ABSTRACT

| Title of dissertation: | THE INTERNET AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS: FORCE, TOOL, OR WILDCARD? |
| | |
| | Timothy E. Wedig, Doctor of Philosophy, 2007 |
| | |
| Dissertation directed by: | Professor Ernest J. Wilson<br>Department of Government and Politics |

The effect of Internet usage on political organizations is largely assumed in the literature, which limits our understanding of the topic. Three dominant perspectives have developed, viewing technology alternately as a Force that transforms organizations (Techno-determinist), a Tool that organizations can utilize (Situationalist), or as a Wildcard that will have unpredictable effects even on similar organizations (Techno-skeptic). This dissertation examines each of these perspectives in detail and tests their predictive elements against case studies of four political organizations: the Dean for America campaign, MoveOn.org, and the Green and Reform Parties. Cases were chosen due to their innovative usage of the Internet, their outsider status, their status as contemporaries, and being active at the national level of American politics. The results demonstrate that while each perspective provides some insight, they are individually inadequate to explain the subject in its entirety and, therefore, a new approach to the topic is necessary. Suggestions for future research and steps to construct a new, more complete, model are presented along with recommendations for the application of these findings by political organizations.

THE INTERNET AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS: FORCE, TOOL, OR
WILDCARD?

by

Timothy E. Wedig

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2007

Advisory Committee:

Professor Ernest J. Wilson III, Chair
Professor Ken Conca
Professor Wayne McIntosh
Professor Miranda Schreurs
Professor Christopher Walsh

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

# Chapter 1

# The Internet and Politics

**Introduction**

In late 1995, the first U.S. presidential campaign website went online. It was a modest website by current standards, consisting of a few photos and position statements, ordering instructions for campaign merchandise, and an email link for interested voters to contact the campaign. The candidate was well-known, having been in the public eye for nearly three decades, and he had run for president before. In preparation for the 1996 primaries, which would be an uphill struggle against Democratic incumbent President Bill Clinton, this candidate seized on the possibilities offered by the new technology of the Internet and blazed a trail that other campaigns would soon follow. Was this candidate Bob Dole, the eventual Republican nominee? Perhaps Pat Buchanan, a Republican challenger with many years of experience in media? Billionaire Steve Forbes, who had the resources to invest in the new medium and years of media experience? The answer is none of the above. The first presidential primary candidate to create a campaign website was comedian Pat Paulsen, running against incumbent Bill Clinton in his sixth presidential campaign.

Paulsen didn't win. He finished a distant second to Clinton in the primaries despite cementing his legacy as the first presidential candidate in cyberspace. There are two items of importance that can be drawn from Paulsen's 1996 campaign, which remain consistent from the early 1990s through today in relation to political organizations and the Internet. First, the use of the Internet alone was not sufficient to tip the scales in favor

of an underdog challenger who lacked other resources and, it should be noted, credibility for the office he sought.  Second, and even more important, top-tier candidates and high-profile political organizations have not been the first adopters of Internet technologies. Without exception, the first application of each Internet technology to politics has been undertaken by underdogs – political organizations that generally have few resources and little to lose by taking a chance on the potential that the technology poses.

The first use of Internet technology by a political campaign was in 1992, when former California Governor Jerry Brown began using email as a campaign tool in his unsuccessful bid for the Democratic presidential nomination (PoliticsOnline, 2007). Brown, nicknamed "Governor Moonbeam" for his often radical ideas and novel perspectives, proved to be a visionary in his use of the Internet.  By 1993, United States Senator Ted Kennedy had set up a website for his Senate office, and in 1994 United States Senator Dianne Feinstein from California launched the first dedicated campaign website for her reelection campaign (PoliticsOnline, 2007).  Shortly after Paulsen's website was launched most of the other candidates for their respective parties' nominations had also launched websites, and the 1996 presidential election became the first national election to feature online campaigning.  By 1998 candidate websites were commonplace, although challengers were more than twice as likely to use the Internet as were incumbents (64% to 28%) (Institute for Politics Democracy & the Internet, 1998).

Since these tentative beginnings, the Internet has become a standard feature of electoral and activist campaigns, serving as a communications tool and, increasingly, becoming a key strategic component for political organizations.  However, although Internet usage by political organizations has become standard during the past decade, our

understanding of this usage remains limited.  In short, we know that something important is happening and that may have some effect on politics, but the questions of why and how much remains elusive.  For example, how can the Dean 2004 campaign go from a non-factor to frontrunner and then back again in the space of a few months?  We know that the Internet (defined here as websites, email, and other communications tools such as chat, instant message, and weblogs) played a role, but it is very difficult to explain exactly what this role was and how politics and technology interacted to produce this outcome for political organizations (defined as groups directly involved in electoral politics or political advocacy efforts).

Three identifiable core perspectives have evolved that seek to explain how Internet usage affects political organizations.  For some, the Internet is seen as a <u>force</u> that transforms the organization at a fundamental level due to the inherent characteristics that the technology possesses.  This view will be called the Techno-determinist perspective in this work, and is exemplified by authors such as Bimber (2003), Norris (2004), Bakardjieva (2005), and Ensor (2006).  This view generally approaches the topic from a normative and optimistic perspective, seeing the Internet as a change agent that will increase democratic practice and strengthen the polity and civil society, and therefore, the technology largely becomes the focus of analysis.  A second perspective (called the Situationalist here) conceptualizes the Internet as a <u>tool</u> that conforms to the existing organizational norms and has no agency of its own, as represented by the work of Noveck (2004), Davis (2005) and (Fox 2005).  From this standpoint the Internet is best seen as a resource or pathway, with outcomes determined by pre-existing situations.  The final view sees the Internet as a <u>wildcard</u> that is unpredictable and therefore potentially

harmful to organizations. Authors taking this view, such as Noam (2005), Wilson (2007), Lofgren and Willim (2006), and Burke (2007)  will be called Techno-skeptics here.  This perspective is not anti-technology *per se*, but instead takes a more skeptical view about the promises made related to the technology and cautions against over reliance on what is, essentially, and unproven commodity.

Although these three perspectives offer some insight, each is inadequate to provide a complete understanding of the phenomenon.  Focusing on the technology alone is akin looking at only one single element in a complex, and constantly changing, mosaic – the technology evolves very quickly and political organizations adapt in response, making attempts to analyze specific technologies or applications very difficult.  As the landscape shifts, it is easy to find oneself considering a tactic or strategy that has already been abandoned in favor of the newest application or venue.  A focus on specific applications of the technology can yield interesting results, but the value of such approaches is limited by the evolving nature of the technology itself.  A careful, even brilliant, analysis of specific usage of Internet technologies by political organizations in 1996 may be interesting, for example, but it would be difficult to draw general lessons about the topic as most of the specific web applications and other technology used in 1996 are outdated.

But there are also limits to turning away from specific technologies towards a focus on the experiences of individual organizations.  When we attempt to pull back from specific organizational experiences to draw general lessons about the Internet and organizations we run the risk of overgeneralization and misinterpretation of the broader implications of the data.  This is particularly the case when the approach is focused only

on structural factors and does not consider the unique characteristics of the Internet in relation to other resources or technologies.  Yet, although the over-emphasis of technology's promise has a long tradition (with each advance accompanied by claims about the democratic promise it offers), the Internet is being used right now and is having an effect on political organizations.  *A priori* dismissals of the potential applications of the technology ignores the fact that although each previous advance has fallen short of its initial promise, each has had utility and an impact on the broader political system.

The dominant perspectives about how the Internet interacts with political organizations tend to proceed from assumptions about the relative power of the technology itself, which are then applied to studies of selected organizations.  In short, the role of the technology in relation to the organizations is already assumed, and the specific experiences of the organizations are then explained within this context.  These theoretical constructs about technology usage serve primarily as predictive models when they are applied to political organizations.  This approach provides mixed results, because these predictions are very often not accurate when applied to actual political organizations and serve to produce more questions than answers.

In order to generate a new and fuller understanding of the effect of the Internet on political organizations, it is therefore necessary to undertake a comprehensive study that evaluates the claims of these dominant theories against the actual results of Internet usage by political organizations.  This work will undertake that task by constructing a comparative analysis of the specific case experiences of several political organizations within the context of these broader theoretical models.  Four political organizations representing three types of political organizations have been chosen: a political campaign

(Dean 2004), a political advocacy group (MoveOn.org), and two political parties (the Green and Reform Parties). A combined focus on specific Internet technology usage by these cases as well as the elements of the dominant theoretical perspectives will challenge the existing models and produce elements of a new model that provides a fuller and more generalizable understanding of the effects of Internet usage on political organizations than has been available thus far.

**Rationale for This Study**

In December 2006, the editors of *Time* magazine announced their Person of the Year. The winner, chosen by *Time* editors with input from readers, was "You" – represented by a mirrored paper panel on the cover. Following in the footsteps of the famous (and infamous) such as "the Computer", Gandhi, Hitler, Stalin, and Churchill, this seems at first an odd choice – why would Time readers warrant such an honor? The "you" in question, however, was the millions of individuals who contribute to the staggering amount of content available on the Internet, ranging from user-generated music and video to research projects using the technology to facilitate collaborative data usage (Grossman, 2007). The choice made by *Time* was a recognition of the ongoing shift away from hierarchical forms of media production, in which large companies serve as the primary vehicle for production and distribution, and towards a new era in which the average person is able to easily produce and disseminate content globally with the aid of computer technology and the Internet.

User-generated content available at such websites as Youtube.com and Wikipedia.com has changed the way that consumers look at entertainment and find

6

information, by blurring or, perhaps more accurately, erasing the line between producer and consumer.  The Internet has provided a unique opportunity for individuals to move beyond passive consumption of information and become interactive producers of content for a global audience.  The social networking potential of the Internet has enabled online communities designed specifically to facilitate person-to-person networking such as Myspace.com and FaceBook.com.  Companies such as Amazon.com have used Internet-only business models to become billion-dollar corporations.  Individuals are now able to become global entrepreneurs through peer-to-peer marketplace websites like Ebay.com and find their true love on dating websites such as Match.com.  With the global online population continuing to grow each year, the networking potential of the Internet is growing exponentially each year.  This growing shift towards a network model of social interactions has been recognized, and to some degree predicted, by intellectuals such as Castells (2000), Cairncross (1997), and Dizard (1997), among others.

Although the Internet has proven to be effective at connecting people with shared interests and facilitating commercial transactions, the application of this technology to politics has, to this point, produced mixed results.  Nearly all political organizations (a term used here to include campaigns, parties, and political advocacy groups) in the United States are using the Internet as a component of their overall strategy, and increasingly many are using it as a central organizing and mobilization tool.  However, while many businesses and social networks have been able to integrate the "brick and mortar" and "virtual" worlds, political organizations have struggled to do this successfully.  The use of the Internet by political campaigns has produced a wide range of results, but most explanations of these outcomes provide little insight into how and why

they were produced.  This is particularly true of political organizations that are underdogs

or that represent minority viewpoints; insurgent organizations have been early adopters of

new applications and have been more willing to rely on Internet-intensive strategies.

Some campaigns have clearly benefited in some areas, while others have invested

significant resources in websites and other Internet efforts yet came up empty when the

votes were cast or the policy created.

This is despite the fact that between 1996 and 2006 an increasing number of

Americans relied on the Internet as a source of political news and information.   Among

Internet users, the percentage that used the Internet for political information grew from

22% in 1996 to 52% in 2004, with the numbers among the entire population (including

non-Internet users) similarly increasing from 4% to 29% (Cornfield 2005, i).  During the

2006 midterm elections, 26 million Americans used the Internet for political news on a

given day, up from 11 million in 2002 (Rainie and Horrigan 2007, 1).  Candidates are

raising vast amounts of money and participating in forums and debates online, while

investing an increasing percentage of their campaign resources in their web activities.

Although the American public has begun to rely more heavily on the Internet for political

information, the ways in which the Internet impacts politics and the means by which it

does so remain unclear.

It is important at this point to define exactly what the Internet means for the

purpose of this study.  The term Internet itself can be applied to a great many things, from

the infrastructure that enables digital content to be moved from point-to-point within a

network to the more amorphous concept of "cyberspace" that exists without defined

physical dimensions and forms a cultural and behavioral norm.  Within this work, the

Internet refers exclusively to the digital communications technologies that are generally available on the World Wide Web. Specifically, this includes applications available through a standard web browser such as email, webpages, chat rooms, bulletin boards, weblogs, and an assortment of digital media players for audio and video content.

In addition, no effort is made here to differentiate between generations of technology as it makes no real difference for the purposes of this study. For example, although the email programs and website design used by the Reform Party in 1996 seem archaic now, it is the way that the technology was used (by organization and members) that matters rather than the level of connectivity, coding language, or other technical attributes. Cutting edge technology (even "bleeding edge", which is a step ahead) has a famously short shelf life in the digital age, and therefore a focus on specific applications rather than general categories of technologies threatens to obscure the digital forest for the software trees. Where specific applications are mentioned they are also framed as representatives of a broader category of applications. For example, Facebook is a currently-popular website, but it is presented as representative of social networking websites in general.

This research project approaches the topic of political organizations and Internet by insurgent political organizations through a case-based test of the claims made by the three dominant perspectives found in the literature. When each of the literatures from the three perspectives (Techno-determinist, Situationalist, and Techno-skeptic) are examined in detail, we can see that each offers a set of predictions along six main components of organizational structure and behavior. These six components will form the dependent variables for this study, and through case studies of insurgent political organizations a test

9

of their respective claims can be constructed and evaluated.  The six components, three

internal and three external, and the indicators used to measure them are described in more

detail in Chapters 2 and 3 but are introduced here as well.

Internal Variables:

*Hierarchy* – A measure of the source of ideas and direction for the organization,

organizations with less membership participation are considered to have rigid,

top-down or pyramid-shaped "high" hierachical structures.  Those with greater

amounts of member input are considered to be flatter, more inclusive, "flatter"

hierarchies.

*Internal Communications* – Measures the availability and usage of

communications channels for members to contact leadership and each other.

*Member Intensity* – A measure of the level of engagement and investment in the

organization by members, including willingness to contribute time, money, and

other resources.

External Variables:

*Activity* – This is a measure of the number of activities that the organization

engages in, as well as the scope (geographical and otherwise) of these activities.

*Coalitions/Alliances* – A measure of the linkages that the organization makes with

other organizations, including both short-term and long-term relationships around

single issues or larger political themes.

*Success* – Measures the ability of organizations to achieve their stated goals, as well as the general impact of the group on the political landscape such as framing the debate or having a lasting influence on political behavior.

This work summarizes of the claims of each perspective related to these variables and presents them as a set of predictions related to organizational behavior and outcomes. These predictions are tested in through four case-studies of insurgent political organizations (listed on page 5) to determine their accuracy and explanatory power against the observed outcomes from these cases. The results of this project (presented in detail in Chapter 8) inform not only the future study of the use of the Internet by insurgent political organizations, but can be used to form a set of guidelines for groups using the technology now.

First, none of these perspectives are adequate to explain the subject. This is true for a number of reasons, but primarily because they each begin their analysis by assuming what role the Internet plays within an organization. By assuming that the Internet is alternately a force, a tool, or a wildcard, their approach to the topic and analysis of evidence is colored by this lens and therefore provides limited explanatory power.

However, the second finding is that each of the three perspectives does offer some insight into some aspects of the topic. While none of them can explain the entire topic, they each do fairly well in explaining some portions of it. Therefore, it is improper and counterproductive to simply disregard these approaches in attempting to better understand how insurgent political groups use the Internet. Rather, it is important to identify their strengths and use elements of each in approaches to the topic.

A new approach that utilizes elements of each of the three main perspectives is needed for this topic. The third main finding of this research project is that the use of the Internet by political organizations is, in fact, an ongoing, iterative and interactive *process* rather than an isolated, single *treatment* that an organization undergoes. At various points in this process the interaction of technology and organization the Internet becomes alternately a force, a tool, <u>and</u> a wildcard. Understanding this process and responding accordingly is critical for an organization to survive and thrive.

Given the previous three findings, and based on the outcomes of the three case studies, it is possible to identify the appropriate elements of a more complete and complex understanding of the topic. The beginnings of just such a framework of a new model of the effects of Internet usage on political organizations is offered, which draws from the lessons learned in this study. This framework is designed to guide future research projects that focus on political organizations more broadly, to include mainstream groups within the United States as well as organizations abroad.

Finally, from this study it is possible to identify a series of applied strategies for political organizations that use the Internet. A set of six recommendations are presented in the Conclusion (Chapter 8) that serve as a summary of the research results generated in this work. Although the focus of the cases and research here are insurgent political organizations, these recommendations are generalizable enough to be offered to any political group regardless of size or political stature.

**Traditional Media and Political Organizations**

Democratic politics requires communications in order to communicate ideas and positions to the audience, whether that audience is constituents, supporters, or even opponents. As detailed by Standage (2007), the spread of the telegraph in the nineteenth century marked the first time that the world was connected by a communications network, setting in motion a process of innovation that continues to this day. During the twentieth century, communications technology leapt forward at a pace never before seen in history. In just 100 years, we moved from reliance on print and in-person interaction to radio, film, television, and now the Internet age. While all of these technologies are still in use, they have continued to evolve and shift their share of the political communication process. Over the past century, these technologies have seen their respective fortunes change a great deal in response to social changes and the development of new technologies that first challenge, and then take their place.

The literature on media and politics is quite rich and diverse, and demonstrates that the mastery of the dominant technologies of a given era is an important factor in achieving successful political outcomes. A full analysis of political communications is well beyond the scope of this work, but a brief overview is useful to set the context for this project. This work will focus on the use of the Internet by political organizations to gain support, in tangible forms such as money and volunteers, and in the more general sense of influencing outcomes in the political process. Therefore, it is useful to set the communications environment that the Internet is part of, so that both the competing technologies and those shifts in political interaction enabled by the Internet can be identified. This is not, nor is it intended to be, a complete study of political media use,

and will not focus on the messages put forth by these organizations as much as the format and venue of this communication. Instead, it is an examination of the use of a particular communications technology (the Internet) by political organizations. That being said, however, some discussion of competing technologies will be helpful in setting the stage for the substance of this work, and I will explore the most relevant literatures on the subject here.

Although Internet use is quickly increasing its share, the three core media formats that are most frequently used in American politics remain print, radio, and television. In addition, campaigns also utilize direct mail and telephone for some limited aspects of their campaigns, such as fundraising appeals and get out the vote efforts. A brief summary of contemporary usage of each of these technologies follows here, with particular focus on the role they currently play in the political process. This section includes a discussion of the key differences between these technologies and the Internet, along with some consideration of the state of political communications at present.

The American public does not read particularly often, in 2004 only 51% "regularly" got their news from a local newspaper (Cornfield 2005, 3). They also do not read particularly well, American adults lag behind most industrialized countries in measures of reading performance (National Center for Educational Statistics 2006). The importance of print media for political organizations has steadily declined as a result, although it still remains relevant in what can best be termed a secondary, indirect capacity. Presidential candidates still publish obligatory biographies and calls to action in order to demonstrate a level of intellectual seriousness, although these are very often ghost-written by others and their content is rarely discussed in any substantive way.

Political commentators such as Ann Coulter (on the Right) and Al Franken (on the Left) regularly publish books targeted at their ideological base, although these books seem to serve less to enrich political debate than as a justification for frequent television and radio appearances by their authors. Authors of this type may be popular among their respective bases, but do not enrich the democratic discourse, according to De Luca and Buell (2005), instead further polarizing an already-divided polity by "demonizing" opponents rather than engaging the issues. In 2004 print resurged in presidential politics when the so-called "Swift Boat" controversy, based on a book written by John Kerry critics, spread to television and radio and drained significant resources from the Kerry campaign for several weeks. While the written word is not quite dead, it is clearly in decline and has become only a secondary outlet for political organizations – print media content most often serves as a talking point for other formats, with books lending credibility to ideas despite the fact that the content is often not read in its original format.

For a large part of the twentieth century, radio was the primary source of information and political communication in the United States. Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Fireside Chats" during the Great Depression and through World War II were extremely effective in selling his New Deal programs and in keeping the national morale high during trying times – and arguably also for keeping Roosevelt in office for nearly two decades. As Craig (2000) details, radio became a vital part of campaigning for political parties, but also served as a unifier for the nation during the Depression and second world war, helping to craft a national identity among a still largely rural and diverse population. Radio is still a medium for political discourse, and has the advantage of allowing more

detailed discussions of issues and being less image-focused than the highly visual medium of television, although it has been eclipsed in importance by television.

The importance of radio for political organizations began to wane as television started to make inroads into peoples homes in the early 1950s. Although almost every household has a radio, the medium was supplanted by television and became largely the domain of entertainment and specialized content. However, in the late 1980s radio experienced a resurgence in large part due to the proliferation of a new national format of predominantly right-wing radio personalities such as Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity. Barker (2001) in particular has expressed concern about the impacts of this format on deliberative democracy, given the tendency for the medium to become a deliverer of opinion to listener rather than an interactive outlet, as it rarely includes a consideration of differing views and the most extreme perspectives tend to be exaggerated. Although radio has become more important as a political medium since it was renewed by the talk radio format, it remains a largely one-sided affair. An attempt by liberals to start a competing radio network, dubbed Air America, has encountered difficulty in gaining partner stations and advertisers, although it continues to broadcast in limited markets and online at AirAmerica.com.

Television remains the most dominant media format for both information and entertainment, and continues to be the most frequently used source of news and opinion for Americans. As West (1997) details, it became the centerpiece of national campaigns soon after it became available in the 1950s, in large part because the visual medium offers campaigns the opportunity to present a more visceral and effective narrative about themselves or their opponents to voters. The importance of the visual aspects of

television was made clear during the 1960 presidential debates, when John F. Kennedy outshone Richard Nixon in terms of performance style. As Jones (2005) describes, this was a watershed moment in U.S. politics, and led to an increasing awareness of, and emphasis on, visual presentation for candidates – often at the cost of substance. Mickelson (1989) also explores this visual element, identifying it as a corrosive influence on politics that has drained substance from politics and betrayed the promise that television posed at its outset of enabling national dialogues and increased citizen access to democratic participation. The impact of public perception of information on television is highlighted even more precisely by Lang and Lang (2002), who identify the dangers of perception management by elites as a critical challenge for a democratic polity.

Television is an immediate and immersive media format, capable of transmitting images and sound in real-time from anywhere in the world, and is accessible to nearly everyone both in terms of access to the equipment as well as the fairly low level of content sophistication it offers. Television is the most important communications tool for political organizations, and is utilized in a variety of approaches such as paid commercial advertising, appearances by candidates and staff on opinion shows, and managing news events through so-called "spin doctors" who seek to shift public opinion about given events. However, while television is readily accessible to the consumer, access to the medium is very difficult for insurgent campaigns and minority views due to cost and the reluctance of gatekeepers to provide outlets for potentially controversial views.

However, even for those with ready access, television is also very limited in conveying substantive information due to constraints of time and the format itself. Skewes (2007) provides an insightful analysis of the level of investment and the priority

that political campaigns place on careful control of media image and manipulation of the medium. Political organizations focus much of their effort on shaping their public image for the media, often at the exclusion of providing information or detailing their positions. Because television provides both sound and picture there is a bias towards visual excitement, limiting the time spent for longer, more detailed presentations. On television image is more important than substance, so the details of a political organizations positions are rarely presented. Buying television time is also the most expensive of the media formats, limiting the ability of political organizations to access the medium on their own terms. Therefore, while television is the most important of the media formats, it is also the most difficult to access (and control) for insurgent campaigns or minority viewpoints.

Other communication formats also continue to be utilized by political organization, although in only limited capacities. Direct mail solicitation, used with great effectiveness by Ronald Reagan's campaign in the run-up to the 1980 presidential primaries, continues to be an important vehicle for fundraising as described by Magill (2003) and Viguerie and Franke (2004). However, similar to other print formats, its effectiveness in political communication is limited (it most effective as a fundraising avenue) and it is increasingly not cost-effective. Political organizations continue to use telephones for fundraising and get out the vote efforts, although recent laws regarding telemarketing and the prevalence of caller identification technology has limited the use of the telephone for outreach. Organizations continue to maintain toll-free telephone numbers for contributions and information requests, however, and targeted efforts to

encourage voter turnout by phone continue to be effective.  The relevance of these two media formats is, however, minor at best for political organizations.

When considered in their entirety, studies of media and politics have tended to identify a recurring path for most communication technologies: promise, manipulation, and betrayal.  Each of the technologies offered the promise of a more engaged and informed polity at their outset, by making information more readily available to more citizens.  However, elites and opportunists with a variety of agendas soon began to consciously manipulate the medium to their advantage, resulting in the eventual betrayal of the initial promises the technology posed.  It is still too early to determine if the Internet will follow this trajectory, or if it should even be located on the same continuum as print, radio, and television as Panagopoulos (2007) situates it.  However, the cautionary examples posed by previous technologies suggest that assumptions about the promise of the Internet should be balanced by empirical research into the phenomenon and careful analysis of the usage of the medium itself.

**Comparisons of the Internet with Traditional Media**

The Internet is seen by many as simply the next step in the continuum of these communication technologies, especially in reference to usage by political organizations.  Although this perception has colored considerations of the Internet to this point, it does not capture the complexity, and the possibilities, of the format.  Political organizations utilize the Internet to get their message out to their constituents, similar in function to the way other media types have been, and still are, utilized.  However, this perspective is neither complete nor particularly helpful in understanding the use of the Internet by

political organizations.  In fact, there are a number of critical differences between the

Internet and the media formats that have come before, and we do a disservice to the

understanding of the Internet and politics by oversimplifying in this way.  As stated by

Klotz (2004, Chapter 1), the Internet is more than the sum of its parts, and in fact it

represents an advancement in communications technology much greater than previous

leaps such as from print to voice, or voice to video.

There are three vital distinctions between the Internet and other forms of

communication technology, each of which are critical for our understanding of the

medium.  These are:


- Low barrier to entry (Bimber 1998; Coombs 1998; Diebert 2000;

  Bennett 2004);

- Content availability (Bimber 2003; Klotz 2004); and

- Interactivity of the technology (Eagleton-Pierce 2001; Norris 2004;

  Kahn and Kellner 2004; Bennett 2004).


I consider each of these factors individually in the next section, and offer comparison

with the media forms that have preceded it.


*Low Barrier to Entry*

The Internet has relatively miniscule barriers to entry, particularly relative to the

technologies that preceded it.  Moore's Law, a frequently cited prediction from 1965

attributed to Intel co-founder Gordon E. Moore, states that silicon chips will double in

power every two years, while simultaneously decreasing in price (Intel, Inc. 2007). Computer technology has conformed to Moore's prediction, with rapid improvements taking place while the cost per unit of power (defined as processing speed or memory, etc.) simultaneously falls with each generation of the technology. The inexpensive startup cost of a website, for example, allows even the smallest organizations to create an online presence equal in all substantive ways to those of the largest.

The cost of the Internet is rapidly decreasing for both users and producers of content, and declining barriers to entry are increasingly blurring the line between the two. The cost of outreach through the Internet for political organizations is negligible, and according to Bimber (1998) this offers an opportunity to decrease inequality in participation. Coombs (1998) and Diebert (2000) argue that the low barrier to entry for organizations to be active on the Internet offers an opportunity for non-mainstream groups to confront even the largest entities, public or private, by constructing large networks at low cost. Email communications are essentially cost-free (once the text and other content of the email have been created), providing organizations with a method of reaching their constituents effectively and efficiently. The cost of online communication is vanishingly small compared to non-electronic methods, and it has an economy of scale such that contacting one billion people is no more expensive than contacting one, allowing any group or individual to take part. This is not an unimportant point, since of all the available media formats (for example, television commercials) the Internet is the only one that is equally accessible by any political organization regardless of size or influence.

