sampling of bloggers and readers in the U.K. Considering, however, the "power law" distribution occurring in not only number of incoming links but also the number of visitors on the Web (Adamic & Huberman, 1999), this voting was expected to yield a reasonable list at least for the "top" bloggers to complement the ranking from wikio.co.uk. Table 5.2 compares the rankings of the top 10

British political blogs from wikio.com with the result of online blog voting which provided the top 200 list (See Dale, 2008 for the full list). Similar to the U.S. comparison, there was a considerable, although not perfect, correspondence between the two. Seven political blogs made the top 10 both in the wikio ranking and online blog voting. Because indices measuring the characteristics of networks, such as density and centralization measures, are very sensitive to the number of nodes in a network, the numbers of blogs in the three countries need to be made equal for cross-national comparability. Therefore, 10 additional blogs, not included in the wikio.com ranking, were added from the list of the 2007 blog voting to come up with the same 106 blogs with the U.S. Four blogs from wikio.co.uk were excluded due to the absence of archives (See Appendix B for the full list).

Table 5.2. Top 10 U.K. Political Blogs in Wikio Site and Blog Voting in 2007

Rank	Wikio.com	Online Blog Voting in 2007
1	Iain Dale	Guido Fawkes
2	Guido Fawkes	Iain Dale
3	Liberal Conspiracy	Conservative Home
4	Conservative Home	Dizzy Thinks
5	Political Betting	Political Betting
6	Dizzy Thinks	Devil's Kitchen
7	Devil's Kitchen	Spectator Coffee House
8	LibDem Voice	Burning our Money
9	John Redwood MP	John Redwood MP
10	Labour Home	Ben Brogan

In the case of German political blogs, two additional blog ranking sites other than wikio.de were identified providing relatively extensive lists of political blogs: topblogs.de and bloggeramt.de. However, there was no consensus at all about the German top political blogs among the three ranking sites, including wikio.de (See Table 5.3). This inconsistency seemed to be due to the fact that both topblogs.de and bloggeramt.de gave

rankings only for those blogs registered on their own websites. Since wikio's rankings showed considerable reliability with other ranking systems for the U.S. and U.K. blogs, the list from wikio.de was assumed to provide the best available ranking to collect the top German blogs. Because five blogs listed on wikio.de did not keep archives, seven available top blogs listed on the top 10 list of topblogs.de and four additional blogs commonly appearing on other lists of political blogs were included to gather an equal number of 106 political blogs (See Appendix C for the full list).

Table 5.3. Top 10 German Political Blogs on Different Blog Ranking Web Sites

Rank	Wiki.com	Topblogs.de	Bloggeramt.de
1	Netzpolitik	Radio-Utopie	Der-Postillon
2	Lummaland	Fact-Fiction	Henning Schürig
3	Der Spiegelfechter	Wahrheiten	Wahrheiten
4	NachDenkSeiten	Deutschland Politik	Sackstark
5	Annalist	SaarBreaker	Gegenmeinung
6	Weissgarnix	Ad-Sinistram	Politk und Wirtschaft
7	Red Blog	Probleme-Heute	Deutscher Hanf Verband
8	Duckhome	Lupe	Informelles
9	Schall und Rauch	Propaganda Schock	Meinungsfreiheit
10	StoiBär	Lizaswelt	Die Hanfplantage

This sampling process yielded a total of 106 political blogs from each country, and 318 blogs combined. Although these blogs occupy very small portions of blog populations, top blogs account for disproportional amounts of huge incoming links (Shirky, 2003) and tend to structure the nature of public discussion and information exchange for their “focal” position within a network (Drezner & Farrell, 2004; Herring et al., 2005). Therefore, the analysis of these 318 blogs was expected to provide representative portrayals of the most significant and influential blogs in each country.

The time frame for the sampling of this study was two randomly selected constructed weeks from the year of 2008, which means two sets of randomly selected

same days of the week, like randomly selecting two Mondays, two Tuesdays, two Wednesday, and so on. Although there was no consensus about the best sampling period for the analysis of blog posts, this study assumed that basically political blogging operates as a “daily” activity following and reacting to daily news cycles. Because two randomly selected constructed weeks were found to be the most efficient for the sampling of the daily newspapers (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998), having similar daily cycles in the publication with blogging, this study employed the same strategy used in newspaper sampling. Selected dates were: January 17; March 5; March 18; April 12; May 13; June 4; June 8; July 17; July 26; August 29; September 5; October 6; December 14, and December 22. When blog posts were not available on a specified date, the following available date was selected for data collection.

CODING

Blog Coding

Each blog selected for this study was coded in terms of its political orientations and organizational affiliations. Organizational affiliation of the blog was decided on the basis of presence and absence of official ties with specific social and political organizations, with four broad categories: (1) citizen, (2) news-media affiliated, (3) political-party affiliated, and (4) other (See Appendix D for details). Citizen blogs were those having no official ties with any established organizational entities whereas news-media affiliated blogs referred to in-house blogs of traditional and online-only news media. Although most of citizen blogs may not intend to produce news in the form found in institutional and professional journalism, they “commit journalism” (Lasica, 2002) by publishing political information and commentaries. News-media affiliated blogs included

both mainstream media blogs (e.g., the Caucus of the *New York Times*) and blogs of opinion journals and political magazines (e.g., the Corner of the *National Review*).

A few top political blogs in the U.S., like the Huffington Post and Talking Points Memo, began to have organizational forms with reporting and editorial staff, an increase in original reporting, and profit-making through advertising, thus blurring the boundary and making it difficult to distinguish blogs from traditional news media, and citizen blogs from journalist blogs. Although these top blogs might be different from “ordinary” blogs in their forms and practices, they were still considered as citizen blogs mainly for two reasons. First, one key characteristic of blogging is its social character and the sense of community among bloggers, which are manifest through various means of linking. Those top bloggers not only receive incoming links from other bloggers, but also they made frequent links to other citizen bloggers, which is much less likely in mainstream news media. Second, these blogs, like other ordinary citizen blogs, have epistemologically different orientations towards facts and news from mainstream media, as shown in their explicitly partisan character. Therefore, those top blogs were still judged as citizen blogs as long as they did not have official ties to traditional news media.

Political-party affiliated blogs were those with official connections to political leaders and party organizations, like the blogs of the British Member of Parliament, Tom Watson. Even if one blog explicitly supported a specific political party and its policies, like the Conservative Home blog and the Labour Home blog in the U.K., it was still judged as a citizen blog as long as it was not an official outlet of a political party and its leaders. The category of “other” was reserved for blogs having official relationships with various forms of social organizations but not belonging to new media or political party organizations, like businesses, interest groups, and professional organizations. For

example, Think Progress, one of the top liberal blogs in the U.S., is affiliated with the Center for American Progress, a liberal policy research and advocacy group. Since blogs with these types of organizational affiliations were only a few across the three countries, they were categorized as “other.”

The political orientation of the blog was decided on the basis of the blogger’s self-claiming of political or party affiliation in that blog. When self-claimed information was not available on the blog, the general tone of blog posts was examined to decide the political orientation. Some bloggers, especially in the U.S. and U.K., gave a specific group name to other blogs in their blogrolls, like “liberal” or “conservative.” Those lists were used to complement the content-based decisions of political orientation of each blog. Different party systems--the two-party system of the U.S. versus the multi-party systems of Germany and the U.K.--were considered in coding political orientations of the individual blogs in the three countries. In the case of the U.S., political orientations were divided broadly into (1) conservative, (2) liberal, and (3) non-aligned. Non-aligned blogs were those that did not reveal clear political orientations or party affiliations, or those outside the conservative-liberal dichotomy. When political blogs revealed mixed political viewpoints depending on the nature of political events and issues, those were also coded as non-aligned. For instance, Andrew Sullivan, who was conservative about economic issues but liberal on some social issues, like abortion and gay-marriage, belonged to this category.

For U.K. bloggers, political orientations of the blogs were coded at the outset on the basis of party affiliations like Conservative Party, Labour Party, and Liberal Democratic Party. However, many British political bloggers did not show their party identifications, but, instead, they supported a broad range of typical political positions

from either the right or the left of the political spectrum. Because the terms “conservative” and “liberal” have meanings in many European countries that are different from America, U.K. bloggers’ political orientations were divided into (1) the political right, (2) the political left, (3) Liberal Democrats, and (4) non-aligned. The political right included bloggers affiliated with the Conservative Party, the United Kingdom Independent Party, and non-party identified bloggers supportive of policy agendas of those parties. Similarly, the political left included bloggers generally supportive of the Labour Party and its policies. Liberal Democrats, considered belonging to the left-side of political spectrum in the U.K., were treated in the initial analysis as a separate group because of their relatively strong presence in the U.K. Parliament and political blogosphere. In an additional analysis, Liberal Democrats were incorporated into the political left to explore whether the U.K. political blogosphere was divided along the broad spectrum of the political right and left.

Similar coding procedures were applied for the analysis of political orientations of blogs in Germany which has a multi-party system. At the beginning stage, German blogs were categorized according to their self-claimed party identifications: (1) Christian Democratic Union (CDU); Social Democratic Party (SPD); Free Democratic Party (FDP); The Greens; The Left Party (PDS); National Democratic Party (NPD), etc. In the following analysis, those blogs were divided into (1) the political right, (2) the political left and (3) non-aligned. Considering the traditional government coalitions in Germany, the political right included blogs aligned with CDU, FDU, NPD and those blogs supportive of traditional positions of those parties, without clear party identification. The left included those favorable to the SDU, the Greens, the PDS, and other blogs supportive of positions from the political left. Non-aligned blogs were those

having uncertain political leanings towards either political perspective. Across the three countries, blogs affiliated with the professional news media were judged as politically non-aligned, except the cases in which news outlets explicitly pronounced and supported specific political orientations. For instance, in-house blogs of opinion journals in the U.S., such as the *National Review* and *The Nation*, were decided to be conservative and liberal in their political orientations, respectively, but coded as media-affiliated in terms of organizational affiliation.

Website Coding

The hypotheses and research questions about micro-level linking patterns required the analysis of types, political orientations, and national affiliations of linked websites from the top blogs selected. First, types of linked websites were divided into six broad categories: (1) blogs, (2) news websites, (3) general information sites, (4) government websites, (5) Interest group websites, and (6) other. The category of new websites included traditional news media, online-only news media (e.g., Slate), news aggregators (e.g., Yahoo News), and political magazines and opinion journals (e.g., *The Nation*). General information sites were those providing information in non-news forms, such as wiki sites and the Internet portal sites (e.g., Google), and relevant individual websites. Government websites referred to official websites of national governing institutions, the E.U. government and political parties and leaders. Interest group websites encompassed organizations attempting to influence government policies to achieve specific social and political goals as a group, such as PACs (Political Action Committees) in the U.S., think tanks, and other non-profit organizations. The category of “other” was reserved for all remaining websites not classified in previous categories, such as businesses, entertainment, and culture (See Appendix D for details). In some cases, the distinction

between blogs and personal websites was not clear-cut. Since this study assumed that the distinction between the two was the presence of social character, rather than form, only websites satisfying at least two of the following standards were classified as blogs: explicit self-identification as blog; linking to other blogs in their posts or blogrolls; a function allowing reader comments about their posts (*cf.* Albrecht, Lubcke & Hartig-Perschke, 2007).

National affiliations of linked websites fell into five categories: (1) the U.S., (2) the U.K., (3) Germany, (4) the E.U., (5) International, (6) other and (7) uncertain. The E.U. category was made because many linked websites on British and German blogs belonged to E.U. governments, for example, to the E.U. Parliament and organizations. Since the Internet enables easy geographic border-crossing of actors in virtual space, the identification of websites and physical locations of blogs becomes elusive (Reese et al., 2007). Many British and German political bloggers use U.S.-originated blogging services, such as blogger.com and blogspot.com, so that identifiers of national domains, such as *com*, *uk* and *de* in URL, were not very helpful to locate bloggers' national locations. Still, we can generally identify the geographic location of bloggers from the best available information in the blog, such as the blogger's biography, the blog name (e.g., *consevativehome.com/torydiary*) and the general geographic focus of blog posts (e.g., British domestic politics). On the basis of geographic location, this study judged websites and blogs as British, German and U.S. Thus, the coding of international blogs and websites in this study depends on the national location of bloggers of interest. For those media and other organizations operating across national borders, such as Reuters and the U.N, the category of "international" was used. When the nationality of linked websites was not clear, it was classified as "uncertain" in this study. The majority of

those in the “uncertain” category were links to wiki sites because the organizational characteristic rendered it difficult to judge the author’s nationality. Political orientations of linked websites followed the same category for blog coding.

To isolate outbound links from the posts of each blog, up to 15 posts on each specified date were coded. Within one post, up to 15 links were counted. Self-referencing links directed towards their own sites, like links to a blog’s own archive, were not counted because they do not contribute to expanding the blogging network. Recurring links within a same single post were counted only once to avoid unduly exaggerating the extent of linking in a network.

NETWORK ANALYSIS METHODS

For the analysis of the network structures of political blogs of the three countries, concepts and methods advanced in social network analysis were employed in this study, and hypotheses were tested using the network software program UCINET 6 (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002). Social network analysis seeks to explain social phenomena through the structural interpretation of social interactions. A network refers to a specific structure, consisting of a number of actors or nodes and their relations or connecting lines (Scott, 1997; Wellman & Berkowitz, 1977). In this study, each political blog was regarded as a node, and a hypertext link within a blog post as a line to signify a hyperlink between the blogs. Because the political blogging network of each country in this study consists of 106 political blogs, a 106-by-106 square matrix was prepared to input the data. Table 5.4 illustrates the matrix used for data input in this dissertation. If, for example, blog 1 directed two hyperlinks to blog 2, then “2” was input in the corresponding cell. If blog 2 linked to blog 1 four times, “4” was entered in the

corresponding cell. When blog 3 did not direct any hyperlink to blog 4, “0” was shown, indicating no connection from blog 3 to blog 4.

Table 5.4. Example of Data Input in the 106-by-106 Matrix

	Blog 1	Blog 2	Blog 3	Blog 4	Blog 5	Blog ...	Blog...	Blog 106
Blog 1	-	2						
Blog 2	4	-						
Blog 3			-	0				
Blog 4				-				
Blog 5								
Blog ...								
Blog ...								
Blog 106								

The UCINET program was used to compute the density for H1, and sub-group density for H2-1 and H2-2, and the centrality and centralization for H3. Density is a group-level index to measure the cohesiveness of the whole network, or the extent to which each node is connected to one another in a network. Simply put, density is the average tie strength among the all nodes present in the whole network. For instance, let’s assume we have a total of 6 blogs in the network. The blog A sent seven hyperlinks to blog B, five to blog C, one to blog D, and so on (See Table 5.5). We can fill all the remaining cells of the six-by-six square matrix except those in the diagonal. After this data-inputting process, we can calculate the overall network density of 2.67 in the network, which is the sum of all hyperlinks (80) shown in the matrix divided by the number of cells present (30), except those in the diagonal (6).

Table 5.5. Example of Density Calculation

	Blog A	Blog B	Blog C	Blog D	Blog E	Blog F
Blog A	-	7	5	1	0	0
Blog B	5	-	4	0	1	2
Blog C	6	7	-	2	0	1
Blog D	0	1	0	-	5	8
Blog E	1	1	0	6	-	5
Blog F	1	0	2	4	8	-

Similarly, sub-group density refers to the average tie strength that is present among a pre-defined sub-group of actors in a network. In network analysis, the decisions of sub-groups are often made inductively on the basis of “structural equivalence” of actors within a network. Actors with similar structural equivalence are classified into the same sub-groups or “positions.” They have similar patterns of connections with other actors in the network. However, in this study, guided by the literature of homophily, sub-groups or positions of political blogs of the three countries were pre-defined along political orientations (e.g., liberal group versus conservative group) and organizational affiliations (e.g., citizen group versus news media-affiliated group) to see if these social categories affected their linking decisions in the political blogosphere. Table 5.6 illustrates how sub-group density is calculated in network analysis.

Table 5.6. Example of Data Input for Sub-Group Density Calculation

	Liberal Blog A	Liberal Blog B	Liberal Blog C	Conservative Blog A	Conservative Blog B	Conservative Blog C
Liberal Blog A	-	7	5	1	0	0
Liberal Blog B	5	-	4	0	1	2
Liberal Blog C	6	7	-	2	0	1
Conservative Blog A	0	1	0	-	5	8
Conservative Blog B	1	1	0	6	-	5
Conservative Blog C	1	0	2	4	8	-

Let's assume that we have three liberal blogs and three conservative blogs in a network. Liberal blog A made seven links to liberal blog B and five links to liberal blog C whereas liberal blog A made only one link to conservative blog A and made no link to conservative blogs B and C. We can input all relational data for each of the six blogs in this six-by-six square matrix. Then, by passing dividing lines (bold lines in the Table 5.6) through the matrix (e.g., between the liberal blog C and the conservative blog A) we have four separate *blocks* partitioned by political orientations of those six blogs.

After this partition, we can calculate average tie strength for each block. For instance, the three liberal blogs have within sub-group density of 5.67 which is derived from the sum of links (34) divided by the number of cells (6) in the block. Again, cells in the diagonal should be excluded in this calculation. Table 5.7 summarizes average tie strength (i.e., sub-group density) for each of the four blocks. We can see that the liberal group has greater within sub-group density (5.67) than between sub-group density with the conservative group (0.78). In other words, on average, liberal blogs tend to have much stronger ties with other liberal blogs than with ties to conservative blogs.

Table 5.7 Example of Sub-Group Density Calculation

	Liberal Blog Group	Conservative Blog Group
Liberal Blog Group	5.67 (<i>SD</i> = 1.11)	0.78 (<i>SD</i> = 0.79)
Conservative Blog Group	0.67 (<i>SD</i> = 0.67)	6.0 (<i>SD</i> = 1.53)
Overall Density = 2.77		

Once both within and between sub-group densities are calculated, the researcher should judge the presence or absence of a relationship within or between those sub-groups. For example, this dissertation examined whether there were relationships or strong ties within the group of politically like-minded bloggers (e.g., liberal-to-liberal),

and between groups of political blogs with different political orientations (e.g., liberal-to-conservative). Unfortunately, social network analysis has not developed formal statistical tests, equivalent to *t*-test or *ANOVA*, to compare different sub-group densities. Instead, it suggests a rule-of-thumb standard to judge the presence or absence of relations among sub-groups. Although there are several criteria to judge the presence or absence of a relationship, this study employed α density criterion (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). When sub-group density was higher than overall density of the whole network, that sub-group was judged to have a relationship or strong ties among its members, whereas lower sub-group density relative to overall density meant an absence of a relationship. For instance, in the previous example (See Table 5.7) the overall network density was 2.77, whereas the within sub-group density of the liberal group was 5.67, and that of the conservative group was 6.0. Since these values exceed overall density of 2.77, they were regarded as having relations among the actors in the same political groups. On the other hand, between sub-group densities of both the liberal group (0.78) and conservative groups (0.67) failed to exceed the overall density (2.77), and therefore it was concluded that the within sub-group relations were not predicted by their sub-group designation.

Centrality basically refers to the measures of the relative importance or prominence of each actor or node embedded in a network. Scholars of social networks have developed several different measures to identify the relative prominence of the actor, such as *degree*, *closeness*, *betweenness*, and *information* (Freeman, 1979; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Both on the Web and the blogosphere, indegree (i.e., the absolute number of hyperlinks received) is considered the most meaningful measure of prestige or importance of a blog or website in a network because highly linked sites signify more attention from other sites. Also, highly linked sites from others increase the

chance of those sites to be exposed to general Internet users. Search engines, like Google, use the number of incoming links (i.e., indegrees) to decide the order of sites displayed in search results (Barabasi, 2002). Therefore, this study used the indegree of each blog as a centrality measure. Centralization is a whole network-level index to measure the extent to which only a few actors are central or prominent in a specific network. In other words, centralization measures how “variable or heterogeneous” (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) centrality values of individual nodes and actors are in a network. Therefore, a centralization index is often used to examine the overall equality of relations among all actors embedded in a community or network. The centralization index always ranges from 0, if all nodes or actors in a network have exactly the same centrality values, to 1, if one actor dominates a whole network. Since this study used indegree as a measure of centrality, we can say that centralization equals 0, when all the blogs have the same indegrees, and centralization equals 1, when one dominant blog has all incoming links and none of the remaining blogs receives incoming links at all.