Web domain names can be acquired, and adequate Internet server space obtained, for well under a hundred dollars per month for a basic website. Commonly available software programs (and even most word processing programs) can be used to construct a website with minimal training, allowing almost anyone to set up a functioning website in a matter of hours. Additional features to allow online donations and provide interactive communication tools can be added for similarly minimal cost as desired, either as integrated components of the website or through third-party vendors. Once a website has been established, the number of people it can reach is essentially unlimited – the cost of reaching one or a billion people on the Internet is, for all practical purposes, the same. The only limitation is the availability of bandwidth, or the capacity to transmit an amount of data in a given time, but high-speed access and improved server capacity has made bandwidth increasingly inexpensive.

Secondly, there are few barriers related to accessing the technology and those that do exist are shrinking quickly. While digital divides still remain within the United States (most notably along age, race, and economic factors), these access gaps are rapidly shrinking (Fox, 2005). People without access at home are often able to access the Internet at work, school, and in public spaces such as libraries and shopping malls – and even from their cell phones. In an increasingly segmented and specialized media environment, this is an important characteristic of the Internet. With so many options available to consumers through cable and satellite, the radio and television markets have split into narrow niches, making it difficult (and very expensive) to reach large and diverse audiences. While the Internet is perhaps the ultimate niche medium, with websites available for a seemingly infinite number of specific interests, it is

simultaneously a wide-open environment.  For example, even though a given person may be interested in a particular campaign or issue, if a television commercial is run during a show that they never watch they will not see the message.  However, through we blinks and email a shared interest and interaction with others on the Internet is very likely to lead a person to an organization's website.

Finally, there are no significant barriers based on content or viewpoints.  While many web hosting companies have policies about hosting specific extreme views and content (and existing federal laws applying to other media formats cover the most egregious content), these barriers pose little real obstacle for most political organizations.  For the purpose of political organizations, the practical outcome is that any candidate or issue group can have a web presence equal to even the largest and most mainstream organization.  This is in sharp contrast to analyses of traditional media outlets such as Lloyd (2006), which find that cost as well as editors and producers play the role of "gatekeeper" in determining which issues, candidates, and topics are considered newsworthy or otherwise eligible for access.

This is an important characteristic, because traditional media outlets frequently fail to include non-majority views and candidates.  There are many reasons for this, and a full survey is beyond the scope of this project, but it is part of a larger phenomenon than just a result of too many candidates and issues in the political process to cover.  Studies such as Alterman (2003) have shown a measurable lack of media coverage of views and candidates that are left-leaning or progressive, through what is characterized as a deliberate effort to exclude these perspectives by Boykoff (2006, Part III).  Some examples of methods used to exclude candidates include setting high fundraising or poll

support requirements for entry into campaign debates. This is not to say that there is necessarily an inherent ideological bias among the mainstream media against progressives, but rather that they tend to favor the dominant party and perspectives at any given time. Since the mid-1990s, the dominant party and perspectives have been overwhelmingly conservative, and this has coincided with the measured lack of time given to progressive and left-leaning political organizations. The Internet has none of these criteria, allowing even the least-popular minority viewpoints and candidates to participate in the debate.

The low barrier to entry provided by the Internet has opened up the political dialogue to an ever-increasing number of groups and individuals. In an era characterized by increasingly segmented and expensive traditional media outlets, the cost of reaching a large audience has increased beyond the means of all but the most well-funded political organizations. However, as Klotz (2004, 85) states, a functional website can be had for less than one hundred dollars, a cost most political groups can afford. The availability of the technology among the target audience, coupled with the lack of the "gatekeeper" function prevalent in the mainstream media, has provided an opportunity for even the least popular political perspectives to be represented. Although the same technology is used by nearly all campaigns and issue groups, the low barrier to entry has been a critical factor for insurgent campaigns and groups representing minority views in reaching larger audiences. Bennett (2004) explores the uses of the Internet in movements such as the Jubilee movement for debt reduction and the construction of alternative news networks, finding that the Internet increases both the speed (in formation as well as response) and the reach of these organizations.

*Content Availability*

The Internet is a dynamic form of communication, with constantly updated and evolving content and easy archiving of everything that has been previously available. Furthermore, a website is available at all times from anyplace with an Internet connection. The Internet provides a readily-available access point to information for individuals, and provides them with the option to gather as much or as little information as they desire. Especially in contrast with other media types, users can access website content in an almost limitless number of ways, allowing user customization of the messages they receive. The flexibility of Internet communications increases the effectiveness by empowering the user to decide how much or how little content to access, which content is useful and which is ignored, and allows members to determine their own schedule of exposure to the content itself.

As Bimber (2003) conceptualizes it, the rise of the Internet provides the Fourth Information Revolution in the United States. In Bimber's view, it is the availability and usage of information that produces revolutionary changes in politics, and he situates previous shifts less around the specific technologies than around the delivery methods. The Internet is relevant for politics, according to Bimber, because previous increases in access to information have produced shifts in the political system, and the Internet offers a massive increase in both quantity of information as well as its availability. Although it marks an era apart from previous revolutions, it is a difference represented by an increase in the same basic factor (information) as in previous changes and therefore part of the same continuum. However, the immediacy and customizability of information available

through the Internet is more than just a next step, as Klotz (2004) argues – it provides content cheaper, faster, and can utilize all previous formats simultaneously.

A website can be updated immediately as events dictate, allowing organizations to easily conduct their communications in "real time" as deemed necessary. This is in contrast with the other media types, because although they are capable of quickly reacting to events (through live broadcasts for example), the costs and effort associated with "real time" content are far higher for them than for the Internet, which often discourages quick reaction. The ease of frequent updates also has another benefit, in that members (constituents, supporters, etc.) are presented with an incentive to visit the website frequently. This can serve to raise the profile of the organization and increase loyalty among the members. Most importantly, frequent updates require a minimal allocation of resources, making it extremely cost-effective to continually provide new content versus the other media types. For example, a television commercial can cost tens of thousands of dollars (at a minimum, better quality costs considerably more) to produce, making it inefficient to continually update commercials based on slight changes in current events. This attribute of the Internet can be particularly useful in political campaigns with a high degree of negative tactics, in which a candidate may need to rapidly respond to an attack by an opponent. While responding on a website may not be sufficient by itself to counter a negative attack, it is the quickest and most efficient means of beginning a response and releasing a message to be picked up by other media types as part of their coverage.

Furthermore, content aired on radio or television exists for only the moment that it takes place, and then is gone. If a listener or viewer misses it, they must either wait until it re-airs or locate an archive in a recorded format. Often, the intended audience is not

aware of missing the content at all, and therefore never becomes interested in seeking it out. Websites can provide a constant presence for content (through archiving), so that members can be kept current on issues and events even if they only login periodically. Another advantage is that this content is easily compiled and sorted by the user, and takes no user storage space like other formats such as print media. Website content can be easily presented in a format that is easily customized by the user; archived, for example, under issue headings and searchable by key words.

The content availability that websites offer differs in two major ways from traditional media. Content can be made available quicker and cheaper than other media types, and all previous content can be made available with minimal effort. Website content is immediate as well as permanent, flexible yet fixed, and all content can be made available to anyone who accesses the website. This allows political organizations the opportunity to fully communicate their views and positions free of time limitations and media access issues. The dynamic character of the content can increase the frequency and intensity of member contact, since they have an incentive to check the site more frequently and spend more time exploring archived content. And, most importantly, these characteristics can be used by any organization regardless of size or popularity, giving insurgent campaigns or groups with minority views the same opportunities as any other organization.

*Interactivity of the Technology*

As stated previously, the Internet is more affordable, accessible, flexible, and informative than traditional media formats. These are important characteristics, and

should be emphasized in the discussion of online political organizations. The ability of even the smallest, least-known organization to fully participate on the Internet and compete in the marketplace of ideas with established and powerful organizations is, in itself, a remarkable phenomenon. However, if these were the only characteristics of the Internet, it is unlikely that it would be as interesting or relevant of a topic for political organizations. While it would be important, it would not capture the potential for long-term effects on the political system and the relevance for creating a new environment for competitive politics in the United States. The final, most unique, and critically important area of difference between traditional media formats and the Internet is interactivity.

The Internet is at heart an interactive medium, in which consumers are able to connect with others regardless of distance and can easily become producers of content as well. This interactivity is explored by Norris (2004) in an analysis of data related to online communities. Norris finds that in fact user experiences online tend to both widen (in terms of increasing the number and diversity) and deepen (by reinforcing and strengthening) social networks. This interactivity is even more important for groups outside of the mainstream of politics, particularly those engaged in protest activities. Insurgent political groups are using the Internet as a central tool for mobilization and coordination of direct action efforts such as the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999, as detailed by Eagleton-Pierce (2001) and Kahn and Kellner (2004), as well as the center of a participatory alternative media (Bennett 2004, 220-223).

The Internet is distinguished from other media types by the ability of content consumers to easily become content producers. Unlike the other media types, one does not need special, dedicated equipment to participate in a website dialogue: the same

Internet-enabled computer that is used to access a website can also be used to participate on the website.  This attribute allows a dialogue between members of an online "community", allowing instant feedback and networking among all participants regardless of their status in the hierarchy.  Websites can be enabled with a variety of participation mechanisms, ranging from email addresses of the staff and candidates, web boards to post comments, chat rooms for real-time discussions, and weblogs (blogs) for ongoing discussions between participants.  Organizations can offer any combination of these options, with minimal upfront investment as these features are readily available.

Other media formats have feedback options, such as call-in radio shows or letters to the Editor, but there are not as accessible to participants as are websites.  There is a limited amount of space and time in other media formats to allow participation by consumers, since every bit of content comes at the expense of other content not included. However, websites need not be limited in this way unless the organization chooses to do so.  Anyone who accesses the website can have the ability to post their thoughts (usually only a free registration is required to discourage wanton misconduct) and participate in the dialogue.  Organizations can determine the options for participation by members by making different tools available, and they can determine the openness of participation through varying strictness of registration requirements.  Furthermore, organizations have the ability to control member participation if they wish by requiring member input to be approved by a moderator or by simply deleting unwanted content after it has been posted.

The ability of members to actively participate and share their views can have three main positive outcomes, if the organization chooses to allow it.  First, members have a strong incentive to be more engaged by virtue of being active participants in

setting the direction of the organization.  The organization becomes a source of community for members, and they develop a stake in the outcome of organizational activities.  Secondly, discussions among members provide an opportunity for networking that often takes the jump to the real world.  This is particularly important for minority views or insurgent campaigns, because the website can provide opportunities for individuals to network with others in their community and form "real world" collaborations that may never have occurred otherwise.  Finally, the Internet allows instant and open feedback between the organization and members, providing a venue to share ideas and best practices at all levels of the hierarchy.  For example, reaction to a recent candidate statement from across the nation can be communicated immediately to the campaign itself, or a successful approach taken in one local community can be shared and then adopted by others.

In this fashion, organization websites become much more than just vehicle for communication, they become "virtual communities" of individuals from diverse locations who share common interests.  Members opt-in to this community by visiting the website or registering with the organization and immediately find like-minded individuals that share their interests, whether that means support for a candidate or a position on an issue.  This is important for all political organizations, but especially for those representing minority views or insurgent campaigns.  Even if one feels that they are alone in their views, online communities can provide support and reinforcement, and can help one to find others who share the same views in the same local area.

**Research Outline**

This work is a test of three dominant perspectives on the effect of the Internet on political organizations through a case-based analysis of the use of the Internet by three different types of political organizations. The three perspectives view the technology as: a force that will transform the organization (Techno-determinist); a tool that will conform to the existing organization and environment (Situationalist); and a wildcard that will, under the same conditions, produce different outcomes for similar organizations (Techno-skeptic). These perspectives offer predictions about the effects of the technology on political organizations; these are identified and assembled into a testing matrix in Chapter 3. Through a test of these predictions it will be possible to establish their specific strengths and weaknesses, and move forward to a broader consideration of the topic at hand.

The three case study chapters include a political campaign (Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign), a political advocacy group (MoveOn.org), and two political parties (the Green and Reform Parties). These cases are chosen from three distinct levels of political activity in recognition of claims made by the situationalists, but should have no impact in evaluating the claims of the other two perspectives. The difference in levels and focus of these organizations is an important factor within the Situationalist perspective, as the general political environment is one of the important aspects of this framework. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 2, the Techno-determinist and Techno-skeptic perspectives contain no such caveats, and should therefore be equally applicable across all three of these levels. The details and rationale for selecting these specific cases is presented in Chapter 3.

I detail the use of technology by each of these organizations as well as the outcomes within these case study chapters. These three organizations are then evaluated along six dimensions to measure how the technology interacted with the organization, and then these results are compared with the outcomes predicted by each of the three perspectives. Each of the three dominant theoretical perspectives are then compared among themselves through a simultaneous comparative analysis of all three perspectives. It will be demonstrated through this project that the effects of Internet usage on political organizations is not adequately understood by these three perspectives, and that a more nuanced approach to the topic is necessary for us to gain a more complete and complex understanding of the topic.

This project has a total of eight chapters, as outlined below.

1. Introduction: This chapter presents the rationale for this project and places the Internet itself into context in relation to other forms of communication media.

2. Review of the literature: The three theoretical perspectives are laid out, and supporting literature related to the Internet and politics are examined.

3. Research Design: This chapter presents the research methodology and outlines the areas of inquiry for the cases and comparative analysis of the theoretical perspectives.

4. Dean for America case study: A case study of an insurgent political campaign from 2004, which heavily utilized the Internet and broke new ground in its application to political campaigns.

5. MoveOn.org case study: This chapter examines one of the most powerful political advocacy groups in the United States, which is based almost entirely on the Internet and has historically represented the minority of political opinion.

6. Green Party and Reform Party case study: A case study of third parties in the United States, examining their similarities and differences in the context of their organizational use of the Internet.

7. Analysis: This chapter is a test of the predictions of each of the three dominant perspectives through a comparative analysis of the results from the cases examined in earlier chapters.

8. Conclusion: Presents a summary of the findings of this study, directions for future inquiry and recommendations for the use of the Internet by political organizations.

**Summary**

The Internet may be more than just the next step in communications media, and may instead represent a significant leap in the ability of organizations to communicate and for citizens to interact. A careful consideration of the potential uses of the technology offers numerous potential applied usage options for political organizations. However, the availability of options does not equate to utilization, nor does utilization equate to particular outcomes. It is therefore important that we consider both the potential and the reality in considering the larger issue of how political organizations are affected by Internet technology. This reinforces the need for a careful, case-based comparative analysis of perspectives on the topic. We can at this point, however, draw some tentative conclusions about the potential of the technology, based on its

characteristics and the evidence before us, that will inform the inquiry contained in this work.

First, the Internet has the capability to deliver the same variety and amount of content that is available in all of the other media types. Although it possesses many of the same properties as the other media types, the Internet has the potential to do all of them better. A single website can contain the same content (print, audio, video) as each of the three core traditional media formats, and has the added advantage of being accessible "on demand" by anyone at anytime. The flexibility of the Internet in terms of linking to other websites also allows organizations to increase their networking potential and to provide users with links to additional content. A single Internet destination can be offered to the entire targeted population, since individuals have the ability to choose the content they determine is most relevant to them.

Second, the interactivity of the Internet has the ability to make a clear break with all previous media formats. Not only can individuals pick and choose which content is most important to them, they can also easily become creators of content themselves. While there have always been opportunities for individuals to participate through call-in shows or letters to the Editor, these opportunities were limited due to constraints of time and space. This characteristic provides greater incentives for "buy-in" than the other media types, and also offers more diversity in the sources of input and sharing of information throughout all levels of the organization. The dynamism that the Internet allows represents a major shift away from the communications strategies of traditional media.

Finally, and most importantly, the Internet is inexpensive and accessible to even the smallest political organization, potentially allowing them to compete on a more equal footing with even the largest organizations.  The cost of maintaining even a first-rate website is already quite low, and costs continue to decline.  The availability of the technology among the population continues to increase, as does the ability of people to use it.  Although at its heart the political process itself has not been fundamentally altered by the new technology –  elections are won by gaining the most votes and public policy decided by the ability to influence decision makers – it provides a new approach and venue for these contests.  Part of the shift in politics through the Internet has been the inclusion of more voices in the process, in part because the ability of smaller organizations to compete in these processes has been greatly enhanced by the technology.

Differences in how organizations approach these characteristics, particularly in reference to which they embrace and which they reject, will be a central component of this study.  The structure of the cases, methodology, and analysis will take into account the potential uses of the technology and will pay close attention to the decisions made by organizations about which options to adopt.  By using a comparative approach to test the dominant theoretical perspectives on this topic, the shortcomings of each will be detailed and the basis for a new, more complete and accurate understanding of how Internet usage affects political organizations will be produced.

**Conclusion**

The use of the Internet for political information and participation by the public continues to increase in each election cycle.  Political organizations are committing more

resources to the Internet each cycle as well  However, the results have thus far been very uneven in terms of impact and success.  The effects of Internet usage on political organizations show a great deal of variation when we consider cases from the past decade – even among cases active during the same electoral cycles.  Attempts to understand these uneven results have proven to be inadequate, and I argue that is because the theoretical constructs underlying these analyses are, themselves, flawed and incomplete.  This work is an attempt to clarify the topic through a careful comparative analysis of specific cases.

This work examines the dominant perspectives about the intersection of the Internet and politics, and makes the case that they are each inadequate in providing a full understanding of how the technology affects political organizations.  In order to gain a full understanding of the effects of Internet usage on political organizations, it is necessary to test the assumptions of these perspectives through case studies of actual political organizations, and identify where they are accurate and where they fall short.  This work will compare predictions about the effect of Internet usage on political organizations with the actual results for four cases representing three types of organizations.  The final analysis of the results demonstrates that even though each of these three perspectives has some value, each is alone inadequate to guide our approach to this topic.

# Chapter 2

# The Contending Literatures

**Introduction**

The Internet as we know it is at present only just over a decade old, yet it has grown from the niche use by research institutions to become as ubiquitous as radio and television in the United States.  Nearly every company has a website and most engage in forms of Internet commerce. Most Americans now have an email address and use the Internet for a variety of activities at work and in their personal lives.  We can readily examine aggregate statistics about Internet usage, and draw on our own experiences and observations of others, and determine that the Internet is having some effect on nearly every human activity around us.  However, the acknowledgement that *something* is occurring is not the same as understanding precisely *what* is occurring and *how* it takes place, nor of being able to identify the impact that it has had.

Unfortunately, the impact of the Internet on these activities is rarely analyzed to a significant degree beyond the aggregate or descriptive levels.  Usage statistics are collected, which gives us information about the prevalence of Internet use, but these rarely provide insight into the outcomes of that usage.  Anecdotal accounts about notable successes and failures of Internet-reliant organizations are commonplace, but rarely do they seek to offer a coherent and generalizable construct to help us understand the internal and external factors that determine how the Internet affects these organizations.  Rarer still are systematic studies of political organizations and the effects of their Internet use.  This work seeks to address this gap in our knowledge by examining in detail the

claims of the three main perspectives about the effects of Internet usage on political organizations.

This project is rooted in three main literatures: political economy, organizational theory, and the emerging literature about the impact of Information Technology (IT) on politics, and may serve to inform a third literature on political communication. This work is within the field of political economy in the sense that it deals with the relationship between resources and power. The intersection of resources, in this case the Internet, and power to achieve political ends is particularly interesting given what we already know about the characteristics of the Internet as they were outlined in Chapter 1. Because of low barriers to entry and low usage costs, the Internet has the potential to be an equalizing force in politics. Innovation and commitment to the technology may well be more important than access to financial resources, for example, in achieving successful outcomes for political organizations. A more complete understanding of the topic will impact political economy by providing a model for analysis of these dynamics and for approaching the study of political organizations that use the Internet.

Organizational theory encompasses a wide range of topics and levels of analysis, however several aspects are particularly relevant in framing this project, and in turn are informed by the results of this research. Although there is a growing subfield focused on the effects of technology on economic sectors and individual firms, there is a distinct gap in this literature as relates to the effects of Internet usage on political organizations. This work represents an attempt to address this gap. In addition, the democratic potential that Internet technology offers represents a challenge to traditional theories about the character and function of political parties as organizations. For example, Michels' (1999)

*Iron Law of Oligarchy* faces a direct challenge from open communication among group members and their instantaneous access to information.

This work also fits within the emerging stream of literature about to the effects of IT (and the Internet in particular) on the political behavior of organizations. This literature is still undefined in many ways, and exists within numerous fields including democratic theory, participatory politics, and contentious politics among others. It is this still-evolving set of literature that this work speaks most directly to. Analyses of the application of the Internet to politics have been undertaken from many perspectives in many fields, yet these works are to this point tentative and, I argue, based on assumptions that serve to obscure rather than illuminate the topic. That is not to say that these works are without value – quite the opposite, in fact. Their efforts to examine the questions have generated valuable insights and, most importantly for this project, have framed the need for a broader understanding of this topic. It is this gap that this work seeks to address, adding value to the existing literature and offering insights to help frame future work.

While this project does not directly engage with political communications literature, it may serve to inform inquiries within that field as political organizations increasingly using the Internet for outreach and coordination. Although the Internet has not entirely replaced other media such as television or radio, and appears unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future, it is already serving to reach new audiences and has had a great impact on usage of the other media. CNN's television coverage of the 2006 midterm elections, for example, included a focus on bloggers and campaign websites. Although the Internet may not be replacing other media types, it has the power to affect

coverage and generate news itself.  A better understanding of the interaction of the Internet and political organizations may contribute to the framing of analyses of this shift in media.

### Analyses of Organizations and the Internet

Studies of the impact of Internet usage on organizations have focused primarily on economics and business applications until fairly recently.  For example, there are many analyses about how the rapid adoption of the Internet has impacted business organizations by lowering costs for communications and increasing efficiency for domestic and multinational businesses.  Early works such as Thurow (2000) focus on the importance of information as a wealth-producing mechanism, supplanting raw materials and even labor in forming the basis of the new "knowledge economy," arguing that adaptation by firms (as well as nations) to this new economy model is vital to remain competitive.  Similar sentiments are provided by Aldrich (1999), who also stresses the need for firms to invert traditional hierarchies in order to tap the innovation and entrepreneurial energy of employees.  Mills (2001) further elaborates these ideas for global competition by companies, outlining a seven-step plan for executives to accomplish the transformation of the structure and mindset of the organization.

A number of studies seeking to identify how individuals utilize the technology have been conducted, in part seeking answers to personal behaviors but also looking for commercial applications.  For example, studies such as Robinson, et al (2000) found that the Internet has a significant effect on the lives of individuals; altering choices made about the allocation of leisure time and providing instant access to a variety of

educational, recreational, and informational resources.  However, for politics there is more conjecture than substance at this point as to how the Internet is affecting political behavior.  This is in large part related to the lack of opportunities to observe Internet usage by political organizations, particularly at the national level, due to the relatively slow pace of adoption of the Internet by these organizations.  With election cycles limited to only every two years, and presidential contests taking place only every four years, studies of political organizations have to this point lagged far behind those of business and personal Internet adoption.  Further complicating this issue, political organizations themselves have been slow to adopt the Internet as a major part of their operations.  This is due in part to a lack of experience and successful models to follow, but is also related to a general sense of risk-aversion among political candidates, parties, and groups.

Even where opportunity exists to make a study of Internet usage by political organizations, these attempts generally take as their starting point an already-formed perspective on how the Internet affects organizations, which serves to further cloud the issue and limit our understanding.  This is not to say that there is an improper bias in these works, but rather that many of these projects are not as much concerned with creating a broad understanding of the topic but rather in explaining one specific case or tendency within organizations.  Others are seeking not so much to identify what is happening in these cases but to locate possible mechanisms or avenues to produce normative goods.  Many other studies of the impact of the Internet on political organizations have, to this point, been conducted by admitted technophiles or through analyses borrowed from other sub-disciplines; and there are shortcomings associated with either of these approaches.

By and large, all of these researchers have brought elements of one of three dominant perspectives of analysis to bear in their applied studies of this topic. Because they start their analysis with an existing theory about the effect of the Internet on political organizations, they tend to conflate cause and effect to some degree in their work. This has tended to limit the broader applicability of their efforts, and has often served to color their analysis in ways that obscure the topic. That is not to say that these perspectives are completely wrong, because in some cases they have produced valuable analyses, but by starting with a pre-determined perspective on the subject they have limited broader understanding of the subject matter.

Some observers see technology (and the Internet in particular) as an intrinsically powerful force with the capability to change everything that it touches. This Techno-determinist view (also called the "Wired" view after the technophile magazine of that name) asserts that the Internet will fundamentally transform the political process, and that the attributes of the technology will create more participatory and democratic outcomes by facilitating direct contact between officials and citizens and by increasing the power of citizens to organize around issues. Another perspective, which I will call the Situationalists, see the Internet as the latest in a continuum of communications tools, manageable in the same ways that such media as television and print have been and, therefore, merely another means of reaching the existing ends of an organization. A third group, here called the Techno-skeptics, however, counter that over-reliance on the promise of technology poses dangers, as the actual outcomes can vary greatly between organizations and cannot be predicted.

While the Internet is now a part of daily life for most Americans, as well as for people around the world, the practical results of Internet usage for political organizations have been uneven at best. Despite the proliferation of online political content and websites, some of which have utilized the full array of instant communications technology that the Internet affords, it is difficult to identify any specific and pronounced change in American politics. Candidates still rely on in-person campaign events and traditional media, while interest groups continue to rely largely on proven methods to lobby and influence lawmakers. Organized attempts to involve citizens in direct Internet lobbying efforts, such as cyber-petitions and email campaigns, have generated large numbers of responses but the actual results of these approaches remains uncertain at this point in time.

**Trailblazing Internet Usage by Political Groups**

Many political organizations have, however, had success in using the Internet as a component of their overall communication strategies. The Internet has proven to be particularly effective when used by contentious political groups to reach an international audience and overcome domestic censorship, for example. Beginning in the early- to mid-1990s, the Free Burma Movement (Danitz 1999) and the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in Mexico (Froehling 1997) began to use the Internet to successfully communicate their issues to a global audience despite a lack of access to communications avenues at home. First adopted as a political tool by contentious political groups, the Internet proved to be effective at mobilizing diverse constituencies around their causes and issues. Ayres (1999) and Dartnell (2006) examine global protest

movements and their early adoption of the Internet as a tool, and identify the opportunities for groups engaged in contentious politics to gain an advantage through the medium. However, Ayres also identifies the potential downsides of the instant nature of the Internet, which is that false information carries the same weight as factual information in the virtual medium, leading to a confusion of message and the potential for opponents to easily undermine Internet-dependent groups through the same medium.

A slightly different example of transnational action coordinated through the Internet is demonstrated by the 1998-9 strike at General Tire Corporation, in Charlotte, North Carolina as Flynn (1999) shows in a detailed case study. U.S. workers began a strike against General Tire in the fall of 1998 over wages and benefits. Months passed without any progress in the negotiations. This changed when the Brussels-based International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers Unions (ICEM), voted to support the cause of the American workers in June of 1999. The ICEM began an Internet campaign against Continental AG, General Tires' German parent company. By coordinating information and email from Europe and the United States, the pressure on both parent and subsidiary company increased: email picketing, increasing support from other unions, and international actions (such as a strike at a plant in South Africa) all contributed to pressuring Continental AG. The threat of a widespread consumer boycott in Europe eventually brought the company back to the bargaining table and labor peace was restored. The result was the first wage increase in a decade for the U.S. General Tire workers, and what was hailed as a major victory for online mobilization that could serve as a model for future campaigns by the unions involved.

The success of some contentious groups in gaining attention and organizing activities is not proof that the Internet has broad applicability to all political behavior, however. In fact, the experience of these contentious groups may simply be a result of lacking access to other resources or traditional media outlets, and therefore having few options other than reliance on the technology. Increasing centralization of media ownership among a few mega-corporations has produced a homogenization of content as well as values in the mainstream media, as Herman and McChesney (1997) identify. Efforts by contentious groups to use the Internet as an alternative form of independent media date back to the anti-globalization movement of the late 1990s, although as Solomon (2000) indicates, these efforts face uphill struggles to gain an audience beyond their existing base. Although contentious political groups began using the Internet for their activities since the early 1990s, however, political organizations engaged in electoral politics in the United States have lagged notably behind in adopting the technology.

**Political Organizations and Technology**

Political campaigns have traditionally been rigid, top-down affairs in which decisions are made by an inner circle of advisors at the top and then delivered down the hierarchy to individual campaign volunteers. A variety of factors contributed to this: a preference for operational secrecy and control of strategic information, preserving the leadership reputation of the candidate, avoiding unexpected occurrences in the campaign, a general resistance to change, and a certain suspicion and mistrust of members, who may not "stay on message" and therefore potentially weaken a carefully crafted campaign.

Control of message and image have long been key aspects of campaigns, and increasingly so as emerging technologies allow for increased, instant scrutiny of campaigns. A high-level staffer at the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee summed up the prevailing attitude in this way:

"(In 2001) At the DSCC the executive director, Jim Jordan said he flatly didn't care (about embracing Internet technology in campaigns). The disconnect is now gone, but the willingness to acknowledge that change must happen to accompany that is not. The Internet has to become the center of the organization. But the notion of the party's committees having well-defined departments with a top-down hierarchical structure hasn't changed." (Sifry 2004).

This emphasis on hierarchy and control by campaigns distinctly influenced the content and usages of candidate websites through the beginning of the 2004 campaign. Rather than being viewed as an interactive medium, or even as a flexible means of communication, campaign websites were static affairs, generally containing only the equivalent of an online press kit – a brief biography, position statements, some stock photos, and contact information. By 2000 technology had improved to the point that tech-savvy campaigns began to add streaming video of campaign speeches and television commercials, as well as links for online donations. Despite being a participatory medium, politics on the Internet remained locked in an old media model: the campaign communicated to the people in only one direction. As people became accustomed to so

many new communications applications on the Internet, however, these websites began to become less and less appealing to many engaged in politics. In response, many political activists began forming their own political websites using new applications such as web logs (blogs).

Political campaigns began to use computers as early as the 1970s to maintain supporter databases and assist in tracking fundraising activities, yet they remained the domain of specialists and administrators until the 1990s. The early uses of computers to track data were viewed with suspicion at the time, while duplicate paper records were utilized by most of the campaign staff. Since the beginning of the Internet phenomenon in the 1990s political campaigns have been fitting new technologies into the traditional campaign structure. Campaign websites and limited uses of e-commerce applications for donations slowly became expected components of a traditional political campaign, yet the stream of communication was nearly exclusively top-down. The occasional moderated chat (in which participants submitted questions in advance for screening and candidates responded to selected queries) was generally the most interactive use of technology most campaigns used. While the technology to run a completely interactive political campaign was widely available, no one had yet utilized it to craft an interactive campaign in which volunteers would be able to participate at the highest levels of strategy and planning. The few innovative approaches to the medium were generally undertaken by marginal campaigns, which had little to lose by trying new options.

Although national political campaigns in the United States began to utilize the Internet in significant ways during the 1996 presidential election, reviews by Whillock (1998) and Tedesco, et al (1998) show that these tentative first steps were neither as

ambitious as contemporary contentious political groups nor did they represent significant elements within the campaign strategies of the candidates.  The first notable use of the Internet by a mainstream, albeit underdog, national candidate was during the 2000 Republican primary race, when United States Senator John McCain used his campaign website as a major focus of his fundraising efforts.  McCain, who carefully cultivated the image of an "outsider" and a "maverick", raised over 20% of his campaign contributions (roughly $6 million) through his website in 2000 (Whillock and Whillock, 2002).  While McCain can arguably be said to have been the first candidate for president to heavily rely on the Internet for a portion of his campaign strategy, his use of the Internet was limited overall and had very few interactive elements.  The McCain 2000 website provided an alternative option for supporters to donate, in other words, but little else in the way of interactive or participatory options.  Although McCain ran a strong campaign and won several state primaries, the bulk of his campaign was focused on traditional methods with the Internet largely an afterthought.

Those political organizations that have been early adopters of Internet strategies have, however, tended to be organizations that were unlikely to have success using traditional approaches.  Insurgents (underdog or outsider campaigns, and groups representing minority and unpopular views) have been the first adopters of emerging Internet technology since the early 1990s, but their experiences have been slow to seep into the mainstream of politics.  So even though we have observed some successful outcomes from the use of the Internet for politics by contentious groups and insurgent organizations, it remains difficult to draw a general conclusion about the topic because these cases remain on the fringes of mainstream political discourse.  Therefore, we are

still left uncertain about the effect of the Internet on political organizations in general, but most particularly for those groups that hold a degree of "legitimacy" within the political system.

**The Internet and Political Organizations**

The literature on the Internet covers a vast array of subject matter, ranging from specific technical aspects on the most applied end of the spectrum to science fiction-esque considerations of what the technology may bring in the future. This broad scope is indicative of the creeping presence of the Internet in our lives. When one focuses only on literature addressing politics, one sees that it is largely composed of conjecture and potentials – presenting broad theoretical interpretations of just what the Internet might mean for politics in the future – or descriptive case studies that present statistical analyses and anecdotes about outcomes but rarely attempt to analyze the means by which these outcomes occur. Both of these approaches are useful, but lack critical explanatory elements.

There is a notable lack of work that examines the effect of the Internet on political organizations, as Howard (2006, 143) indicates, and my work here is a response to this gap in the literature. There are many works that examine networks and individual citizenship, but very little about organizations themselves. What literature is available about the effect of the Internet on politics within the field of political science has tended to cluster around three main perspectives. Techno-determinists present technology as force that transforms all that it touches – a necessary and holistic treatment that promises greater democratic participation and better governance because of the inherent properties

49

it possesses.  Situationalists see technology as a useful tool to support existing behaviors or structures, essentially a component to 'drop in' to existing organizations, that will support existing activities when properly configured.  Techno-skeptics see technology as a wildcard that will generate unpredictable consequences with even the most careful of designs, and could even unintentionally produce harm within an organization.  However, the predictions of these perspectives have not been rigorously evaluated through observations of specific organizations, and the results of these competing predictions have not been compared with each other in the literature.  In short, one comes away from a survey of the literature with numerous competing analyses but little in the way of a framework to evaluate their conclusions.  This project is a response and reaction to this continuing void in systematic analysis of the actual effects of the introduction of the Internet on political organizations.

Where there have been evaluative approaches taken to information technology and organizations, these have largely focused on business applications for firms.  Most studies of technology usage by firms focus their attention the opportunities or obstacles posed by technology in reaching specific, defined results rather than a broader understanding of the process.  One subset of this literature is edited collections such as Zapalla and Gray (2006), which provide useful case studies of specific firms and elements of technology usage in businesses, but these are not generalizable to organizations in general, or even much beyond firms engaged in similar enterprises. Approaches focused at the top-level such as found in Coakes (2003) are a second strain of this literature, and while these works are useful tools for management in terms of implementing or directing technology usage by their company, they provide little insight

beyond their applied, and relatively narrow, uses.  Finally, an approach that presents

organizational best practices at a more macro level, such as found in During, Oakey, and

Kauser (2001) and Tapscott (1997) offers case studies of entire sectors and diverse types

of firms, largely focused on descriptive presentations of results.  Although these could be

applicable to other large firms, they are still limited by their focus on specific outcomes

rather than generating a larger understanding of process.

In most instances, studies of the use of the Internet in politics have started with

the technology itself, rather than the organization, and therefore tend to focus on internal

technical aspects.  While this approach is useful in evaluating, for example, the cost

effectiveness of online versus direct-mail fundraising, it does little to inform the reader of

the overall effect of technology use on the organization.  Similarly, studies of the

hierarchical aspects of technology usage are useful from the participatory politics

perspective, but do not address how this may affect the external activity of the

organization.  The lack of a comparative evaluation of the dominant theories on the topic

is notable, and limits the ability of academics and practitioners alike to establish a proper

framework for considering how Internet usage effects political organizations.

In short, the evaluations done to this point are not focused on evaluating how the

Internet functions within, and facilitates the activities of, political organizations in any

generalizable way.  Instead, by basing their consideration in one perspective they miss

opportunities to evaluate how the Internet interacts with organizations, and often focus

instead on describing how an organization properly or improperly utilized the Internet

according to their guiding perspective.  While this may seem to be somewhat of a small

difference at first, the consequence is that nuance is lost and we are left with prescriptive recommendations that are not necessarily complete or applicable to other organizations.

There have been many attempts to structure the literature on this topic in categories. Classifications of the literature about the effect of the Internet on politics in general have often tended to structure it into two basic camps: the optimist and the pessimist. Schema that use this two-category approach include Dahlgren (2005) (positive and negative), Norris (2002) (cyber-optimists and cyber-skeptics). These views focus only on the view of the technology itself in categorizing the literature, and therefore lose a great deal of variation in their considerations. It is possible, for example, to be reluctant to accept the most optimistic views without being necessarily negative or even skeptical about the possibilities of the technology. Rather, one may place technology within a broader, non-determinative context. Wilhelm (2000) (neofuturists, dystopians, and technorealists) acknowledges that there is a third way in between the pro and con, although remains focused on the technology itself in his categories. The idea of a broader contextual classification has been used by authors such as Wilson (2004) (optimists, pessimists, and structuralists), bringing in considerations of the constraining and enabling effects of structure.

While these are all useful constructs for the topics that the authors have explored with them, they are not completely adequate for the purposes of this work. While they have informed the development of the categories used to define the three main perspectives, it was necessary to adapt these categories for the specific purposes of this research. While I find that the boundaries of literature contained in the optimist categories (optimist, positive, neofuturist) are largely correct, for the purposes of this

work it was necessary to redefine it as Techno-determinist: not only is technology viewed positively, it is in fact largely viewed as an independent transformative force. The pessimist/dystopian/negative category is, however, somewhat limited and instead became the Techno-skeptic, which is closer to Wilhelm's (2000) technorealist configuration. Techno-skeptics are not necessarily negative about the *potential* or opposed to exploring the applications of the Internet, rather they assume a cautionary stance about reliance on an unproven technology that largely remains a wildcard in their view. Finally, the structuralist view became the Situationalist, in recognition of the assumptions already attached to the word structuralist, which are not entirely applicable to this category of literature on this topic. This is largely a difference without distinction in practice, although the literature included allows for less rigid approaches to, and outcomes from, structural features than one might typically expect from a structuralist perspective.

What follows, then, is a survey of the three main identified perspectives that this work engages, including work from a number of disciplines but with particular focus on works from political science. From this survey of the literature, we can see that there are three central and distinct perspectives that underlie analyses from a variety of subfields, informing and guiding these approaches. Each of these perspectives contain predictive elements, which will be drawn out and used to construct a framework for testing in Chapter 3. With such a broad topic and variety of literature available, this overview is not intended to be complete but rather to be representative of the state of the literature by identifying major themes and discourses.

For the purposes of this study these three perspectives are categorized as:

1. Techno-determinists – This perspective gives technology agency in its interactions with organizations. Simply put, the inherent properties of technology will tend to alter the organization in certain predictable ways when it is introduced, regardless of the prior organizational structure.

2. Situationalists – This perspective identifies the organization itself as the primary determinant of outcomes related to Internet usage. It states that the technology will conform to the existing practices of organizations, and that subsequent outcomes will be the result of conscious decisions by the leadership of the organization.

3. Techno-skeptics – This perspective views technology with suspicion, and suggests that Internet usage by an organization is likely to produce unpredictable and unintended outcomes. While a given organization may benefit from a certain application of technology, an identical organization could just as likely be devastated by reliance on the very same technology.

By comparing these three perspectives through comparative case studies of four representative political organizations that utilized the Internet, we will be able to make an assessment of the relative accuracy of each viewpoint. Furthermore, the results of a test of these three perspectives can serve as the basis for constructing a set of generalizable recommendations for Internet usage by political organizations. The results of this approach will add value to a number of disciplines and fields, and provide elements of a new model for evaluation of Internet usage by political organizations.

**Techno-determinists**

A great deal of literature on this topic privileges technology as possessing inherent traits that will produce change once introduced into a political organization. This view, which is termed here the Techno-determinist perspective, argues that the Internet is such a powerful medium that it has a transformative effect on everything that it touches, including politics. Works from this perspective are often normative – welcoming this shift and looking for evidence that it is occurring, such as Norris (2004) and Ensor (2006), or focused on identifying the obstacles preventing this shift from taking place at present such as Bimber (2003) and Bakardjieva (2005). This perspective sees the IT revolution of the 1990s as the catalyst for an unparalleled shift in power, hierarchy, and freedom. In this view, the Internet serves to democratize communications in general by dispersing control of the medium to individuals, and will similarly produce fundamental change when introduced to political organizations.

Expectations about the effects of the "digital revolution" on organizations in particular are not new. The early 1970s saw a number of authors predicting the effects of the burgeoning computer industry. This literature, largely focused on business applications rather than home and individual usage, attempted to prepare managers to face the upcoming transition to a computerized workplace. Interestingly, works such as Whisler (1972a, 1972b) and Kingdon (1973) predicted a beneficial and inevitable *centralization* of activities as one of the main products of computerization –increasing the vertical hierarchy of businesses rather than dispersing power. These considerations of the effect of computers on the internal functioning of organizations also examined the new forms that organizations would take, becoming more information-intensive while still

performing traditional tasks. In regard to political organizations, authors from this period such as Chartrand (1972) tended to envision the technology serving elite functions, maintaining supporter data and the like, rather than being a tool for the average member or voter. The early futurist considerations of the technology focused on elite applications and organizational efficiency (through increased command and control functions) as the outcome of increased computer usage. Computers remained largely the realm of researchers, hobbyists, and science-fiction stories until the early 1990s, however, and had very little outward impact on political life.

Sudden shifts in the affordability and functionality of computers beginning in the 1990s, however, increased both the stakes and the appeal of the topic. In fact, by the end of the 1990s computers had become such a central part of everyday life that the fear of a worldwide computer shutdown on January 1, 2000 (from the Y2K bug) generated a level of panic among many (CNN.com 2000). As the mainstreaming of information technologies in society has increased, many authors have approached the topic of the Internet from the technology side; as "futurists" projecting the impacts of technology on society, or as political scientists seeking ways in which the Internet can be specifically applied to political issues. In both cases, the technology is the starting point – applications and impacts are extrapolated from the characteristics of the technology itself. Futurists such as Toffler (1981), Oberst (2001), and Ensor (2006) are at the core of this perspective, making predictions that computers will initiate a shift in society as significant as the Industrial revolution was two centuries before, with almost exclusively positive results. Great claims of change and promises of a more egalitarian and

prosperous society have been attached to the computer and, by direct connection, to the Internet.

The futurist-oriented Techno-determinist literature predicts the rise of an "information society" in which digital communications, and the information which it provides access to, will be the defining characteristic. There are several seminal works from this perspective that provide slightly different approaches, but because they were written at the dawn of what we consider the "Internet age" (the mid-1990s through 2000), they have had a great impact on the development of the Techno-determinist view. The potential impact of the Internet as a vehicle for primarily economic shifts, although with resulting political effects, was described by Dizard (1997) as an inevitable process that could only be made faster or slower, but neither altered nor stopped. Cairncross (1997) forecast that the rise of the Internet would essentially remove considerations of distance entirely, reducing transaction costs and enabling both greater customization of goods and culture as well as less centralization of political power. While in some ways she can be seen as visionary, if we consider economic globalization and outsourcing, her predictions for political decentralization have proven to be less accurate. Negroponte (1996) offers similar, although cautionary, predictions about the breakdown of centralized control over daily life, but takes a focus on individual, rather than collective, autonomy.

According to Drucker (1995), Marlow and Wilson (1997), and Norris (2000, Chapter 6), increased speed and new channels of communications promise a continuing flattening of organizational hierarchy, and will lead to organizational shifts as mid-level managers are no longer needed to relay information between high- and low-level employees. Communication will occur directly between management and worker, top

and bottom levels, and result in a flattening of organizational hierarchy.  An extension of

this flattening is the rise of the networked organization, as predicted in Toffler (1981) in

which members can be dispersed across great distances, yet still work collaboratively.

For political groups, this suggests that IT-intensive organizations would have flatter

hierarchies, more equality in participation, and would function in a more decentralized

manner than traditional organizations.  Because of the capabilities of the technology,

there would be no longer be a need for a developed middle layer between leadership of

the organization and the rank-and-file, hence resulting in a flattened hierarchy.

Because of the effects of IT, members would have more access to information and

are likely to feel more invested in the organization.  Cheap and frequent digital

communication allows members at any level to share information simultaneously with

all, or just a selected sub-group, of members as desired.  The flattening of hierarchy leads

to more investment in the organization by individuals at all levels, increasing loyalty and

personal feelings of efficacy, by eliminating rigid power structures and chains of

command.  Due to these inherent properties, then, organizations with a well developed IT

infrastructure will be more efficient and responsive, and will have members with higher

motivation levels.  Members will be empowered within the organization, and will

respond with a heightened sense of ownership and accountability for organizational

outcomes.

For political activities, the Internet would create increased opportunities for action

by providing access to quick communication among members and external

constituencies.  The technology can provide the opportunity for a republican form of

government (rather than a direct democracy) as envisioned by the founders of the United

States, according to Grossman (1995), by offering opportunities for grassroots participation and public deliberation. Increased access to communication tools, previously out of reach for the average citizen, would create new democratic spaces, in which ideas are debated freely and individuals can network among fellow citizens with similar views. Analyses of early uses of the Internet by campaigns, such as Kaid, et al (2000) and Selnow (1998) see the Internet as a method of citizen involvement in politics by making content more accessible and customizable to individuals similar to traditional campaign appearances. The message is made direct and accessible to a larger audience through the Internet, which will have positive effects on activity and engagement.

Techno-determinists tend to assume that because the characteristics of the Internet make these types of outcomes possible, the use of the Internet within the political system will therefore produce these outcomes. Bakardjieva (2005) and Bimber (2003) provide an example of this perspective in their work, which builds from the perspectives of inevitability posed by Toffler (1981), Dizard (1997), and Cairncross (1997) by examining the effects of the Internet on daily life since the beginning of the phenomenon. While they admit in their work that there has been little substantive change in politics (or social structures in general, for that matter) it is not a result of the predictions of Techno-determinists being inadequate, incorrect, or overly-optimistic. Rather, it is only the slow pace of Internet adoption and, in many cases, outright resistance by political organizations that is preventing this dramatic shift.

If this perspective is correct, observations would show a flattening of the hierarchy and increased efficiency and effectiveness when organizations adopt the Internet. Those organizations that adopt the technology most completely and apply it to

the most activities would have a substantial advantage over those that did not, particularly in competitive political activities such as elections and policy debates. Communication and information-sharing would occur much more quickly due to the speed of the technology and the breakdown of rigid levels of hierarchy, meaning that the organization as a whole would be more responsive, flexible, and competitive in its activities.

Members would also feel more valued and consequently be more willing to participate in efforts. We would therefore see a more active membership, including more participation in the organization's activities. Decision-making would be dispersed as well, making the larger organization better able to respond quickly and with greater flexibility to events as they occur. The openness of this organization would provide more opportunities for collaboration with other, similarly structured organizations, managed through networking possibilities that are available through the use of the Internet. As a result, we would see more initiative taken at the lower levels of the organizational structure, an increased amount of decision-making activity occurring in cooperative ways, and more collaboration with other groups.

Table 2.1 provides a summary of the predictions that we can draw from this survey of the Techno-determinist literature. On most indicators, we should see in increasing amount of collaboration, openness, action, and positive outcomes. We should also see a breakdown of hierarchy, with the line between leaders and members becoming blurred as the structure moves from a traditional pyramid shape to a flatter hierarchy with fewer levels, and with fewer distinctions between the levels that remain. In a general sense, the organization should become much more effective and members should be significantly energized by the application of the Internet to the external activities and

internal structure of the organization.  In this work, I will evaluate the claims of this

perspective by testing the hypotheses that it offers against a series of case studies.

| TABLE 2.1 | |
|---|---|
| **Predicted outcomes for organizations by Techno-determinists** | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | PREDICTED OUTCOME |
| Hierarchy (Int.) | ↓ |
| Internal Communications (Int.) | ↑ |
| Member Intensity (Int.) | ↑ |
| Activity (Ext.) | ↑ |
| Coalitions/Alliances (Ext.) | ↑ |
| Success (Ext.) | ↑ |
| (Int.) = Internal variable<br>(Ext.) = External variable<br>↓ = Decrease<br>↑ = Increase | |

**Situationalists**

While Techno-determinists privilege technology in relation to organizations,

Situationalists take the opposite approach: the Internet is a tool and it will take on the

properties of the existing organizational structure.  This approach is based on decades of

study of social movements and political participation, particularly of how organizations

have mobilized and advocated for political change.  By starting their analysis with the

organizations (campaigns, parties, etc.) rather than the technology, these authors

conceptualize the Internet largely as a component added to an existing entity rather than as a transformative force or agent that can generate outcomes independent of organizational decision-making.  The Internet may produce greater efficiency, and therefore multiply or amplify existing dynamics, but will not produce momentum for change within the organization.  With a different starting point than the Techno-determinists, they consequently arrive at a very different conclusion about the impact of the Internet on political groups.

Situationalists see technology as only one of many factors involved in political process and change, and this affects their conclusions about technology adoption by political groups.  In most cases, Situationalists seek to identify a complex relationship among many factors as important for success of organizations or movements: the right people and technology under the right circumstances can lead to successful completion of organizational goals given certain external factors.  This perspective can be seen, for example, in the analysis of chat rooms by Noveck (2004), in which the author identifies group rules and norms as the critical component for establishing an effective deliberative environment.  Many Situationalists, such as Davis (2005) and (Fox 2005), focus on the relative resource base and differences in power between actors and groups as a key indicator of success: the impact of technology is therefore limited by existing characteristics of the organization including such factors as access to resources, existing support base, and perceived moral authority.  The impact of technology on a political group is determined by these existing characteristics of the organization and therefore the proper starting place for study are the characteristics of the organization, political system, and general policy environment.

Within this context, technology can serve as a useful support for groups from a resource mobilization perspective. Resource mobilization theory sees politics as a struggle for resources in which the side that can most effectively raise and organize its resources will be best positioned to achieve its goals. Applying the insights provided by Zald and McCarthy (1979) about resource mobilization to the Internet yields a significant component of the Situationalist perspective: the Internet is only one of many resources that can be brought to bear on a political issue or cause, and cannot alone tip the scales. Within this approach, there is no clear consensus on which resources are most important or how they can be used to mutually support each other. For example, some collective action theorists argue that trust within the group (Chong, 1991) is the most important factor among many for sustaining political activity. Other perspectives argue that institutional identification and support (Morris, 1984), perceived opportunities for success (McAdam, 1982), maintaining group cohesion (Lichbach, 1995), or leadership capacity (Burns, 1978) are most important. Technology can assist in planning and organizing group tactics and activities, and even replace other communications tools, but it is properly conceptualized as one of many resource components akin to mobilized constituencies and public awareness.

For example, Tarrow (1998a) considers the use of technology (and email in particular) for building transnational social movements, although he remains cautious in drawing broad conclusions about the meaning of this activity in the absence of long term analysis and data – particularly in interaction with other identifiable factors. Although technology can facilitate social movements, it is not a substitute for the interpersonal contacts that they rely on to develop and prosper. The impersonal nature of the

technology is, therefore, a critical flaw that limits its ability to be a primary factor in building social movements. This view can be summarized thusly: technology can assist in mobilizing resources necessary for political groups to succeed, but it is best conceptualized as one of many tools to do so. Variation in outcomes will result from the strength of organizations and not from varying degree of technology usage.

The Internet therefore fits into the equation as a supportive element for other organizational activities, assisting in building trust, communicating group goals and facilitating collaboration, for example, but it is not suited for being a driving force. Therefore, we can conclude that the use of the Internet by political groups will not produce different outcomes by itself. Rather, groups which have organizational and resource advantages in place will be have success in applying the technology, while organizations that rely on the Internet to the exclusion of traditional mobilization tactics will not. Internet usage by organizations *may* provide a multiplier effect for successful organizations by increasing the speed and reach of group communications, but the properties of the Internet will not automatically create positive outcomes for an organization. In fact, according to Wertkin (2002), the Internet is more likely to result in strengthening of existing convictions and beliefs among users than it is to provide openings for new ideas – hence not providing new converts for minority positions or insurgent organizations. Although the technology facilitates reaching an existing audience, it may not be the venue for attempts to broaden the base.

Similarly, the addition of the Internet as a tool by an existing organization will not change the internal structure of the group or influence the tactics used unless the organization makes a conscious decision to change. Inherent in this view is the belief

that technology will serve to reinforce existing inequalities of power and access in politics, rather than shift the balance of power. The technology is best thought of as a multiplier of resources and power, and it will therefore serve to reinforce, rather than break down, existing gaps between political organizations – even if all parties have relatively equal access. Considerations of this factor can be found in Blumier and Gurevitch (2001) who argue that the potential of online democracy can only be realized by policy changes in the environment that would increase access and actively encourage the creation of a "civic commons" online.

Davis (1999) argues that although the Internet began as a free-flowing and open environment, it is almost inevitable that it will be captured by the same companies and interests that currently control traditional media forms, leading to a homogenization of content. In this argument, the overwhelming majority of users will choose the familiar over the new, and the Internet will become another component reinforcing the status quo. From this perspective, not only does the Internet not offer a transformative solution to political concerns; it actually leads to an increase in the consolidation of power among elites. In order for the Internet to be a change agent, according to Davis (2005) there must be fundamental shifts in other structures first.

Furthermore, the existence of online deliberation options and opportunities to interact does not guarantee that even when interaction occurs it will be a positive encouragement for citizenship. Studies of Internet discussion groups and issue chat rooms such as Schneider (2000) finds that most discourse is, in fact, neither civil nor particularly illuminating. Outcomes from these experiences tend to reinforce negative views of others, discouraging all but the most combative participants to eventually retreat

from the online public sphere or to seek only identical views.  This would, of course, serve only to reinforce existing beliefs and offer little opportunity for shifts in public opinion – instead producing ideological camps that rarely interact.  Shapiro (1999) suggests such outcomes are likely because, for example, the customization possibilities of technology can enable citizens to opt out of contact with all differing perspectives.