Finally, the values of network density and centralization do not necessarily correlate with each other. In other words, high density scores do not always come together with either high centralization or low centralization scores. We can imagine a network which is densely knit among the nodes (high density) but which is very equal in the exchanges of hyperlinks among constituents without dominant nodes (low centralization). On the contrary, we can assume a network which is sparsely connected among the nodes (low density) but in which one dominant node accounts for all incoming links from the rest (high centralization).

CHAPTER 6. NETWORK ANALYSIS

This chapter tested hypotheses regarding the network structures of the U.S., the U.K. and German political blogospheres and compared them cross-nationally. In the first section, political blogosphere of the individual country was described in detail, with rankings of the 106 selected blogs on the basis of their indegrees (number of incoming links). Political orientations and organizational affiliations of 106 blogs from each country were summarized. Key network measures for this dissertation, such as density, sub-group density and centralization, were provided to show the structural characteristics of each network. A whole network structure of each political blogosphere was visualized, using NetDraw software. In the second section, measures of network density, sub-group density, and centralization were compared across the three blogging networks to see to what extent these networks were similar or different in their structural features.

MAPPING THE POLITICAL BLOGGING NETWORKS IN THE U.S., THE U.K. AND GERMANY

U.S. Blogging Network

Based on the rankings in the wikio.com and two other complementing blog ranking sites, a total of 106 U.S. political blogs were collected for network analysis. Political orientations and organizational affiliations of those blogs were recorded to see whether they affected the way the political blogs linked to other political blogs. With regard to political orientations, the majority of 55 blogs were conservative whereas 27 blogs were liberal. Among the 24 blogs which were aligned to neither political orientation, 20 of them were news media-affiliated blogs, like the Caucus of the *New York Times*. Organizationally, 75 of them were judged as blogs with no official ties to media or political organizations, and 28 blogs were affiliated with traditional news media.

Three remaining blogs were affiliated with a political candidate (Obama HQ) and interest groups (Think Progress and News Busters).

U.S. political blogs analyzed in this study made 25.8 incoming and outgoing links on average. Because an outbound link of one blog meant an inbound link to the other, the average number of incoming and outgoing links was equal. Standard deviation of incoming link was 38.5 which signified great differences in the absolute number of incoming links received from other blogs among the selected 106 blogs. The number of incoming links of the selected blogs ranged from the most of 201 to the least of 0. The mode of the number of incoming links was 1, with each of 11 political blogs receiving only one link from the rest of the blogs. There was a moderate correlation between the number of incoming links each blog received and the number of its outgoing links to other blogs ($r = .318, p < .01$). In other words, making more outgoing links to other blogs positively related to getting more incoming links from others, but the relationship was not very strong.

Among the 106 U.S. blogs, the conservative Hot Air received the most incoming links (N = 201) while the liberal Huffington Post had the second most links (N = 177). The top five conservative blogs in the number of incoming links were, following Hot Air, The Corner (N = 102), Michell Malkin (N = 91), News Busters (N = 63), and Instapundit (N = 59). The top five liberal blogs were, including the Huffington Post, Talking Points Memo (N = 166), Daily Kos (N = 135), Think Progress (N = 100), and Fire Dog Lake (n = 61). The top five media blogs included Ben Smith of Politico (N = 117), The Trail of the *Washington Post* (N = 91), CNN's Political Ticker (N = 68), ABC's Political Radar (N = 65) and the *New York Times*' The Caucus (N = 63). Appendix A shows the full list

of 106 political blogs and their political and organizational affiliations and the number of incoming links (i.e., indegrees) and outgoing links (i.e., outdegrees).

Since incoming links often signify the relative influence and prominence of individual blogs in the blogosphere, this study looked at the distribution of the number of incoming links of the 106 political blogs. Previous studies have noted that the distribution of incoming links both in the blogosphere and on the Web tends to follow a “power curve” pattern in which only a few blogs attract most of incoming links while most of blogs receive only a few. Although political blogs included in this study were the most influential and prominent ones in the U.S. political blogosphere, the distribution of the number of incoming links of the sample revealed a similar pattern found in past research. Among a total of 2,759 incoming links made in the network, the top 10 blogs received 1,257 incoming links which accounted for 45.6% of the total links.

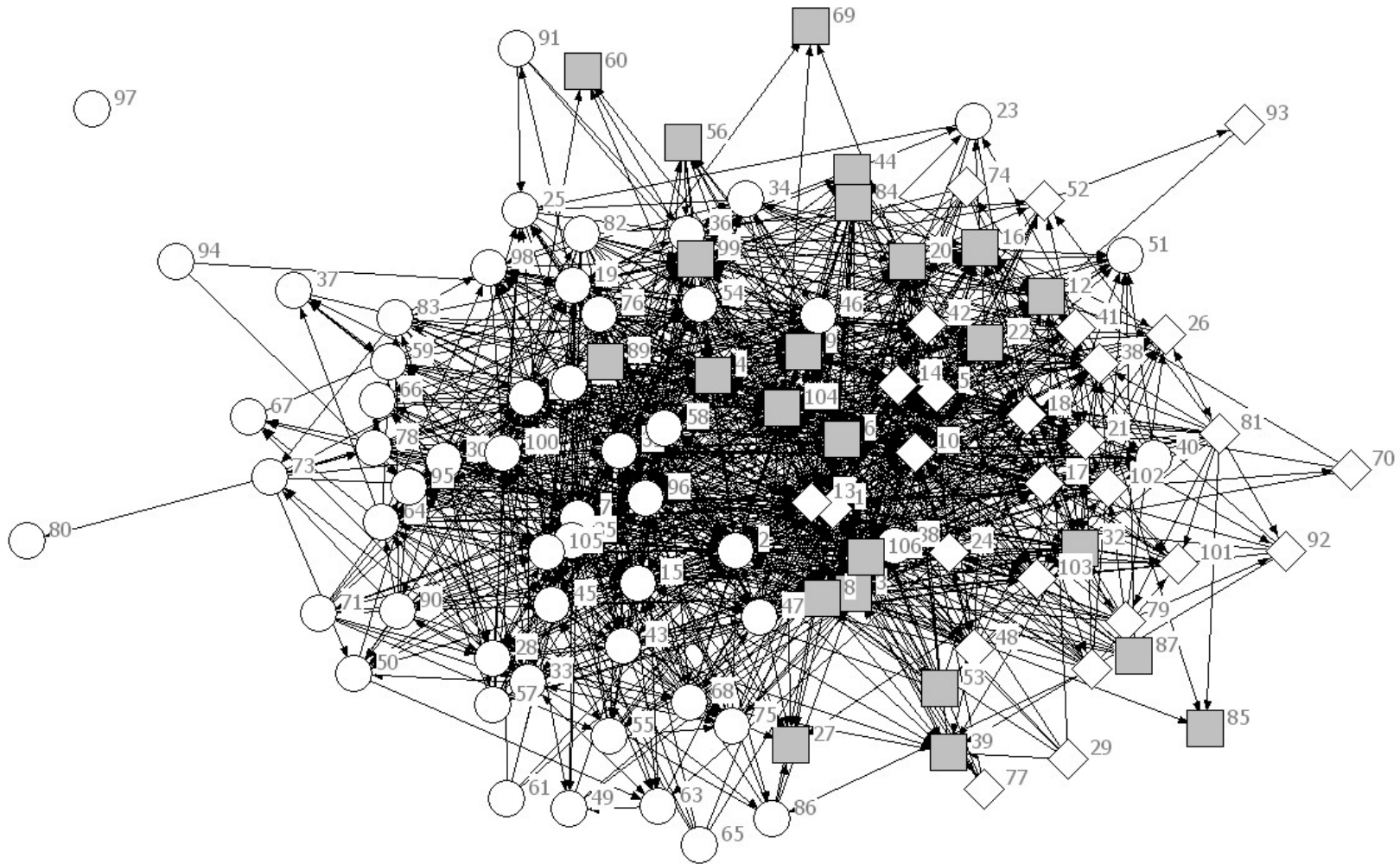
The selected U.S. political blogs showed a considerable interconnectedness in the network (See Figure 6.1). All those blogs were a part of one large group of connections, except one: blog Greg R. Lawson (*No. 97* in the full list). This meant 105 blogs were clustered together through direct or indirect connections to others, with only one blog (i.e., Greg R. Lawson) totally isolated from this group. Specifically, the density of the whole network was 0.246 ($SD = 0.93$), which meant the average of 0.246 tie for every possible pairs of blogs in the U.S. network (See p. 58 for the calculation process of density).

One of the main research interests of this study was to investigate the extent of segregation of the blogging network along political and organizational differences. The U.S. blogging network revealed considerable separation among political blogs on the basis of political orientation. In the visual presentation of the network of the selected

blogs (Figure 6.1), circles represent conservative blogs, and diamonds signify liberal blogs, whereas squares are those having no clear political orientation. As the figure shows, both the conservative and liberal blogs tended to connect to like-minded political blogs rather than to those with opposing perspectives. There seem to be only two very noticeable exceptions in this pattern: Ross Douthat (*No. 40*) and David Frum's Diary (*No. 52*). Although both are regarded as conservative blogs in this study, they had stronger ties with liberal blogs than conservative blogs. Both blogs were affiliated with news media, Ross Douthat with the *Atlantic* magazine and David Frum with the *National Review*, which may have generated some attention and prestige among liberal blogs.

One interesting pattern found in this study was that politically non-aligned blogs were more closely connected to liberal blogs than to conservative blogs. As Figure 6.2 illustrates, about half of the non-aligned blogs were located in the mid-zone of the network, and the other half skewed towards the liberal group. Since most of non-aligned blogs were in-house blogs of news media organizations, this observation could be interpreted as media blogs had stronger ties with liberal blogs than with conservative blogs.

Figure 6.1. Network Structure of the 106 Selected U.S. Political Blogs¹



Note. Circle = Conservative blog; Diamond = Liberal blog; Square = Non-aligned blog

¹ All visual network representations in this dissertation used the spring-embedded layout technique in which nodes having similar relations to other nodes are located closer together. If two nodes, for example, are closer to each other, they have similar patterns of connections with all other nodes in a network. On the other hand, if two nodes are located at a distance, they have very different patterns of connections with all others (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005).

To obtain clearer indicators about the degree of interactions among political blogs within same groups and across different groups, this study compared the sub-group densities of liberal, conservative and non-aligned blogs. Table 6.1 summarizes sub-group densities that were present from the sub-groups of political blogs in the row position to sub-groups of blogs in the column positions (See p.59 for the calculation process of sub-group density). Using the density of the overall network (.246) as a cutting point to decide the presence or absence of sub-group relationships, four sub-group relationships were found as meaningful (See Table 6.1, sub-group density scores above overall density in bold). It was found that density values were higher along the diagonal, which meant that across all groups there was a greater tendency towards within-group connections than between-group ties. Conservative blogs were more likely to link to other conservative blogs (.321) than to liberal (.135) or non-aligned blogs (.222). Similarly, liberal blogs tended to connect to the like-minded liberal blogs (.838) rather than to conservative (.034) or non-aligned blogs (.403). Even non-aligned blogs had more ties with other non-aligned blogs (.348) than either conservative (.070) or liberal (.164) blogs.

The degree of within-group density was considerably higher in the liberal group (.838) than in the conservative group (.321). In addition, there was a stronger connection between the non-aligned and liberal blogs than the connection between non-aligned and conservative blogs. Liberal blogs made more ties to non-aligned blogs (.403) than conservative blogs to non-aligned blogs (.222). Similarly, non-aligned blogs had more connections with liberal groups (.164) than conservative groups (.070).

Table 6.1. Sub-Group Density of U.S. Political Blogs by Political Affiliation

	Conservative (s.d.)	Liberal (s.d.)	Non-Aligned (s.d.)
Conservative (n = 55)	.321 (1.073)	.135 (.535)	.222 (.661)
Liberal (n = 27)	.034 (.241)	.838 (2.070)	.403 (1.006)
Non-Aligned (n = 24)	.070 (.454)	.164 (.627)	.348 (.941)

Note. Overall density = .246

In terms of organizational affiliations, only news-media affiliated blogs showed the presence of a meaningful within sub-group density, which indicated that in-house blogs of news outlets had more ties to the same media-affiliated blogs than to citizen blogs. Even citizen blogs were more likely to link to media-affiliated blogs than other citizen blogs, suggesting that official ties with mainstream news media gave considerable prestige in the U.S. blogosphere (See Table 6.2.). Political blogs classified as “other” were not interpreted due to the small sample size (N = 3).

Table 6.2. Sub-Group Density of U.S. Political Blogs by Organizational Affiliations

	Citizen (s.d.)	Media Affiliated (s.d.)	Other (s.d.)
Citizen (n = 75)	.234 (.970)	.314 (.825)	.596 (1.764)
Media Affiliated (n = 28)	.114 (.639)	.366 (.941)	.345 (1.393)
Other (n = 3)	.276 (1.308)	.464 (.1.005)	.000 (.000)

Note. Overall density = .246

Overall results of the network analysis suggests a general tendency of political homophily in making ties in the U.S. political blogosphere, and at the same time, a stronger connection between liberal groups and non-aligned groups than between conservative and non-aligned groups. However, these results have to be interpreted with caution. Social network literature has noted that different levels of power among social actors play a significant role in social connections. Thus, it can be presumed that political

blogs make ties with other political blogs on the basis of political homophily as well as perceived influence and power of other blogs on the blogosphere. Conservative blogs were the majority in the sample of this dissertation, thus that factor may have negatively affected group density of the conservative group. In other words, the top conservative blogs, such as Hot Air and The Corner, might not have made frequent connections to the conservative blogs at the low end, and this could have led to the relatively low group density of the conservative group compared with the liberal group that had fewer members.

To control the confounding effects of the size of group membership of each political orientation, an additional analysis was conducted, selecting the top 20 conservative, liberal and media blogs from the number of incoming links. In this analysis, only media-affiliated blogs in the non-aligned group were chosen to further explore the associations between media blogs and conservative and liberal blogs. In the original analysis, the majority of non-aligned blogs was media-affiliated blogs (20 out of 24). Although only four of the non-aligned blogs were not affiliated with media organizations, this factor could have affected results in the initial analysis. Therefore those four blogs were excluded in the additional analysis. The analysis of the top 60 blogs yielded very different results with regard to the number of incoming links among them, with the liberal blogs being much more prominent than the conservative blogs. Among the top five most linked blogs out of 60, none of the conservative blogs was included (See Table 6.3). The top liberal blog, Talking Points Memo (TPM) had almost twice as many incoming links ($N = 142$) as the top conservative blog, Hot Air ($N = 75$). This finding indicates that conservative blogs had numerical superiority to liberal blogs in the top 106 blogs (i.e., 55 conservative blogs versus 27 liberal blogs), but that superiority totally

disappeared when limited to the same number of top 20 blogs from each group. This result might be due to the liberal group's greater reluctance to link to conservative blogs than the conservative's to link to the liberal blogs, or more ties to liberal blogs than to conservative blogs from non-aligned media blogs. More detailed results are provided in the following.

Table 6.3. Top 10 Most Linked Blogs in Liberal, Conservative and Media Groups

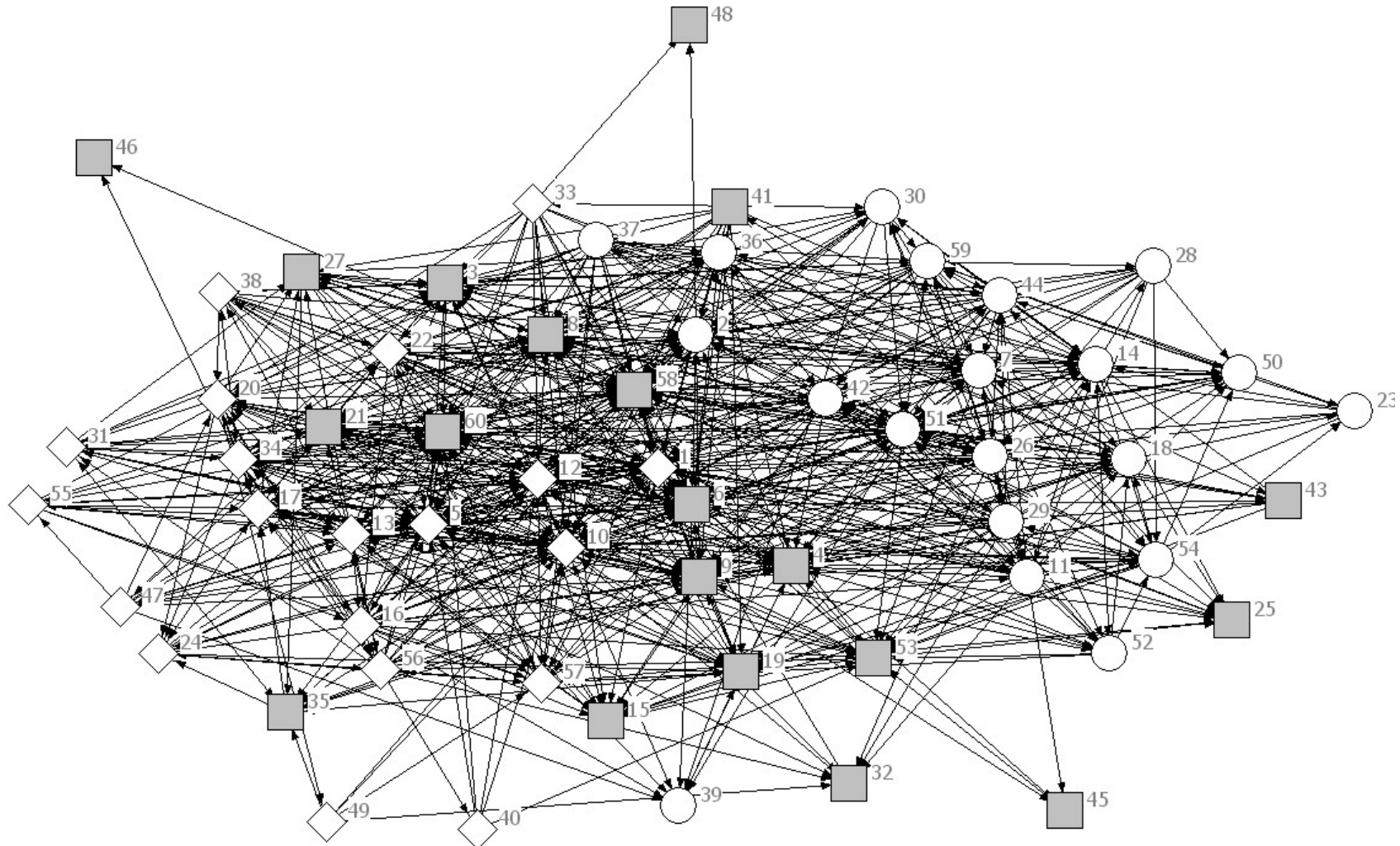
Rank	Conservative Blogs	Liberal Blogs	Non-Aligned Media Blogs
1	Hot Air (75)	TPM (142)	Ben Smith (93)
2	The Corner (61)	Huffington Post (131)	The Trail (73)
3	Michell Malkin (35)	Daily Kos (90)	Political Ticker (50)
4	News Busters (29)	Think Progress (88)	Political Radar (49)
5	Little Green Football (28)	Fire Dog Lake (40)	The Caucus (48)
6	Power Line (27)	Political Animal (26)	Political Punch (47)
7	Gateway Pundit (26)	America Blog (24)	The Plank (42)
8	Instapundit (24)	Glenn Greenwald (21)	Top of the Ticket (30)
9	Michael Goldfarb (19)	Talk Left (20)	Washington Wire (19)
10	Hit & Run (16)	Crooks and Liars (17)	Hot Line on Call (17)

Note. Number of incoming links in parentheses.