The term Digital Divide refers to the demographic gaps among Internet users, and Situationalists suggest that because of variations along race, class, gender, age, and education dimensions, increased use of the Internet for political activity will serve to exclude significant numbers of stakeholders who do not have regular access to the Internet or are not well-versed in its usage.  While recent studies show that this divide is rapidly shrinking, due to lower costs and increased access opportunities, there still remains a significant gap between haves and have-nots (Fox 2005).  This uneven dispersal means that segments of the citizenry, shrinking though the overall number may be, are left out of political interaction on the Internet.  An increasing reliance on the Internet for political activities will, therefore, not include the entire polity.  De Vaney (2000) and Wilson (2004, Chapter 6) in particular identify concerns that since those without Internet access are generally already disadvantaged in political matters (due to lack of resources and other effects of social stratification), a reliance on the technology will widen the existing gaps.  Furthermore, according to these arguments, not only will late adopters be disadvantaged by not having been online , but they will also suffer continuing effects as they find it difficult if not impossible to truly catch up with the already-formed communities and norms that have been established in their absence.

Due to these factors, Margolis and Resnick (2000) conclude that the Internet will not, in fact cannot, foster democracy because existing unequal social and political dynamics are far more likely to be reproduced through the technology than they are to be overcome.  This position has more to do with notions of experiential democracy than with the Internet itself, stating that in the absence of experience with truly democratic processes, individuals will simply reproduce the structures that they know.  This is in sharp contrast with the Techno-determinist view that the democratic potential of the technology will produce democratic outcomes.  Instead, this view suggests that the Internet will move to resemble the existing societal structure rather than the technology changing society.  So for many Situationalists, the Internet does not present a transformative force for democratic politics, but rather a strengthening of the status quo with a clear delineation between the online haves and the offline have-nots.

The core of the Situationalist argument is posed by Buss and Buss (2006), who state that the Internet will not have one single effect on every organization, but will instead behave in a way consistent with existing patterns of relationships and practice. While the Internet may amplify these traits (due to less expensive and faster communication, for example), it will not, and in fact *cannot*, transform an organization by itself.  Existing inequalities of resources and power will be reproduced through the technology rather than diminished.  Therefore, any variations between political organizations are not directly a result of Internet usage, but instead are the product of the structure of the group and the resources it has the capacity to mobilize.  Groups that begin with existing advantages will continue to prosper, but those without will not see a change in fortunes by using the Internet.  Therefore, we would not see the broad organizational

changes that Techno-determinists predict when organizations use the Internet, although

we may see a relative increase in organizational performance based on structural

characteristics.

Table 2.2 offers a summary of the predictions that we can draw from this survey

of the Situationalist literature.  For each if the indicators, we will see essentially no

change through Internet usage.  Although there may be slight increases in effectiveness

for some indicators, these will be largely consistent with previous results for the

organization and represent a multiplier of existing traits rather than a change.

Organizations that have been effective will continue to be so, but those which face

existing structural disadvantages will not see their fortunes shift through their use of the

Internet.

| | |
|---|---|
| **TABLE 2.2** | |
| **Predicted outcomes for organizations by Situationalists** | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | PREDICTED OUTCOME |
| Hierarchy (Int.) | ↔ |
| Internal Communications (Int.) | ↔ |
| Member Intensity (Int.) | ↔ |
| Activity (Ext.) | ↔ |
| Coalitions/Alliances (Ext.) | ↔ |
| Success (Ext.) | ↔ |
| (Int.)  = Internal variable <br> (Ext.) = External variable <br> ↔   = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization | |

**Techno-skeptics**

A third group, which takes a much more critical view of technology, can be termed the Techno-skeptic perspective. This perspective does not privilege organizations with agency in relation to technology as do the Situationalists, but is also dismissive of the claims of Techno-determinists. Starting from a different point than either the Techno-determinists (technology transforms organizations) or Situationalists (organizations shape technology), the Techno-skeptic begins by challenging assumptions about the technology itself. Some views within this perspective are dismissive (or even hostile) towards technology, but the majority of these authors have a cautiously positive view about technology in general. However, they seek to place the Internet into a historical continuum of technologies and are skeptical about current claims related to the Internet that lack proof or, at a minimum, a framework for testing. This perspective is grounded in a consideration of previous promises made in relation to technology and the eventual failure of the technology to produce these promised outcomes. Due to this particular starting point, the Techno-skeptics express caution about relying on the Internet as a major component by political organizations.

Ogden (1998) states that the democratic promises of the technology are unlikely to be realized given the structures current in place, but goes further to suggest that since the rules for the new technology are being shaped by the current structure it is unlikely that any change can result. Change will occur around the edges, but the core of the Internet and its application to politics is likely to result in far less positive impact than many may expect. Taking this view further, Barney (2000) suggests that far from delivering democracy and social openness, the Internet poses grave threats to freedom by

increasing surveillance opportunities and consolidating power in the hands of the elite. Walking a middle ground between the two, Sclove (1995) argues for an open dialogue about the potential positive and negative impacts of the technology to reach a societal understanding of the risks involved. Some of these risks are outlined by Noam (2005), who cautions against expecting positive outcomes for democracy through the Internet, stating that negative outcomes are just as likely if caution is not applied to predictions related to the technology.

This particular literature has a basis in considerations of the history of technology and the process by which new technologies integrate into society. In considering the current "digital revolution", these authors reflect on the gap between past promises made about new technologies and the eventual results. The mid-twentieth century claims of nuclear power advocates ("electricity too cheap to meter") and promises of consumer goods such as personal jetpacks and affordable vacation trips to the moon challenge the current dialogue about the promises of technology in this view. Works from this perspective such as Wilson (2007) and Corn and Horrigan (1996) offer examinations of historical claims about technologies such as robots and personal jetpacks that seemed as real in their day as the promise of the Internet is today. Upon examination, these past claims are rather ridiculous, and in turn faith in technology seems naïve at best.

The Techno-skeptics view the predictive elements of the other perspectives as dangerous: organizations that accept the promises of the technology will replace proven components and methods with unproven ones, which may have unintended negative consequences. Not only could the effects of a mistaken reliance on technology be immediately harmful to an organization, the opportunity costs of shifting resources to

technology could undermine the organization as a whole.  Because the results of adopting

the Internet have been largely unpredictable, and often negative, the technology should be

approached with caution by political organizations.

A central component of this argument is a criticism of reliance on technology as a

form of superstition or "magic-thinking."   While this view is critical of technology in

general, it is particularly so for the Internet.  Magic is, from the perspective of Stivers

(1999), an attempt to use rituals and tools (talismans, etc.) to alter the world around us.

In the modern world magic is illogical and irrational, so technology (seemingly "logical")

has taken magic's place in modernity: we now feel we are (or will shortly be) empowered

to effectively predict and change the world around us through the use of emerging

technologies.  The argument, then, is that we have moved from an irrational faith in

magic to what is considered a *rational* faith in technology to solve the questions and

uncertainties of the world around us.  Taking this one step farther, Lofgren and Willim

(2006) suggest that there is an element of conscious and aware suspension of belief

behind these types of cases, a "Mandrake Mode" that overtakes both buyers and sellers of

cutting edge technology – even though all parties realize that the claims are exaggerated,

they will believe because they very much want them to be true.

A slightly different consideration of this phenomenon is the danger that optimistic

projections about the future benefits of a technology have generally proven to be false.  In

examining expectations about technology through the twentieth century, there are

numerous examples of technology falling short of expectations.  For example, Geels and

Smit (2000) discuss the promises of an "electronic cottage" and automated cars that were

made as far back as the 1930s.  While some of this hyperbole is doubtless a necessary

strategy to rally support (financial and otherwise) for new technologies, there is ample evidence for decision-makers to be cautious about their commitments to the promises of new technologies. The original purpose of technologies are also often not what they come to be used for, as detailed in Burke (2007), and therefore the risks of early adoption are high. Decisions made to allocate resources or shift organizational practices to take advantage of technological promises should be undertaken only after considerable evaluation to ensure that these promises are, in fact, attainable. The risk of relying on unproven, and potentially misleading, claims can be devastating for organizations.

More directly, the continued blurring of the line between fact and fantasy through technology can produce unintended consequences, including declining feelings of personal responsibility for outcomes, which can undermine the central mobilization and participation goals of political organizations according to Garreau (2001). In this view, individuals can disassociate themselves with society on the basis that technology is more efficacious than human interactions for addressing problems. Through this process, political organizations can find themselves undermined by the Internet in society as a whole, even as they find utility in its usage in their daily activities. The long-term erosion of social engagement brought about by the technology will, over time, more than offset the short-term gains it has brought.

If we consider the potential consequences of the adoption of technology by political organizations, we can identify numerous potential dangers. The commitment required to create an Internet-centric organization means that other approaches are either discarded or activities are duplicated in multiple formats at significant expense. Reliance on the Internet can be dangerous not only because it may not produce the expected

results, but also because the organization has shifted resources away from more effective options. The Internet is not the same as the "electronic cottage" and automated cars of the 1930s: it in fact poses an even greater potential risk for political organizations and the political system in general since so many are rushing to adopt it. There were few groups and individuals that had staked their futures on the arrival of automated cars, but most political organizations have now initiated at least some efforts towards redesigning themselves to participate in the "digital revolution," and many have fully embraced it as a central component of their activities.

If we apply these misgivings about technology to Tarrow's (1998a) conclusions about email and transnational social movements, we can see some of the implications of the Techno-skeptic view. While Tarrow sees some positive impacts from the use of email, he simultaneously expresses some concern about the long-term effects of relying on the technology. In his observations of social movements, the basis of their cohesion (and therefore their success) is the creation of interpersonal relationships and building bonds of trust. By replacing these interactions with impersonal electronic tools, the bonds that create close and dedicated groups and organizations might be eroded or never form in the first place. Without other means of ensuring loyalty or personal investment (i.e. coercion, rewards, etc.), it is possible that the Internet could undermine the organization rather than strengthen it. Furthermore, it is unclear that the target of activity, be it a company, group, or elected official, will respond to virtual interactions as strongly as tangible ones – and perhaps they may not respond at all. As early as Edsall (2001) we see, for example, that Congressional recipients of constituent email were simply unable to assimilate it all, and instead deleted the bulk of it unread. Citizens who

felt that they had "done their civic duty" by sending their comment had, in reality, accomplished nothing.

There is no question that the Internet is an effective tool for information gathering and dissemination, and that it has enabled the creation of numerous "New Media" outlets, where the content is produced by individuals free from commercial and other considerations. Political groups, and in particular those engaged in contentious politics, have been able to utilize this attribute of the Internet for their benefit since the early 1990s, with positive results in a great many cases. However, as cautioned in Castells (1998), this may perversely result in increased fragmentation over the longer term, as individuals seek content that bolsters their existing beliefs rather than seeking new perspectives. Democracy as an aggregation of interests may be possible in a networked society, according to Castells, but there will also be a temptation for interests to isolate themselves in numerous virtual worlds. Prior (2007) finds just such an outcome in a study of individuals, finding that the prevalence of niche media and social networks has served to increase fragmentation while decreasing political participation and awareness. This effect was particularly pronounced for non-mainstream groups, who used technology to create affinity-based communities that served to isolate them even further. Mutz (2006) uses empirical data to find that, in fact, the most politically active groups and individuals tended to be the least deliberative in their behavior. Drawing from her work, it can be concluded that a more wired polity will not necessarily be a more functional polity – in fact Internet-based political activity may serve to make the polity more dysfunctional.

If we extend this perspective to political organizations and their use of the Internet, we can begin to see how these consequences could be quite significant. If this skeptical viewpoint were correct we would see essentially random results from increased Internet usage. Some groups may experience positive outcomes while utilizing the technology, but similar groups will experience negative outcomes from the same types of usage. Furthermore, the shift to an Internet environment for group activities may alter the character of the membership – even if all members have access and opportunity to participate online, the subset that actually does participate may not be representative of the membership in general. Therefore, when organizations replace existing methods and tactics with Internet-based substitutes, they are exposed to significant unknown risks. Finally, because there are so many possible (and largely unidentifiable) factors that may influence the outcome, reliable predictions cannot be made about the course this process may take.

As we can see in Table 2.3, Techno-skeptics differ from both Techno-determinists and Situationalists in that they do not make directional predictions but instead predict uneven variations in outcomes. In their view, the historical outcomes of technology have never been as great (both in terms of being positive as well as simply in meeting basic expectations) as promised, and therefore a high investment in the promise of technology is a potentially disastrous path to follow. Given the uncertain effects of technology, we should therefore observe random results when we examine the use of the Internet by political organizations. The technology will not behave as expected, producing unanticipated (and potentially negative) consequences for the organization along all dimensions of our analysis. Similar organizations using the same applications for the

same activities will produce different outcomes as well. Therefore, rather than seeing a transformation in the organization or continued stability (or an amplification of existing traits), we would see a random set of outcomes, both positive and negative, which would follow no set pattern. These differences would be apparent between as well as within our cases, even those that, by most measures, would appear to be similar in most other respects.

| TABLE 2.3 |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Predicted outcomes for organizations by Techno-skeptics** | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | PREDICTED OUTCOME |
| Hierarchy (Int.) | **?** |
| Internal Communications (Int.) | **?** |
| Member Intensity (Int.) | **?** |
| Activity (Ext.) | **?** |
| Coalitions/Alliances (Ext.) | **?** |
| Success (Ext.) | **?** |
| (Int.) = Internal variable<br>(Ext.) = External variable<br>  ? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases | |

**Applying the Models**

Having identified the perspectives as they are laid out in the literature, a short consideration of a specific case will provide some insight into the conclusions that each draws. If we consider the experience of the ICEM union, as described on page 44, from

each of these perspectives we will find that three different conclusions can be drawn from the same case example.  To summarize the case, U.S. workers at a General Tire factory won an important victory in their labor dispute with management in large part due to a coordinated response by union members in Europe.  Much of the coordination of this effort was Internet-based, facilitating close cooperation and communication among union leadership on both sides of the Atlantic.

Although each perspective would likely consider this case an important landmark for organized labor, the reasons that they would assign for this outcome would greatly differ.  Techno-determinists would, for example, emphasize the features of the technology that were used and make the claim that, in fact, the adoption and usage of the Internet by this particular union was the key component of their eventual victory.  The conclusion that would follow is that if more unions would aggressively use the Internet to undertake similar actions they would be able to achieve similar outcomes. From this perspective, the outcome of the ICEM case proves their point – use of the Internet will produce better outcomes for organizations.

Situationalists, however, would tend to de-emphasize the technology and focus instead on the existing social networks (in this case unions) that produced the outcome. Years of interaction among the parties and a shared identity as union workers are the key factors for this perspective, and although the Internet was the vehicle for coordination it was only a tool that the unions used.  In this particular case, the Internet played a major role but it was only able to do so because there was an existing network, trust, and shared identity/interests among the actors. Finally, similar results were accomplished by transnational networks without Internet usage, so although the technology may have

increased the speed and lowered the cost of coordination activities it was only a replacement for other communications methods rather than a unique or revolutionary element.

Techno-skeptics would acknowledge that the Internet was used successfully in this case, but would caution against devising a best-practice model for future union struggles from this one case. The ICEM case was, in other words, an isolated example that may have limited applicability to future situations. Techno-skeptics would, therefore, take a less enthusiastic approach than the techno-determinists about this outcome and instead view it as an exception that should not be overemphasized. The success of Internet usage in one case such as this does not mean that it will produce similar results in others, and in fact the it is likely that there were intervening variables or, for lack of a better term, simple luck involved. More case studies would be necessary to determine if, and in what specific ways, the Internet was responsible for elements of the outcome. Pending time and careful analysis, the risk of relying on the technology in the short-term is far too great.

**Summary**

The effect of the Internet on political organizations has been the subject of much speculation and analysis, but there is still no definitive conclusion to be drawn. Most analyses of the topic so far have been colored by the particular lens of the researchers examining it, and our understanding of the broader topic is limited by this factor. There are few examples of comparative case studies of Internet usage by political organizations, and no one to this point has yet identified these three perspectives in a methodical way,

let alone undertaken a case-based test of all three of these perspectives.  In response to this gap, this work provides a test of these perspectives by examining four contemporary political organizations, each of which relied on the Internet for significant portions of their activity.  The results of this study will serve to not only help to identify a generalizable model of the effects of Internet usage on political organizations and improve our understanding of the subject, but will also provide some illumination of what is, and what is not, a reasonable expectation of the value of the Internet for political organizations.

The predictions by each perspective have been presented individually in Tables 2.1-3; Table 2.4 presents these predictions in a side-by-side format.  The predictions for each indicator differs among the three perspectives, clearly illustrating the differences between these approaches.  The Techno-determinists offer clear directionality for the effects of the Internet on political organizations, while Situationalists predict no significant changes will occur, and the Techno-skeptics state that unpredictable outcomes will be the result.   By examining four cases representing three types of political organizations, we will be able to observe how political organizations are affected by Internet usage and evaluate the predictive accuracy of these three dominant perspectives.  By doing so, it will be possible to not only make a critical evaluation of the claims made by each of these perspectives about the impact of the Internet on political organizations, but begin to construct a more generalizable model of the effects of Internet usage on political organizations.  In the next chapter I will outline the research methodology that I will use to test the hypotheses of these perspectives, including the rationale for case

selection and the indicators used to evaluate each of the claims made by the three

perspectives.

| TABLE 2.4 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Predicted Results for Variables by Perspective** | | | |
| | PREDICTED OUTCOMES | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | SITUATIONALISTS | TECHNO-SKEPTICS |
| Hierarchy (Int.) | ↓ | ↔ | ? |
| Internal Communications (Int.) | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Member Intensity (Int.) | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Activity (Ext.) | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Coalitions/Alliances (Ext.) | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Success (Ext.) | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| (Int.) = Internal variable <br> (Ext.) = External variable <br> ↓ = Decrease <br> ↑ = Increase <br> ↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization <br> ? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases | | | |

# Chapter 3

# Research Design

**Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the state of the literature about political organizations and the Internet, with particular focus on the three main perspectives on the topic. Techno-determinists see the technology as a transformative force for organizations, Situationalists see it as a tool that will conform to the organization norms, and Techno-skeptics see it as a wildcard that will produce unpredictable outcomes In addition, it placed this project within the broader political science literature especially as regards the field of political economy. This chapter will lay out the research framework that will guide the case studies and analyses, as well as a broader comparative analysis of the perspectives themselves. The intent is to determine the accuracy of these perspectives in predicting the outcome of Internet usage by political organizations, and therefore their utility in describing this phenomenon. In order to do so four political organizations will be examined in detail through case studies. These cases have been chosen to represent different types of political organizations, each with different purposes and goals.

The research design itself is a test of the claims made by each of the three perspectives for six measurable outcomes: three measuring internal function of the organization and three that measure external performance. Data for each variable will be constructed through case studies of each organization, using a combination of descriptive and narrative qualitative data drawn from organization archives, case studies, and primary source material. Because each perspective has a distinct prediction for each

variable, these can be tested and used to provide a means of drawing a comparative conclusion about each of their claims. As a basis for this test, a matrix of the claims of each perspective relating to each of the variables is constructed in this chapter. This will be used to evaluate claims at the conclusion of each case (Chapters 4-6), and then used to draw conclusions about the three perspectives in a final comparative analysis in Chapter 7.

The Internet is still a relatively new and continually evolving phenomenon, especially in terms of application to politics, so much of this work charts new terrain. The three main perspectives on the Internet and political organizations are themselves not fully developed, in large part due to a lack of multiple observations for research. Political campaigns have used the Internet for a variety of tasks beginning in the early 1990s, but the practice of using the Internet as a tool for national political activity only began in 1996 and has developed slowly in the years since. Given the relatively short timeframe and the fact that few political organizations have made the Internet a central part of their strategy, it is only now possible to assemble a meaningful comparative case study of these organizations.

Furthermore, the nature of political organizations, campaigns in particular, is that they do not generally last past a given election. This makes a time-series study of the same organization over multiple election cycles very difficult. Although these organizations may continue to be active over multiple election cycles (candidates running again, groups continuing activity, parties remaining active), their approaches to the Internet vary greatly over time. Therefore, this work will examine four separate organizations, of distinct types, that were active during the same general time period.

This will provide enough variation between the cases to draw general conclusions about the effect of the Internet on political organizations, while also controlling for changes in the technology and the general political environment.

The remainder of this chapter introduces the cases to be examined, the justification for their selection, the three internal and three external indicators for analysis, and the matrix that will be used to evaluate the claims of the three perspectives. Each indicator description is also accompanied by a brief description of the predicted result based on each perspective. Each of the case study chapters will contain a narrative description of the organization and the outcomes of their Internet usage, and then an evaluation of the three competing claims for each of the six indicators in this study. The results of these case studies will then be used for a broader comparative analysis of the accuracy of the three perspectives in Chapter 7.

**Case Selection**

The choice of organizations as the focus of this study was a recognition of the importance of institutions in general to the topic at hand. Political parties, advocacy groups, and campaigns are the main focus of the literatures that are being evaluated in this study, and they are particularly relevant for the topic of the Internet when it is viewed as a communications medium. The Internet offers both opportunities and challenges for the aggregation of individual interests within political organizations, and while individuals have an impact on these organizations it is the aggregation that is of interest here. Numerous valuable studies have been conducted of individual Internet usage, many of which informed this work and are cited as such, but the recognizable entity of the

organization was the appropriate level of focus in order to evaluate the literatures properly.

Within the organizations, these literatures make claims related to both internal and external function. The split between internal and external is a reflection of the literature in question as much as it serves as a useful methodological tool. Claims made by these perspectives include both internal organizational effects, including how the leadership relates to members and the characteristics of communication within the organization, as well as external characteristics related to efficacy and engagement within the political arena. Because this split is recognized in the literatures being evaluated, it is used to guide the analysis. This division also allows for a consideration of the relative impact of internal shifts as they relate to external behavior of organizations. For example, it is possible to evaluate how member input or suggestions are translated into group activities in the political battles the organization engages in.

To test the perspectives in question, it is necessary to construct a narrative account of the adoption and usage of the Internet by selected political organizations. A large-N approach was considered for this study, but after consideration of the available data I determined that this approach would not appropriate for the purposes of this study. This is due to two main reasons: the complexity of the claims being evaluated and a general lack of cases to provide data. Although a macro approach could provide a great deal of information about broad behavioral and structural changes, the predictions being evaluated here focus much more on specific elements of internal processes and external behavior; and these changes are best observed through a case study methodology rather than a macro-level analysis.

Furthermore, organizations that used the Internet as a major component of their activities are, to this point, relatively few. The lack of such cases also limited the applicability of a macro-level analysis at present, although in the near future this appears likely to change. In order to properly capture the elements required for this study the focus of the analysis must be deeper rather than broader – requiring in-depth analysis of a small set of individual cases rather than a large dataset covering many cases. That is not to say that a quantitative approach could not be used for future work on this topic, but at this stage of our understanding a small-N qualitative approach is simply much more appropriate.

Having identified the proper focus of the study, case selection is the next step. The justification for the selection of cases used is largely drawn from the literature of the perspectives themselves, although a consideration of broader trends and dynamics in the larger political system also had some impact. Certain limitations and considerations (detailed below) relating to the categories and attributes of cases were also included in the selection process for the purposes of crafting a strong research project. Finally, consideration was also given to choosing cases that would be at least generally familiar to the reader and have some continued relevance for political organizations now and in the future. While there are many political organizations adopting genuinely interesting approaches to the Internet, their efforts do not always create immediate resonance within the larger political system.

For the purposes of this study, then, cases must possess the following four Criteria:

Criterion 1: First, cases must utilize the Internet for a significant portion of their activity and must have broken new ground in their application of the technology. In order to evaluate the effect of Internet usage on an organization, it is obviously important that the organization being examined use the Internet. In fact, the more usage by an organization, the better the test will be because the observed outcomes should be more pronounced, and therefore easier to evaluate. While nearly every political organization now uses the Internet in some way, those that have relied heavily on the technology or blazed a trail for others should, based on the predictions we are examining, show greater variation in the variables and indicators used for this project. In addition, early adopters of technology tend to become models for others, making a detailed analysis of their experiences a useful product by itself. The four cases selected here therefore not only used the Internet for political activities, but also used it in new and innovative ways. Although comparisons with organizations that have not used the Internet to the same degree would be valuable in other contexts, it would not provide useful results for the purposes of this work.

Criterion 2: Secondly, the cases must represent either an insurgent campaign or be an advocate for minority viewpoints. The three literatures make claims as to how the technology will affect organizations, and this is best viewed by examining organizations that lie outside the mainstream and face significant obstacles. Situationalists would predict that these organizations would remain outside of the mainstream, for example, while Techno-determinists would predict the opposite. This criterion, then, provides a key testable element for these perspectives. Furthermore, insurgent campaigns have historically led the way in technology usage, in part because they lack resources to

compete in other areas and have little to lose by taking calculated risks. Therefore, their usage is more likely to be more generally applied through their organization, and therefore a more complete treatment. However, insurgents are also chosen because their use of the Internet can be better isolated in terms of outcomes. For example, it is difficult to say what effects the Internet had on the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates in the 2004 campaign because they already had access to a broad array of tools and substantial available resources. It is easier to isolate the effects of Internet usage by smaller organizations with fewer resources available, particularly those that already meet Criterion 1.

Criterion 3: Third, cases should be contemporaries in order to control for a variety of social and technological factors. With just over a decade of Internet usage by political organizations to choose from, the cases will all be roughly chronological contemporaries from the eight-year period of 1996-2004 with significant overlap. Technology moves quickly and politics shift over time so this time period controls for many of these factors. More importantly, all cases chosen are from the United States in order to control for the electoral system, economic issues, and voter demographics. Although very interesting things are happening in other parts of the world, it is important for this project to limit the impact of broader environmental factors and adopt a most-similar approach.

Criterion 4: Finally, the cases selected are all focused at the national level of politics. This is in part a reflection of the desire to keep the cases at least somewhat familiar for the reader, but also in recognition of regional variations in the use of, and attitudes towards, the Internet. For example, the digital divide along regional dimensions is significant, and although it is declining there is reason to conclude that an organization

located in a large coastal city would operate in a different Internet environment than one located in a small Midwestern town.  As national organizations operating at the same level of politics, these differences are kept at a minimum as all of the cases will draw from the same pool of potential members and have representatives from as broad of a demographic base as possible.  National-level organizations are also more likely to serve as models for others, and have a greater impact on the general political system.

In addition, cases were selected to represent a variety of activities and functions as well as structural differences.  These cases represent three distinct types of political organizations, including a political campaign, an advocacy group, and two political parties.  These groups allow for a comparison of the effect of IT on organizations focused on different activities and priorities, providing an opportunity to consider whether the perspectives being tested are more effective when applied to certain activities as opposed to others.  This is also a direct challenge to the predictions of the perspectives being tested, as they generally make no distinction based on the level or type of political organization being considered.  Each case meets the four criteria identified above, as well as providing this variety of activity and priorities.  The cases examined are:

- Dean for America – 2004 presidential campaign

- MoveOn.org – online political advocacy group

- The Green Party – national third party

- The Reform Party – national third party

These cases, and their qualifications under the identified Criteria, are detailed in the following sections.

*The Political Campaign: Chapter 4*

During the 2004 presidential campaign, the Dean for America campaign committed to the use of the Internet as their primary organizational focus for the Democratic primaries.  In just a few short months during the summer and fall of 2003, the campaign moved from an asterisk in the polls to frontrunner largely through their use of the Internet.  The Dean campaign broke fundraising records each quarter through the beginning of 2004, and even though the campaign did not win the nomination it is hailed as the first national political campaign to utilize the full capability of the Internet.  It was innovative and aggressive in the use of technology, and has served as an example of both the potential and the dangers of combining politics and the Internet.  Despite the spectacular failure of the campaign once votes began to be cast, it is very much a model for current campaigns.

The Dean campaign meets all four case selection criteria.  From early 2003 the campaign made a conscious decision to rely on the Internet for fundraising, outreach, and coordination of campaign activities.  In addition, it very much captures both the insurgent campaign and minority viewpoint criteria, by virtue of having almost no national standing at the outset and because of Howard Dean's positions on such issues as the War on Iraq and gay marriage.  Finally, it fits within both the observation period and level of politics for case eligibility.  The rise and fall of this campaign, as Internet-centered as it

was, provides a valuable set of observations in comparing the three main perspectives on technology and political organizations.

*The Political Advocacy Group: Chapter 5*

MoveOn.org began in 1998 in response to the Clinton impeachment process. Created as a single online petition advocating that Congress censure the President and "move on" to more pressing issues, it has since expanded to become the largest and most active online political organization in the United States. As of the 2006 midterm elections, MoveOn had over 3 million registered members, and was one of the most sought-after partners by Democratic Party campaigns. While MoveOn is still largely focused on email and online petition efforts, beginning in 2000 it expanded its activities to include fundraising for specific candidates and partnerships with political groups involved in "real world" activities such as protests, voter mobilization, and other forms of political action.

MoveOn meets the four criteria for case selection in this project. It is almost entirely an online organization, and despite partnerships with "real world" organizations it does not have any significant presence offline. It is active at the local, state, and national levels, but its main focus of fundraising and issue advocacy is national. MoveOn experienced a substantial growth in membership and national stature during the 2004 election cycle, and played a major role in voter mobilization efforts. Finally, although it works closely with the Democratic Party, MoveOn has allied itself with the most progressive elements of the party in the past. In the past it has been critical of conservative and moderate Democrats, and has supported efforts by progressives to

unseat Democratic incumbents in primary elections.  MoveOn was an early and vocal

opponent of the War on Iraq, and continues to support minority viewpoints on issues of

national importance.

*Third Parties: Chapter 6*

Best known for Ralph Nader's 2000 presidential campaign, the Green Party has

made a strong effort through the Internet to build a party base and win elections across

the nation.  The Green Party is actually a decentralized organization, with the state and

local organizations being the primary center of power.   However, the Internet is a major

component of their national strategy, as it is used as a fundraising, outreach, and

coordination tool by the national party organization.  It uses the Internet for campaigns

and national party activities, and has been active throughout the time period identified for

this project.  By virtue of being a third party it is an insurgent organization, and in

addition it represents minority positions on most issues.  While the bulk of Green Party

activity is focused on the state and local level, there is a clear structural division between

the national party and these state and local organizations.  The national level is clearly

delineated, however, and has unique responsibilities within the party structure that can be

observed in the context of this project.

The Reform Party provides an interesting contrast to the Greens, both in terms of

structure and political strategy.  The Reform Party evolved from H. Ross Perot's

independent bid for president in 1993, which led to the creation of the party organization

in 1995.  Since that time it has continued its national focus, but also expanded its focus to

include efforts at the state and local level in the late 1990s.  The Reform Party was the

first national party to use the Internet in their candidate nomination process, and experienced some success with Internet-based campaign strategies at the state level as well. The Reform Party is an insurgent organization by virtue of being a third party, but also arguably was the first representative of what is has been called the "radical middle" in American politics. Since 2000, and in part due to its use of the Internet, the Reform Party lurched from moderate to reactionary to progressive politics, finally finding a home in irrelevancy. The contrast seen between the experiences of the Reform and Green Parties is stark, which provides an opportunity to explore linkages of results to their respective approaches to using the Internet.

**The Competing Theories**

This dissertation will evaluate three dominant views about the impact of the Internet on political organizations. Literature based in each of these perspectives was examined in Chapter 2, but a summary of their positions is presented here along with their predictions for the indicators chose for this study. These perspectives can be summarized as:

1. Techno-determinist (TD) – Use of the Internet will change an organization by increasing internal democracy, creating greater efficiency, and will lead to greater effectiveness in reaching goals. As Internet usage increases, these changes will become more pronounced. The Internet is a transformative force, and the inherent characteristics of the technology will produce definite, observable effects for the organization.

*Prediction*: Organizations using the Internet will have less hierarchy (flatter rather than vertical), increased communications (between and within levels), and increased intensity among members. These changes extend to external variables as well, creating a more active organization, more communication and coalitions with other groups, and more success in reaching stated objectives.

2. Situationalists (ST) – The Internet is a tool, and although it can supplement or replace existing communications methods it will not create fundamental changes in the organization. Internet usage by an organization will not fundamentally change the functioning of the organization; although it may serve to amplify the existing norms and processes by increasing efficiency and the reach of the organization. Use of the Internet alone will not produce fundamental changes in the organization, changes will occur only if the leadership decides to alter the organizational structure or norms.

*Prediction*: Use of the Internet by an organization will not create any fundamental changes, but will become a supporting component for existing practices and norms. Hierarchy will remain unchanged, and communication norms and member intensity will also not be significantly affected. Externally, there would not be a definitive change in activity levels, coalitions, or success in reaching stated objectives – although efficiency may be increased. Although we may see some improvements in organizational function, this would be due to identifiable organizational adaptations

and improvements in efficiency rather than any inherent characteristics of the technology.

3. Techno-skeptics (TS) – Internet usage will have random and unpredictable effects on an organization, varying even among similar applications and organizational structures. The effects of the technology cannot be predicted, although results may be influenced by other factors (or combinations of factors) not related to the structure of the organization or the technology itself. Unrealized promises and outright failures by previous technologies, including the dot.com boom of the late 1990s, suggest that the technology has more promise than results, and an over-reliance on it may prove catastrophic. Internet usage is not inherently positive or negative for organizations, but should be utilized with extreme care because it is unpredictable.

*Prediction*: Each organization studied will have vastly different outcomes from their Internet usage, both positive and negative, with no apparent pattern or identifiable intervening variable or variables. Similar cases with similar applications of the technology are likely to see vastly different results, and the unanticipated consequences can prove disastrous in some instances. Over-reliance on the Internet is a dangerous strategy and, although it has limited uses, it should not be relied upon as a central component of an organization's strategy.

These perspectives offer competing visions of the effects of Internet usage on organizations: stating that the technology will fundamentally alter the organization and

produce positive outcomes (TD); that organizations will not be changed, but the Internet will instead support existing behaviors (ST); and that Internet usage will have unpredictable and possibly negative consequences for organizations (TS). There is little common ground among these views, yet they each make a strong case for the accuracy of their perspective to explain this topic. We can evaluate the claims of these three perspectives, however, by observing the results of Internet usage by political organizations. This project will do so by examining case studies of activities by four political organizations that have used the Internet as a central part of their strategy. A final analysis, based on a comparative evaluation of testing these three perspectives against the outcomes for these cases will be presented in Chapter 7. This analysis will give insight into the accuracy of their predictions and provide the initial components necessary to construct a new and more complete model of the impact of the Internet on political organizations.

**Variables and Indicators for Analysis**

A case study methodology is used in this project, with careful analysis of these cases against the claims made by the predictive models identified above. A combination of internal and external indicators is used to measure the effect of the Internet on the political activities of each organization. This combination of indicators is derived directly from the predictive models being tested, allowing for a fuller analysis of their claims about the scope of activities by these organizations. For each of the four cases, a base narrative is constructed through archival research, original source materials, and

other available materials.  Case results will be measured against six identified variables to determine the accuracy of the predictions of each of the three perspectives.

The use of interviews for this project was considered and later rejected for several reasons.  First, preliminary interviews with representatives from several organizations did not generate significant information, as they were much more focused on current efforts and there was some apparent conflation of current and past information in their responses.  Second, two of the cases (the Reform Party and MoveOn) have no channels currently open to reach leadership to arrange interviews, for reasons detailed in their particular case study chapters.  Finally, information gathered from other sources was found to be sufficient to assemble the necessary data for the case studies, which lessened the importance of interviews in general.  Although interviews may have provided meaningful corroboration for some of the details in these cases, the use of primary sources and archives provides the information necessary for this study.


*Internal Variables*

- Hierarchy ($X_1$): This indicator evaluates the amount of input and decision-making power that rank-and-file members have within the organization. Determination of the level of hierarchy is made through archival research and identification of the online tools available to members with emphasis on where major organization decisions and initiatives originated.  The prevalence of, and reliance on, Internet-based communication tools (blogs, discussion boards, email, etc.) for the organizational decision process is also an important factor considered.

<u>Measures</u>

- o *The origin of group activities and initiatives*: measured by whether decisions regarding organizational direction included input from members.

- o *Accessibility and responsiveness of leadership*: measured by the availability of direct contact mechanisms <u>and</u> response by leadership to member contact.

- o *Ability of members to act independently*: measured by the response of leadership to independent actions by members under the organization banner.

The Techno-determinist perspective states that the use of the Internet by an organization would break down the hierarchy, and create an organization in which most decisions would be made with equal opportunity for input by all members. Leaders would be readily accessible to members, and there would be few, if any, barriers between rank-and-file and the formal staff of an organization. Members would be able, and in fact encouraged, to undertake independent actions in pursuit of organization goals without direct involvement by leadership. Overall, the use of the Internet would render the shape of the organization nearly flat, as opposed to the pyramid shape of traditional organizations.

The Situationalist perspective predicts that use of the Internet by an organization would not change the structure of the organization. While members may have new avenues for communication, this would not automatically result in increased input by members. For example, a rigidly hierarchical organization could choose to remain so,

and there would be neither pressure nor incentive to change simply due to the presence of the Internet in the organization. Decision-making would be unaffected, and could remain concentrated among organization leaders if they so desired.

Techno-skeptics would predict that the effect of the Internet on organizational hierarchy would be unpredictable. For some organizations it may break down the hierarchy, perhaps to the point of making the organization unmanageable, but in similar circumstances it may have no measurable effect at all. The uncertainty of the actual effect presents a challenge to the organization, as it cannot be predicted and therefore cannot be managed.

- Internal communications ($X_2$) – This is a measure of the type and regularity of internal informational activity that the group undertakes. The amount of communication with (and among) members through the Internet and other outlets is evaluated through archives and other available data collection methods for each organization. Consideration is also given to the directionality of this communication, in particular which level of the organization initiates the communication and which level receives and responds to it.

    Measures
    - *Openness of communications channels*: measured by whether members have ready access to communication forums and the level of active moderation by the organization.

- *Member usage*: measured by the amount of usage of the forums, and the number of participants – i.e. do a small group of users dominate or do many members take part.
- *Practical application*: measured by the level of practical activity that takes place, such as coordination of activity and strategic planning, as opposed to informational and conversational.

The Techno-determinist perspective predicts that the characteristics of Internet-supported internal communications options would lead to an increase in the frequency, openness, and inclusiveness of internal communication. Active participation by members would result in a deliberative discourse around issues and activities. The availability of channels for members to communicate with anyone in the organization at any time would result in increased substantive discussion, generating beneficial outcomes for the organization.

Situationalists would predict that the potential for internal communications through the Internet would not result in any measurable increase in communications for the organization. Organizations that had active internal communications models separate from the Internet would continue to be active, while those that did not would see no change. The level of internal communications is a product of organizational norms and expectations, and the availability of increased communications options through the Internet would, in itself, create no noticeable difference.

Techno-skeptics would predict that internal communications would take an unpredictable course, differing even among similar cases. In some cases, the Internet

might increase internal communication while a similar case may see no change. This communication could produce positive organizational outcomes, but it is as likely to be completely at odds with organizational goals. In some cases, the availability of Internet channels may even reduce communication for reasons difficult to predict and unique to the case in question.

- Member intensity ($X_3$) – This measures the strength of personal investment members feel towards the group, and their propensity to become active on behalf of group goals. This is measured by financial contributions, participation in group activities such as meetings, online activity by members within organization websites, and the response rate to requests for action such as signing petitions or contacting elected officials. This data is obtained through archived materials, reports by the organizations, and analysis of available results for requested actions and activities.

    Measures
    o *Participation rates*: Measured by the response rate to requests for activity, in terms of total numbers as well as time.
    o *Contributions of resources*: Measured in terms of contributions of money as well other resources such as time or reputation.
    o *Loyalty*: Measured by the length of membership and response to negative outcomes by members.

The Techno-determinist perspective is that the Internet would have the effect of generally (and measurably) increasing member intensity, in part due to increased buy-in and feelings of ownership over the organization. From this perspective, the use of the Internet by an organization would result in a high level of member intensity, measurable in all activities and not just those that are conducted through the Internet. This would be beneficial to the organization, and give them a significant advantage over those that either do not utilize the Internet or that use it to a lesser degree.

Situationalists predict that member intensity would not be affected by the use of the Internet, and it would instead be a product of other organizational characteristics. While the Internet is a faster and more flexible tool for coordinating member participation and action, the results would not be notably different than non-Internet methods. Although there might be a slight amplification or multiplier effect due to increased efficiency, existing organizational traits and practices would be the determining factor and not transformative effects from the technology.

Techno-skeptics predict that member intensity could vary in many ways due to the use of the Internet. For example, some members may be less likely to participate precisely because the Internet is involved in the activity, due to factors including the impersonal nature of the technology, uneven access, and discomfort or inexperience with the technology. The impact of the Internet on member intensity is therefore unpredictable, and its use by the organization may even generate a backlash among members.

*External Variables*

- Activity ($X_4$) – Activity measures the amount of group activity directed outward, such

  as protests, petitions, and mobilization/recruitment efforts. This data is collected

  through archive materials, self-reporting by the organization, and observed results

  reported by other available sources. The relative level of reliance on the Internet to

  coordinate and accomplish these activities is considered and factored into the analysis

  of each organization.

  Measures

  - *Number*: Measured by the number of activities that the organization

    undertakes.

  - *Scope*: Measured by the variety of activities the organization is engaged

    in, both in terms of content as well as geographic space.

  - *Relationship of online and offline activities*: Measured by the amount of

    online and offline activities the organization engages in, and the

    relationship of each to the other.

The Techno-determinists predict that the amount of external organizational

activity would be greatly increased by the use of the Internet. Increased opportunities for

action and the relatively low investment of time and effort required to participate would

generate greater participation in external activities. Organizations would be able to

expand their scope of activity to include a variety of types and geographic locations.

Techno-determinists predict higher offline activity levels due to improved coordination and outreach capacities enabled by the Internet.

The Situationalists predict that the level of external activity would be largely unaffected by the Internet. Similar activities organized online and offline would produce nearly identical results, with any variation being the result of member preferences about the value of the activity (either intrinsically or for associated benefits such as social interactions, etc.) and not the method of delivery. Although the costs for organizing activities through the Internet are likely to be lower for the organization, members will respond in the same numbers as they do to traditional methods. The external activity level would remain constant regardless of use of the Internet.

Techno-skeptics predict that the Internet would not have a consistent effect on the external activities of an organization. An organization may have success in one instance, but find a complete lack of member response in another instance. The identical approach may produce vastly different outcomes even among two similar organizations. Members may be more or less likely to participate in a given group activity because of the Internet, but there would be no single predictable outcome for all organizations.

- Coalitions/alliances ($X_5$) – This indicator measures the number and duration of cooperative activities with other groups, such as combined actions or support for issues. This information is collected through archive materials, self-reporting by the organization, and available observations by other sources. Special focus is given to coalitions and alliances that were initiated or significantly operationalized through the Internet.

Measures

- o *Number of coalitions/alliances*:  Measured by the number of cooperative relationships that the organization enters into, including ad-hoc as well as long-term partnerships.
- o *Depth of cooperation*: Measured by page links and common websites, as well as sponsorship of common events and activities offline.
- o *Resource sharing*:  Measured by the amount of shared resources, such as membership access or financial assets.

The Techno-determinist perspective predicts that the Internet will facilitate coalition and alliances with other groups, leading to more opportunities for collaboration and closer cooperative relationships.  The ease of linking from one organization to another, as well as the flexibility afforded by the Internet would allow organizations to blend their identities for common efforts, making members of each organization part of the new partnership.  The ability to network on the Internet would facilitate these relationships, multiplying both the number and effectiveness of intergroup collaborations as the organizations combine their networks and other resources.

Situationalists predict no effect on coalitions and alliances for an organization based on Internet usage.  The Internet can be used to facilitate existing collaborations, but there is nothing inherent about the Internet that makes collaboration more likely or easier to accomplish.  Organizations will continue to work within their existing networks and build coalitions and alliances through the same processes as they have in the past.  The

Internet will not change organizational partnership behavior, although the technology

may make collaboration easier and less costly once it has begun.

Techno-skeptics predict that some organizations may find it easier to collaborate

with others, but there will be no general trend for organizations. The Internet can greatly

facilitate such linkages, but it may also serve to block cooperation because, for example,

it creates more avenues for competition between the groups for finite resources.

Organizations using the Internet may also gain an inflated sense of efficacy due to their

faith in the technology, and as a result may decline offers to collaborate in the belief that

they are capable of going it alone.

- Success in reaching objectives ($X_6$) – This indicator measures the ability of

  organizations to achieve their stated goals in campaigns or other activities. The

  objectives of an organization are identified as the outcomes they have declared to be

  their goals: i.e. winning an election, influencing a piece of legislation, mobilizing

  voters, or recruiting new members. Success is often difficult to determine, however,

  as softer goals are often stated such as "changing the culture of politics" or "bringing

  our concerns to Congress." However, success in these cases can be measured through

  a rough proxy of whether the organization is attributed with having an impact by the

  target of their action or by outside observers. Data is gathered from archives, self

  reported results from the cases, and reports of observers outside of the organizations.

  Emphasis is placed on contemporary news and commentary items as well.

  Measures

- *Reaching stated goals*: Measurement of whether organizations meet the goals that they define for themselves.

- *Reputational status*: Measurement of how other groups and observers regard the organization, in terms of effectiveness and generating positive outcomes for the organization.

- *Impact on other organizations*: Measurement of long-term changes on the political arena, including adaptations by other organizations as well as shifts in policy or dialogues.

Techno-determinists predict that the Internet would greatly increase the success rate for an organization because of the inherent attributes of the technology. The speed and efficiency of the technology combine to make an organization more effective and efficient, and therefore more likely to meet its declared goals. In any given activity, organizations that use technology most creatively and to the greatest degree will always be more successful than those that do not. Early adopters will serve as change agents for the political system more generally, as their example serves to encourage others to adopt similar approaches.

Situationalists predict that the Internet would have no bearing by itself on the success of an organization in reaching its stated goals. A strong organization, with solid fundamentals and ideas, will be successful regardless of the level of technology usage. Although Internet usage may be part of a successful outcome it will not be a determining factor by itself, and is not sufficient to overcome existing organizational disadvantages alone.

Techno-skeptics argue that the Internet may make some organizations more successful in reaching their stated goals on occasion, but it is just as likely to turn a successful organization into a failure. The technology itself has such unpredictable effects that there is no way to predict how it will impact the outcome for political organizations. Some organizations may succeed at times through Internet-centric strategies, but the same organizations may also fail under similar conditions with the same strategy in another instance.

**Summary**

Chart 3.1 illustrates the expected changes predicted for each indicator by the three perspectives. As indicated, the Techno-determinist perspective states that use of the Internet will have predictable impacts on the organization due to the inherent properties of the technology. At the core of this argument is the idea that these changes occur due to momentum created by the empowering effects of the technology itself. The Situationalist perspective, however, considers the Internet to be only one of many resources used by the organization, each of which works in combination within a structure and environment to produce outcomes. Therefore, these outcomes are not driven by the technology but rather the technology functions within existing organizational norms. Finally, the Techno-skeptic perspective suggests that the effects of using the Internet will vary greatly within and between organizations, based on no predictable intervening variables. Technology will have random effects because it is an unpredictable force in interaction with people and institutional norms. While some

organizations may prosper at times through Internet usage, there is also great potential for unpredictable negative outcomes.

| TABLE 3.1 | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Predicted Results for Organizations by Perspective** | | | |
| | PREDICTED OUTCOMES | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | SITUATIONALISTS | TECHNO-SKEPTICS |
| Hierarchy | ↓ | ↔ | ? |
| Internal Communications | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Member Intensity | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Activity | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Coalitions/Alliances | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Success | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| ↓ = Decrease<br>↑ = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br>? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases | | | |

**Conclusion**

The selection of cases and the identification of indicators to be measured is informed by the literatures and perspectives being evaluated, by drawing out the general themes and underlying assumptions of each approach. Throughout the process of crafting this research design several alternative approaches were debated and a number of other indicators considered and then dismissed, including quantitative approaches based on large-N datasets and the inclusion of indicators to measure outcomes such as public

perception and media coverage.  However, a focus on the organization itself at the

internal and external levels made the most sense after careful consideration of the topic

and existing literature, so this is the approach that I have taken.  Clearly there are many

different and valid ways of approaching this topic, however.

In Chapters 4-6 of this work, each of the three cases is presented in a narrative

piece detailing their use of the Internet for political activities including measures related

to the identified indicators as well as other information relevant to this study.  At the end

of each Chapter, an evaluation of the performance of the organization for the indicators,

based on Chart 3.1, is presented along with a short summary of the central findings.  A

comparative summary and analysis of the research findings is then given in Chapter 7,

evaluating the predictive accuracy of each of the three perspectives and concluding with a

comparative analysis of the results.  Finally, Chapter 8 provides a summary of the

research project and offers recommendations for constructing a fuller, and more accurate,

understanding of the topic.  Finally, this work concludes with some applied

recommendations for political organizations to most effectively approach their own use

of the Internet.

# Chapter 4

# The Dean for America Phenomenon

**Introduction**

In late October 2003, the Howard Dean campaign was riding high in the polls and had become the major story of the presidential primary season. However, with the Democratic caucuses and primaries yet to take place, the Dean campaign faced a difficult decision. While they had been raising money at a record pace, much of it had already been spent on ongoing daily campaign activities as well as long-term planning and spending targeted to early primary battles. The campaign had made a point of criticizing the influence of big money on politics and had built itself largely on small contributions, but over the past year Dean had demonstrated a remarkable ability to raise money, in particular through the Internet. At this early point in the campaign, with the toughest challenges still ahead, the Dean campaign was almost certain to raise and spend the public financing fundraising limit ($45 million) by the time the Democratic National Convention was held, leaving it out of money until the general election. The additional $19 million available through public financing was significant, and would sustain the campaign through the post-convention period until the general election began.

Having broken Bill Clinton's 1996 fundraising record for a Democratic candidate in the third quarter of the year (raising $14.8 million to Clinton's $10.3 million), and seemingly having enough momentum to carry through to the eventual nomination, the campaign began to turn its focus to the likely general election match up with incumbent George Bush (Trippi 2004, 169). Bush's advisors had already declined public financing,

as they had in 2000, allowing them to raise unlimited money in preparation for what would be a tough and expensive election.  If the Dean campaign was out of money during the period between the Democratic National Convention (held in Boston from July 26 through 29, 2004) and the official start of the general election campaign (in September after both party nominees were named), the campaign would be unable to counter Republican attacks and would lose its momentum in challenging the incumbent president. With the Republican National Convention taking place five weeks after the Democrat's, this was no small concern as it would give the Bush campaign (already nearing the $200 million mark and facing no primary challenge) the ability to frame the entire general election campaign.  However, no Democratic presidential campaign had ever rejected public financing – due in part to a public commitment to the principle of fundraising limits, but mostly because the party had never been able to compete in fundraising on a national level with the Republicans.  In 2000, Democrat Al Gore raised a then-Democratic Party record of $49 million dollars for his campaign and accepted public financing –  George Bush rejected public financing and raised $125 million (Trippi 2004, 166).  Faced with the difficult choice of likely being out of funds or possibly alienating a significant portion of its base, the Dean campaign decided to turn to its own members for direction.

On Tuesday, November 4, 2003 the campaign announced that a three-day, binding member poll would determine the future course of the campaign. (Gross 2003a) 484,000 members received an email with an individually-coded link (to ensure only one vote per member) to a page where they could cast their vote to accept or reject public campaign finance, while an additional 26,000 supporters were given the option to vote by

111

mail and 88,000 received automated phone calls asking for their vote (Lyris 2004). Once they had voted, they were taken to a confirmation page where those who elected to opt out of public financing were asked to make a special contribution to the campaign to make up for the $19 million that public financing would bring. The results of this vote were overwhelmingly in favor of rejecting public financing, by roughly an 80%-20% margin out of about 100,000 votes cast, and produced $5.3 million in immediate contributions (Lyris 2004). The campaign officially announced that it would decline public financing on November 8 with a "Declaration of Independence by the People of Dean for America" and continued to raise money at unprecedented rates through the rest of the year, breaking their own Democratic Party record by raising $15.8 million in the fourth quarter of 2003 (Gross 2003b; Trippi 2004, 170).

This chapter is the story of the Dean for America phenomenon, which rose from obscurity to frontrunner in a few short months on the strength of an untested Internet-based campaign strategy, but then quickly crashed back to Earth once the first primary ballots were cast. Never before had a presidential campaign relied so heavily on the Internet or opened its internal workings so far to rank-and-file supporters. No Democratic candidate had ever been able to raise the money that the Dean campaign raised, and no candidate from any party ever had such a large base of small contributors. Although it eventually lost the battle for the nomination, the Dean for America campaign evolved into a new organization, called Democracy for America, which continues to raise money, endorse candidates, and play an active role in politics at every level.

**Background**

The Dean campaign is an important case for this work because it represents the first declared "Internet candidacy" by a major party candidate. Although candidates had been increasingly utilizing the Internet as a component of their campaigns since 1992, no candidate had ever staked their political ambitions so directly to the technology. In addition, as the first high-profile Internet-centric campaign, it has served as a model for campaigns since. In particular, in 2008 presidential candidates with linkages to the Dean campaign, such as Barack Obama, have embraced the technology as a major component of their efforts. Not only is it an ideal case from the perspective of this study, but because it has become a model for others an in-depth exploration of the campaign can also provide insight into current and future campaigns.

As a political campaign, the Dean for America campaign of 2004 fell short of reaching its goal of winning the Democratic nomination for president. However, although it was short-lived it altered perceptions about how to run a major campaign as well as the ways that technology could be used as a political tool. Using the Internet as the primary forum for running the campaign, Dean for America rose from an asterisk in the polls to the frontrunner in a period of a few short months. For a brief period from mid-2003 through the Iowa caucuses, the Dean campaign led the Democratic field and captured the attention of the entire nation. While it eventually fell short of its goals, Dean for America broke new ground with the use of Internet technologies in a political campaign.

When Howard Dean began his campaign for president in September 2002, there was barely a ripple in the national press. The former physician and two-term governor of

Vermont was virtually unknown in national politics, and had very little money and no national organization to speak of.  In a race that included high profile, well funded, and highly organized candidates such as Missouri Representative Richard Gephardt, Massachusetts Senator John Kerry, and the party's 2000 Vice-Presidential candidate Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman, Dean was considered at best an also-ran.  What conventional wisdom there was about Dean, and there was very little at the national level, disregarded him as a serious candidate.