Despite the prevalence of liberal blogs among the top 60 blogs, however, the overall structure of the blogging network revealed a similar pattern of clustering between the conservative and the liberal groups. In addition, similar to the results of the analysis of the 106 blogs, media blogs tended to come between the conservative and the liberal blogs as a mediating middle zone (See Figure 6.2). Comparisons of sub-group densities among conservative, liberal, and media groups indicates this tendency more clearly (See Table 6.4). Both the conservative group (.430) and the liberal group (.580) directed links to the media group more frequently than they directed links towards the opposing group in political orientation. Also, the media group gave relatively similar numbers of links to conservative groups (.115) and liberal groups (.190). As a result, most media-affiliated blogs were located in the center of the network. Still, there was a general

tendency of closer ties between the liberal and the media blog groups than the conservative and media blog groups, except for two media blogs, which had stronger ties with conservative blogs. Those were Lynn Sweet of the *Chicago Sun Times* (No. 25) and FP Passport (No. 43) of the Foreign Policy magazine (See Figure 6.2). Again, David Frum with the *National Review* (No. 39) was the only conservative exception from the conservative pack, with closer ties with the liberal blogs. These results seemed to show two interesting points about the role of media-affiliated blogs in the U.S. political blogosphere. First, both liberal and conservative blogs regard media blogs as being more reliable and prestigious sources than politically opposing blogs. Still, liberal blogs are more willing to connect to media blogs than conservative blogs, seemingly reflecting the accusation of “liberal bias” of the media by conservatives.

Figure 6.2. Network Structure of the 60 Top U.S. Political Blogs



Note. Circle = Conservative blog; Diamond = Liberal blog; Square = Non-aligned media blog

Although comparisons of sub-group densities also showed a pattern similar to the original network of 106 blogs, there were some notable differences in individual sub-group density scores (See Table 6.4.). In general, overall network density of the 60 selected blogs increased from .246 to .464, compared with that of the all 106 blogs. This increase seems to be due to a lower number of network members and more intense interactions among the top blogs. In addition, the gap decreased considerably between the conservative and liberal blogs in their within-group densities, relative to the results of the original analysis of 106 blogs. Still, liberal blogs had a higher tendency of making links on the basis of political affinity (1.300) than their conservative counterparts (.908). Using the overall density of the network of .464 ($SD = 1.30$) as a cutting-point, both conservative and liberal group had more interactions within their own groups than between groups. Also, liberal blogs were more likely link to politically non-aligned media blogs (.580) than did conservative blogs (.348).

Table 6.4. Group Density of the 60 Top U.S. Political Blogs by Political Affiliation

	Conservative (s.d.)	Liberal (s.d.)	Media (s.d.)
Conservative (n = 20)	.908 (1.668)	.228 (.671)	.430 (.941)
Liberal (n = 20)	.100 (.394)	1.300 (2.570)	.580 (1.210)
Media (n = 20)	.115 (.558)	.190 (.662)	.348 (1.028)

Note. Overall Density = 0.464

In sum, the analysis of the U.S. political blogosphere showed four major characteristics in its network structure: (1) dominance of a few blogs receiving most of the incoming links, (2) fragmentation of the sphere along conservative and liberal lines, (3) strong presence of media blogs and their mediating location in this sphere, and (4) ties between liberal and media blogs that were more frequent than ties between conservative and media blogs.

The U.K. Blogging Network

Based on lists of wikio.co.uk rankings and online voting of the bloggers and readers conducted in 2007, 106 U.K. political blogs were selected and their political orientations and organizational affiliations were examined. Due to the multi-party system in the U.K., political orientations of the selected blogs were more diverse than in the U.S., including Green Party (N = 3), Socialist Party (N = 1), and the U.K. Independent Party (N =1). Many bloggers included in this study, however, signaled their political orientations on their blogs as the political right or left, without clear party identifications. Also, blogs aligned with “minor” parties like the Green Party constituted only a small portion of the entire network. Small sample sizes of these groups and unclear party identifications rendered comparisons of sub-group densities difficult, on the basis of bloggers’ party affiliations. Therefore, this study classified the U.K. political bloggers’ political orientations as the political left, political right, and Liberal Democrats. Liberal Democrats were regarded as a separate group because they had a relatively significant presence in the network, and the Party was viable independently of the Labour Party in the U.K. Parliament. Among a total of the 106 selected blogs, 44 blogs were coded as the right, and 39 the left, and 7 Liberal Democrats. Considering Liberal Democrats leaned towards the left side of British politics, the U.K. blogging network was quite evenly divided in the number between the left and the right on the political spectrum. The remaining 16 blogs were judged as politically non-aligned blogs of which seven blogs were in-house blogs of the mainstream media.

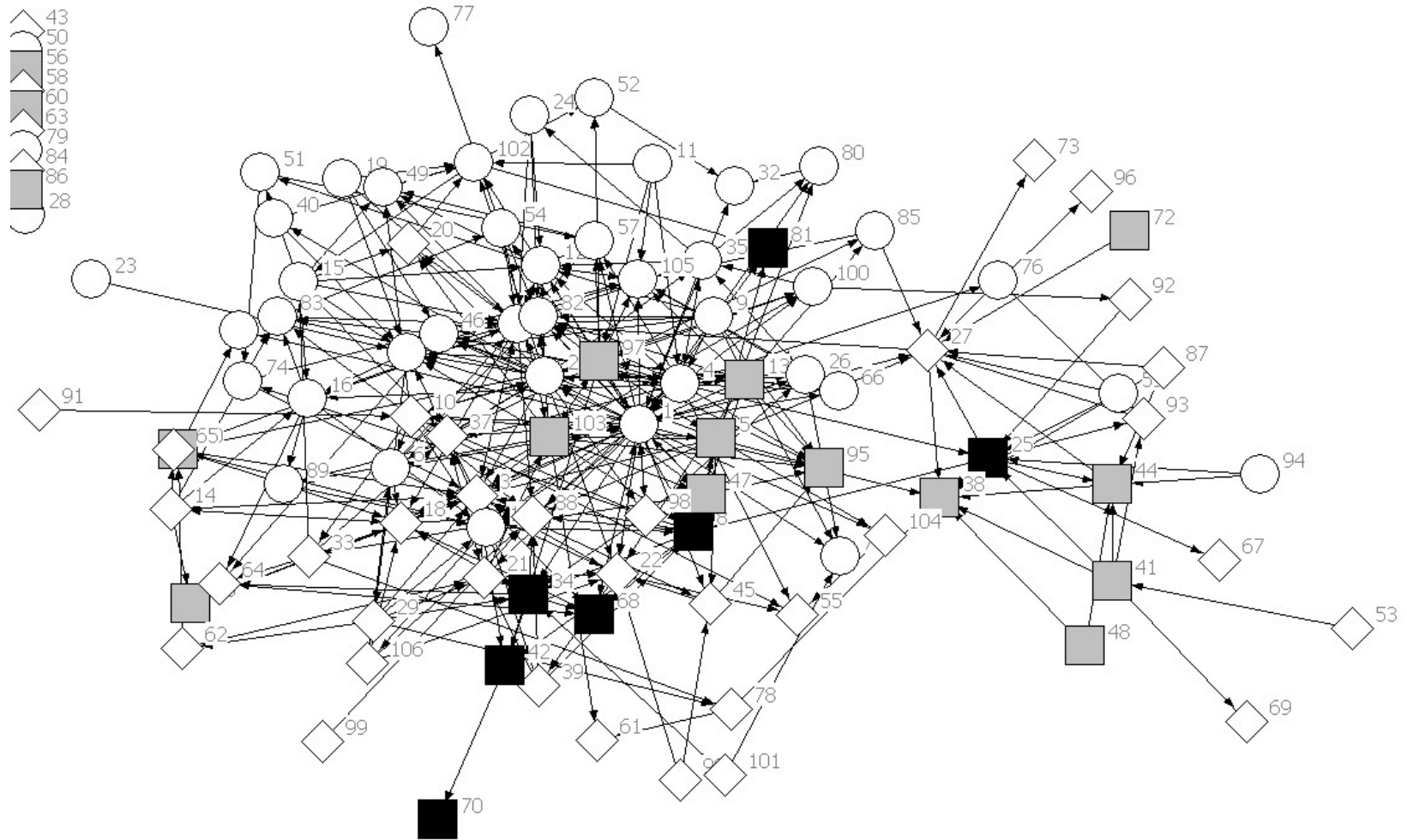
In terms of organizational affiliations, the U.K. political blogging network differed from its U.S. counterpart in terms of the relatively strong presence of political-party affiliated blogs, indicating one tendency of a politicized culture. Thirteen bloggers

were either Members of Parliament (MP) or Assembly Members (AM) representing a specific party, indicating one aspect of a politicized culture in which parties play significant roles in political communication processes as compared to a mediatized culture. The majority of 81 bloggers was not affiliated with any organization or official entity but rather participated in the blogosphere as independent citizens. Twelve blogs were the in-house blogs of the U.K. news media, and one blog was affiliated with the British think tank, the Adam Smith Institute.

On average, each U.K. political blogger had 4.51 incoming and outgoing links ($SD = 6.76$). Again, the number of incoming links equaled the number of outgoing links due to the data structure of the network analysis. The number of incoming links ranged from the most 48 to the least 0. The mode was 0, with 24 blogs having no incoming links at all (See Appendix B for the full list and rankings). Pearson correlation between the number of incoming links and the number of outgoing links was a moderate level of .325 ($p < .01$). Similar to the U.S. network, making more outgoing links positively related to receiving more incoming links, but the relationship was not very strong. Although the number of bloggers from the left and right of the political spectrum was quite evenly divided in the network, blogs of the political right were more prominent in the ranking of the number of incoming links. Among the top 10 most linked blogs, five had orientations toward the right side of politics, and four were non-aligned blogs of which three were media affiliated, LibDem Voice being the only one among the top 10 blogs from the political left. This result coincided with British commentators' general observations that blogs from the political right were dominating the U.K. political blogosphere (Dale, 2008).

Distribution of incoming links of the U.K. network showed a similar power curve pattern found in the U.S. blogging network. Among the total of 482 incoming links in a network, the 10 top blogs had 208 incoming links which equaled 43.2% of total links. The overall network of selected blogs showed a density of .043 ($SD = .268$), which was much lower than a density of .246 ($SD = .930$) of the U.S. network. Ten British political blogs among the 106 were totally isolated from the rest of the blogs, with no linkage to any blog. To explore whether the U.K. political blogosphere was segregated along lines of political differences, like the U.S. blogosphere, an analysis of the network structure of the British blogosphere was conducted (See Figure 6.3).

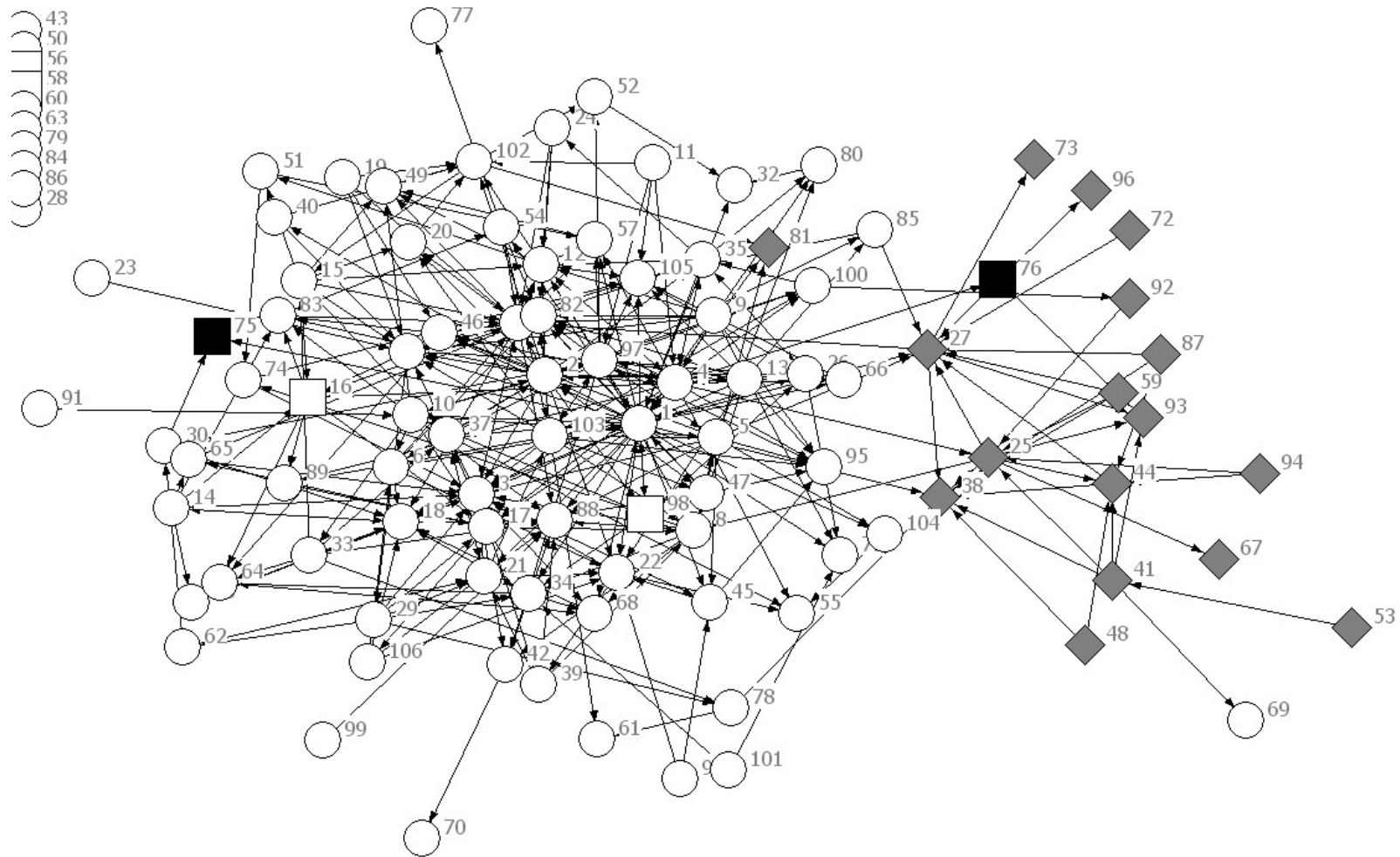
Figure 6.3. Network Structure of the 106 Selected U.K. Political Blogs



Note. Circle = The right; Diamond = The left; Black square = Green; Grey square = Non-aligned

In this figure, circles indicate blogs from the political right, diamonds blogs from the political left and black squares refer to Liberal Democrats, and grey squares represent politically non-aligned blogs. Although there were some exceptions, most of the blogs from the right side of politics were located in the upper-left zone of the network, whereas blogs from the political left, including the Liberal Democrats, were in the lower-left area of the network. Detached from the two zones that are quite densely connected, however, on the right side of the network there exists a “third zone” that is sparsely connected among the blogs with mixed political orientations. To figure out the nature of this third zone, relevant blogs were examined, and it was found that those blogs mainly talked about “Wales” politics. To see whether bloggers’ regional affiliations influenced the communicative ties in the British blogosphere, each blogger’s regional affiliation was checked. Most of bloggers were from England (N = 83), followed by Wales (N = 17), Scotland (N = 4), and Northern Ireland (N = 2). Figure 6.4 is the visual illustration of the U.K. political blogosphere categorized according to its members’ regional affiliations, with diamonds indicating political blogs from Wales and circles for bloggers from England. A few white and black squares indicate the Scottish and Northern Irish blogs, respectively. This visual presentation clearly shows that the U.K. blogging network has a separate area formed around bloggers’ regional affiliations. This result suggests that regional rivalries shaping the political landscape in the U.K also affect social and communicative ties in the U.K. political blogging network.

Figure 6.4. Network Structure of U.K. Political Blogs by Regional Affiliations



Note. Circle = English blogs; Diamond = Welsh blogs; White square = Scottish blogs; Black square = Northern Irish blogs

An analysis of sub-group densities was conducted to obtain more definite scores measuring the extent of within-group and between-group interconnectedness. Within-group densities, shown along the diagonal in Table 6.5, were higher than between-group densities across all sub-groups of different political orientations. Using the overall density of the U.K. network (.043) as a standard to judge the presence or absence of relationships among those groups, all sub-groups were found to have stronger within-group ties relative to between-group ties. Liberal Democrats had the strongest within-group ties (.381) among the four groups. Also, they made more frequent ties to the left (.055), having more political affinity, relative to the right. In general, the results support the argument of political homophily as a general rule in making ties in the blogosphere.

Table 6.5. Group Density of the U.K. Political Blogs by Political Affiliation

	Right (s.d.)	Left (s.d.)	Liberal Democrats (s.d.)	Non-Aligned (s.d.)
Right (N = 44)	.087 (.372)	.032 (.255)	.032 (.226)	.026 (.237)
Left (N = 39)	.013 (.132)	.043 (.258)	.040 (.214)	.034 (.214)
Lib Democrats (N = 7)	.010 (.098)	.055 (.343)	.381 (1.022)	.036 (.229)
Non-Aligned (N = 16)	.045 (.234)	.030 (.181)	.071 (.346)	.096 (.370)

Note. Overall Density = .043

Also, the U.K. political network was clearly divided into two separate areas with respect to regional affiliations: the England group and the Wales group. Both English and Welsh bloggers had stronger within-group ties than between-group ties (See Table 6.6).

Table 6.6. Group Density of the U.K. Political Blogs by Regional Affiliation

	England (s.d.)	Wales (s.d.)	Other (s.d.)
England (N = 83)	.059 (.317)	.007 (.084)	.026 (.204)
Wales (N = 17)	.003 (.053)	.132 (.425)	.000 (.000)
Other (N = 6)	.026 (.213)	.010 (.099)	.000 (.000)

Note. Overall Density = .043

Finally, relationships were examined between bloggers' organizational affiliations and their within-group and between-group tie strengths. Only news media-affiliated blogs had higher within-group density, which suggests that media blogs were more likely to connect to other media blogs than to citizen or party-affiliated blogs.

Table 6.7. Group Density of the U.K. Political Blogs by Organizational Affiliations

	Citizen (s.d.)	Media (s.d.)	Party (s.d.)	Other (s.d.)
Citizen (n = 81)	.047	.024	.021	.173
Media (n = 11)	.063	.118	.021	.091
Party (n =13)	.034	.007	.026	.000
Other (n =1)	.037	.000	.000	n.a.

Note. Overall Density = .043

Overall, the U.K. political blogging network showed: (1) dominance of a few blogs getting the most incoming links, (2) separation of the sphere along political differences, (3) division of the sphere along regional affiliations, (4) relatively strong presence of politically non-aligned blogs and political party-affiliated blogs.

German Blogging Network

From the blog rankings from wikio.de and a few complementary sites, 106 German blogs were collected for the network analysis. In political orientation, the German political blogosphere was characterized by the prevalence of politically non-aligned ones and a relatively weak presence of political blogs from the right side of the German political spectrum (See Appendix C for the full list). Thirty-nine blogs did not clearly reveal specific political orientations. Although SPD and CDU are two major parties in Germany, 17 political blogs were aligned with SPD, and only three blogs were supportive of CDU. Ten political bloggers identified themselves as supporters of the FDP and the Green Party, respectively. A few bloggers were associated with minor parties in Germany: four PDS, one Communist, and one German Pirate Party. Without clear party

identification, nine blogs leaned towards the right side while 10 blogs to the left side of German politics. Organizationally, 72 blogs were not affiliated with any media or social, political organization. Five blogs were news media affiliated, and 25 blogs were official blogs of either political parties or political leaders. Four remaining political blogs were related to either interest groups or think tanks.

German bloggers made an average of 1.21 links ($SD = 2.32$) to each other. The number of incoming links ranged from 0 to 17 links. A majority of the blogs ($n = 66$) had no links to other blogs at all. There was no correlation between the number of incoming links in blogs and the number of outgoing links in those blogs ($r = .057$). In other words, even if one blog directed many outbound links to other blogs, it was not likely to receive as many incoming links from others. Among a total of 128 links, 10 top blogs received 50.0% ($n = 64$) all incoming links, showing similar patterns of dominance by the few observed in American and British networks. The density of the overall German political blogging network was .012, which is much lower than the U.S. (.246), and even U.K. (.043) blogging networks. The density value of .012 was very similar to the density of .011 found in the previous study about the German political blogosphere in the 2005 German Bundestag election (Albrecht, Lubcke & Hartig-Perschke, 2007).

To see whether the political homophily in making ties was also found in the German blogging network, sub-group density was examined on the basis of political orientations. As Table 6.8 shows, a general tendency of political homophily was found in the German political blogosphere: higher within-group densities than between-group densities. Using the overall network density (.012) as a cutting point, all sub-groups of political orientations had meaningful within-group relations, except two groups: the “other” and the “non-aligned.” Considering those two groups did not share specific

political perspectives, it could be interpreted that the German political blogosphere is also segregated along political differences.

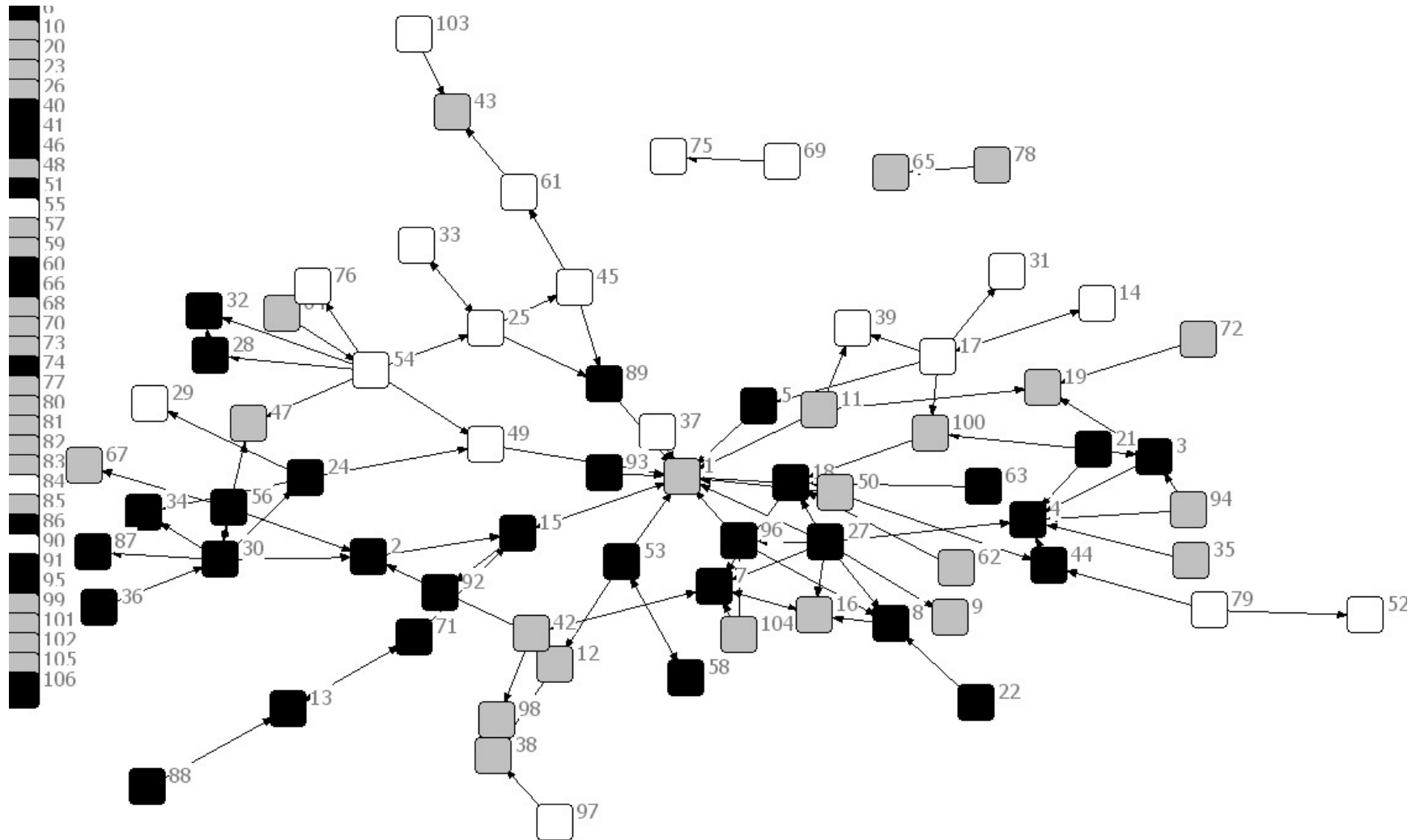
Table 6.8. Group Density of the German Political Blogs by Political Orientations

	CDU	SPD	FDP	Green	PDS	Right	Left	Other	Non- Aligned
CDU (n = 3)	.167 (.373)	.039 (.194)	.067 (.249)	.033 (.180)	.000	.037 (.189)	.000	.000	.017 (.130)
SPD (n = 17)	.000	.040 (.215)	.000	.006 (.076)	.000	.013 (.114)	.000	.000	.006 (.095)
FDP (n = 10)	.067	.000	.056 (.273)	.020 (.199)	.000	.000	.010 (.099)	.000	.003 (.051)
Green (n = 10)	.000	.000	.000	.078 (.268)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.013 (.133)
PDS (n = 4)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.167 (.553)	.000	.050 (.312)	.000	.006 (.080)
Right (n = 9)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.069 (.304)	.011 (.105)	.028 (.164)	.009 (.092)
Left (n = 10)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.025 (.156)	.000	.233 (.817)	.000	.036 (.245)
Other (n = 4)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.025 (.156)	.000	.000
Not- Aligned (n = 39)	.009	.002 (.039)	.000	.003 (.051)	.013 (.112)	.003 (.000)	.021 (.142)	.026 (.319)	.005 (.082)

Note. Standard deviations in parentheses.
Overall density = 0.012

To explore whether political blogs in Germany can be divided into two large groups on the political right and left, orientations of political blogs were collapsed into the right, left, and non-aligned. Considering traditional political coalitions, CDU and FDP blogs were included on the right whereas SPD and the Green Party, on the left. In Figure 6.5, white squares are blogs from the right side and black squares are blogs from the left side of political spectrum, whereas grey squares represent non-aligned blogs. The figure shows a stronger presence of the political left and non-aligned blogs, relative to blogs belonging to the political right.

Figure 6.5 German Political Blogging Network by the Right-Left Political Spectrum



Note. White square = The right; Black square = The left; Grey square = Non-aligned

Although there was no clear-cut segregation along political orientations found in the U.K. and U.S., the analysis of sub-group density of the German network revealed more frequent ties made within the each of the left and right groups than across the two groups. Also, between-group density from the left to the non-aligned group was marginally higher than overall density (See Table 6.9).

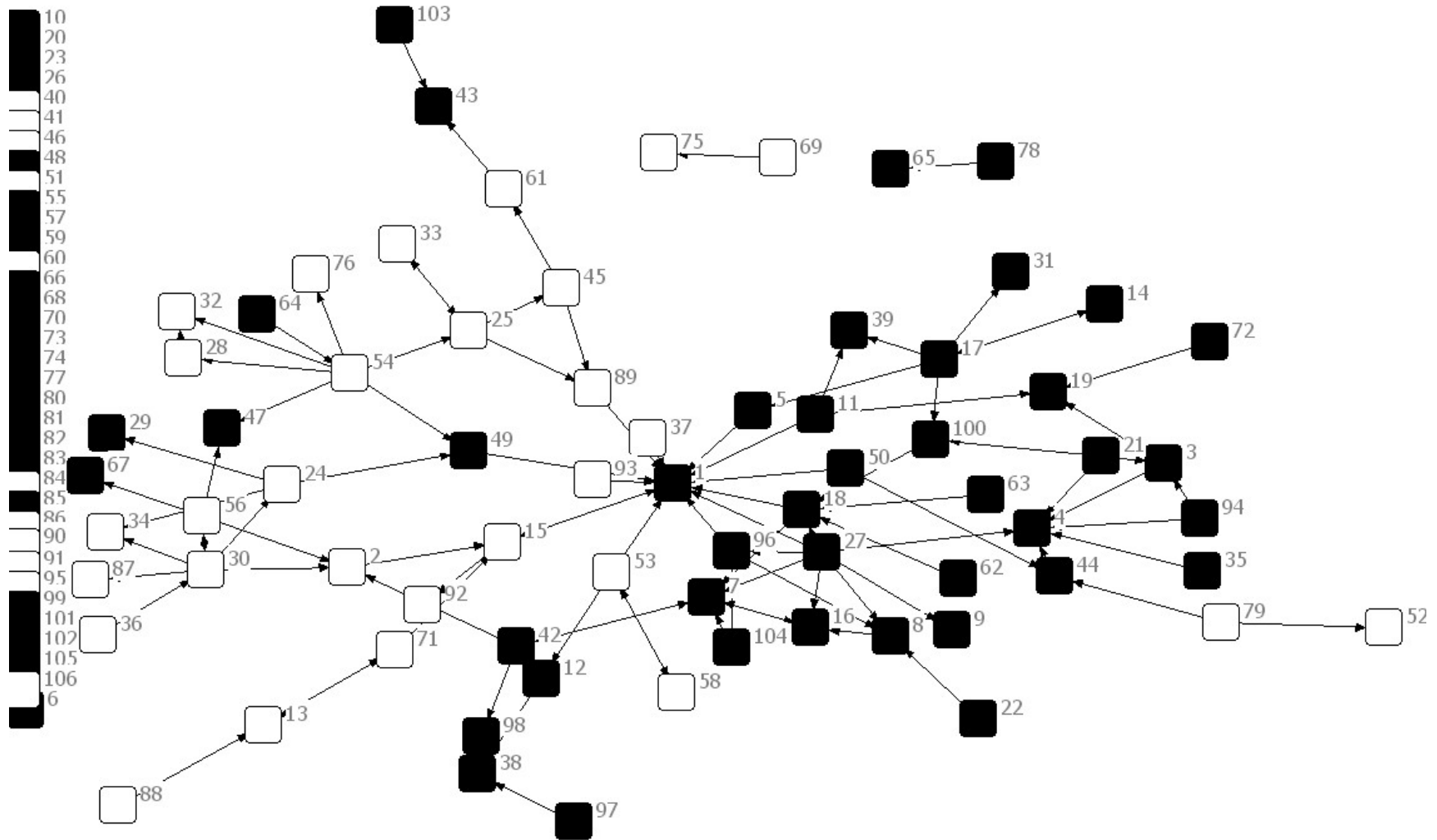
Table 6.9. Sub-Group Density of the German Political Blogs by Political Right-Left

	Right (s.d.)	Left (s.d.)	Non-Aligned (s.d.)
Right (n = 22)	.035 (. 215)	.008 (.098)	.008 (.087)
Left (n = 42)	.002 (.046)	.027 (.235)	.014 (.146)
Non-Aligned (n = 22)	.002 (.046)	.007 (.082)	.007 (.123)

Note. Overall density: 0.012 (SD = 0.138)

A closer look at the Figure 6.5 reveals an interesting linking pattern in the German blogosphere. Along the netzpolitik blog (*No.* 1), the German network seems to be separated into the right side and left side of Figure 6.5. Except for the common ties to netzpolitik, only one link from Narragonien (*No.* 42) to Red Blog (*No.* 7) connected the two groups. After investigating the attributes of each blog belonging to the two groups, it was found that most blogs in the left side of network were those identifying themselves with major parties participating in the coalition government in Germany: CDU, FDP, SPD and the Green Party. On the other hand, most of the blogs on the right side of the network did not belong to the “mainstream” politics, either having no party identification or belonging to parties outside the coalition government (i.e., PDS and Communist). Figure 6.6 presents this division between mainstream party-identified blogs (white squares) and others (black squares) in the German blogging network. Comparisons of Figures 6.5 and 6.6 reveal a clearer pattern of segregation along mainstream and alternative politics than the segregation between the political right-left.

Figure 6.6 German Blogging Network by the Presence of Mainstream Party Identifications



Note. White square = Mainstream party-identified blogs; Black square = Non-mainstream party-identified blogs

Sub-group density analysis supported that the German political blogosphere was separated along the presence and absence of bloggers' mainstream party identifications (See Table 6.10).

Table 6.10. Sub-Group Density of the German Political Blogs by the Presence of Party Affiliation

	Mainstream Party-Identified Blogs (s.d.)	Non Mainstream Party-Identified Blogs (s.d.)
Mainstream Party-Identified Blogs (n = 40)	.022 (.163)	.006 (.087)
Non Mainstream Party-Identified Blogs (n = 66)	.001 (.034)	.017 (.186)

Note. Overall density = .012

Finally, the analysis of sub-group density was conducted to see whether blogs belonging to the same organizational affiliations made more frequent ties with each other than with others (See Table 6.11). The results indicate that there was no clear linking tendency on the basis of bloggers' organizational affiliations. Only citizen bloggers had meaningfully more ties with other citizen bloggers, but the within-group density (.014) was just marginally higher than the overall network density (.012)

Table 6.11 Group Density of the German Political Blogs by Organizational Affiliations

	Citizen (s.d.)	News Media (s.d.)	Party (s.d.)	Other (s.d.)
Citizen (n = 72)	.014 (.143)	.006 (.074)	.010 (.133)	.063 (.395)
News Media (n = 5)	.000	.000	.000	.050 (.218)
Party (n = 25)	.007 (.094)	.008 (.089)	.010 (.129)	.000
Other (n = 4)	.000	.000	.000	.000

Note. Overall density: 0.012

In conclusion, the German political blogosphere of selected blogs showed four major characteristics in its network structure: (1) relatively infrequent ties and interactions among bloggers, (2) fragmentation of the sphere across political differences,

(3) strong presence of political party blogs, but weak presence of media blogs indicating an aspect of a politicized culture, and (4) segregation between blogs of mainstream politics participating in the German government coalition and blogs of alternative politics outside the coalition.

COMPARING THREE NETWORKS

Based on analyses of political blogging networks in Germany, the U.K., and U.S., this section compares the network structures of the three countries for hypothesis tests. The first hypothesis regards the extent of interconnectedness among political blogs in the three countries. H1 predicted that the U.S. blogging network would have a greater density than the British and German blogging networks due to a higher sense of community identity among U.S. political bloggers. As shown in the analysis of network density of each country, the U.S. network had the greatest density (.246), followed by the U.K. network (.043) and the German network (.012). In other words, the U.S. network had 5.72 times more average ties between all possible pairs of 106 blogs than the U.K. network, and the U.S. network had 20.5 times more ties than the German network. Also, the U.K. network had 3.58 times more average ties than the German counterpart. Higher density of the U.S. network, relative to that of the U.K. and German networks, was probably due to more frequent posts of American blogs than British or German blogs. All conditions being same, having more posts increases the opportunities to make ties to other blogs. To control the different levels of blogger activity in the three countries, the amount of posts by selected 106 blogs from each country during the two constructed weeks were considered: 11,188 total posts in the U.S. network; 3,764 total posts in the U.K. network; and 2,405 total posts in the German network. The U.S. network had 2.97 and 4.65 times more posts than the U.K. and German networks. Even accounting for the

total number of posts by dividing the density of the U.S. network (.246) by 2.97 for the U.S.-U.K. comparison and by 4.65 for the U.S.-German comparison, the U.S. network still showed higher density relative to the U.K. and German counterparts. After controlling for the number of posts of the three countries, the U.S. network had a density of .083 whereas the U.K. network had a density of .043. Also, the U.S. network had a density of .053 while the German network had a density of .012. Compared with the density of .012 of the German network, the U.K. network had a density of .027, after controlling for the amount of posts. These results further support the argument that U.S. political bloggers had the highest sense of community identity among bloggers, and German bloggers had the lowest, with British bloggers in the middle.

The second set of hypotheses deals with the tendency of making ties on the basis of political and organizational homophily across the three countries. H2-1 expected that within sub-group density would be higher than the between-group density across all three countries due to the general human tendency of homophily. As shown in the data of individual countries, political bloggers of the three countries made more ties to bloggers belonging to the same political groups than bloggers belonging to different groups. There was no exception to this political homophily in making links in the political blogospheres of the three countries as long as political blogs had clear political orientations.

H2-2 predicted that the U.S. network would show the greatest within sub-group density among the networks of the three countries due to structural factors--political, media, and technological--that shape blogging practices. Previous visual mapping of the networks of the three countries indicated that the U.S. political blogs were most clearly divided into two separate zones of the conservative and the liberal. Because there is no direct test comparing the sub-group densities across different networks available in

network analysis, this study compared the ratio of ties between within-group and between-group densities across the three countries. For the cross-national comparisons of sub-group densities, the 40 top political blogs representing the two broad political orientations in each country were selected: the conservative versus the liberal in the U.S. and the political right and the political left in Germany and the U.K. Within-group and between-group densities were examined across the three countries (See Table 6.12).

Table 6.12. Sub-Group Densities of the German, U.K., and U.S. Networks by Political Orientations

<u>U.S. Network</u>		
	Conservative (s.d.)	Liberal (s.d.)
Conservative (N = 20)	.908 (1.668)	.228 (.671)
Liberal (N = 20)	.100 (.394)	1.300 (2.570)
<u>U.K. Network</u>		
	Right (s.d.)	Left (s.d.)
Right (N = 20)	.200 (.573)	.097 (.416)
Left (N = 20)	.038 (.203)	.155 (.562)
<u>German Network</u>		
	Right (s.d.)	Left (s.d.)
Right (N = 20)	.042 (.237)	.018 (.149)
Left (N = 20)	.015 (.212)	.050 (.272)

Based on scores of sub-group densities, the ratio between the within-group density and between-group density was calculated by dividing the former by the latter for each blogging network. As Table 6.13 illustrates, all six sub-groups connected to like-minded within-group blogs more often than to competing political groups. American liberal blogs were most likely to link to the same liberal blogs (13.0), followed by U.K. blogs of the political left (4.08), and American conservative blogs (3.98). On average, U.S. blogs had the highest ratio linking to their own political group (8.49), German blogs had the lowest ratio (2.83), and U.K. blogs were in the middle (3.07).

Table 6.13. The Ratio of Within-Group Links to Between-Group Links

	U.S.	U.K.	Germany
Conservative (Right)	3.98	2.06	2.33
Liberal (Left)	13.0	4.08	3.33
Average	8.49	3.07	2.83

Based on network mapping and comparisons of sub-group densities across the three countries, it was concluded that the political blogging network in the U.S. had the highest level of segregation along the lines of political differences among the three countries.

Finally, H3 predicted that the U.S. political blogging network would show higher centralization and less equality than the British and German blogging networks, due to its longer durability and larger size. The centralization scores range from 0, if all the blogs in a network have the same amount of incoming links and to 1, if one dominant blog attracts all incoming links and none of the remaining 105 blog receives incoming links at all. The comparisons of network centralizations revealed that the American network had higher centralization (0.07) than the German network (0.03), but it had a similar level of centralization with the U.K. network (0.08). This result suggests that the British network has evolved into a level of stratification similar to that of the U.S. network (See Table 6.14).

Table 6.14. Network Centralizations of the German, U.K., and U.S. Blogging Networks

	U.S. Network	U.K. Network	German Network
Indegree Centralization	0.07	0.08	0.03
Outdegree Centralization	0.03	0.04	0.02

CHAPTER 7. LINK ANALYSIS

Chapter 7 presents findings about linking patterns of the top political blogs in the U.S., the U.K and Germany. The ten most linked non-media affiliated blogs in each of the three countries were chosen from network data of the selected 106 political blogs. To examine differences in linking patterns on the basis of political orientation, the five top blogs representing the two broad competing political stands were selected from each country: five conservative and five liberal blogs in America: five blogs from the political right and five from the political left in both Great Britain and Germany. Also, the five most linked and politically unaligned media blogs were chosen from U.K. and U.S. networks to explore whether their official ties with professional media organizations influenced their linking patterns. Media-affiliated blogs of Germany were excluded in the analysis due to their virtual absence in the German political blogosphere, in number and influence.

LINKING PATTERNS IN THE U.S., THE U.K., AND GERMANY

Describing the Data

Table 7.1 summarizes the 15 U.S. political blogs chosen for the analysis of linking patterns. Those 15 blogs--10 non-media affiliated and five media-affiliated--had a total of 4,065 posts during the two constructed weeks, and each blog had an average of 19.3 posts every day. The Corner had the most with 55.1 posts per day whereas Political Radar had the least with 6.1 posts. The 15 political blogs had a total of 6,380 outgoing links, with an average of 2.71 links in every post. On average, Fire Dog Lake had the most frequent outgoing links ($M = 5.54$) per post and The Trail had the least ($M = .07$).