Adding to the obstacles Dean faced in terms of organization and public awareness, those things that were known about him at the national level could hardly be considered positive in a conservative-leaning national electorate.  As Vermont's governor he had signed the first Civil Unions legislation to provide equal partnership rights under the law for gay and lesbian couples.  He supported, and later signed, a groundbreaking public health care law in Vermont.   As early as September 2002 he was on record as opposing the looming, although overwhelmingly popular, war against Iraq and had criticized compromises of civil liberties rooted in the "War on Terror."  He was a vocal critic of the Bush tax cuts, and an advocate for higher taxes on the wealthy and corporations.  Finally, he had the reputation of being short-tempered and impatient, which added further to the perception of being "un-presidential" in comparison with recent "guy next door" Presidents Reagan, Clinton, and the second Bush.  With conservative Republicans increasing their strength at every level of governance based on the exact opposite of these positions, Dean was destined to face an uphill struggle even within his own party.

After the failure of the 1988 Dukakis campaign, the national Democratic Party had moved sharply to the right. This process was mainly driven by the Democratic Leadership Committee (DLC), which supported so-called "New Democrats" who were often pro-gun, anti-choice, and took conservative positions on issues of economics, national security, and corporate responsibility. The DLC backed so-called "New Democrat" Bill Clinton in the 1992 primaries, and after his victory the organization claimed the leadership mantle of the Democratic Party. Despite losing control of both houses of Congress and numerous governorships and state houses, Clinton's two terms in the White House provided sufficient justification for the DLC to increase their control over the party, including chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) which oversaw the entire national party structure. When so-called "New Democrat" and former Clinton Vice President Al Gore lost the election of 2000 to George W. Bush, despite the inclusion of the very conservative Joe Lieberman on the ticket, blame was assigned by the DLC to Gore's "liberal" positions on issues such as the environment and his lack of public religious piety, and the conventional wisdom was that even more conservative candidates were needed in the future.

When Dean entered into this arena few experts gave him a chance to survive until the first caucuses, let alone become the front-runner. At the beginning of 2003 his campaign consisted of seven people located in a small office in Burlington, Vermont with only $100,000 in the bank, no national organization to speak of, and only 432 committed supporters across the nation (Trippi 2004, 78). Dean was an "asterisk" candidate at the national level, with polls showing no measurable support outside the margin of error for his campaign nearly half a year after declaring as a candidate. To his credit, Dean stuck

by his positions on the issues, but the electorate remained uninterested. Into this unpromising environment entered a new campaign manager, Joe Trippi, who intended not only to save Howard Dean's campaign, but to change the very nature of political campaigns in the United States.

In retrospect, the addition of Joe Trippi to the Dean campaign seems to be a curious move for both sides when one considers their relative approaches to technology . Trippi had pioneered the use of computers during the Tom Bradley campaign in the 1981 California governor's race, by managing campaign supporter and donor information on an early 16-bit DEC machine he leased with his own money (Trippi 2004, 23). Since then he had worked on many campaigns at the local, state, and national level, each time pushing them to include ever more technology in the campaign. In contrast, the Dean campaign was tracking supporter information on index cards stored in shoe boxes in their Burlington offices, and Dean himself did not even own a computer. However, this seemingly unlikely combination of new and old school would turn out to be just the opportunity both sides needed.

Trippi was not only a firm believer in technology's ability to streamline the administrative tasks of a campaign, but in the potential for Internet communication technologies to completely revolutionize the entire political process, from campaigns to the formulation of public policy. His confidence in the potential of technology for political participation had led him to embrace emerging communications technologies, and after the 2002 elections Trippi had retired from campaign management to focus on advising Internet start up companies. Hesitant to return to campaign politics, Trippi

nonetheless agreed to join the campaign when he saw the opportunity to craft an Internet-based national campaign organization.

**Technology and Dean for America**

In order to become a serious contender, the first thing that the Dean campaign needed to do was to overcome the organizing advantage that other candidates had. Candidates generally begin their run for president several years in advance, quietly building relationships with influential local organizers that can later be called on to lead organizing efforts at the local level. John Kerry, for example, had started planned his 2004 campaign over a decade before, constructing a nationwide network of supporters, donors and volunteers that could be activated when he declared his candidacy. Even Dean's fellow asterisk candidates such as Florida Senator Bob Graham, Ohio Representative Dennis Kucinich and former Senator from Illinois Carol Moseley Braun had at least held national office and could draw some support from friends in Congress and the many national organizations they had worked with. Al Sharpton, despite having not held national office, was able to tap into a national network constructed through his work with civil rights and religious issues. Dean had none of these advantages, and time was growing short.

While Dean was making some inroads in early 2003 through media appearances and consistent criticisms of the Bush administration, it was clear that without an organized campaign network at the state and local level there would be no chance of catching the frontrunners. Having neither existing local networks nor the money to construct them from scratch, an alternative was needed, and fast. Bringing in Trippi

ensured that the Internet would be part of that alternative, and the Dean Campaign website (Deanforamerica.com) immediately began to expand both in content as well as interactivity.  The campaign would continue to have typical content on the website, including position statements, a candidate biography, and fundraising tools, but would also open the campaign up in ways no other campaign had ever attempted.  As the campaign continued, the amount of strategic planning and organizational discussions on the weblog (blog) increased to the point that campaign staffers often had to consult the blog themselves to determine what was happening with the campaign at the moment (Trippi 2004, 141).

The Dean for America blog, titled simply "Blog for America" would prove to be the tipping point for the campaign in terms of national exposure and interest.  The blog itself became news as the open source model became a subject of media coverage and inquiry, bringing in new members and reinforcing the notion among existing members that, in fact, this campaign was becoming a revolutionary political "happening" as much as a campaign for the Presidency.  The commitment to running an open, participatory campaign by the Dean organization would prove to be more than just a strategic success however, it would change the way politics are conducted in the United States.

Over time, the campaign would expand its use of the Internet to include online games, on-demand campaign video and audio through DeanTV.com, and a myriad of websites designed to reach out to groups across the country.  The Howard Dean for Iowa online game was relatively simple to play, but it was interactive in that as members played it online the game evolved based on their input.  So it would never be the same game twice, since the content continually shifted to reflect the progress of other players.

(Dean for America 2003)  Although these applications were impressive and groundbreaking, the Blog would prove in the end to be the most influential step taken by the campaign.

**Dean for America Members**

The initial core membership of the Dean campaign was composed of the very edge of the liberal political spectrum, presenting a number of challenges for the campaign in gaining national credibility.  Dean started off with all of the attributes of a "fringe" candidate – a nationally unknown former governor of a small, "liberal" New England state with unpopular views and a political base far outside of the political mainstream. Given the ongoing conservative shift of the national electorate since the 1980s, and particularly of the Democratic Party leadership, no one gave Dean much chance to be competitive.  However, with the support of three identifiable "niche" bases of support, he very nearly won the Democratic Party nomination for President of the United States. This section will discuss the three main groups that composed Dean's political base (gays and lesbians, opponents of the War on Iraq, and experienced online activists) and examine how the campaign was able to build from this base to draw from a much larger cross-section of the American electorate through their application of technology.

The limited national profile that Dean's campaign began with was based on two highly controversial issues – gay marriage and opposition to the impending War on Iraq. On April 26, 2000, then-Governor Howard Dean signed into law a measure making Vermont the first state to legally recognize same-sex civil unions.  While this measure only applied to residents of Vermont, it marked the first state-level affirmation of gay and

lesbian couples' right to enter into a legal relationship and to enjoy the same legal protections and shared benefits of heterosexual couples.  Throughout 2002, all but one of Dean's fundraisers outside of Vermont were hosted by gays or lesbians, and over half of his events in the first quarter of 2003 were as well.  While perhaps the lesbian and gay community in the United States is not a political powerhouse along the lines of organized labor or the National Rifle Association, it provided Dean with an early political base from which he could launch his national campaign.

However, Dean really entered the public consciousness during the Congressional debate over authorizing the Bush administration to invade Iraq in the late summer and fall of 2002.  Dean began to include statements against authorizing the War on Iraq in his campaign speeches during this time period, a position that was far from the mainstream and one that set him well outside of the Democratic Party.  In October of 2002, approximately two-thirds of Americans favored military action against Iraq according to polls (Feinstein 2002).   The Democratic Leadership in the House and Senate supported the Bush administration's push for war in late 2002, and the resolution authorizing war eventually passed overwhelmingly through Congress (with Democratic Party support) on October 10, 2002, with the Senate vote 77-23 in favor and the House 296-133 (CNN.com 2002).

Of the Democratic primary candidates, only Kucinich had cast a vote against the resolution, while Kerry, Edwards, Lieberman, and Gephardt all voted in favor.  Moseley Braun and Sharpton both later opposed the war but did not make it a central issue of their campaigns.  Clark had not entered the race at this time, although once he did he took a middle ground of supporting the war while simultaneously disagreeing with it. His stance

120

against the war immediately made him one of only two "anti-war" candidates in the race, along with Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich.  However, Kucinich's position was based on his being a committed pacifist – advocating for the creation of a Department of Peace, for example – while Dean held a more nuanced position.  On the campaign trail, Dean repeatedly expressed support for the ideals of the War on Terror and for the overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan, but opposed the war on Iraq as unnecessary and a diversion from the pursuit of actual terrorists (On the Issues 2004).  While perhaps a subtle difference in the minds of many Americans, this distinction reflected a far more nuanced and moderate stance than Kucinich on the Iraq war issue.

Given how unpopular the first two political positions that Dean gained attention for were in 2002, conventional wisdom was that it would be a difficult campaign to sell to the American people.  In addition to the two-thirds of the country that supported the march to war, opposition to gay marriage was also becoming a central campaign issue at the state and national level.  In the 2004 General Election, eleven states had ballot initiatives opposing gay marriage – all eleven states passed these initiatives by large margins (Rosenberg and Breslau 2004).  However, these positions also helped Dean to differentiate himself from the crowded Democratic field and attracted supporters who, although small in number, were passionately supportive of his position on these two issues.  From 2002 through early 2003, Dean attracted supporters of gay rights and opponents of the War on Iraq who simply felt that there was no other serious candidate in the race who shared their position on these issues.  While the aforementioned Dennis Kucinich shared Dean's positions on these issues, public perception of him was very much that he was not a serious choice for president.  For lack of a better term, Kucinich

was perceived as "weird" by most voters. His promise to create a Cabinet-level Department of Peace, vegan diet, use of the campaign trail to attract dates, and quirky demeanor limited his appeal to the public and generated misgivings even within the far-left (Cox 2003). While Dean could tap into a committed and energized core of supporters, this was by no means a large enough coalition to carry a major campaign. By mid-2003, the third major base of support was attracted by the launch of Dean for America's online campaign.

When mentioned at all by the national media, Dean was framed by these two issues alone. As the campaign established its online presence, the base of supporters expanded quickly beyond the issues of gay rights and opposition to the war. By utilizing the Internet as a communication tool, the campaign was able to expand Dean's reach beyond the two "niche" issues and broaden his appeal to a larger audience by emphasizing his more moderate credentials from his time as governor of Vermont. (Cohn 2004) Dean's record as a fiscal conservative in Vermont, during which he turned an inherited budget deficit into years of surpluses while attracting new business investment and lowering taxes, appealed to fiscally-conservative Democrats. Establishing a state-wide program of guaranteed health care for children coupled with Dean's background as a physician attracted public health care advocates. His criticism of waste by the Vermont Legislature, and refusal to allow lobbyists access to his office, gained support from good government activists. And finally, the "open source" campaign model that Joe Trippi instituted online attracted members who may not have agreed with Dean's stance on all (or even any) of the issues, but believed in the ideal of "small-d" democracy and supported the openness in the political process that the Internet facilitated. With the

expansion of DeanforAmerica.com, the campaign suddenly was able to appeal directly

and interactively with a much broader audience than it would have otherwise been able.

Certainly there was a high degree of overlap between these three core

constituencies, after all many gays and lesbians also use the internet and were opposed to

the war, for example.  Attempting to separate out supporters based on these three key

constituent groups is practically impossible given the likelihood of double and even triple

membership.  However, the adoption of an Internet focus by the campaign was clearly the

"tipping point" that it desperately needed in mid-2003.  Campaign Manager Joe Trippi

identifies the tipping point as occurring in June 2003, when he first saw the "hockey

stick" phenomenon (in which a gradual rise in support suddenly accelerates upwards) on

a fundraising graph (Trippi 2004, 136).  The momentum of the campaign quickly

attracted new volunteers, which in turn added to the momentum of Dean for America and

created a feedback loop that increased the national visibility of the campaign.  In a matter

of a few months the Dean campaign quickly passed all of the competing campaigns in the

polls to become the presumptive nominee.

With the campaign now emphasizing the Internet, members quickly responded

with their own Internet efforts.  Supporters started their own websites with names like

Geeks for Dean, Prince George's County for Dean, Latinos for Dean, Teachers for Dean

and hundreds of other identity, location, and affinity designations all loosely affiliated

with the main campaign website through links and content.  The decision by the

campaign to link to these independent groups, and therefore implicitly endorse them, was

seen by outsiders as risky because the campaign could not control their content.

However, it was a conscious part of the campaign's efforts to utilize the networking

possibilities inherent in the Internet.  Rather than lead from the top down with central contact persons for specific community message and outreach tasks, the local level was empowered to tailor the message for their own communities.  This level of empowerment for the average volunteer led to an outpouring of activity unseen in most political campaigns, and member input began to change the overall campaign as well.

The decentralized nature of the campaign, and the role of the individual members in achieving the success that it had, can be viewed through the lens of fundraising.  Large campaigns, which Dean for America became by mid-2003, generally utilize fundraising tactics that rely on large donors.  In part this is because large donors (such as Political Action Committees or individual donors who contribute at the maximum level) seek candidates that have a good chance to win to ensure their contributions gain them the most benefit.  It is also a function of the limited time a major candidate has to engage in fundraising – the higher the profile of a candidate, the more efficient it is to rely on fewer large contributors rather than reach out to many individuals.  However, even at its peak the Dean campaign was able to reach its record fundraising totals by relying predominantly on small contributions.

For example, over sixty percent of Dean's contributions in the 2004 election cycle were under $200 (OpenSecrets 2005).  Only Dennis Kucinich had a higher percentage of donors in this category, nearly 70 percent, although he raised far less money in total. Furthermore, the number of maximum contributors (those who gave the legal maximum of $2000) was also quite small (around 12%) relative to the other major campaigns (OpenSecrets 2005).  Again, Dennis Kucinich at roughly 8% was the only candidate with fewer maximum contributors as a percentage of his total than Dean.  This is made more

remarkable by the amount of money raised by Dean's campaign, which shattered
Democratic Party quarterly records and were only surpassed by Kerry after he became
the acknowledged nominee. Dean raised over $51 million dollars in individual
contributions during the election cycle, while Kucinich raised just under $8 million. Of
Dean's total campaign fundraising, 97% was from individuals, and under %1 ($15,500)
came from PACs, with the remainder from self-financing and other sources (OpenSecrets
2006).

While it is an imperfect proxy measure, this breakdown of contributions to Dean's
campaigns is an indication of member activity and intensity. For example, through
February of 2004, when Dean fundraising effectively ended, the percentage of donors
who had cumulatively contributed more than $1000 for Dean was 19%, while it was 66%
for John Kerry – which was actually down from Kerry's 73% total at the end of 2003
(Campaign Finance Institute 2004). All of these statistics provide the conclusion that
Dean's campaign supporters were more willing to contribute to the campaign than
supporters of other candidates: although the vast majority of donors gave less money
individually than those of most other campaigns, more people actually contributed to
create the record-breaking totals raised by Dean.


**Organization Activities**

The Dean campaign took on all of the traditional political campaign elements, but
with the key difference that the Internet would be a major component of these activities.
In part, this was a continuing legacy of the initial starting position of the campaign
(unknown, under-funded, and without a national organization), which had forced it to

rely on alternative forms of organization.  However, even once the campaign built momentum and began to gain a national following, the continued benefits of using the Internet as a major component of the campaign were clearly evident.  Taking this interactive, open source model of politics even further, the campaign publicly resolved to take an entirely new approach to political campaigns in general.

The first major change was in campaign fundraising.  In June 2003, the Dean campaign announced that fundraising goals and totals would be public, visible at all times on the website through the use of a baseball bat graphic that would track daily, and even hourly, progress towards the announced goal.  As contributions were tabulated, the bat would fill with red showing the current total of money raised for the period.  This was unheard of for campaigns, which traditionally closely guarded fundraising information until it was necessary to file their quarterly public reports and never publicly shared their goals.   The risks of falling short of a stated goal, which would be interpreted as a loss of momentum for the campaign, were very real but the campaign was committed to opening the process including information of this type (Trippi 2004, 130).

The campaign had raised $3.2 million as of June 22, 2003 when the first bat went up to announce a quarterly goal of $4.5 million.  By the morning of June 29, the Dean campaign had raised more than $6 million for the quarter, with over $2 million coming through Internet contributions alone during those eight days (Trippi 2004, 131).  The success of the fundraising bat graphic would continue to be a running theme during the campaign, as supporters would anxiously track the progress of each bat and push to reach the declared goals.

The second, and most significant, change in how campaigns are run was the launch of an open web log (or "blog") on the website in the summer of 2003. This was the first attempt by a campaign to open instant communication between staff and supporters, allowing every registered Dean supporter to post and respond to entries. While blogs were not new, and had in fact been used by political pundits and analysts since the late 1990s, no campaign had ever posted an official, open blog that allowed for instant (and uncensored) comments by rank-and-file supporters of the campaign. The first Dean Campaign blog, entitled "Call to Action", was rushed onto the web despite being very rough and user-unfriendly. It was soon replaced by a cutting-edge application called the "Blog for America".

The Blog for America quickly took on a life of its own, creating a virtual online community with members from across the country. During the first 5 months of the blog (from June to mid-November of 2003) over 100,000 comments were posted by supporters on the blog, with a single-day high total of 2,200 (Cone, 2003). It served as a channel for the campaign to keep supporters updated about daily events and to emphasize its themes, but it also served as a place for supporters to exchange stories from the campaign, share best practices, and build the sort of connected national network that the Dean campaign lacked at the beginning. This would be especially valuable as the campaign intensified in Iowa and New Hampshire and volunteers from around the country traveled to these states to assist in voter outreach.

The open nature of the blog has the potential to be problematic in a contested political campaign, and at the beginning there were a number of obscene and derogatory posts about Dean and the campaign. One well-known "troll" (a term used on the Internet

127

for a person posting on a blog or website with the intent to sabotage, incite, or otherwise vandalize) would cut-and-paste hundreds of pages of the phrase "Dean Sucks" into the blog in an attempt to disrupt the community. Although the webmasters would remove these posts as quickly as possible, the blog community developed its own creative, and very effective, response to "trolls" that turned what could be a negative into something positive for the campaign. When a "troll" would post in the blog, bloggers would immediately post a "troll bat" to raise money in response. Thousands of dollars would be raised within the next hour in response to these attempts to disrupt, discouraging Dean detractors from posting messages of this type while benefiting the campaign in general (Trippi 2004, 147).

Because supporters would login to the blog daily to keep up with the discussion, it proved to be an effective tool to instantly respond to the actions of other campaigns. When Vice President Dick Cheney attended a high-profile, $2,000 per plate fundraiser in August of 2003, for example, a call was made on the blog to contribute to a counter fundraiser. Within four days, the Dean campaign raised over $500,000 from small contributions averaging $53, more than doubling Cheney's total of $250,000 (Cone, 2003). A group of frequent contributors to the blog banded together as the "Dean Defense Forces" to organize letter-writing efforts to counter negative press coverage or attacks from other campaigns (Suellentrop 2003). As supporters began to take more direction of the campaign through blog postings, the campaign continued to respond as quickly as possible to the demands of their supporters. For example, the Dean for America and Blog for America websites became so overwhelmed with requests for video

resources that yet another site, Dean TV, was launched just to provide updated streaming video content to supporters.

While the Blog for America was a first step at opening up channels of communication and breaking down hierarchy within the campaign, it still left the key local organizational questions unanswered. Candidates such as John Kerry had been laying the groundwork for their campaigns for many years, and had identified organizers years in advance at the local level ready to operate the campaign. Dean did not have this network in place, and at the outset of his campaign did not even have a significant national profile. Even with a robust and participatory Internet presence through Dean for America's website and the Blog for America, the campaign realized that translating the online "buzz" into electoral results would be quite difficult. That is, until they found Meetup.com.

Meetup.com is a website, started in 2002, that connects people with others in their local area who share similar interests. One can search the website for groups of fans of a sports team or people who enjoy a particular hobby, filter the results for a set distance from home, and join a community of like-minded people. Once the results are gathered, a simple click brings up details about the group's membership, the time and location of their meetings, and an online forum for discussions. Groups listed on the website hold regular monthly meetings (called, appropriately enough, Meetups) at a public venue open to all. The Meetup model is essentially a vehicle to create "real world" communities out of virtual ones, and it therefore suited the goals of the Dean campaign perfectly.

In January 2003, while the Dean campaign was still struggling to create a national campaign network, they were approached by the CEO of Meetup.com. Earlier that

month, Meetup had decided to create a group for each of the presidential candidates, and over 400 people had joined the Dean Meetup group on just the first day alone (Lizza 2003, 1). While a small number of people in terms of a national campaign, these Meetup participants represented an untapped and self-motivated group of campaign volunteers that could possibly become the core of a national organization. After a brief meeting with Joe Trippi, an alliance between the campaign and the website were formed, with the Dean campaign paying Meetup.com $2500 for the contact information of Dean Meetup members and linking to the site from Dean for America's homepage (Scheiber 2003). By March 2003, there are hundreds of monthly Dean Meetups, with single meetings attracting as many as 250 members in New York City (Scheiber 2003). According to Howard Dean, the momentum built through the Meetups was critical for building the national organization (Wolf 2004a).

Meetups were effective at mobilizing supporters and giving them an opportunity to actively participate in the campaign, ensuring loyalty and a sense of ownership of the campaign. For example, at the July 2, 2003 Meetup volunteers around the country were given the address of an Iowa caucus voter that was uncommitted, along with a stamp and stationary, and asked to send a hand-written note to encourage them to support Dean. 30,000 letters were mailed, and by August various polls showed Dean tied for the lead with, or even slightly ahead of, Dick Gephardt (Wolf 2004a). The August 6 Meetups focused on letters to undecided voters in New Hampshire, where Dean trailed John Kerry and by the end of the month Dean led John Kerry by double digits (Wolf 2004a). By November, there were 138,000 attendees at 820 locations, focused on local as well as national organizing (Cone 2003).

Meetup was also instrumental in recruiting campaign volunteers for the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary. The goal was to bring Dean supporters to these states from around the country to conduct door-to-door campaigning. This was not a new idea; campaigns traditionally bring out-of-state volunteers to these states to both boost their presence on the ground as well as to provide an opportunity for training and gaining experience. However, the sheer number of Dean volunteers was overwhelming – 3,500 from around the country tasked with outreach to 200,000 homes (Trippi 2004, 183). These volunteers paid their own way to Iowa and New Hampshire, often sleeping on the floor of fellow Dean supporters' homes, in order to be part of this effort. In fact, the presence in Iowa was so large that it was named the "Perfect Storm", complete with hats and shirts emblazoned with a campaign logo.

Continued success in fundraising and in maintaining member motivation could not, however, carry the campaign over the top in the primaries. A dismal showing in the Iowa caucuses severely damaged the campaign given the significant amount of resources and volunteer effort that had been expended there. This damage became a complete disaster later that evening when Howard Dean uttered the famous (and often imitated) "scream" at a rally for supporters (Salzman 2004). Although the "scream" was taken out of context, and the coverage of the incident perhaps unfairly emphasized, it played into the conventional wisdom about Dean's temper and unpredictability and is seen as marking the end of the competitive phase of the Dean for America campaign. Although the campaign continued on through poor showings in New Hampshire and successive states, the Dean for America organization ceased to be a contender in the Democratic primaries after Iowa.

**Outcomes**

On February 18, 2004 Howard Dean withdrew as a candidate for the Democratic Party nomination for president. Despite pioneering a new form of open Internet-focused campaigning, raising record amounts of money, and leading the national polls heading into the state caucuses and primaries, Dean was unable to win the critical early Iowa and New Hampshire contests. Mistakes by the campaign as well as a concerted effort by opponents to attack the frontrunner took their toll, resulting in a quick drop out of contention. While ultimately unsuccessful in accomplishing its primary goal of winning the nomination, the campaign was successful in reaching many of its secondary goals – specifically those related to the "open source campaign" model that drove the technological strategy of the campaign.

The Dean campaign defied conventional wisdom from the beginning, and through the use of Internet technology was able to disprove several key assumptions about political campaigns:

- Major campaigns cannot be financed by small, individual contributions – In fact, the Dean campaign was able to break party fundraising records without significant PAC contributions or reliance on large individual donations. The Internet greatly facilitated small-scale fundraising efforts by making it simple to donate and lowering the cost of processing small donations.

- Rank-and-file members of a campaign cannot be trusted to participate – The message of the campaign was not negatively influenced by the explosion of

individual Dean Websites or the open nature of the blog. Campaign

supporters were more than capable of policing themselves (for example the

"troll bats"), and through these open channels were able to contribute new

energy and ideas (such as the Sleepless Summer tour).

- Candidates for national office must run as a moderate or conservative –

  Arguably the failure to win the nomination proves this correct, although the

  early success of the campaign in fundraising and his rise in the polls suggests

  that this conventional wisdom may be misleading. Tapping into a more

  progressive, and arguably better-informed, constituency on the Internet

  allowed Dean to represent progressive positions and still become a credible

  candidate. Dean's successful rise to the front of the pack took place despite

  his being cast as a left-wing ideologue on gay marriage and the War on Iraq.

  Once Dean became the frontrunner and the primary season loomed, the Dean

  campaign began to emphasize issues on which he held more moderate

  positions and attempted to move away from the "liberal" label – which

  correlates (perhaps spuriously, perhaps not) with his eventual losses in the

  primaries.

The legacy of the Dean for America campaign continues to be felt to this day.

The Dean campaign itself evolved into Democracy for America, a Political Action

Committee (PAC) that works to support candidates at all levels of elections that are

committed to the ideals of the Dean campaign – open participation and progressive

political values. Candidates are generally chosen in groups of twelve, with Democracy

for America members across the country encouraged to provide financial and other support to them. Democracy for America began during the 2004 primaries, with one of the candidates in the first "Dean Dozen" grouping being Barack Obama, then running in the Illinois Senate primary.

Democracy for America was also instrumental (through member lobbying as well as the success of the overall model) in Howard Dean's election as Chair of the Democratic National Committee. In the 2006 midterm elections, the DNC utilized aspects of the Dean for America model (reliance on the Internet for fundraising and communications, support for progressive positions, and a nationwide focus) in their successful efforts to gain control of both houses of Congress as well as many governorships and state legislatures. Certainly this result cannot be solely attributed to the strategy, as dissatisfaction with the Republican White House and Congress were very high. However, the scale of Democratic gains and the fact that many of the gains came in "Red states" that had no recent history of voting Democratic are hailed as results of applying the Dean for America model.

The most important legacy of the Dean campaign, however, continues to evolve. The concept of an Internet-based election strategy has become mainstream, and campaign websites are no longer simply a rehash of other campaign methods or perceived as a necessary (but neglected) obligation. Increasingly, campaign websites are a central component of electoral strategies, with many candidates taking an active role through blogging and web-specific appeals to voters. The importance of web-based politics was seen during election night of 2006, when major cable networks such as CNN heavily featured web bloggers as part of their coverage – a far cry from even the 2004 election

when bloggers found access to the party conventions and many campaigns quite difficult to gain. Although we are not in an era of a fully participatory Internet-centered electorate, the idea has become much less far-fetched.

**Analysis**

The Dean for America campaign was the first national campaign to fully embrace an Internet-first strategy in the United States. Faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges in generating money and public awareness at the outset, Dean for America was willing to take the leap required to break new ground. Breaking with the traditional models of Internet usage by national campaigns, which focused on using the Internet as a form of traditional media to reach the online segment of the population, the Dean campaign privileged the Internet as the primary means of communication, organization, and fundraising. Although not successful in reaching its goal of gaining the Democratic Party nomination for president, the campaign made its mark on the 2004 election and established a legacy that continues to this day. In terms of this study, an analysis of the Dean for America campaign along the dimensions of the variables identified provides some interesting results.

The failure of the campaign to breakthrough once votes began to be counted has been debated in many quarters, with explanations seemingly outnumbering his Iowa caucus supporters. The most credible explanation is that Dean himself is responsible for the collapse of his campaign –the novelty and excitement of Dean's Internet campaign attracted voters initially, but that his personality and/or his positions were just not appealing enough for them to stay (McSweeney 2007). An in-depth analysis of why the

campaign failed in the end to capture the nomination is outside the scope of this work.
However, regardless of the reason that it failed, the Dean for America campaign did
accomplish at least one of its goals: changing the way political campaigns are run in the
United States.

*Hierarchy*

There is no question that the adoption of an Internet-based strategy broke down
the traditional hierarchy of a political campaign in the case of Dean for America.  In
some areas, such as in setting campaign events and determining the role of campaign
volunteers, there often appeared to be almost no hierarchy at all.  Local organizations or
individuals could suggest options to the entire Dean for America community (including
staff, candidate, and volunteers) through the online communication tools.  In many cases,
these suggestions were adopted by the organization and became part of the campaign.
Although there are also many instances of hierarchical control (i.e. direction and
coordination of Meetup activities from campaign staff), the origination of the ideas was
most often from the rank-and-file.  The campaign became increasingly less hierarchical,
with more member input being implemented by the top level leadership over time.

Observed result: A **decrease** in Hierarchy.  (↓)

*Internal Communications*

The single most identifiable and influential feature of the Dean Campaign was the
open-source campaign model it adopted  through the blog and other web communication
tools such as email.  Communication flowed very freely in both directions within the

organization, especially when compared with traditional campaign organizations. Financial and strategic information were open for all to access and comment on, and with few exceptions even the most significant decisions were left open for member input. Most significantly, on balance this openness created more positive than negative outcomes, challenging the assumption of traditional campaign thinking that control over information is a critical element of campaigning.

Observed result: An **increase** in Internal Communications. (↑)

*Member Intensity*

Campaign volunteers were often mocked by other campaigns as "Deaniacs" (a term soon co-opted by the Dean volunteers themselves) due to their high intensity and commitment to the campaign. Individual members were responsible for the vast majority of funds raised for the campaign, most often through repeated small amounts rather than single maximum contributions of $2,000. The open-source campaign model left open opportunities for critics and competing campaigns to create mischief, such as abusive or derogatory postings on the blog, but the membership of Dean for America took the lead in policing their own community. (Through actions such as the "Troll Bat"). The commitment of volunteers to participate in events such as the "Perfect Storm" in Iowa at their own expense in terms of time and money exceeded the levels of any previous campaign as well.

Observed result: An **increase** in Member Intensity. (↑)

*Activity*

The level of activity within the Dean campaign was far higher than that of other campaigns, and when one considers the activities undertaken by the Dean for America campaign compared to the eventual number of votes Dean received, it is even more remarkable. Although the campaign conducted traditional activities such as rallies and speeches, it also sought to increase the available options for activity across the nation. The reliance on Meetups to build local organizations was only possible because of the Internet. Coordination of activities at the local level was also facilitated by the Internet, including sharing of best practices and other useful information by individuals.

Observed result: An **increase** in Activity. (↑)

*Coalitions/Alliances*

Once the Dean campaign became the frontrunner for the nomination, it began to join with other organizations and campaigns to leverage its newfound strength. Early endorsements by the AFSCME and SEIU unions in November 2003 (Lawrence 2003) and high-profile individuals such as 2000 Democratic nominee Al Gore in December of 2003 (King and Wallace 2003) represent some of the endorsements Dean received that were considered most critical. In addition, around the same time the Dean campaign began to use its Internet-based network on behalf of other campaigns around the country through the "Dean Dozen" lists. By tabbing a candidate as one of the monthly "Dean Dozen", it provided a major boost in terms of credibility as well as fundraising potential. The low cost and relatively low barriers to coalitioning provided by the Internet were used to their full potential by the Dean campaign once it rose to national prominence. However, due to its reliance on the Internet, there arose a perception that the Dean base

was fairly homogeneously white, young, male, and (at a minimum) middle-class, which created difficulty in building coalitions with other traditional Democratic Party constituencies. While this perception was exaggerated by opponents, it was probably not completely undeserved in the early days of the campaign although it was still very much an over-generalization based on existing stereotypes of Internet users. The result of the coalitions that were made, however, appear to have delivered little in terms of support at the ballot box.

Observed result: A **mixed result** in Coalitions/Alliances. **(↔)**


*Success*

This category is a mixed bag for the campaign. The Dean for America organization had one, straight-forward goal – to win the Democratic Party nomination for president of the United States. Once the nomination was won, the party and Dean organizations would merge and focus on the next goal of winning the election. If we only use this goal as a measure of success, the Dean for America campaign was an unqualified failure. It came from the bottom of the polls to frontrunner status, but crashed spectacularly in the cornfields of Iowa and for all intents and purposes closed shop before Super Tuesday arrived. However, the campaign also had other goals that were supportive of the primary goal but also have their own objective criteria. Born of the desperation of an asterisk campaign, the Dean organization set out to prove that an open-source, Internet-centered campaign is both viable and preferable to traditional models. This it unquestionably achieved. With an evolving legacy through Howard Dean's tenure at the DNC, the continuing efforts of Democracy for America, and the

acceptance of the Internet as a viable (and necessary) campaign tool, the Dean campaign continues to have an impact on American politics today.

Observed result: **No change/Unknown** in Success. **(↔/?)**

| TABLE 4.1 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Results for Dean for America Compared to Predicted Results** | | | | |
| | | PREDICTED OUTCOMES | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | DEAN CAMPAIGN | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | SITUATIONALISTS | TECHNO-SKEPTICS |
| Hierarchy | ↓ | ↓ | ↔ | ? |
| Internal Communications | ↑ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Member Intensity | ↑ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Activity | ↑ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Coalitions/ Alliances | ↔ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Success | ↔/? | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| ↓ = Decrease<br>↑ = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br>? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases | | | | |

## Conclusion

The Dean for America campaign fell well short of its goal of capturing the Democratic Party nomination for president in 2004, but changed the face of politics forever. The Internet has been elevated in politics to almost an equal level as traditional communications outlets such as television and radio, as campaigns embrace the medium and use many of the same open source tactics as the Dean campaign. In the 2006 mid-

term elections, cable and network news coverage included substantial coverage of blogs, of both the campaign and pundit variety, including CNN's devotion of an entire segment of their coverage election evening to an assemblage of bloggers at a cybercafé in Washington DC.  No longer is the web reserved for only a few tech-savvy political operatives, it is now an important component of all campaigns.

The Dean for America campaign organization did not disappear after Dean's withdrawal from the race.  Within weeks of leaving the race, Howard Dean officially announced the start of a new organization, called Democracy for America, which would continue to utilize Dean for America's web-based model of politics of on behalf of progressive candidates across the country.  Among the very first of the Democracy for America candidates was Illinois Senate candidate Barack Obama, identified in the first "Dean Dozen".  The 2004 "Dean Dozen" effort began with 12 candidates but expanded to over 600 by election day, assisting candidates across the country, including Senator Barack Obama from Illinois, Governors Brian Schweitzer in Montana and John Lynch in New Hampshire, several members of the United States House of Representatives, and many other state and local officials (Liloia 2004).  At the state and local levels, the Democracy for America organization contributed to over 600 candidates – of which more than 300 won their races.  These numbers are better understood in the context of the candidates supported, as many of them were given little to no chance to win, but were identified for support due to their commitment to the ideals of the Democracy for America organization – fiscal responsibility, social progressivism, and adoption of inclusive, "open source" campaign structures – making these results perhaps even more impressive.

Furthermore, the Dean campaign has inspired other candidates of both parties to embrace the Internet as a central campaign feature. Candidates now routinely venture into cyberspace, posting on blogs and investing significant campaign resources into their web presence. Despite falling short of the nomination, the experience of the Dean campaign served legitimize the Internet it as a component of campaign strategy. Websites are no longer afterthoughts for campaigns, they are now important features of the overall campaign.

Howard Dean currently serves as the Chair of the Democratic National Committee, having won a contested election for the seat after the 2004 election. He immediately began to implement an Internet-focused strategy of outreach across the country, building up organizations and investing resources in the so-called "Red" states that the previous leadership had conceded to the Republicans. Dean's 50 state strategy was controversial, but his unquestioned ability to break fundraising records at the DNC and success in mobilizing voters turned the Democratic party's fortunes around. In the 2006 midterm election, Dean's strategy paid off as the Democrats swept back into Congress, taking control of both the House and the Senate for the first time in over a decade. With the 2008 presidential election season in full swing at the time of this writing, the influence of the Dean for America campaign can be plainly seen in the reliance of candidates on the Internet as a major feature of their campaigns. Not only are the contenders making websites, blogs, and online fundraising central to their campaigns, they have also embraced newer web resources such as YouTube (a public shared content site where they can post campaign videos) and MySpace (a social networking site with tens of millions of members).

# Chapter 5

# MoveOn and the Netroots

**Introduction**

In 2006, the Democratic Party appeared to be at a crossroads. The strategic rightward shift that had elected Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996 had become party orthodoxy through the influence of organizations such as the Democratic Leadership Council. The consequent rightward drift of the party, intended to strengthen its moderate base and increase party strength nationwide, had not had significant success in either but had instead alienated a large portion of its traditional base. After a decade of defeats at all levels, this strategy was challenged across the nation in 2004 by a new mobilization of progressive energy, which in large part was led on the Internet by individuals and groups such as MoveOn.org. By 2006, a number of DLC-supported incumbents were targeted by progressive challengers, who were backed by Internet-based supporters, in primaries across the nation. One of (if not the) biggest stories of the 2006 primaries occurred in Connecticut, where incumbent United States Senator Joe Lieberman was defeated by upstart Ned Lamont in the Democratic Party Primary.

In early 2006, Connecticut businessman Ned Lamont announced his candidacy to challenge incumbent Joe Lieberman for the Democratic Party nomination for the United States Senate. Although Lamont had previously served in city government in Greenwich, CT, he was relatively unknown politically at the state level at the time of his declaration, and his candidacy was written off by observers as hopeless. Lieberman not only held all of the substantial advantages of a three-term incumbent, he also had a national base of

support due to having been his party's nominee for vice president in 2000.  Further adding to Lieberman's advantage were many high-profile and politically-diverse supporters such as Bill Clinton, Fox News, and the Bush White House.  Political analysts gave Lamont no chance against such a formidable opponent, but Lamont's campaign adopted an aggressive Internet-centered campaign that would, by August, lead to one of the most stunning upsets in recent electoral history.  In large part, the Lamont campaign's primary victory was due to the active support and cooperation of Internet-based supporters such as MoveOn.org.

Entering the primary season Lieberman appeared to be a lock for re-election because in addition to the advantages of incumbency he was also considered a political "moderate" by major opinion-makers.  Lieberman held hawkish positions on national security and had close ties to the White House, and despite being a Democrat he was held in high stature and regard by the national media and punditocracy.  Despite having been on the ticket that lost to George Bush in the 2000 presidential election, he had aligned himself far to the right on national security and domestic issues in the intervening years, siding more often with the Republican caucus in the Senate and the White House than with his own Party on important issues.  Having been one of the strongest Congressional supporters of the invasion of Iraq in 2002-3, Lieberman had since firmly allied himself with the White House against increasing questioning and criticism from both parties in Congress.  Strategically, this seemed to provide Lieberman with several important political points in his favor: he held the majority position based on polling data, and he could count on the strong support of the mainstream media and conservative donors during his campaign.  However, the Lamont campaign pursued a strategy that would turn

these two perceived strengths against Lieberman, by launching an explicitly anti-war campaign and relying on an Internet strategy to raise money and awareness.

Throughout the spring and into the summer of 2006, with the War on Iraq raging on with no end in sight, the Lamont campaign began to gain momentum and slowly creep up in the polls. As public uncertainty about the War on Iraq began to build, Lieberman became increasingly hawkish and moved ever closer to the White House – increasing the warm regard and support from the mainstream media for the "maverick" "moderate" and "statesman-like" Lieberman. With the weight of the national media and major fundraisers firmly behind Lieberman, the Lamont campaign faced a steep uphill climb. However, rather than attempting to use the Clintonesque triangulation strategy of moderating his own positions, Lamont aggressively worked to draw ever-sharper distinctions between himself and Lieberman, including using Lieberman's close ties with the White House against him. For example, the most successful image for the Lamont campaign was called simply "the kiss" – a nationally-syndicated photo of George Bush embracing and kissing Lieberman after the 2006 State of the Union address that was featured on buttons and in campaign advertisements.

While Lamont's campaign had a definite strategy in place, overcoming the incumbency advantages of Lieberman would be difficult. As an incumbent and a leading supporter of the war Lieberman received a great deal of free publicity making the rounds of new programs and talk shows. Lamont's campaign reached out to progressive and liberal groups, blogs, and email campaigns to raise both money and awareness of his campaign. Lamont's campaign was 15 points behind Lieberman as late as June 5, 2006, but within two months had shifted 28 points to lead 54-41 among likely primary voters

(Lagorio 2006). The final result, a 52-48 percent victory for Lamont, was hailed by many as an example of Internet-driven campaigns finally breaking through to victory (Bash 2006; Bacon 2006). Whether or not it represents a breakthrough for Internet-driven campaigns, it does represent a major victory for MoveOn's approach to political action (Farhad 2006).

While Lamont's campaign has often been compared to the Dean campaign of 2004, given the centrality of the anti-war issue and reliance on the Internet, there was one critical difference. In addition to a web strategy, Lamont also acted early and aggressively to construct a grassroots organization in Connecticut that would utilize traditional political campaign strategies as well. Early in the campaign, Lamont worked to gain support from one-third of delegates to the state Democratic convention while conducting his statewide petition campaign to get on the ballot (Murray 2006). This strategy allowed the campaign to build a strong statewide organization while also reaching outside of Connecticut through the Internet – creating a traditional electoral base while also tapping the financial and publicity strengths of the Internet. This dual strategy proved to be effective, aided in no small part due to Lieberman's Senate record and positions coupled with his announced intention to run as an Independent if he lost the primary.

The general election became a three-way race; with Lamont running as a Democrat, Lieberman as an Independent, and Alan Schlesinger as a Republican. While the Democratic Party formally endorsed Lamont, prominent national figures did not campaign for him. Early in the general election, prominent and influential Republicans such as New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg lined up behind Lieberman with

endorsements, money, and photo-ops.  White House advisor Karl Rove even called

Lieberman the day he lost the Democratic primary; he did not contact Schlesinger at all

during the election (McEnroe 2006).  The Bush White House also threw their support

behind Lieberman, with Vice President Dick Cheney equating Lamont's victory with

surrender in the War on Terror during an interview the following day (White House

2006).

Despite winning a respectable 65% of the Democratic vote in Connecticut (a

higher percentage than he gained in the primary), Lamont's campaign fell short in the

election.  Facing the full weight of the national Republican Party, and with only grudging

support from his own, Lamont lost the general election with 40% of the vote to

Lieberman's 50% (Schlesinger finished a distant third with 10%) (CNN.com 2006).  A

full 70% of the Republican vote went for Lieberman, while only 21% went for the

Republican candidate Schlesinger, and Lieberman won a majority of the independent

vote as well (CNN.com 2006b, sec. Vote by Party ID).  In the days after the election

Lieberman began to self-identify as an "Independent Democrat", and with Democrats

gaining a narrow 51-49 majority he quickly grasped his position as the most powerful

Senator in Congress – Lieberman immediately began to threaten to leave the Democratic

Party caucus if he was unhappy with the direction of the party (Boston Globe 2006).

Despite contributing to a stunning primary victory and a rise to national

prominence, the netroots were unable to deliver the general election to Lamont in

Connecticut.  Lieberman's decision to run as an independent, with the backing of the

national Republican Party and many conservative Democrats, created an insurmountable

challenge to the progressive underdog candidate.  With only tepid support from his own

party, which seemed at times to be frightened of his netroots base, Lamont was unable to take the final step into the Senate.  However, the success of the Lamont campaign in framing the debate in the primary and defeating an entrenched incumbent stands as a major accomplishment for the developing netroots model of politics.

**Background**

Politics in the United States have always included the participation of political advocacy groups.  These groups engage in fundraising, voter mobilization, and policy debate in an attempt to influence electoral and public policy outcomes.  Often derided as representatives of "special interests" and accused of subverting the goal of a citizen-led democratic polity, political advocacy groups have aligned with both of the major parties and play a major role in political outcomes in the United States.  Traditional, well-established groups such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) and National Organization for Women (NOW) built their reputations and established influence by decades of traditional political activities at the national, state, and local levels.  However, MoveOn became a major political organization in just a few short years, with a membership measured in the millions and significant influence on the political system, all through the Internet.  By 2004, it had become the leading progressive political advocacy in the United States, and was considered by many Democratic Party leaders to represent the best hope for success in the elections of that year (Wolf 2004b).

MoveOn did not start out to become one of the leading political advocacy groups in the country.  It began on September 18, 1998 as an online petition drive in response to the Clinton impeachment episode, advocating that Congress "Censure President Clinton

and Move On to Pressing Issues Facing the Nation" rather than expending their efforts on the impeachment process (MoveOn.org 2006a). Started by Joan Blades and Wes Boyd, Silicon Valley entrepreneurs already familiar with the Internet, this first petition gathered several hundred thousand signatures within days and encouraged the founders to expand their efforts into other areas of political activity. MoveOn PAC was registered later that year as a Political Action Committee (PAC) and began to grow into a major force in American politics. The MoveOn organization is now composed of two sub-organizations, MoveOn.org Political Action (formerly MoveOn PAC) and MoveOn.org Civic Action.

Since its founding, MoveOn has grown to become one of the best-known political action groups in the United States. This has been a double-edged sword, however. Because of its stature, MoveOn receives a great deal of free publicity for its campaigns simply by virtue of being such a major organization – what it does is, by itself, news. This has multiplied advertising, for example, through repetition of ads on talk shows and news programs. It is also a recognition of the success of MoveOn in achieving its goals, which serves (in a media feedback loop) to further amplify the power, and therefore the chances for success, of the organization. However, because of this success it has also become a symbolic straw man for attacks on progressive and left-leaning politics by right-wing commentators, who often refer derogatorily to the "MoveOn crowd" in their discussions of current issues. For example, Bill O'Reilly compared giving money to MoveOn to funding the Nazi Party on his FoxNews show, while Karl Rove has referred to MoveOn as a "Liberal Extremist Group" in defending the White House from criticisms (Media Matters 2005; O'Donnell 2005). The accuracy of this characterization is

questionable, since MoveOn is arguably well within the mainstream of American politics as it is closely aligned with the Democratic Party on most significant issues. However, the amount of effort and style of rhetoric used by Republican Party spokespeople is indicative of the importance of MoveOn in the political arena.

While still an Internet-only organization in terms of member interaction and participation, MoveOn is also involved in more traditional political activities such as television advertising, voter mobilization, and fundraising for campaigns. MoveOn has found an effective role in sponsoring and collaborating with organizations engaged in non-virtual efforts such as voter registration and media watchdog activities. Since 2004, MoveOn has also focused on general issue mobilization and activist training, utilizing other forms of media (such as film) and house party models to build networks beyond the Internet. These activities are still coordinated and based within the existing Internet organization, with members participating in decision-making and even the creation of organization materials within the virtual community.

A case study of MoveOn offers an opportunity to examine the effects of Internet usage on a political advocacy group, but also provides a glimpse at what has been called the "netroots" movement. Netroots, a variation on the term grassroots, is often used to describe the mobilization of political activity through the Internet. Detailed consideration of the MoveOn case will provide insight into this new participatory political model and the ways in which a representative netroots organization is affected by its use of the Internet. Although not all netroots activity takes place through already-established political organizations, or even through organizations at all, the experience of MoveOn

since its founding in 1998 in leading the netroots movement offers an opportunity to examine this emerging political phenomenon.

**Technology and MoveOn**

MoveOn is completely virtual in that there is no "brick-and-mortar" presence for the organization.  From its inception, it was intended to serve as a communications tool for dissatisfied members of the polity to communicate with their public officials.  While there are physical offices, paid staff members, and partnerships are often established with "real-world" organizations on specific issues or campaigns, MoveOn as an organization is exclusively an online enterprise.  In this sense, technology forms the basis for the entire organization, rather than being a component that was later adopted or a tool that has become useful for the purposes of the organization.

The majority of MoveOn activities start with email.  Members receive emails several times a week asking them to take actions such as contacting officials, signing online petitions, donating money, and a variety of other activities.  These emails are nearly always accompanied by Internet links that the member can use to join the activity.  Some examples may include a link to an online petition to sign, a candidate or organization website, or even a search page to find the phone number of their elected officials.  Because members are clicking through these links, MoveOn can tabulate how many members have responded and quickly release the number of total signatures for a petition, for example.  Additionally, members can choose to submit email addresses of friends and add a personal message to an email from MoveOn about the petition or other call to action.  Where the requested action is something "offline" (for example, calling a

member of Congress or attending a rally), acknowledgement links are provided to click through after the member has completed the requested activity. This system of affirmative response allows MoveOn to accurately track the level of response to their call for action, allowing them to make accurate claims about both participation as well as the level of public input on an issue. Results are posted on the MoveOn website once the effort is completed.

As part of this email action system, information is targeted specifically to members through the website and registration process. Using the member's zip code, the MoveOn system automatically addresses letters, petitions, or other contact requests to the proper elected officials. This ensures that, for example, members of Congress are contacted only by their own constituents with requests or lobbying efforts. When a request for phone calls is issued, the email will contain only the phone numbers for a member's elected officials, including the number of their Capitol office as well as any applicable local offices. This customization of requests by MoveOn increases the likelihood of a positive response by members by lowering the time and effort levels required to follow through. This has made MoveOn one of the most agile political action groups, able to make a request of members and generate results almost immediately.

This flexibility has also made MoveOn a capable and desirable partner for electoral campaigns and other organizations. For example, during the 2004 presidential campaign the Kerry campaign partnered with MoveOn to create a swing state volunteer network, in which volunteers from so-called "safe states" (where polls showed Kerry with a comfortable lead) would travel to states where the polls were close and work with local campaign groups in the final week before the election. Working with anti-war

groups, MoveOn contributed to vigils organized around the country in support of Cindy

Sheehan's "Camp Casey" protest at President Bush's Crawford ranch on August 17,

2005. This collaboration resulted in 1,627 simultaneous vigils nationwide, taking place

in every state and including hundreds of thousands of opponents of the war on Iraq.

250,000 MoveOn members added comments online in the 48 hours prior to the vigils in

support of the event (MoveOn.org 2006b). In June of 2005, Congressman John Conyers

held hearings on the so-called "Downing Street Memos" related to the pre-war on Iraq

period, and delivered a petition to the White House calling for them to respond to the

allegations contained in these memos. MoveOn members provided 360,000 out of

560,000 signatures to this petition. The following day, there were more than 1,600 news

items on the issue linked in Google.com, turning the issue into a significant news story

(Anderson 2005). With results such as these, MoveOn has become a powerful and

sought-after partner by liberal and progressive causes across the nation.


**MoveOn Members**

MoveOn currently claims 3.3 million members, representing a broad spectrum of

backgrounds from "carpenters to stay-at-home moms to business leaders" (MoveOn

2006a). With the sole requirement for membership being online registration, however, it

is difficult to determine how many of the 3.3 million members are unique and active in

the organization. While the participation numbers are readily available because of the

tracking methods used by the organization, these aggregate numbers are not particularly

useful in determining how many members participate regularly, how many are active on

only certain issues, and how many may never respond at all. What is clear is that all 3.3

million registered email addresses within the MoveOn network receive communications from the organization, making it a force to be reckoned with in terms of outreach potential.

Membership in MoveOn requires no special action by individuals, such as dues or formal application, only that they register on the MoveOn homepage with an email address. This open approach to membership is indicative of the strategy that the organization takes with the membership – provide opportunities for people to participate, and enough will do so to make a difference. Members are asked to perform tasks (sign an online petition, join a protest or donate money) but there is no requirement to do so and no sanction for those who do not. Individuals are free to decide their commitment and participation levels, and decide just what membership in the organization means to them. Whether one is an active participant in every activity, or only occasionally takes part when time and interest coincide, the organization makes no distinction when requests are made. It is reasonable to conclude that the participants in MoveOn activities are a rotating group of individuals – a portion of membership responds to every request, but it is most likely a different cohort at any given time based on issue interest and their availability at that moment in time.

In many ways, this informal membership structure is at the center of MoveOn's effectiveness. It is easy to be a member of MoveOn; one need only read the emails and decide whether to click through the included links to take action. Members respond to requests that they feel passionate about at minimal cost of time and effort, but they can also disregard requests that they are not interested in (or oppose) without consequence. This approach allows members to create an individual definition of membership that fits

their ideological preferences and meets their scheduling and economic ability. The ability to choose allows for a broader membership, since members can opt out of some (or even most) activities but still take part in those activities that are meaningful and important to them. Furthermore, because there are no membership requirements such as dues or even a public record of being a member, the organization is open to anyone who supports even one issue among the many MoveOn is involved in. For example, a pro-war, anti-choice, conservative Republican might still join MoveOn because of their position against the privatization of Social Security, and never participate in any of the issues that they disagree with the organization about.

However, the informal nature of membership in MoveOn also presents challenges to the organization in terms of public credibility and crafting coalitions. There are risks for an organization without expectations for member participation, in that it cannot accurately predict (or promise, in cases of collaboration with other groups) a specific level of activity resulting from a given appeal. While it may be possible to create an estimate of a given response based on past results, MoveOn can never be certain about how strongly members will react to these appeals. In the case of a request for donations to a particular candidate, this may not pose a major threat to organizational credibility. However, the stakes become much higher for very public events such as vigils or protest rallies where a poor member response could be interpreted as a lack of support for the issue, position, or cause. So far MoveOn has not faced a major crisis of this type, in part because of parallel organizing at the local level by members and coalition partners as well as careful selection of requests by MoveOn.

The direction of the organization has, at times, been member-drive. In the aftermath of the 2004 election, MoveOn sent an email to members requesting input as to the future direction and priorities of the organization itself. MoveOn had been focused on the election since the primaries began in 2003, and experienced rapid growth during that time period due to interest in the election. Although other issues and efforts had also occurred over that time period, it was clear that for many members (especially newer ones) electoral politics was central to their participation. With the election over, it was important to both re-energize membership as well as to set an organizational direction for the interim period before the 2006 midterm (and 2008 presidential) elections, especially given the poor results from 2004. With an organization of over 3 million members, MoveOn was an attractive partner for organizations looking to partner on issues, and it would be easy for it to quickly over-extend itself across the country at all levels.