Table 7.1. List of 15 U.S. Political Blogs for Link Analysis

	Total Posts	Average Daily Posts	Total Links	Average Links per post
<u>Conservative Blogs</u>				
Hot Air	293	20.9	678	3.57
The Corner	772	55.1	202	1.14
M. Malkin	129	9.2	490	4.08
News Busters	320	22.9	599	3.20
Instapundit	553	39.5	247	1.44
<u>Liberal Blogs</u>				
Huffington Post	247	17.6	430	2.40
TPM	199	14.2	171	1.08
Daily Kos	317	22.6	813	4.54
Think Progress	181	12.9	878	5.23
Fire Dog Lake	202	14.4	875	5.54
<u>Non-Aligned Media Blogs</u>				
Ben Smith	287	20.5	152	1.00
Political Ticker	251	17.9	225	1.31
Political Radar	85	6.1	127	1.49
The Caucus	105	7.5	406	3.90
The Trail	124	8.85	87	0.73
Average	271	19.3	455.7	2.71

The 15 top political blogs in the U.K. had a total of 945 posts during the selected 14 days, with an average of 4.5 posts each day (See Table 7.2). The number of daily posts ranged from the least of 1.5 posts (Nick Robinson) to the most of 10.3 (Tim Worstall). Each post had an average of 2.16 outgoing links, with a maximum of 3.72 links (EU Referendum) and a minimum of 0.56 link (Ben Brogan).

Table 7.2 List of 15 U.K. Political Blogs for Link Analysis

	Total Posts	Average Daily Posts	Total Links	Average Links per post
<u>Political Right</u>				
Iain Dale	97	6.9	68	0.85
Conservative Home	43	3.1	136	3.16
Guy Fawks	48	3.4	49	1.11
Tim Worstall	144	10.3	101	0.90
EU Referendum	58	4.1	216	3.72
<u>Political Left</u>				
LibDemVoice	103	7.4	229	2.76
Liberal Conspiracy	48	3.4	187	4.92
Labour Home	56	4.0	70	1.27
Quaequam	27	1.9	83	3.07
Socialist Unity	39	2.8	64	1.64
<u>Non-Aligned Media Blog</u>				
Coffeehouse	115	8.2	208	1.87
Comment Central	91	6.5	131	2.47
Nick Robinson	21	1.5	29	1.38
Ben Brogan	32	2.3	18	0.56
Daniel Hannan	23	1.6	58	2.76
Average	63	4.5	109.8	2.16

The top ten citizen blogs in Germany had a total of 295 posts, with an average of 2.1 posts each day. Duck Home and Radio Utopie had the most with 3.0 daily posts and Bissige Liberale had the least with 1.4 posts. A total of 847 outgoing links were made, with an average of 2.85 links in every post. Zettles Raum had the most with 5.23 outgoing links and CDU Politik had the least with 1.07 link per post (See Table 7.3).

Table 7.3 List of 10 German Political Blogs for Link Analysis

	Total Posts	Average Daily Posts	Total Links	Average Links per Post
<u>Political Right</u>				
Bissige Liberale	32	2.3	67	2.31
Filter Blog	20	1.4	31	1.63
CDU Politik	29	2.1	31	1.07
Robert Hesse	21	1.5	29	1.45
Zettels Raum	26	1.9	136	5.23
<u>Political Left</u>				
Red Blog	41	2.9	92	2.71
Duck Home	42	3.0	116	3.31
Mark Seibert	20	1.4	30	1.50
Radio Utopie	42	3.0	255	6.54
Blog NRW-SPD	22	1.6	60	2.73
Average	29.5	2.1	84.7	2.85

U.S. Linking Patterns

For cross-national comparisons of linking patterns of the political blogs of Germany, the U.K., and the U.S., a link analysis of selected blogs from each country was conducted in the beginning. Types, political orientations and national affiliations of linked to websites from the top political blogs were examined. Among the 15 U.S. political blogs, the most common type of websites linked to, on average, were news media websites (39.8%), followed next by other blogs (31.2%). Government websites accounted for 6.7% of the total linked websites (See Table 7.4).

Table 7.4 Types and Frequencies of Linked Websites on U.S. Blogs

	Blog (%)	News Media (%)	Information (%)	Govet (%)	Interest Group	Other (%)	Total (%)
Hot Air	186 (43.7)	159 (37.3)	30 (7.0)	11 (2.6)	9 (2.1)	31 (7.3)	426 (100.0)
The Corner	37 (21.9)	81 (47.9)	12 (7.1)	6 (3.6)	16 (9.5)	17 (10.1)	169 (100.1)
Michell Malkin	118 (39.3)	126 (42.0)	13 (4.3)	10 (3.3)	10 (3.3)	23 (7.7)	300 (99.9)
News Busters	83 (22.3)	161 (43.2)	28 (7.5)	10 (2.7)	58 (15.5)	33 (8.8)	373 (100.0)
Instapundit	141 (61.3)	67 (29.1)	13 (5.7)	0	6 (2.6)	3 (1.3)	230 (100.0)
Huffington Post	65 (25.2)	97 (37.6)	18 (7.0)	15 (5.8)	31 (12.0)	32 (12.4)	258 (100.0)
TPM	19 (28.4)	31 (46.3)	2 (3.0)	6 (9.0)	3 (4.5)	6 (9.0)	67 (100.2)
Daily Kos	126 (28.1)	173 (38.5)	44 (9.8)	36 (8.0)	37 (8.2)	33 (7.3)	449 (99.9)
Think Progress	127 (23.3)	284 (52.2)	11 (2.0)	32 (5.9)	59 (10.8)	31 (5.7)	544 (99.9)
Fire Dog Lake	180 (31.9)	229 (40.5)	34 (6.0)	27 (4.8)	46 (8.1)	49 (8.7)	565 (100.0)
Ben Smith	71 (55.0)	33 (25.6)	6 (4.7)	2 (1.6)	5 (3.9)	12 (9.3)	129 (100.1)
Political Ticker	3 (20.0)	6 (40.0)	0	1 (6.7)	0	5 (33.3)	15 (100.0)
Political Radar	4 (22.2)	6 (33.3)	0	5 (27.8)	1 (5.6)	2 (11.1)	18 (100.0)
The Caucus	25 (17.0)	77 (52.4)	5 (3.4)	17 (11.6)	5 (3.4)	18 (12.2)	147 (100.0)
The Trail	11 (28.2)	12 (30.8)	5 (12.8)	3 (7.7)	2 (5.1)	6 (15.4)	39 (100.0)
Average %	31.2%	39.8%	5.4%	6.7%	6.3%	10.6%	100.0

Since media organizations and politicians were adopting blogging formats as communication tools, organizational affiliations of linked blogs were examined (See Table 7.5). Although citizen blogs had the majority of incoming links in the 15 blogs (47.3%), both in-house blogs of mainstream news media (30.2%) and blogs organizationally tied to opinion and political journals (10.2%) received a considerable amount of incoming links, too. Blogs classified as “other” included those blogs officially affiliated with interest groups, professional organizations, entertainment, and business.

Table 7.5. Types and Frequencies of Organizational Affiliations of Linked Blogs

	Citizen (%)	News Media (%)	Political Magazine (%)	Party/ Politician (%)	Other (%)	Total
Hot Air	95 (51.1)	48 (25.8)	39 (21.0)	1 (0.5)	3 (1.6)	186 (100.0)
The Corner	21 (56.8)	6 (16.2)	9 (24.3)	0	1 (2.7)	37 (100.0)
Michell Malkin	82 (69.5)	24 (20.3)	4 (3.4)	2 (1.7)	6 (5.1)	118 (100.0)
News Busters	57 (68.7)	14 (16.9)	7 (8.4)	0	5 (6.0)	83 (100.0)
Instapundit	108(76.6)	22 (15.6)	7 (5.0)	0	4 (2.8)	141 (100.0)
Huffington Post	34 (52.3)	16 (24.6)	7 (10.8)	0	8 (12.3)	65 (100.0)
TPM	6 (31.6)	10 (52.6)	1 (5.3)	0	2 (10.5)	19 (100.0)
Daily Kos	55 (43.7)	40 (31.7)	13 (10.3)	2 (1.6)	16 (12.7)	126 (100.0)
Think Progress	52 (40.9)	54 (42.9)	12 (9.4)	2 (1.6)	7 (5.5)	127 (100.3)
Fire Dog Lake	118 (65.5)	34 (18.9)	7 (3.9)	0	21 (11.7)	180 (100.0)
Ben Smith	18 (25.4)	36 (50.7)	10 (14.1)	4 (5.6)	3 (4.2)	71 (100.0)
Political Ticker	1 (33.3)	1 (33.3)	0	0	1 (33.3)	3 (99.9)
Political Radar	0	2 (50.0)	1 (25.0)	0	1 (25.0)	4 (100.0)
The Caucus	10 (40.0)	9 (36.0)	3 (12.0)	1 (4.0)	2 (8.0)	25 (100.0)
The Trail	6 (54.5)	2 (18.2)	0	0	3 (27.3)	11 (100.0)
Average %	47.3%	30.2%	10.2%	1.0%	11.2%	99.9%

Political orientation of the websites linked to by the 15 blogs was classified into three categories: (1) supportive (2) opposing and (3) neutral towards the political perspectives of each of the 15 top political blogs to which their links were directed. Similar to findings by Reese et al. (2007), those selected blogs made the most frequent links to websites that were neutral in their political orientations (68.8%), followed by links to supportive websites (26.8%). This result was due to frequent links to news websites that in most cases were coded as neutral.² Only 4.5% of total links were directed to websites with opposing political perspectives (See Table 7.6).

Table 7.6. Political Orientations of Linked Websites in U.S. Blogs

	Supporting (%)	Opposing (%)	Neutral (%)	Total (%)
Hot Air	123 (28.9)	20 (4.7)	283 (66.4)	426 (100.0)
The Corner	39 (23.1)	11 (6.5)	119 (70.4)	169 (100.0)
Michell Malkin	92 (30.7)	7 (2.3)	201 (67.0)	300 (100.0)
News Busters	108 (29.0)	22 (5.9)	243 (65.1)	373 (100.0)
Instapundit	95 (41.3)	26 (11.3)	109 (47.4)	230 (100.0)
Huffington Post	62 (24.0)	6 (2.3)	190 (73.6)	258 (99.9)
TPM	11 (16.4)	2 (3.0)	54 (80.6)	67 (100.0)
Daily Kos	103 (22.9)	8 (1.8)	338 (75.3)	449 (100.0)
Think Progress	105 (19.3)	24 (4.4)	415 (76.3)	544 (100.0)
Fire Dog Lake	180 (31.9)	13 (2.3)	372 (65.8)	565 (100.0)
Ben Smith	9 (7.0)	17 (13.2)	103 (79.8)	129 (100.0)
Political Ticker	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	13 (86.7)	15 (100.1)
Political Radar	4 (22.2)	0	14 (77.8)	18 (100.0)
The Caucus	9 (6.1)	17 (11.6)	121 (82.3)	147 (100.0)
The Trail	0	11 (28.2)	28 (71.8)	39 (100.0)
Average %	26.8%	4.5%	68.8%	100.1%

² Across the three countries, professional news media were judged as neutral, except the cases in which news outlets explicitly pronounced and supported specific political orientations.

In terms of national affiliations of linked websites, the 15 U.S. blogs most frequently linked to websites from their own country (91.4%). Excluding those websites with unclear national affiliations (4.8), only 3.8% of linked websites were outside the U.S. (See Table 7.7).

Table 7.7. National Affiliations of Linked Websites in U.S. Blogs

	U.S (%)	U.K. (%)	Uncertain (%)	Other (%)	International (%)	Total (%)
Hot Air	396 (93.0)	10 (2.3)	16 (3.8)	4 (0.8)	0	426 (99.9)
The Corner	143 (84.6)	9 (5.3)	7 (4.1)	10 (5.9)	0	169 (99.9)
Michell Malkin	276 (92.0)	10 (3.3)	5 (1.7)	10 (3.3)	1 (0.3)	300 (99.9)
News Busters	345 (92.4)	7 (1.9)	17 (4.6)	3 (0.9)	1 (0.3)	373 (100.1)
Instapundit	221 (96.1)	7 (3.0)	0	2 (0.9)	0	230 (100.0)
Huffington Post	233 (90.3)	8 (3.1)	16 (6.2)	1 (0.4)	0	258 (100.0)
TPM	61 (91.0)	1 (1.5)	3 (4.5)	2 (3.0)	0	67 (100.0)
Daily Kos	421 (93.8)	10 (2.2)	12 (2.7)	4 (0.8)	2 (0.4)	449 (99.9)
Think Progress	507 (93.2)	16 (2.9)	8 (1.5)	8 (1.5)	5 (1.0)	544 (100.1)
Fire Dog Lake	517 (91.5)	20 (3.5)	17 (3.0)	10 (1.7)	1 (0.2)	565 (99.9)
Ben Smith	122 (94.6)	1 (0.8)	4 (3.1)	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	129 (100.1)
Political Ticker	13 (86.7)	0	2 (13.3)	0	0	15 (100.0)
Political Radar	16 (88.9)	0	2 (11.1)	0	0	18 (100.0)
The Caucus	140 (95.2)	0	6 (4.1)	0	1 (0.7)	147 (100.0)
The Trail	34 (87.2)	0	3 (7.7)	1 (2.6)	1 (2.6)	39 (100.1)
Average %	91.4%	2.0%	4.8%	1.5%	1.1%	100.3%

U.K. Linking Patterns

In the U.K., news media websites, on average, were the most common type of websites (42.8%) linked by the 15 selected blogs, followed by linking to other blogs (28.1%) and government websites (11.8%) (See Table 7.8).

Table 7.8 Types and Frequencies of Linked Websites in U.K. Blogs

	Blog (%)	News Media (%)	Information (%)	Government (%)	Interest Group (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
Iain Dale	25 (40.3)	21 (33.9)	2 (3.2)	3 (4.8)	6 (9.7)	5 (8.1)	62 (99.9)
Conservative Home	18 (24.3)	42 (56.8)	2 (2.7)	3 (4.1)	6 (8.1)	3 (4.1)	74 (100.1)
Guy Fawks	9 (27.3)	10 (30.3)	1 (3.0)	6 (18.2)	5 (15.2)	2 (6.1)	33 (100.1)
Tim Worstall	28 (28.6)	59 (60.2)	3 (3.1)	1 (1.0)	1 (1.0)	6 (6.1)	98 (100.0)
EU Referendum	33 (25.0)	72 (54.5)	2 (1.5)	13 (9.8)	3 (2.3)	9 (6.8)	132 (99.9)
LibDemVoice	24 (18.6)	40 (31.0)	2 (1.6)	50 (38.8)	5 (3.9)	8 (6.2)	129 (100.1)
Liberal Conspiracy	57 (41.3)	48 (34.8)	4 (2.9)	9 (6.5)	11 (8.0)	9 (6.5)	138 (100.0)
Labour Home	18 (30.0)	24 (40.0)	2 (3.3)	8 (13.3)	3 (5.0)	5 (8.3)	60 (99.9)
Quaequam	20 (29.4)	28 (41.2)	7 (10.3)	4 (5.9)	5 (7.4)	4 (5.9)	68 (100.1)
Socialist Unity	12 (22.2)	15 (27.8)	3 (5.6)	4 (7.4)	17 (31.5)	3 (5.6)	54 (100.1)
Coffee House	33 (23.1)	85 (59.4)	3 (2.1)	12 (8.4)	3 (2.1)	7 (4.9)	143 (100.0)
Comment Central	32 (41.0)	32 (41.0)	5 (6.4)	1 (1.3)	0	8 (10.3)	78 (100.0)
Nick Robinson	6 (26.1)	13 (56.5)	1 (4.3)	1 (4.3)	1 (4.3)	1 (4.3)	23 (99.8)
Ben Brogan	0	7 (63.6)	0	3 (27.3)	0	1 (9.1)	11 (100.0)
Daniel Hannan	12 (44.4)	3 (11.1)	0	7 (25.9)	3 (11.1)	2 (7.4)	27 (99.9)
Average %	28.1%	42.8%	3.3%	11.8%	7.3%	6.6%	99.9%

In organizational affiliations of linked to blogs, citizen blogs were most frequently linked (61.4%), and in-house blogs of mainstream media were next (27.6%). Unlike the U.S., linking to blogs belonging to opinion and political journals was very infrequent; instead, linking to blogs with official ties to political parties and political leaders accounted for 7.0% of total links (See Table 7.9). This result seems to reflect an important aspect of the more politicized culture of the U.K. in which political institutions play relatively prominent roles, compared to political communication processes in the U.S.

Table 7.9 Types and Frequencies of Organizational Affiliation of Linked Blogs

	Citizen (%)	News Media (%)	Political Magazine	Party/ Politician	Other (%)	Total (%)
Iain Dale	16 (64.0)	6 (24.0)	0	2 (8.0)	1 (4.0)	25 (100.0)
Conservative Home	4 (22.2)	12 (66.7)	0	2 (11.1)	0	18 (100.0)
Guy Fawks	7 (77.8)	2 (22.2)	0	0	0	9 (100.0)
Tim Worstall	20 (71.4)	1 (3.6)	0	4 (14.3)	3 (10.7)	32 (100.0)
EU Referendum	26 (78.8)	2 (6.1)	0	4 (12.1)	1 (3.0)	33 (100.0)
LibDemVoice	14 (58.3)	7 (29.2)	0	3 (12.5)	0	24 (100.0)
Liberal Conspiracy	48 (84.2)	5 (8.8)	2 (3.5)	1 (1.8)	1 (1.8)	57 (100.1)
Labour Home	14 (77.8)	4 (22.2)	0	0	0	18 (100.0)
Quaequam	16 (80.0)	1 (5.0)	0	2 (10.0)	1 (5.0)	20 (100.0)
Socialist Unity	9 (75.0)	0	0	3 (25.0)	0	12 (100.0)
Coffee House	10 (30.3)	22 (66.7)	0	0	1 (3.0)	33 (100.0)
Comment Central	10 (31.3)	18 (56.3)	2 (6.3)	1 (3.1)	1 (3.1)	32 (100.1)
Nick Robinson	2 (33.3)	3 (50.0)	0	0	1 (16.7)	7 (100.0)
Ben Brogan	0	0	0	0	0	0
Daniel Hannan	9 (75.0)	3 (25.0)	0	0	0	12 (100.0)
Average %	61.4%	27.6%	0.7%	7.0%	3.4%	100.1%

Websites considered to be neutral from a political perspective received, on average, the most frequent links from the 15 British blogs (64.3%), followed by supportive websites (28.5%) and opposing websites (7.2%) (See Table 7.10).

Table 7.10. Political Orientations of Linked Websites in U.K. Blogs

	Supporting (%)	Opposing (%)	Neutral (%)	Total
Iain Dale	10 (16.1)	15 (24.2)	37 (59.7)	62 (100.0)
Conservative Home	14 (18.9)	0	60 (81.1)	74 (100.0)
Guy Fawks	10 (30.3)	5 (15.2)	18 (54.5)	33 (100.0)
Tim Worstall	13 (13.3)	7 (7.1)	78 (79.6)	98 (100.0)
EU Referendum	30 (22.7)	2 (1.5)	100 (75.8)	132 (100.0)
LibDemVoice	60 (46.5)	3 (2.3)	66 (51.2)	129 (100.0)
Liberal Conspiracy	40 (29.0)	12 (8.7)	86 (62.3)	138 (100.0)
LabourHome	13 (21.7)	3 (5.0)	44 (73.3)	60 (100.0)
Quaequam	20 (29.4)	4 (5.9)	44 (64.7)	68 (100.0)
Socialist Unity	31 (57.4)	1 (1.9)	22 (40.7)	54 (100.0)
Average %	28.5%	7.2%	64.3%	100.0%

In terms of national affiliations of linked websites, the U.K. websites had a majority with 82.5% of total incoming links, and the U.S. websites had 8.7% (Table 7.11).

Table 7.11. National Affiliations of Liked Websites in U.K. Blogs

	U.K. (%)	U.S. (%)	Uncertain (%)	Other (%)	International (%)	Total (%)
Iain Dale	55 (88.7)	3 (4.8)	2 (3.2)	0	2 (3.2)	62 (99.9)
Conservative Home	67 (90.5)	2 (2.7)	0	0	5 (6.8)	74 (100.0)
Guy Fawkes	31 (93.9)	1 (3.0)	1 (3.0)	0	0	33 (99.9)
Tim Worstall	85 (86.7)	6 (6.1)	2 (2.0)	2 (2.0)	3 (3.0)	98 (99.8)
EU Referendum	87 (65.9)	24 (18.2)	2 (1.5)	10 (7.6)	9 (6.8)	132 (100.0)
LibDemVoice	121(93.8)	2 (1.6)	3 (2.3)	1 (0.8)	2 (1.6)	129 (100.1)
Liberal Conspiracy	108(78.3)	23 (16.7)	7 (5.1)	0	0	138 (100.1)
Labour Home	49 (81.7)	8 (13.3)	2 (3.3)	1 (1.7)	0	60 (100.0)
Quaequam	57 (83.8)	4 (5.9)	5 (7.4)	0	2 (3.0)	68 (100.1)
Socialist Unity	44 (81.5)	2 (3.7)	4 (7.4)	3 (5.6)	1 (1.9)	54 (100.1)
Coffee House	117(81.8)	21 (14.7)	3 (2.1)	2 (1.4)	0	143 (100.0)
Comment Central	50 (64.1)	21 (26.9)	2 (2.6)	4 (5.1)	1 (1.3)	78 (100.0)
Nick Robinson	20 (87.0)	1 (4.3)	2 (8.7)	0	0	23 (100.0)
Ben Brogan	9 (81.8)	1 (9.1)	0	1. (9.1)	0	11 (100.0)
Daniel Hannan	21 (77.8)	0	1 (3.7)	1 (3.7)	4 (14.8)	27 (100.0)
Average %	82.5%	8.7%	4.1%	1.9%	2.8%	100.0%

German Linking Patterns

The top German blogs made the most frequent links to news media websites (40.5%), and the next most frequent links to other political blogs (20.0%), followed by general information sites (12.9%) and government websites (10.2%).

Table 7.12. Types and Frequencies of Linked Websites in German Blogs

	Blog (%)	News Media (%)	Information (%)	Government (%)	Interest Group (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
Bissige Liberale	13 (24.5)	23 (43.4)	9 (17.0)	0	2 (3.8)	6 (11.3)	5 (100.0)
Filter Blog	6 (28.6)	6 (28.6)	1 (4.8)	4 (19.0)	1 (4.8)	3 (14.3)	21 (100.1)
CDU Politik	2 (8.0)	15 (60.0)	5 (20.0)	3 (12.0)	0	0	25 (100.0)
Robert Hesse	8 (34.8)	9 (39.1)	0	2 (8.7)	3 (13.0)	1 (4.3)	23 (99.9)
Zettels Raum	4 (6.3)	32 (50.0)	13 (20.3)	6 (9.4)	4 (6.3)	5 (7.8)	64 (100.1)
Red Blog	15 (25.0)	22 (36.7)	3 (5.0)	2 (3.3)	11 (18.3)	7 (11.7)	60 (100.0)
Duck Home	25 (31.3)	37 (46.3)	8 (10.0)	2 (2.5)	5 (6.3)	3 (3.8)	80 (100.2)
Mark Seibert	6 (24.0)	5 (20.0)	7 (28.0)	2 (8.0)	1 (4.0)	4 (16.0)	25 (100.0)
Radio Utopie	16 (13.3)	46 (38.3)	26 (21.7)	10 (8.3)	8 (6.7)	14 (11.7)	120 (100.0)
NRW-SPD	2 (4.4)	19 (42.2)	1 (2.2)	14 (31.1)	0	9 (20.0)	45 (99.9)
Average %	20.0%	40.5%	12.9%	10.2%	6.3%	10.1%	100.0

With regard to organizational affiliations of linked websites, citizen bloggers had the most incoming links (75.8%). Unlike the U.S. and the U.K., media-affiliated blogs in Germany had a relatively weak presence in the political blogosphere, receiving only 8.3% of total incoming links. Instead, official blogs of political parties and leaders accounted for 14.1% of incoming links from the 10 blogs (See Table 7.13).

Table 7.13. Types and Frequencies of Organizational Affiliation of Linked Blogs in German Blogs

	Citizen (%)	News Media (%)	Political Magazine	Party/ Politician (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
Bissige Liberale	10 (76.9)	1 (7.7)	0	1 (7.7)	1 (7.7)	13 (100.0)
Filter Blog	5 (83.3)	0	0	1 (16.7)	0	6 (100.0)
CDU Politik	1 (50.0)	0	0	1 (50.0)	0	2 (100.0)
Robert Hesse	8 (100.0)	0	0	0	0	8 (100.0)
Zettels Raum	3 (75.0)	1 (25.0)	0	0	0	4 (100.0)
Red Blog	15 (100.0)	0	0	0	0	15 (100.0)
Duck Home	24 (96.0)	0	0	0	1 (4.0)	25 (100.0)
Mark Seibert	5 (83.3)	0	0	1 (16.7)	0	6 (100.0)
Radio Utopie	15 (93.8)	0	0	0	1 (6.3)	16 (100.1)
Blog NRW-SPD	0	1 (50.0)	0	1 (50.0)	0	2 (100.0)
Average %	75.8%	8.3%	0%	14.1%	1.8%	100.0%

In terms of political orientation of linked to websites, neutral websites were the most common, having 76.2% of total links with 19.1% of links directed to supportive websites, and only 4.7% toward opposing websites (See Table 7.14).

Table 7.14. Political Orientations of Linked Websites in German Blogs

	Supporting (%)	Opposing (%)	Neutral (%)	Total (%)
Bissige Liberale	5 (9.4)	1 (1.9)	47 (88.7)	53 (100.0)
Filter Blog	5 (23.8)	4 (19.0)	12 (57.1)	21 (99.9)
CDU Politik	2 (8.0)	2 (8.0)	21 (84.0)	25 (100.0)
Robert Hesse	4 (17.4)	1 (4.3)	18 (78.3)	23 (100.0)
Zettels Raum	6 (9.4)	5 (7.8)	53 (82.8)	64 (100.0)
Red Blog	25 (41.7)	0	35 (58.3)	60 (100.0)
Duck Home	8 (10.0)	3 (3.8)	69 (86.3)	80 (100.1)
Mark Seibert	7 (28.0)	0	18 (72.0)	25 (100.0)
Radio Utopie	15 (12.5)	0	105 (87.5)	120 (100.0)
Blog NRW-SPD	14 (31.1)	1 (2.2)	30 (66.7)	45 (100.0)
Average %	19.1%	4.7%	76.2%	100.0%

Other German websites were the most frequent destinations of selected blogs in terms of national affiliation (74.6%), followed by the U.S. (9.8%) and “other” countries (6.4%).

Table 7.15. National Affiliations of Linked Websites in German Blogs

	Germany (%)	U.S. (%)	Uncertain (%)	Other (%)	International (%)	Total (%)
Bissige Liberale	34 (64.2)	9 (17.0)	7 (13.2)	3 (5.7)	0	53 (100.1)
Filter Blog	19 (90.5)	1 (4.8)	1 (4.8)	0	0	21 (100.1)
CDU Politik	21 (84.0)	2 (8.0)	0	2 (8.0)	0	25 (100.0)
Robert Hesse	21 (91.3)	2 (8.7)	0	0	0	23 (100.0)
Zettels Raum	29 (45.3)	16 (25.0)	8 (12.5)	9 (14.1)	2 (3.2)	64 (100.1)
Red Blog	41 (68.3)	6 (10.0)	2 (3.3)	9 (15.0)	2 (3.3)	60 (99.9)
Duck Home	60 (75.0)	2 (2.5)	6 (7.6)	10 (12.5)	2 (2.6)	80 (100.2)
Mark Seibert	23 (92.2)	2 (8.0)	0	0	0	25 (100.2)
Radio Utopie	61 (50.8)	17 (14.2)	17 (14.2)	20 (16.7)	5 (4.1)	120 (100.0)
Blog NRW-SPD	41 (91.1)	0	4 (8.8)	0	0	45 (99.9)
Average %	74.6%	9.8%	6.4%	7.2%	1.3%	100.3%

In sum, the U.S., U.K. and German political blogs selected for this study had several characteristics in common in their linking patterns. News media were the most frequently linked websites across the three countries, and other blogs were the next most favored websites. Also, a majority of the links was directed to neutral websites from linking blogs due to the heavy reliance on news media, and links to websites with opposing political orientation were the least likely. National affiliations of linked to websites were, as expected, predominantly those within bloggers' own countries in all the three countries. However, there were some notable cross-national differences in their linking patterns. In the U.S., citizen bloggers from the 15 blogs had only 43.7% of total links directed towards all forms of blogs, whereas in the U.K., citizen bloggers had 61.4% and Germany 75.8% of incoming links to blogs. Instead, news-media affiliated blogs accounted for 40.4% of all incoming links directed to blogs in the U.S., whereas media-affiliated blogs took 28.3% in the U.K. and 8.3% in Germany. These cross-national differences indicate that media-affiliated blogs in the U.S. have relatively more influence and prestige compared to those in the U.K and Germany, reflecting an aspect of

the mediatized culture in America. On the other hand, political organizations and leaders in the two European countries seemed to have a stronger presence than in America. Government websites had 11.8% of all incoming links in the U.K. and 10.2% in Germany while government websites had only 6.7% of all incoming links in America. In the following section, individual findings of the three countries are compared in detail.

COMPARING LINKING PATTERNS ACROSS COUNTRIES

Based on individual data of each country, hypotheses and research questions were tested. All hypotheses and RQ1 were tested using findings from the 10 top non-media affiliated blogs in the U.K., the U.S., and Germany. For RQ2, comparing non-media affiliated blogs and media-affiliated blogs, an additional 10 in-house blogs of news media organizations from the U.K. and the U.S. were analyzed.

H4 predicted that U.S. political blogs would make more links to other political blogs than British and German political blogs. Table 7.16 summarizes the means and medians of the proportions of blogs among linked to websites from the 10 top selected blogs of each country. To check whether a few outliers unduly affected mean scores, both means and medians were provided. On average, American bloggers were the most likely to link to other political bloggers (32.5%), followed by British (28.7%) and German bloggers (20.0%). U.S. political blogs made about 12.5% more links to other bloggers than their German counterparts. The difference between American and British bloggers was relatively small. An analysis of variance was conducted to see if differences among the three countries were statistically significant. The proportion of linking to other blogs was treated as a dependent variable. The result showed that there was a significant difference ($F = 6.98, p < .01$), and a post-hoc analysis, using Tukey HSD tests, found a difference between U.S. bloggers ($M = .33, s.d. = .12$) and German bloggers ($M = .20,$

s.d. = .11) at the significance level of .01. No differences were found in other pairs of comparisons. Therefore, H4 was partially supported.

Table 7.16 Cross-National Comparisons of Proportions Linking to Other Blogs

	U.S. Blogs (n = 10)	U.K. Blogs (n = 10)	Germany (n = 10)
Mean	32.5%	28.7%	20.0%
Median	28.2%	28.0%	24.3%

In H5-1, U.S. bloggers in a mediatized culture were expected to make more connections to news media websites than British and German bloggers in politicized cultures. Table 7.17 is a summary of means and medians of proportions linking to news media websites from the 10 top blogs in the U.S., U.K. and Germany, respectively. Contrary to the prediction, there were almost no differences in the proportions across the three countries.

Table 7.17. Cross-National Comparisons of Proportions Linking to Media Websites

	U.S. Blogs (n = 10)	U.K. Blogs (n = 10)	Germany (n = 10)
Mean	41.5%	41.1%	40.5%
Median	41.3%	37.4%	40.7%

However, this analysis did not include in-house blogs of mainstream news media and political journals, as professional news media. Since in-house blogs have official ties with their mother organizations and tend to follow the norms and practices of traditional journalism even in their blogging (Singer, 2005), in-house blogs were classified as professional media websites in an additional analysis. As Table 7.18 indicates, the inclusion of in-house blogs resulted in a different amount of increases in the proportion linking to news websites across the three countries. The proportion increased by almost 10% point for the U.S., and 5% point for the U.K., and only by 0.5% point for Germany.

Table 7.18. Cross-National Comparisons of Proportions Linking to Media Blogs and News Websites

	U.S.	U.K.	Germany
Mean	52.7%	46.4%	41.0%
Median	50.8%	43.1%	41.8%

H5-2 predicted that British and German blogs would be more likely to link to government websites than American blogs. Since official blogs of political parties and leaders have a relatively strong presence in the U.K. and Germany, those official blogs were included as government websites in this analysis. On average, U.K. and German bloggers had about 8% point more ties to government websites than American bloggers (See Table 7.19).

Table 7.19. Cross-National Comparisons of Proportions Linking to Government Websites

	U.S.	U.K.	Germany
Mean	4.8%	13.5%	11.9%
Median	4.4%	10.9%	9.1%

The findings of H5-1 and H5-2 showed that American blogs tended to make more ties to news media, compared with British and German blogs. On the other hand, the European blogs linked government websites more frequently, compared to their American counterparts. To see whether these results were statistically significant, the proportions of media links were calculated, dividing the number of links to news websites by the number of links to government sites and news media sites combined. An analysis of variance for these scores revealed that the difference between the U.S. and the two European countries was statistically significant ($F = 4.54, p < .05$). Post-hoc analyses showed that there was a significant mean difference between U.S. blogs ($M = .92, s.d. = .04$) and U.K. blogs ($M = .78, s.d. = .14$) at the 0.5 level. The mean difference between the U.S. blogs and German blogs ($M = .79, s.d. = .15$) was also statistically significant at

the same 0.5 level. No significant difference was found between British and German political bloggers. Therefore, it was concluded that American bloggers made more ties to news media sites than British and German bloggers, whereas European bloggers made relatively more ties to government sites than U.S. bloggers. The result showed that German and British bloggers were similar in linking patterns in that they were more likely to rely on government sites, as compared to American bloggers.

H6 predicted that U.S. political blogs would make more ties to politically like-minded websites compared to British and German political blogs. Table 7.20 is the summary of proportions of links to like-minded websites from the 10 top blogs of each country. This result showed that American and British bloggers were similar in their proportions in terms of linking to supportive websites. On average, German bloggers made about 10% fewer links to like-minded blogs, compared with U.K and U.S. bloggers. However, the results of ANOVA revealed that there were no significant differences in mean scores among the three groups, seemingly due to the small sample size.

Table 7.20 Cross-National Comparisons of Proportions Linking to Like-Minded Websites

	U.S.	U.K.	Germany
Mean	26.8%	28.5%	19.1%
Median	29.0%	25.9%	15.0%

RQ1 asked to what extent political bloggers in the U.S., Great Britain, and Germany linked to international websites. The summary of means and medians of the proportions linking to their own countries' websites suggest that U.S. bloggers made the most, followed by British bloggers, while German bloggers made the least links to their own countries' websites (See Table 7.21). Scores were calculated, dividing the number of links to their own countries' websites by the total number of links, after excluding those

websites with uncertain national affiliations. The result of ANOVA showed that there was a significant difference, ($F = 6.98, p < .01$), and post-hoc analyses found those differences were only between American blogs ($M = .95, s.d. = .027$) and German blogs ($M = .80, s.d. = .13$). The results reveal that links to bloggers' own national sites were the norm across the three countries, and political blogging did not escape national insularity. Still, German blogs were more willing than U.S. blogs to connect beyond national boundaries.

Table 7.21. Cross-National Comparisons of Proportions Linking to Websites from Own Country

	U.S. Blogs (n = 10)	U.K. Blogs (n = 10)	Germany (n = 10)
Mean	91.8%	84.5%	74.6%
Median	92.4%	85.2%	79.5%

RQ2 asked whether there was any difference in linking patterns between news media-affiliated bloggers and non-media affiliated bloggers. Because journalist blogs had virtually no presence in terms of influence and number in Germany, only in-house blogs of American and British media outlets were considered for this analysis. Citizens blogs made about one more link per post ($M = 2.78, s.d. = 1.56$) than in-house journalist blogs ($M = 1.75, s.d. = 1.03$). Due to the small sample size, this difference between the two groups was significant only at the 0.1 level ($t = 1.89, p = .070$). Also, media-affiliated blogs, in comparison to citizen blogs, made more frequent connections to both news media sites and government sites, whereas citizen bloggers had more frequent links to other blogs and international websites (See Table 7.23). However, none of these differences was statistically significant.

Table 7.22. Comparisons of Linking Patterns between Media-Affiliated and Non-Affiliated Blogs

	Non Media - Affiliated Blogs	Media-Affiliated Blogs	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean (s.d.)	Mean (s.d.)		
Linking to blogs	.31 (.10)	.28 (.16)	.62	n.a.
Linking to media sites	.50 (.11)	.55 (.16)	-1.09	n.a.
Linking to government sites	.09 (.09)	.13 (.10)	-1.03	n.a.
Linking to international sites	.88 (.07)	.85 (.09)	1.19	n.a.

CHAPTER 8. DISCUSSION

This dissertation began with two comprehensive questions about the transformative power of new media technology on existing structures and relations in the realm of political communication at both national and international levels. First, it asked whether new media technology facilitates transnational convergence of communication practices and forms to the American model. Second, it inquired whether new media technology democratizes structures and processes of political communication by empowering ordinary citizens in the national and global public sphere. To address these two questions, this study investigated political blogging in the U.S., the U.K. and Germany as a testing ground, using a comparative network approach.

Specifically, this study compared network structures and linking patterns of the top political blogs of the three countries. It predicted commonalities rooted in general human and social tendencies and particularities emerging from different political systems and communication cultures indigenous to the three countries. Findings from the dissertation offer substantial evidence that network formation in political blogospheres follows similar patterns found in other social networks. In the network analysis of the three countries, bloggers were found to make more communicative ties to politically like-minded bloggers than those with opposing perspectives (Hypothesis 2). This finding of homophily in blogging networks was replicated and confirmed in the analysis of linking patterns of top political bloggers to other websites. Bloggers made more ties not only to political blogs but also to general websites when they shared political orientations with linked to websites. In this respect, the political blogospheres reveal fragmented spaces segregated across political differences in all the three countries.

The comparisons of the three networks also showed that the political blogospheres are very unequal in the distribution of the number of incoming links. Although political blogs selected for this study represent the most prominent and influential ones in each country, a few of them took a disproportional amount of incoming links. Also, linking from top bloggers was highly insulated within their own countries across the three countries, but to varying degrees and American bloggers were the least likely to make cross-border links (RQ1).

However, there were also notable cross-national differences in network structures, due to their different political systems and political communication cultures. The U.S. blogging network had more dense ties among its members compared with the U.K. and German networks, even after controlling for the amount of posts. This supports the idea that national political systems and communication cultures facilitate political blogging with varying degrees (Hypothesis 1). The American emphasis on direct participation in politics motivates citizens to have their own tools for direct communication with technological assistance, like political blogging. Concerns about “powerful and corrupt” media in a mediatized culture encourage searches for alternative forms of media that differentiate approaches to news from that of mainstream journalism. The individual-level analysis of top political blogs gives additional support that U.S. bloggers in a mediatized culture made more frequent ties to fellow bloggers than did German bloggers in a politicized culture (Hypothesis H4).

More members and interactions of the U.S. political blogosphere were expected to cause more unequal relations within the network, relative to their British and German counterparts. This prediction received only partial support that the American network had a higher centralization than the German network, but with almost no differences found in

the magnitude of inequality with the British network (Hypotheses 3). This result suggests that the British blogosphere has evolved levels of stratification similar to those of the American blogosphere. However, this result has to be interpreted with a caution. For the comparability of the three networks, the number of political blogs analyzed in this study was made equal, 106 blogs from each country. In naturally occurring “real” networks, the American network has far more members than the British network. As the number of nodes is a key factor causing inequality in a network, in a real blogging network, it is projected that the U.S. blogging community will show a higher level of inequality than the U.K. community in incoming links. Future studies with larger sample sizes will address this problem that has arisen due to the limited sample size of this dissertation.

The American mediatized culture also increased the probability that political blogs chose to link to news media websites, including the in-house blogs. Although bloggers in all the three countries linked to news media websites more frequently than to other types of sites, the U.S. bloggers directed their links to news websites more often than did British and German blogs. On the other hand, the U.K. and German blogs connected to government websites more frequently than their U.S. counterparts (Hypothesis 5-1 and Hypothesis 5-2). This renders support to the argument that news media in a mediatized culture play a more active role in the public sphere and their influence extends to the blogosphere.

A mediatized culture not only fosters blogging activity but also shapes it to be a highly partisan venue of political discussion. The American political blogosphere was more clearly divided along lines of political differences, compared with U.K. and German blogospheres (Hypothesis 2). This result provides evidence that the indigenous political system and journalism culture in the U.S. increases the need for communication

based on political homophily. Since the American two-party, majoritarian system makes political distinction clearer and raises the stakes in electoral outcomes, communication based on political affinity is more likely in the U.S. to avoid psychological and social discomfort that may occur in political communication across lines of political difference.

POLITICAL BLOGGING, CROSS-NATIONAL COMMONALITIES AND NATIONAL PARTICULARITIES

Cross-national comparisons of political blogging provide insights regarding relationships between the technology-enabled, new communication form, its international diffusion, and the role of indigenous conditions influencing the adoption of foreign forms. One of the major themes in international communication has been the media-cultural hegemony of the U.S. over other countries, which results in homogeneity of communication practices and cultures. New media technology exacerbates the fear of U.S. cultural dominance due to its far-reaching, boarder-crossing capability. Indeed, the practice of blogging has spread from the U.S. to the U.K. and Germany.

However, the American model has yet to be uniformly adopted. Political blogging in the U.K. and Germany, at least in the near future, is not likely to be as highly popularized as in America. Findings of this study suggest that systems and cultures specific to each nation not only foster a new form of medium in varying degrees but also formulate different norms and practices in the use of that medium across countries.

The most striking difference among the three countries seems to be the sheer number of members in national blogging networks. Even accounting for the difference in general populations, U.S. blogs disproportionately outnumber U.K. blogs and to a much larger extent, German blogs. What causes the difference in blogging populations across the three countries? This dissertation illuminates that political systems and journalism cultures in the U.S. and to a lesser degree in the U.K. provide more fertile ground for

political blogging than in Germany. In political systems, America and Germany are contrasted in significant ways: (1) participatory versus representative democracy, (2) individualized versus organized pluralism, and (3) two-party, majoritarian versus multi-party, consensus system of representation. These cross-national differences affect the blogging activity in direct and indirect ways. Emphasis on citizen participation nurtures a culture of “self-publishing” enabled by new technology. As observed in the comparison of politicians’ uses of website in the U.S. and Germany (Zittel, 2004), individualized pluralism in America encourages the use of this new platform for direct interaction between citizens and government.

National political systems also shape institutional arrangements between news media and governing institutions, distinguished in this study as between mediatized cultures and politicized culture, which indirectly influence the practices of political blogging across countries. Structural factors internal to a mediatized culture not only lead to more influential media actors in political processes and the public sphere but also breed an objectivity model of journalism. For example, application of the objectivity norm in the form of balanced coverage between two competing parties in a two-party system is more practicable within a single media outlet. A multi-party system, however, renders it a daunting task for a single news media to cover multiple political parties in accordance with their proportional representations in politics. In a politicized culture, therefore external pluralism is a more viable model in which “a range of media outlets and organizations reflecting the points of view of different groups or tendencies in society” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 29). Therefore, in a politicized culture, pluralism is realized at the whole media system whereas in a mediatized culture, it is achieved within a single media outlet. This model of pluralism naturally leads to a high level of

parallelism between media organizations and governing institutions and political parties (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Hoffmann-Riem, 1996). The American objectivity model of journalism leaves more room for highly opinionated and partisan bloggers than the media systems in the U.K. and Germany.

Differences in communication cultures also affect who should be major agents in the adoption of foreign forms and practices. Since political institutions and leaders play more significant role in the public sphere in a politicized culture than in a mediatized culture, they tend to lead the adoptions of political blogging. In the British blogosphere, political activists closely associated with mainstream party politics tend to occupy A-list blog status: for example, Conservative Home for the Conservative Party, Labour Home for the Labour Party, and LibDem Voice for Liberal Democrats. Although these collaborative group blogs are not official communication outlets for those parties, their major contributors are often party activists and their topics focus on British party politics. For instance, the Conservative Home clearly states its political identity and purpose in the blog:

ConservativeHome.com aims to provide comprehensive coverage of Britain's Conservative Party. It's independent of the Conservative Party but supportive of it. It is edited by Tim Montgomerie and Jonathan Isaby. By 9 a.m. every day ConservativeHome identifies the most important Tory stories of the day.”

Editors and contributors of these blogs often have party leadership and journalist experience at the same time, which reflect high political parallelism typical in European countries, allowing for a cross-over between politics and journalism. Thus, a more party-centered British political communication structure, in contrast with America, decides who

should be the main players in adoption of a foreign form and how this form should be modified to fit into political demands emerging from the British political context. In this respect, slow development of the German political blogosphere could be ascribed not only to its politicized communication culture but also to the absence of agents driving blogging activity. In Germany, political elites tend to consider blogging only as a periodic effort during campaigns (Albrecht et al., 2007). Because of neglect by dominant party actors, bloggers politically aligned with German minor parties, like FDP, the Greens, and PDS, are over-represented in the German blogging network.

In sum, findings in this dissertation note that political and cultural specificities in the U.S. and the two European countries still have continued relevance to explain differences in political blogging activity. The findings of this study suggest that diffusion and adoption of foreign forms and practices are not linear and hierarchical processes that move from one country to others. The results also confirm the thesis of “domestication” that importing countries decide who should use foreign forms and systems and how they should be used. As Hallin and Mancini emphasize (2004), “Where European countries have borrowed American innovations, they have done so for reasons rooted in their own economic and political processes, often modifying them in significant ways” (p. 20).

In this study, system-level variables of national political and media system were introduced to explain the differences in the network structures of the political blogs across the three countries. I assumed that the specific institutional linkage of political and media system of nation-states would produce particular norms and practices of participating actors in the political blogosphere. Based on the relative discretionary power of the media in the production and communication of news and public information, this study distinguished the cultures of political communication in Western democracies into

the U.S.-mediatized culture and the German-politicized culture. The communication culture of the Great Britain was regarded as being located between the two extremes. The mediatized culture of the U.S. fostered blogging activity since its political system encourages direct citizen participation and communication in the public arenas. In addition, public expectation about the new media as a “technological fix” to the problems of the powerful, mainstream media encourages the culture of online personal publication. An active blogging community promotes a shared sense of community among bloggers and increases interactions among its members. As a result, the U.S. political blogging network showed higher density than the U.K. and German networks.

News media in the mediatized culture serve as a mediating public zone of competing interests whereas the press in the politicized culture traditionally functions as a transmitter of those actors politically associated with specific news organizations. Political actors in the U.S., thus, tend to seek more media attention to push their political agendas and interpretations than those in the politicized cultures where party-centered routes are more preferred than press-mediated routes in the access to public arenas. Due to the distinct press roles, U.S. political bloggers tended to make more links to professional news media than British and German counterparts whereas the European bloggers linked to government official websites more frequently than the American bloggers.

However, cross-national similarities should not be overlooked, although they fall short of an international homogeneity or convergence of blogging activity in the American model. A more fruitful way to look at the blogging phenomenon would be to consider indigenous variables related to national contexts and external forces stemming from transnational and global processes (cf. Esser & Pfetsch, 2004; Reese, 2001). In

stead of viewing transnational trends as unilateral and hierarchical processes, international comparative research should consider the globalization process as multi-dimensional processes in which national systems and cultures are being reconfigured but still play a key role in defining local transformations, adoptions, and hybridizations of communication forms and practices (Tomlinson, 1991; Robertson, 1995)

POLITICAL BLOGGING, JOURNALISM, AND DEMOCRACY

Due to its technological traits, emerging new media tend to raise expectations that they will reinvigorate democracy by increasing the quantity and quality of public information available to citizens and promote direct citizen participation in political processes. Similarly, enthusiasts of political blogging assert that this new avenue of political communication constitutes an alternative form of journalism that will correct the wrongdoings of mainstream journalism and serves as a new online public sphere for open and interactive public debates. On the other hand, critics view new media technology as undergoing a so-called “normalization” process by which its democratizing potentials are tamed by powerful actors for their own purposes. Davis (1999) summarizes this pessimistic perspective:

Rather than acting as a revolutionary tool rearranging political power and instigating direct democracy, the Internet is destined to become dominated by the same actors in American politics who currently utilize other mediums...the mobilization of public expressions will still largely be the creation of groups and individuals who currently dominate the political landscape. And the information that the public will obtain electronically will come primarily from the same sources on which they currently rely and will not feature interaction by more people than currently exist via other means (p. 5).

This study sheds some light on debates that surround the role of new media technology and political blogging in democracy. This discussion focuses on four major areas: (1) presence of political blogs outside mainstream politics, (2) bloggers' linking to sources outside the mainstream media routine, (3) co-optation of the blogging format by dominant players in political communication, and (4) fragmentation and stratification within the blogosphere.

First, one expectation about new media technology is that it may empower social and political groups on the political periphery. Looking at bloggers' political orientations provides some insight about the extent to which those who are outside mainstream politics and media routines play significant roles in the blogospheres. In the U.S., the 106 political blogs were broadly within two-major party politics. In the U.K., a similar pattern of representation of mainstream politics was found, with the majority of political blogs belonging to either center-right or center-left politics. The German blogosphere was the only notable exception, deviating from the representation of mainstream politics. There were only three political blogs clearly identifying themselves with CDU, the main center-right party in Germany. The political far-left, such as PDS (The Left Party) and Communist supporters, had a relatively strong presence in the blogosphere. More interestingly, the German blogging network showed a division between blogs representing major parties and those having no clear major-party identification. This implies that the German blogosphere may consist of two separate zones of mainstream versus alternative politics. The presence of political actors outside mainstream politics signals that the German blogging network might function as a new, alternative venue for those outside the mainstream. At the same time, this German peculiarity seems to reflect that those in mainstream politics do not recognize political blogging as an important

platform for political communication and mobilization. Virtual absence of CDU-supportive bloggers is an additional indication that political blogging does not play a significant role in German political communication. Long-term observations of changes in the German blogosphere will be interesting topics for future research to examine whether and to what extent political blogging will be mainstreamed or normalized by powerful actors in Germany.

Second, news production in traditional news media is often characterized by institutional, routinized ties with government officials and powerful interests. Political blogging is expected to break existing powerful actors' dominance of access to the media and encompass more alternative and diverse voices within it. The analysis of linking patterns in this study showed, however, that news media and government websites were the most frequent destinations by top political bloggers in the three countries. Heavy reliance on news media websites gives support to the criticism that political blogging reproduces the narrow range of perspectives in the mainstream news media, rather than upsetting old relations and structures in political communication.

Third, the U.S. political blogosphere showed high levels of mainstream media co-optation of blogging format. In the various 2004 rankings of U.S. political blogs, none of the mainstream media-affiliated blogs made the top 10 list (See Adamic & Glance, 2005 for 2004 ranking). In the 2008 wikio ranking, however, three mainstream media-affiliated blogs were included in the top 10 list. Comparisons between the 2004 and 2008 rankings by technorati.com reveal a similar pattern: no mainstream media-affiliated blogs in 2004 but two media-affiliated blogs on the 2008 list (See Table 8.1). There are additional normalization trends of American blogosphere in four years: The Corner and Think Progress, not ranked in 2004, are affiliated with an opinion journal and interest group,

respectively; Andrew Sullivan writes his blog under the *Atlantic* magazine; Huffington Post and Talking Points Memo have begun to have organizational forms with editorial and reporting staff and draw more advertising revenue.

Table 8.1. Top 10 U.S. Political Blogs in 2004 and 2008

Rank	Wikio.com 2008	Technorati.com 2008	Truthnorati.com 2004
1	Huffington Post	Huffington Post	Instapundit
2	The Caucus	Daily Kos	Daily Kos
3	The Corner	The Caucus	Eschaton
4	Think Progress	Think Progress	Little Green Footballs
5	Political Punch	Andrew Sullivan	Andrew Sullivan
6	Michelle Malkin	Talking Points Memo	Wonkette
7	Andrew Sullivan	Crooks and Liars	Power Line
8	Political Radar	Political Radar	Volokh Conspiracy
9	Crooks and Liars	The Corner	Michelle Malkin
10	Daily Kos	Pajama Media	Lileks

Note. Political blogs affiliated with media outlets or interest groups in bold characters.

A look at the organizational affiliations of linked blogs in this study provides additional support for the normalization thesis of political blogging in the U.S. Among the total links to other blogs, only 47.3% of links were directed to non-media affiliated blogs whereas 30.2% were to in-house blogs of mainstream news media, and 10.2% to blogs affiliated with opinion journals and political magazines. At least among top political bloggers in the U.S., it seems hard to define political blogging activity as a pure citizen collaboration to collect and organize public resources and knowledge. These results render some support for the argument that existing dominant actors adapt to new forms of communication and use them for their own purposes. The British blogosphere showed a similar co-optation by the news media, though to a lesser degree than in America. Virtual lack of media-affiliated blogs in the German blogosphere is more support for the argument that the recognition of significant roles of political blogging

may cause more active and pervasive co-optation of this medium by dominant actors in a society.

Fourth, the political blogospheres of the three countries represented highly partisan and unequal spaces among their members, aside from discussion about the beneficial or harmful aspects of this tendency to democracy. The belief in the revolutionary potential of blogging is based on the perception that blogging and the Web, in general, lack central control due to technological features. This anarchic quality has been expected to bring a mutuality and equality to the blogosphere. What optimists have overlooked are naturally emerging rules in the blogosphere that favor human predispositions and social characteristics. Without professional norms and organizational constraints, it seems to be a norm to establish communicative ties on the basis of homophily in the blogospheres. Also, political blogging was not an exception in forming hierarchical relationships among its members, a general trend found in various forms and sizes of social groups. However, the role of national systems and culture should not be overlooked in facilitating or hindering these trends. This study suggests that American political and media specificities give political blogging more partisan characteristics, compared with Germany and Great Britain.

In the beginning, this study aimed to investigate the disruptive power of political blogging in reshaping the existing systems of relations in political communication both at the national and transnational levels. Technological capabilities of blogging—low cost, far-reaching, boundary crossing, etc.—are expected to loosen the traditional linkage between the power and participation in the public sphere. Arguably, first in the history of public communication, ordinary people are given means to produce and circulate their own news and ideas. A lack of visible markers of social status in the virtual space could

effectively “bracket” social inequalities and lay grounds for critical-rational debates. The networked characteristics of the Web, in general, and the political blogosphere, in specific, open up the possibility of journalism as horizontal “conversation” of networked citizens rather than top-down “lecture” from newsmakers to citizens. This emerging form of journalism might create new areas of news that have been systematically excluded in the mainstream media for their institutionalized approach to news and information. Political blogs seemed to encapsulate a radical departure from the practices and values of mainstream news media, shift from routine, official, unequal, hierarchical to independent, diverse, equal, conversational production and communication of news and public information.

Then, do findings of this dissertation support the argument that political blogging revitalize democracy and the public sphere? On the one hand, political blogging provides a technical means whereby citizens can play more active roles as producers and organizers in political communication processes. It also tends to facilitate citizen deliberation and participation in political processes through direct conversations with other citizens, the media, and political actors. On the other hand, it intensifies polarization and fragmentation of the public sphere along existing political difference among bloggers. Also, the political blogosphere comprises highly unequal relations among its members, with a few monopolizing most of the incoming links, thereby exerting disproportionate influences on the sphere.

In sum, findings of this study indicate that these new potentials and opportunities that new media technologies promise have not been fully realized in political blogging. It might be a naïve “technological determinism” that media technologies would revolutionize or democratize the existing relationship of the power in the production and

circulation of public information. More fruitful way to think about the role of political blogging might be to evaluate the place of political blogging in the national media system as a whole and its unique contribution to journalism and democracy. Political blogging puts an additional layer to the inherited public communication system consisting of different platforms (e.g., newspaper, broadcasting news, news magazine, etc.) and ownership systems (e.g., private, public, party) in Western societies. Despite the recent institutional conversion of a few top blogs, still, political blogging renders an avenue, at its full potential, relatively free of the influences of the market and state on public discourse. Its grassroots, citizen-oriented approach to news might constantly challenge the power and authority arising from the control of access and production of public knowledge and information. When the political blogosphere, as its proponents argue, serves as “watchdogs on the watchdog,” it effectively constitutes an alternative form of journalism and public sphere that might complement and correct the existing public communication system. Also, I argue that political blogging can contribute to democracy and the public sphere to the extent that the tendency towards political insularity and dominance by the few is counterbalanced by the emergence of working self-correcting system in the blogosphere, shared norms and standards among bloggers judging the quality of information and commentaries on the basis of credibility, soundness of argument, and evidence.

LIMITATIONS

While the findings of this dissertation have a number of important implications, there are a number of limitations to be acknowledged. First of all, networks analyzed in this study reflect only a small portion of the real blogging networks in the three countries. Thus, this study does not fully represent the nature of political blogging networks

occurring in those countries. Because political blogs chosen for this study are the most prominent ones in each country, they may not reveal typical patterns and behaviors of “average” blogs in the “long tail.” Future studies need to develop research designs to include enough blogs to show a picture of real-world occurring networks in the three countries. In addition, future studies should investigate similarities and differences in practice between top political blogs and ordinary blogs at the long tail of power-curve distribution.

Second, differences in the average number of posts among bloggers of the three countries may weaken the cross-national comparability of this study. U.S. political blogs generally had far more posts in a single day than did British and German blogs. Fewer posts on British and German blogs are subject to daily variability that might weaken the validity of the findings of the two countries. One realistic way to deal with this sampling issue is to expand sampling periods and randomly select the enough number of posts.

Third, comparisons of the three countries do not fully address the cross-national commonalities and variations of political blogging. Although this dissertation distinguished political communication cultures of Western societies into mediatized and politicized cultures, even within those two broad cultures national differences are expected to be great. For instance, Southern European countries (e.g., France, Spain), which would be classified as politicized cultures, are noted to have developed different journalism cultures from those in America and even Northern European countries like Germany (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Analysis of political blogging of those Southern European countries will provide additional insights about the relationships between structural factors internal to each nation state and social use of new forms of communication enabled by new technology. In addition, as blogging practices expand

beyond Western countries to other parts of world, the analysis of these practices in non-Western societies will offer interesting research areas to expand understanding about the role of national systems and cultures in shaping the use of foreign forms.

Fourth, link analysis of this dissertation provides only a partial explanation to understand discourse occurring on the blogosphere. Bloggers may have different motivations and reasons when making their linking decisions. For instance, conservative bloggers may link to the *New York Times* site to criticize its editorial stance whereas liberal blogs link to the same site to support. Content analysis of the linked websites will complement this weakness of link analysis.

Fifth, this dissertation does not explain why, in the beginning, some political blogs have more prestige and influence over others. Although first-movers have an advantage in gaining popularity over late-comers in the blogosphere, not all those first-movers reach A-list blog status. Sources of prominence might be either content quality or other sources online and offline. Future studies should investigate factors influencing the process of hierarchy formation on the blogosphere.

Finally, this study did not consider which political issues and topics are discussed in the blogging networks. Analysis of specific topics will shed light on questions about whether (1) political blogging facilitates the formation of issue publics focusing on specific topics and (2) there are any differences in the emphasis of specific topics among different groups of political and organizational affiliations. In addition, cross-national comparisons of correspondence between topics in blogs and those emphasized in the media and political parties will provide additional insight about the differences between mediatized and politicized cultures. It can be assumed that blog topics in the U.S. will have more correspondence to topics in the media whereas blog topics in the two

European countries will have more correspondence to topics emphasized in political parties. Future studies should be able to address limitations of this dissertation.

Aside from the limitations, this dissertation makes a number of significant contributions to the areas of comparative studies and new media research. First, this dissertation is the first systematic comparative study of political blogging across different countries. Similar to general trends in communication research, scholarly investigations of political blogs have focused predominantly on the U.S. case. By employing a comparative approach, this dissertation sensitizes U.S.-centered, ethnocentric views of communication phenomena and expands understanding of cross-national trends and national particularities of political communication. This comparative perspective about political blogging contributes to the theorizing of relationships between exogenous forces of Americanization, globalization, and technology and the endogenous influences internal to national contexts in the adoption and implementation of foreign forms and practices. Also, employing a social network approach, this dissertation attempts to explore network structures of political blogging communities beyond descriptions of attributes of individual blogs. Since the networked relationships in the political blogosphere define the essential characteristics of political blogging as journalism and public forum, the study of political blogging necessarily involves the inquiry about its network structure. A social network approach of this dissertation was best able to capture the community characters of political blogs, illuminating the extent of integration, stratification, and fragmentation of political blogospheres.

APPENDIX A: List of 106 Political Blogs in the U.S.

Rank	Name	Political Orientation	Organizational Affiliation	Indegree	Outdegree
1	Hot Air	C	C	201	89
2	Huffington Post	L	C	177	28
3	Talking Points Memo	L	C	166	13
4	Daily Kos	L	C	135	51
5	Ben Smith	N	M	117	31
6	The Corner	C	M	102	20
7	Think Progress	L	O	100	63
8	Michell Malkin	C	C	91	46
8	The Trail	N	M	91	2
10	The Daily Dish	N	M	73	45
11	Political Ticker	N	M	68	1
12	Political Radar	N	M	65	11
13	The Caucus	N	M	63	18
13	News Busters	C	O	63	31
15	Fire Dog Lake	L	C	61	80
16	Instapundit	C	C	59	60
17	Political Punch	N	M	58	19
18	Little Green Footballs	C	C	51	15
19	Gateway Pundit	C	C	50	64
20	Power Line	C	C	45	21
21	The Plank	N	M	40	51
22	Political Animal	L	M	35	59
23	Michael Goldfarb	C	M	34	47
23	American Thinker	C	C	34	37
25	Talk Left	L	C	33	54
26	Top of the Ticket	N	M	30	13
27	Washington Wire	N	M	27	6
28	Americablog	L	C	26	43
29	Crooks and Liars	L	C	25	77
29	Glenn Greenwald	L	M	25	29
31	Red State	C	C	24	31
32	Fivethirtyeight	N	C	23	11
32	Mydd	L	C	23	48
32	Hulabaloo	L	C	23	47
35	Hit & Run	C	M	22	18
36	Hotline on Call	N	M	20	5
36	Just One Minute	C	C	20	36
38	Swampland	N	M	19	18
39	Outside the beltway	C	C	17	36
39	Forward Movement	C	C	17	47
41	Eschaton	L	C	16	28
41	Townhall	C	C	16	11
43	Atlas Shrugs	C	C	15	29
44	Volokh Conspiracy	C	C	14	11
44	Lynn Sweet	N	M	14	1

44	Patterico's Pontifications	C	C	14	45
44	David Frum's diary	C	M	14	3
48	Political Wire	N	M	13	25
48	Ross Douthat	C	C	13	22
48	Don Surber	C	M	13	70
51	Balloon Juice	L	C	12	43
51	Stop the ACLU	C	C	12	56
53	Political Intelligence	N	M	11	2
53	Confederate Yankee	C	C	11	29
53	Jammiewearingfool	C	C	11	50
53	Jihad Watch	C	C	11	12
53	Debbie Schlussel	C	C	11	4
53	Rightwing Nuthouse	C	C	11	14
59	Jawa Report	C	C	10	40
59	Strata-sphere	C	C	10	16
61	Sweetness & Light	C	C	9	3
61	Riehl World View	C	C	9	34
63	Next Right	C	C	8	18
63	Oliver Willis	L	C	8	31
63	Jim Treacher	C	C	8	14
63	American Prospect	L	M	8	14
67	Flopping Aces	C	C	6	37
67	Yid with Lid	C	C	6	14
69	Marginal Revolution	C	C	5	5
69	Brad Blog	L	C	5	8
69	Wake Up America	C	C	5	16
72	Iowahawk	C	C	4	2
72	Club for Growth	C	C	4	1
72	Belmont Club	C	C	4	30
75	FP Passport	N	M	3	11
75	Sleuth	N	M	3	2
75	Buzz Florida Politics	N	M	3	1
75	Jack and Jill Politics	L	C	3	25
75	Naked Politics	N	M	3	0
75	Scrapple Face	C	C	3	6
75	Jesus' General	L	C	3	7
82	Wonkette	L	C	2	39
82	HorsesAss	L	C	2	9
82	Soccer Dad	C	C	2	27
82	Rising Hegemon	L	C	2	28
82	Right Truth	C	C	2	24
87	Real Clear Politics Blog	N	M	1	24
87	Say Anything	C	C	1	19
87	Washington Note	L	C	1	3
87	Moonbattery	C	C	1	20
87	Raising Kaine	L	C	1	12
87	Michael Totten	C	C	1	0
87	Sideshow	L	C	1	52
87	Classic Values	C	C	1	27
87	PoliGazette	N	C	1	49

87	LRC Blog	C	C	1	3
87	Bob Geiger	L	C	1	1
98	Obama Hq	L	O	0	7
98	Jill Stanek	C	C	0	5
98	Radio Equalizer	C	C	0	8
98	Sister Toldjah	C	C	0	50
98	Donklephant	N	C	0	34
98	Election Law	N	C	0	11
98	American Power	C	C	0	71
98	Part-time Pundit	C	C	0	2
98	Greg R. Lawson	C	C	0	0

a. Rank is based on the number of incoming links.

b. In political orientation; C refers to conservative blogs; L to liberal blogs; N to politically non-aligned blogs

c. In organizational affiliation, C refers to citizen blogs, M to media-affiliated blogs; P to party-affiliated blogs; O to blogs with all other organizational affiliations

d. Indegree refers to the number of incoming links received

e. Outdegree refers to the number of outgoing links to other blogs.

APPENDIX B: List of 106 Political Blogs in the U.K.

Rank	Name	Political Orientation	Organizational Affiliation	Regional Affiliation	Indegree	Outdegree
1	Iain Dale	R	C	E	48	14
2	Conservative Home	R	C	E	32	10
3	Guy Fawkes	R	C	E	25	5
4	LibDem Voice	LD	C	E	18	8
5	Spectator Coffee House	N	M	E	18	13
6	Comment Central	N	M	E	16	6
7	Political Betting	N	C	E	14	3
8	Tim Worstall	R	C	E	13	2
9	John Redwood	R	P	E	12	0
9	Nick Robinson	N	M	E	12	1
11	EU Referendum	R	C	E	10	14
12	Liberal Conspiracy	L	C	E	9	23
12	Devil's Kitchen	R	C	E	9	22
12	Labour Home	L	C	E	9	6
15	Mr Eugenides	R	C	O	8	6
15	Socialist Unity	L	C	E	8	1
15	Quaequam Blog	LD	C	E	8	12
18	Ben Brogan	R	M	E	7	0
18	Bloggerheads	L	C	E	7	15
18	Peter Black AM	LD	P	W	7	6
18	Daniel Hannan	R	M	E	7	8
22	Dizzy Thinks	R	C	E	6	5
22	Chicken Yoghurt	L	C	E	6	5
22	Burning Our Money	R	C	E	6	0
22	Harry's Place	L	C	E	6	9
22	Dave's Part	L	C	E	6	1
22	Pickled Politics	L	C	E	6	7
22	Betsan Powys	N	M	W	6	1
22	A View From Rural Wales	R	C	W	6	0
30	Blaney's Blarney	R	C	E	5	6
30	Ordivicus	L	C	W	5	13
30	Boulton & Co	N	M	E	5	2
30	Another Green World	L	C	E	5	1
30	Tom Harris	L	P	O	5	4
35	Wardman Wire	R	C	E	4	7
35	Cranmer	R	C	E	4	1
35	Tory Troll	L	C	E	4	1
35	Croydonian	R	C	E	4	1
35	Paul Linford	L	C	E	4	7
35	Letters from a Tory	R	C	E	4	3
35	Appalling Strangeness	R	C	E	4	6
35	Adam Price	L	P	W	4	0
35	Tom Watson	L	P	E	4	1
44	Stumbling and Mumbling	L	C	E	3	4
44	Bob Piper	L	P	E	3	11

44	UK Polling Report	N	C	E	3	4
44	An Englishman's Castle	R	C	E	3	2
44	Nation of Shopkeepers	R	C	E	3	6
44	Tygerland.Net	L	C	E	3	2
44	Yorksher Gob	LD	C	E	3	6
44	Bishop Hill	R	C	E	3	2
44	Adam Smith Iinstitute	R	O	E	3	15
53	Obnoxio the Clown	R	C	E	2	15
53	Beau Bo D'or	N	C	E	2	1
53	Miss Wagstaff Presents	N	C	W	2	6
53	A Very British Dude	R	C	E	2	7
53	Valleys Mam	N	C	W	2	0
53	Mark Wadsworth	R	C	E	2	7
53	Shiraz Socialist	L	C	E	2	2
53	Heresy Corner	R	C	E	2	2
53	Thunder Dragon	R	C	E	2	3
53	Skipper	L	C	E	2	0
53	Theo's Blog	L	C	E	2	0
53	Nick Bourne	R	P	W	2	0
53	Three Line Whip	R	M	E	2	4
53	Recess Monkey	L	C	E	2	0
53	Waendel Journal	R	C	E	2	12
68	Old Holborn	R	C	E	1	0
68	Miserable Old Fart	N	C	W	1	10
68	Mortimer	LD	C	E	1	9
68	Saxon Times	R	C	E	1	2
68	Paul Flynn	L	P	W	1	0
68	Amused Cynicism	L	C	E	1	4
68	Daily Referendum	R	C	E	1	5
68	Cambria Politico	N	C	W	1	0
68	Pint of Unionist Lite	R	C	O	1	1
68	Douglas Carswell	R	P	E	1	3
68	Stephen's Linlithgow	LD	C	W	1	3
68	Bevan Foundation	L	C	W	1	1
68	Borthlas	L	P	W	1	1
68	Hopi Sen	L	C	E	1	0
68	Luke Akehurst	L	P	E	1	2
83	UK Libertarian Party	R	C	E	0	0
83	PJC Journal	R	C	E	0	3
83	F-Word Blog	L	C	E	0	0
83	Peter Hitchens	R	M	E	0	0
83	Newerlabour	L	C	E	0	4
83	Blether with Brian	N	M	O	0	0
83	Night Jack	L	C	O	0	0
83	Olly's Onions	N	C	E	0	0
83	Bob from Brockley	L	C	E	0	2
83	Neil Clark	L	C	E	0	0
83	Huw Lewis	L	P	W	0	1
83	Ian Bone	L	C	E	0	1
83	Charlotte Gore Blog	LD	C	E	0	1

83	Andrew Allison	R	C	E	0	4
83	Welsh Ramblings	L	C	W	0	1
83	Redemption's Son	R	C	O	0	2
83	Tangled Blog	R	C	E	0	1
83	Neue Arbeit Macht Frei	R	C	E	0	0
83	Curly's Corner Shop	R	C	E	0	15
83	Rupert's Read	L	P	E	0	0
83	Mark Mardell	N	M	E	0	0
83	Chris Paul	L	C	E	0	18
83	Amlwch to Magor	L	C	W	0	4
83	UK Daily Pundit	N	C	E	0	13

- Rank is based on the number of incoming links.
- In political orientation, L refers to blogs of the political left; LD to blogs of Liberal Democrats; R to blogs of the political right; N to politically non-aligned blogs
- In organizational affiliation, C refers to citizen blogs; M to media-affiliated blogs; P to party-affiliated blogs; O to blogs with all other organizational affiliations
- In regional affiliation, E refers to English blogs; W to Welsh blogs; O to all other regions
- Indegree refers to the number of incoming links received
- Outdegree refers to the number of outgoing links to other blogs

APPENDIX C: List of 106 Political Blogs in Germany

Rank	Name	Political Orientation	Organizational Affiliation	Mainstream-Party Affiliation	Indegree	Outdegree
1	Netzpolitik.org	N	C	N	17	1
2	Nach Denk Seiten	L	O	N	12	0
3	Red Blog	L	C	N	6	2
3	Duck Home	L	C	N	5	1
3	Mark Seibert	L	P	N	5	3
3	Endstation Rechts.	R	P	N	5	0
3	Radio-Utopie	L	C	N	5	4
3	Lumma Land	L	C	M	3	1
3	Der Spiegelfechter	L	C	N	3	2
3	Zeitrafferin	L	P	M	3	3
3	Elementarteile	N	C	N	3	1
3	Lobby Control	N	O	N	3	0
3	Blog NRWSPD	L	P	M	3	5
3	Politik Digital	N	O	N	3	0
3	Jung Grün Stachelig	L	C	M	3	1
3	Ad-Sintrom	N	C	N	3	1
17	NPD-BLOG.INFO	N	C	N	2	4
17	Henning Schuerig	L	C	M	2	1
17	Bissige Liberale	R	C	N	2	5
17	Filter Blog	R	C	M	2	5
17	Michael Neumann	L	P	M	2	0
17	Robin Haseler	L	C	M	2	0
17	Wirtschaftliche Freiheit	R	C	N	2	0
17	Sex, Macht und Politik	N	M	N	2	0
17	Perspektive 2010	L	C	N	2	3
17	CDU Politik	R	C	M	2	2
17	Robert Hesse	R	C	N	2	1
17	Hans Jürgen Beerfeltz	R	P	M	2	0
29	Annalist	L	C	N	1	1
29	Schall und Rauch	N	C	N	1	0
29	Zettels Raum	R	C	N	1	2
29	Das Leben und die Politik	L	C	M	1	3
29	Carola Veit	L	C	M	1	1
29	Antibuerokratieteam	R	C	N	1	0
29	freie menschen, freie märkte	R	O	N	1	0
29	Brandt Aktuell	R	C	M	1	1
29	Narragonien	N	C	N	1	4
29	LaVo-WG	R	P	M	1	0
29	PatJe	L	C	M	1	3
29	Johan von Huelsen	R	C	M	1	6
29	Reichels.Org	L	C	M	1	5
29	Dennis Blog	L	C	M	1	1
29	Pflügers	R	P	M	1	1
29	Einspruch!	N	M	N	1	0

29	Küchenkabinett	N	C	N	1	0
29	Daniel Mouratidis	L	P	M	1	2
29	Oliver Luksic	R	C	M	1	0
29	Klaus Lübke Blog	L	P	M	1	0
29	Paula Rieste	L	C	M	1	0
29	Politplatschquatsch	N	C	N	1	0
51	WEISSGARNIX	L	C	N	0	0
51	StoiBär	N	C	N	0	0
51	CARTA	N	C	N	0	3
51	CTRL	N	M	N	0	0
51	Oeffinger Freidenker	L	C	N	0	9
51	Das Rote Blog	L	C	N	0	1
51	Roman Möller	N	C	N	0	0
51	Deutschland Debatte	N	C	N	0	0
51	SaarBreaker	L	C	N	0	14
51	Bürger Herold	N	C	N	0	1
51	Jens Matheuszik	L	P	M	0	2
51	JuLis Bayern - Das Weblog	R	P	M	0	1
51	Nouripour	L	P	M	0	0
51	Politik und Panorama	L	C	M	0	0
51	SPD-Blog für BaWü	L	P	M	0	0
51	Whistle Blog	N	C	N	0	0
51	24stunden	N	C	N	0	3
51	Brigitte Zypries	L	P	M	0	0
51	Dinesiso	R	C	N	0	0
51	Blogs Gesang	N	C	N	0	0
51	Whistle Blower	N	C	N	0	0
51	Sauerländer Bürgerliste	L	C	M	0	0
51	Kommunal Politik	N	C	N	0	1
51	Links-Politik	L	C	N	0	2
51	Blog von Lukas Kilian	N	C	N	0	1
51	Halina Wawzyniak	L	P	N	0	0
51	Womblog	N	C	N	0	0
51	FDP-BW Weblog	R	P	M	0	2
51	Ralph's Blog	N	C	N	0	0
51	Hans Martin Tillack	N	M	N	0	1
51	Politik blog	N	C	N	0	0
51	Tobias Pflüger	L	P	N	0	0
51	Wahlbekanntschaften	N	M	N	0	0
51	Sind Wir Alle Wirklich Blöd ?	N	C	N	0	1
51	Gelb Macht Glücklich	R	C	M	0	2
51	Im Stadtrat	N	P	N	0	0
51	node-0	N	C	N	0	0
51	Ottos Weblog	N	C	N	0	0
51	Stefan Jung	N	C	N	0	0
51	Niebels Woche	R	P	M	0	0
51	Landesverband Piratenpartei	N	P	N	0	0
51	Ulrich Kelber	L	P	M	0	0
51	Flammendes Grün	L	C	M	0	1
51	Brüsseler Spitzen	R	P	M	0	0

51	Metzingen und Mehr	L	C	M	0	0
51	Alexander Sempf	L	C	M	0	1
51	Kamikaze	N	C	N	0	2
51	Weigle	L	P	M	0	0
51	Fact-Fiction	R	C	N	0	1
51	Sackstark	N	C	N	0	0
51	Problem-Heute	N	C	N	0	0
51	Lupe	N	C	N	0	0
51	Lisaswelt	R	C	N	0	1
51	Informelle	N	C	N	0	2
51	Meinungsfreiheit	N	C	N	0	0
51	Axel Schaefer	L	P	M	0	0

- a. Rank is based on the number of incoming links.
- b. In political orientation, L refers to blogs of the political left; R to blogs of the political right; N to politically non-aligned blogs
- c. In organizational affiliation, C refers to citizen blogs; M to media-affiliated blogs; P to party-affiliated blogs; O to blogs with all other organizational affiliations
- d. In mainstream-party affiliation, M refers to blogs identified with major political parties; N to blogs with non-major party identifications.
- d. Indegree refers to the number of incoming links received
- e. Outdegree refers to the number of outgoing links to other blogs

APPENDIX D: CODING SCHEME

1. National Affiliation

1. U.S.
2. U.K.
3. Germany
4. E.U.
5. International
6. Other (specify)
7. Uncertain

2. Site Type

1. News Media
 - 1) Newspaper
 - 2) Broadcasting
 - 3) Magazine
 - 4) Opinion Journal
 - 5) News Agency
 - 6) News Aggregator
 - 7) Online-Only News Media
 - 8) Other (Specify)
3. General Information Site
 - 1) Internet Portal
 - 2) Wiki Sites
 - 3) University/Academy
 - 4) Publication/Book
 - 5) Personal Websites with Specific Information related to Blog Post
 - 6) Public Opinion Site
 - 7) Business: General Information Provider
 - 7) Other (Specify)
4. Government Website
 - 1) National Government
 - 2) EU Government
 - 3) Party Organization/Leader Website
 - 4) Other (Specify)
5. Interest Group
 - 1) Citizen Organization (Non-profit)
 - 2) Interest Group (e.g., trade union)
 - 3) Professional Organization
 - 4) Think Tank
 - 5) Other (Specify)
6. Other
 - 1) General Business
 - 2) Entertainment/Sports
 - 3) Culture/Art
 - 4) Celebrity Website

- 5) Youtube
- 6) Social Networking Site (e.g., facebook)
- 7) Other (Specify)

3. Blog Organizational Affiliation

- 1) Individual Citizen(s)
- 2) Traditional News Media (Newspaper; Broadcasting)
- 3) Opinion Journal/Political Magazine
- 4) Political Party/Leaders
- 5) Other (Specify)

4. Blog/Website Political Orientation

U.S.

- 1) Conservative
- 2) Liberal
- 3) Non-Aligned
- 4) Other (Specify)

U.K.

- 1) Conservative
- 2) Labour
- 3) Liberal Democrat
- 4) Green
- 5) Political Right
- 6) Political Left
- 7) Other (Specify)
- 8) Non-Aligned

Germany

- 1) CDU
- 2) SPD
- 3) FDP
- 4) Green
- 5) PDS
- 6) Political Right
- 7) Political Left
- 8) Other (Specify)
- 9) Non-Aligned

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