Members active on the MoveOn Action Forum message boards began to discuss this problem, which eventually led to the creation of a list of issues, activities, and causes the organization could focus on in the near future. This list was the core of an email request MoveOn sent to all members, which included a unique link to a webpage to cast a vote. Members were asked to select their three most important issues from a list that included issues such as health care access, opposition to the war, building grass roots organizations, identifying progressive candidates to support early in the process, exposing corruption, etc. The results would be binding on MoveOn's priorities through the 2006 midterm election and beyond, and would represent the priorities of membership.

However, this member-driven approach has occasionally produced negative outcomes for the organization as well. The most well-known and damaging instance of

this occurred during the "Bush in 30 Seconds" contest in 2004, the archive of which can still be accessed at http://www.bushin30seconds.org. This contest offered members an opportunity to create their own 30 second television ad against Bush, which they could post to MoveOn's website. Members could then view and rate the ads based on their preferences; the eventual winner would appear on national television, paid for by MoveOn. 1,512 ads were submitted during the contest, and 11,000 members entered a total of 2.9 million ratings submitted to an expert panel that awarded the best ads in several categories including best ad, best animation, and funniest submission (Bush in 30 Seconds 2004). The eventual winner, entitled "Child's Pay", focused on the effects of deficit spending on future generations, and was generally applauded by advertising experts and well-accepted by viewers.

However, one entry of the over 1,500 became so controversial that the entire MoveOn organization was placed in jeopardy. The so-called "Hitler Ad", which used footage of a Hitler speech to draw comparisons to Bush's policies, was quickly flagged by members and withdrawn from the website. (An archive of this ad and another similar entry, as well as some of the press controversy they generated, can be found at http://www.thememoryhole.org/pol/bush-hitler-ads.htm) The damage was done, however, as pro-Bush groups and conservative Jewish organizations and media outlets quickly began to accuse MoveOn of anti-Semitism and hate speech (Cameron and Porteus 2004). MoveOn found itself on the defensive, with opponents claiming that MoveOn had created the ad and was planning to run it across the country. The controversy eventually died down, but only after the expenditure of significant resources and long-term damage to MoveOn's reputation. In part due to this controversy, the

winning ad (Child's Pay) was blocked by television network CBS from running during the Super Bowl as "too political", although they did run an ad from the White House Office of Drug Policy during the game that equated the War on Drugs with the War on Terror (Karr 2004). The resulting censorship controversy over CBS' decision garnered substantial free airplay and discussion to the eventual benefit of MoveOn (Darman 2004).

At the beginning of the 2004 presidential primary season, MoveOn held a binding online primary of its own. Members could register to vote online at http://www.moveon.org/pac/cands/ for one of the declared candidates, and if a candidate gained a majority of votes MoveOn would endorse that candidate for the nomination. Ballots were sent by email to members who had registered for the primary, with each email containing a link with a unique identifier to prevent multiple voting. The final tally showed Howard Dean leading the pack with nearly 44% of the votes, followed by Dennis Kucinich with almost 24% and John Kerry with just under 16%; everyone else was in single digits (Fenton Communications 2003). No candidate drew majority support, however, so MoveOn remained uncommitted through the nomination, instead focusing its efforts on other races and building a get-out-the-vote organization for the general election. This primary approach raised MoveOn's profile within the Democratic Party due to the number of votes cast, and essentially put the candidates on notice that MoveOn's constituents were a force to be reckoned with early in the primary process.

During the 2004 presidential general election, MoveOn encouraged members to register for the "Leave No Voter Behind" campaign, which sent volunteers from electorally "safe" states (those where polls indicated either Bush or Kerry had a decisive lead) to "swing states" where the polls showed the race to be close. MoveOn sent emails

to members asking volunteers to register online at http://pol.moveon.org/lnvb/. These volunteers were then given contact information for coordinators in contested districts in neighboring swing states. Volunteers from out of state were linked with local volunteers in an effort to canvass registered Democrats during the weekend before the election to encourage them to vote. This effort resulted in commitments by 70,000 volunteers, who generated more than 6 million voter contacts, and very likely contributed to a close Kerry win in Pennsylvania (MoveOn 2006c).

Not all MoveOn member activities are political in nature, however. In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina along the Gulf Coast of the United States in 2005, MoveOn sponsored HurricaneHousing.org, which was designed to link those made homeless by the hurricane with people who had available housing. Concerned individuals could place listings of the type of housing they had to offer, including the location and any stipulations such as no pets, non-smoking, length of stay, or other preferences. Persons in need of housing could then contact these people through the website and finalize arrangements. Tens of thousands of people responded to this organization, providing everything from single rooms recently vacated by children going away to college to entire empty houses that were newly built or on the market. This effort was able to provide housing for nearly 30,000 people, all through the Internet and with the support of MoveOn members (Dawn 2006).

**Organization Activities**

MoveOn is an unapologetically left-leaning, liberal political organization that has generally aligned itself with the Democratic Party, or at least against Republicans, on

most issues.  The ability of MoveOn to mobilize members for these activities has been impressive, particularly given their ability to provide documentation of the number of participants for most of these efforts.   The main commonality among the campaigns that MoveOn runs is that members are generally asked to do something other than just make financial donations.  When fundraising requests are sent, these pitches are almost always tied directly to specific candidates, issues, and events.  Very rarely are members requested to contribute more generally to MoveOn as an organization or for general funding purposes.

MoveOn's approach to member activity has evolved since 1998 to encompass a wide variety of approaches.  It has a strong presence on the Internet in large part because it began as an online petition and has continued to utilize the reach and immediacy of the Internet in all of its efforts.  As a result, MoveOn's activities are always initiated, and to at least some degree managed, through the Internet.  However, it has also begun to take advantage of collaborations and networking opportunities to participate in more traditional political arenas at all levels of politics.  A combination of organizational growth and issue-related partnerships with other organizations has allowed MoveOn to become one of the most important political organizations in the United States, capable of instantaneously reaching and potentially mobilizing millions of members at marginal cost.

One of the earliest and most effective activities of MoveOn is generating financial support for candidates and raising their public profiles.  During each electoral cycle MoveOn endorses progressive candidates across the country at the national, state, and local levels that are facing tough primary or general election fights.  These candidates

gain national attention and support through MoveOn's member network, allowing them to tap into a much larger base than they could find in their own district. MoveOn sends emails to its members with appeals on behalf of these candidates including a brief summary of the race they are in, their positions on key issues, and links to the candidate's own website. Members are requested to send small donations ($20 or more) to the candidate. In 2005, MoveOn set the goal to directly raise $5 million nationally for these candidates through these appeals, measured by click-throughs from the emails. 125,000 people contributed an average of $45 each (and none more than $5,000 in total), resulting in over $9 million raised in 2005 (MoveOn.org 2005). Members who did not click-through and instead went directly to the candidate's website are not measured, so the fundraising total is likely higher than the verified numbers report. While certainly not a huge amount of money in the context of the multi-billion dollar election industry, these funds were important for a number of campaigns and leveled the playing field for many candidates, including Ned Lamont in Connecticut.

MoveOn began to evolve and establish itself as a major force in American politics in 2002, when it became one of the first major organizations opposed to the War on Iraq. MoveOn partnered with numerous antiwar groups, including the Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (ANSWER) coalition, and assisted in promoting antiwar events across the nation up until the start of hostilities in March 2003. Given that the overwhelming majority (up to 70%) of Americans and nearly the entire Democratic Party supported the invasion of Iraq at that time, this was in many ways a gamble for the organization. Although a majority of the MoveOn base was against the war, publicly (and so aggressively) taking such an unpopular position was risky in terms of image and the

future growth of the organization.  The (ANSWER) Coalition is an umbrella group formed on September 14, 2001 that includes dozens of organizations. ANSWER sponsored anti-war marches in 2003 that brought 500,000 people to the streets of Washington, D.C. in the lead up to the War on Iraq.

While momentum built for war prior to the start of hostilities against Iraq, MoveOn worked with groups opposed to the war such as ANSWER to coordinate rallies, protests, and petition activities among members.  Since the start of the war, MoveOn has also worked with activists such as Cindy Sheehan and others to coordinate a variety of antiwar efforts.  This cooperation includes support for petition efforts, fundraising for advertisements in newspapers and on television, and email invitations to rallies and other public events.  In this way, MoveOn is able to facilitate the efforts of other organizations by increasing their reach to include MoveOn members.  Within these emails, members are directed to the partner websites to get additional information and confirm their participation.

MoveOn also partners with other established political advocacy organizations on a variety of issues, bringing their network into coalitions with these groups on specific legislation.  An example was Americans United to Protect Social Security, (http://www.americansforsocialsecurity.com/) a collaboration that included the AFL-CIO, the Campaign for America's Future, AFSCME and USAction joined together to oppose Social Security privatization.  In addition to running advertisements and lobbying members of Congress against this legislation, the group website provided a calculator so that visitors could get an estimate of the effect of this legislation on their own benefits.  In 2006, MoveOn joined in an unlikely collaboration (MoveOn.org 2006d) with political

opponents the Christian Coalition and the Gun Owners of America to raise money for advertisements on the issue of Net Neutrality. These collaborations are generally ad-hoc and specific to one legislative initiative, but bring together often-unlikely coalitions through Internet-based campaigns.

To further the immediacy of requests for member action, MoveOn has adopted an online system that allows members to customize and send emails to their elected officials. Members receive an email with a unique link to a page with pre-prepared text to be sent to officials. Members can edit the text or send it as-is after completing a form with their contact information. This email is then sent to all relevant officials: for example, during the battle over Network Neutrality a member could click a link to send pre-prepared emails to their members of Congress in the days leading up to an important vote. Past efforts have included Federal and State issues, for example the so-called "Wal-Mart bill" in the state of Maryland designed to require large companies to provide employee health care. This approach of generating instant response on specific issues and legislation in real-time would be practically impossible, certainly at this scale, without the Internet.

Another increasingly frequent approach used by MoveOn is facilitating "house parties" among the membership. Over the past few years, MoveOn has sponsored house parties for a variety of activities, including phone-banking for campaigns, fundraising efforts for specific candidates, voter registration, conference calls with candidates or leadership (of parties, campaigns, organizations, etc.) and even to celebrate the release of political DVDs. Some of the films that MoveOn has sponsored in this way include Fahrenheit 911 and The Day After Tomorrow, as well as independent documentaries such as Uncovered: The Whole Truth About Iraq and WalMart: The High Cost of Low

Price.  When the house party approach is undertaken, emails are sent to members with a

request to host a party.  Members willing to host a party in their home, or interested in

attending one in their local area, register with MoveOn.  Hosts receive the necessary

materials (DVDs, flyers, phone-banking lists, etc.) by mail, along with all the necessary

instructions for hosting the party.  Specific emails continue to be sent to members alerting

them of a party in their local area, requesting that they register to attend.  Once registered

to attend, members receive contact information and directions to the party.  House party

participants are asked to sign petitions, contribute money, and other specific activities

such as phone-banking efforts to mobilize voters and agreeing to host their own house

party.  As the 2006 mid-term elections approached, MoveOn established the Call for

Change program to reach 5 million voters with personal calls from house party volunteers

reminding them to vote.  The website even allowed members to sign up to do

independent phone banking from home on their own schedule, providing contact

information of registered voters after a volunteer has registered on the website.

Not only has the house party model proven to be very effective in generating

effort among MoveOn members, it has also been an important catalyst for the

construction of local networks.  House parties break down the barrier between virtual and

concrete participation by putting people with similar goals and interests into contact in a

way that few other approaches could.  MoveOn serves as a facilitator, a proven and

known entity that members trust, in making these real world connections within

communities.  Particularly in areas that are largely devoid of visible progressive or liberal

political groups, this represents a significant opportunity for individuals who may feel

disempowered and isolated to join or form local networks.  The combination of virtual

outreach and real world activity has certainly proven to be a successful model in terms of immediate results, but the spin-off benefits of creating local networks may prove to be the most important legacy of these activities.

One of the ways that MoveOn further facilitates this local network approach is through Operation Democracy, a field organization of volunteer organizers. (MoveOn.org 2005) Operation Democracy grew out of the 2004 effort to mobilize voters for the Kerry campaign, which illustrated the effectiveness of local efforts by reaching over 6 million potential voters in only six weeks through organized phone and door-to-door outreach (MoveOn.org 2006c). MoveOn provides support and a venue to share best practices for local organization leaders, serving to coordinate grassroots efforts across the country. Some of these efforts have included the delivery of anti-war petitions to 270 local Congressional offices, delivery of constituent letters against cuts in Medicare and student loans to 93 local Congressional offices, and 1,355 candlelight vigils across the nation to mark the death of the 2,000[th] U.S. soldier in Iraq (MoveOn.org 2005). In addition to nationally-led efforts such as these, Operation Democracy provides a venue for these groups to share best practices and ideas for their own local activities across the country.

**Outcomes**

In 2006, the Democratic Party took over both houses of Congress and numerous governorships and state legislatures in a landslide victory of massive proportions, reversing decades of consistent losses by the party at all levels. Online political activities including blogging as well as member action played a significant role in the election, through fundraising as well as communication and voter mobilization. MoveOn in

particular played a major role in not only providing financing for campaigns, but in coordinating the voter registration and mobilization work that traditional political party structures have generally done (MoveOn.org 2007). The ability of MoveOn to draw from a large membership base, and to target that base along geographic criteria as appropriate, gave the organization instant access to millions of volunteers across the country that could be linked with local groups engaged in campaign activities.

MoveOn has demonstrated that virtual political activity can have a substantial impact on the "real world", challenging assumptions about the capability of Internet-based political activism:

- The Internet is a virtual medium and cannot be connected to the "real world" – The Internet can provide the capacity for instantaneous and inexpensive outreach to a self-selected group of members who share the goals of the organization. The wall between the virtual and concrete is being increasingly broken down, with more and more activity previously done in "realspace" venues taking place online. Improvement in strategies and tactics used by organizations to perform coordination and organization tasks online, and then connect them to the real world for action, negates much of this criticism as well.

- The anonymity of the Internet means that members will be less likely to participate and will instead "free ride" – Although this may well be the case since it is easy to delete an email request for action on an issue that one does not feel strongly about, the low cost of making the appeal itself makes a small return acceptable. The free rider problem is not limited to the Internet of

course. The Internet makes the requested activism (sending an email, clicking a link, etc.) very simple in most cases, lowering the cost of participation for members. Furthermore, the response rate of MoveOn members to the highest profile issues is actually quite high, in part due to the low opportunity cost of participation.

- The Internet represents only a narrow demographic, and therefore will not produce a broad base of activism and political support – Although this criticism may have been valid at the time of MoveOn's founding, this is an increasingly irrelevant concern. The Digital Divide has shrunk dramatically since 1998, and continues to become narrower across all demographic dimensions. Furthermore, the profile of an Internet activist (as opposed to Internet user) has also become much less narrow as comfort with the technology leads more people to seek opportunities for active participation in their communities. Increasingly, the demographics of online activists are becoming much broader than those of "real world" political activists.

MoveOn is the dominant Internet-based political organization in U.S. politics, and is challenging more established traditional political organizations to become the most important political organization in the country. The opportunities that MoveOn provides for the average person to participate in political activities with minimal effort, cost, and time may well be a model for the future of politics in general. The ability of an online organization to move quickly and at low cost allows organizations to focus on more issues and to work in "real time" as the debate and conditions change. This flexibility

enhances the effectiveness of an organization:  because it can react quickly and adjust to ongoing conditions, it is able to not only lobby for specific outcomes but participate in the debate about these outcomes in an almost conversational manner.  For example, if efforts to influence a piece of legislation led to a slight change in the wording of a bill, organization members can be given an opportunity to evaluate and weigh in on these changes before the final vote the next morning.  This would be impossible, or at least prohibitively difficult, through traditional communications technologies.

The MoveOn approach of using the Internet to organize and coordinate campaign activities played a large role in the Democratic Party midterm victories of 2006.  Fundraising and voter mobilization efforts at the national, state, and local levels facilitated Democratic victories in so-called "Red states" that had been written off by the party leadership in previous elections.  Online efforts such as those undertaken by MoveOn facilitated outreach to voters in new ways, providing opportunities for local activists to work within their communities.  Phone banking and financial support for candidates in close races could be coordinated on a daily basis, allowing resources to be allocated from anywhere in the country to influence the most competitive races.  Voters living in a "safe district" could play an active role in a close race on the other side of the country by participating in a MoveOn campaign phone bank or by making an online contribution.

Finally, MoveOn has brought activism to the mainstream.  It is not necessary to, for example, spend an entire day joining a street protest against a trade agreement and risk arrest or harassment in order to have one's voice heard.  It can now be as simple as clicking a link in an email and adding your name to a customizable letter to your elected

officials.  A few clicks are all that is required to participate in the political process.   The

practical effect is that more people have the option to take part in politics.  The longer

term effect may be that once citizens experience activism at this level, they might begin

to demand more from the political process in general, particularly in terms of

responsiveness of public officials and opportunities for direct participation.  Political

activism appears to be slipping out of the realms of the policy wonks and committed

activists and into the hands of the average citizen.


**Analysis**

MoveOn has become the pre-eminent online political organization in the United

States, capable of coordinating nationwide campaigns nearly instantaneously that

mobilize hundreds of thousands of members and produce measurable results in a matter

of days.  The instant response capability that MoveOn has is unparalleled in American

politics, and this has made it an effective force in national politics.  However, this success

has also created new problems such as an organized backlash by conservative

organizations that paint MoveOn as a far-left fringe organization.  These efforts to make

association with MoveOn a liability for candidates have not proven very successful to

date, but the efforts continue and may lead to a less aggressive stance by the organization.

It also remains to be seen how effective MoveOn can be in representing member interests

now that Democrats control Congress and seem to have a strong chance to retake the

White House in 2008.  Will MoveOn continue to represent member positions in their

activities, or will they moderate their activities to protect the officials that it helped to

elect?  Based on their handling of the Iraq War issue after the Democratic takeover of

Congress, MoveOn faces a severe challenge in managing its own success.


*Hierarchy*

Although most of the activity that MoveOn undertakes is member-driven in terms

of requests sent via email, most of the decision-making is done by MoveOn staff.

Members are consulted through periodic preference polls, but the day-to-day operations

of the organization remain fairly rigidly hierarchical.  MoveOn does give local

organizations a great deal of control in setting details of local activities (for example in

choosing the location and program for an anti-war vigil), and partnerships are organized

in a structure of informal nodes rather than a tight formal organization.  However, the

lack of frequent opportunities and open channels for participation and decision-making

by members creates a mixed result for the Hierarchy variable.

Observed result: A **mixed result** in Hierarchy.  **(↔)**


*Internal Communications*

As of mid-2007, MoveOn's website does not currently have a mechanism for

internal communications among members, although there are links to email MoveOn

staff.  Access to these forums had been severely limited since 2005 when postings began

to require moderator approval prior to appearing, which resulted in delays that limited the

conversational application of the forums.  Their web forums were disabled in the fall of

2006 during the election to "conserve bandwidth" for electoral campaigns (as they were

temporarily shut down close to the 2004 general election) but have not been reopened

yet. In part as a result of increased scrutiny by conservative opponents, and likely due at least in part to the resurgence of the Democratic Party in Congress, MoveOn has limited member communications options during the past year of observation.

Observed result: A **decrease** in Internal Communications. **(↓)**

*Member Intensity*

With 3.3 million members across the country, MoveOn has a large base to draw from for its various activities. Members are not asked to do much in most cases, generally only to click a link to sign a petition and only occasionally to attend an event or take another "real world" action. Large numbers of members do respond to these appeals for action, and MoveOn remains the most effective political advocacy organization in the country. In the past, MoveOn members have contributed millions of dollars to political campaigns and mounted successful online petition drives on issues as diverse as the environment and human rights to budgetary priorities at the national and state levels. Although the investment requested for member activity is relatively low, the response of members is consistently high and immediate.

Observed result: An **increase** in Member Intensity. **(↑)**

*Activity*

MoveOn is active on an almost-daily basis, with a focus on both the national and state levels. Campaigns as diverse as encouraging California's Public Utility Commission to support solar energy to blocking the nomination of John Bolton as the United States Ambassador to the United Nations are regularly run by MoveOn. The ease

and immediacy afforded by the Internet in conducting activities of this sort allows

MoveOn to take on a variety of campaigns focused at all levels of politics and to generate

near real-time responses to events. The flexibility of the Internet allows a single email

call for action to include links to information resources to let members make an educated

decision about taking action.

Observed result: An **increase** in Activity. (↑)

*Coalitions/Alliances*

MoveOn works closely with numerous other groups to coordinate efforts and

publicize the activities or positions of these groups. MoveOn has worked closely with

groups such as the ANSWER Coalition to organize protests prior to the start of the War

on Iraq, for example, by using its network to publicize and coordinate the events.

MoveOn continues to work closely with anti-war activists engaged in vigils and other

activities. In 2006, MoveOn joined with the Christian Coalition and the Gun Owners of

America to raise money for advertisements on the issue of Net Neutrality. An advantage

of the Internet for organizations is through online coalitions members of groups that

might otherwise have nothing in common can work together on a common issue without

necessarily coming into contact and confronting issues of difference. This, for lack of a

better term, "virtual compartmentalization" facilitates single-issue alliances far beyond

anything possible in the physical world.

Observed result: An **increase** in Coalitions/Alliances. (↑)

*Success*

Without question, MoveOn has proven to be a successful organization. It has

created a virtual activist community that is large and powerful, and it is now arguably the

most important political advocacy group in the country. It has achieved success in part

by keeping its goals small and immediate, such as campaigns to deliver cyber-petitions to

elected officials, but it has also had success with larger and more long term objectives.

Among the major political advocacy groups in the United States, MoveOn stood alone in

opposing the War on Iraq in 2002-3. MoveOn's consistent opposition to the ongoing

conflict has contributed (in conjunction with the failure of United States military and

political policy in Iraq) to shifting public opinion against the war over time. MoveOn can

credibly claim a share of the credit for the Democratic takeover of Congress in 2006

based on its efforts in the areas of fundraising and voter mobilization.

Observed result: An **increase** in Success. (↑)


As Table 5.1 indicates, MoveOn shows a strong correlation with four of the six

Techno-Determinist variables, with the Situationalists on one, and possibly the Techno-

Skeptics on the remaining variable. Members participate frequently and in a variety of

ways, and increasingly not only through online options. The activity level of the

organization is quite high, encompassing a variety of types of activities as well as issues

and campaigns. MoveOn has a history of partnering with other organizations in formal,

informal and single-objective types of alliances such as their partnership with the

Christian Coalition and the Gun Owners of America on the issue of Net Neutrality. It is

appropriate to conclude that MoveOn's use of the Internet has produced, or at a very

minimum greatly facilitated, these outcomes. MoveOn has been successful as an

organization in meeting its specified goals as measured by influence in elections and in

legislative matters.  On the Success variable, MoveOn has seen a consistent increase in

recent years.

| TABLE 5.1 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Results for MoveOn.org Compared to Predicted Results** | | | | |
| | | PREDICTED OUTCOMES | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | MOVEON | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | SITUATIONALISTS | TECHNO-SKEPTICS |
| Hierarchy | ↔ | ↓ | ↔ | ? |
| Internal Communications | ↓ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Member Intensity | ↑ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Activity | ↑ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Coalitions/ Alliances | ↑ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Success | ↑ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| ↓   = Decrease<br>↑   = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br>?    = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases | | | | |

However, the MoveOn case also demonstrates some of the weaknesses of the

Techno-Determinist perspective as a predictive model of organizational behavior.

MoveOn has actually increased its level of Hierarchy and decreased Internal

Communications since 2006, when it arguably reached its pinnacle in terms of Success.

Although MoveOn was never a completely "open source" organization in the sense of a

completely interactive dialogue between members and leadership over organizational

strategy and agenda setting, there were some opportunities for members to have influence

in the past. However, since the 2006 election campaign, even these limited channels have been unavailable. In addition, a recent scandal involving "push polling" of members over a Democratic Iraq War measure in Congress raised suspicions among even stalwart supporters of MoveOn and has placed the organization on the defensive (Grieve 2007; Manjoo 2007; Pariser 2007).

As an example of a political organization that uses the Internet as its primary tool, MoveOn presents a strong test of the three perspectives in this study. The most remarkable aspect of this case is how it demonstrates the fluidity of the medium. As MoveOn has increased its membership it has been able to simultaneously increase both the number and range of issues and campaigns that it is involved in with minimal difficulty. Despite beginning as a single-issue advocacy group (asking Congress to censure President Clinton and "move on" to more pressing business), MoveOn has evolved over time to become arguably the dominant political advocacy organization in the United States. The use of the Internet was instrumental in this outcome, in terms of the opportunities that it provided for MoveOn.

**Conclusion**

MoveOn is a success story for not only those individuals and groups involved, but also represents a major innovation in the use of the Internet by political organizations. However, the organization now appears to stand at a crossroads. After nearly a decade of oppositional politics, it now faces the new challenge of working with a majority in Washington. This may well prove to be a bigger challenge to MoveOn than any previous campaign for two reasons. First, the expectations of its membership have been greatly

raised. After working for so long to achieve a majority position in Congress, members expect, and are beginning to demand, specific and significant changes. It is generally easier to be a critic than to be responsible for outcomes, and MoveOn now finds itself in just that position. Secondly, now that the Congress is allied to some degree with MoveOn the organization must determine whether to continue to use oppositional tactics to accomplish its objectives. For example, will MoveOn mount a campaign on Global Warming issues demanding Congress take immediate action? If it does, and Congress does not act, will MoveOn attack the new Democratic leadership that it worked so hard to put into power?

As of mid-2007, it appears that MoveOn has shifted its tactics to reflect its new relationship with Congress. Certainly the previously mentioned "push poll" on the Iraq War resolution suggests that MoveOn will be susceptible to supporting the Democratic leadership's agenda even when it represents a reversal of position, or is against known membership preferences. The continued suspension of MoveOn member bulletin boards and other communication tools is another ominous sign for the continued responsiveness of the organization. At present it is too early to tell what the eventual outcome of this new political alignment will be for MoveOn. Although it has always been tightly connected to the Democratic Party, it has also been a frequent critic of Democrats as well as Republicans on issues of importance to its membership. If this changes, the future shape of MoveOn is likely to be quite different than the first decade of its existence.

# Chapter 6

# Third Parties – Green and Reform

**Introduction**

Third parties represent a prime example of insurgent campaigns in the American political system. Third parties face steep obstacles in the two-party structure of the American political system, often spending most of their resources in efforts to gain ballot access and raise awareness of their campaigns while being dismissed, and often derided, in the media. The generally quixotic struggles of third parties in the United States become the subject of jokes or are ignored all together in press coverage of elections, although history demonstrates that these outlier parties and candidates have altered American politics to a much greater degree than their vote counts would suggest. For the most part, this is because third parties are generally more ideologically explicit than the major parties and tend to take strong positions on their core issues, which generally places them outside of the mainstream of political discourse, which tends to seek the "middle" of the political road. This middle of the road, however, is a constantly-moving target. In no small part, this is due to the efforts and campaigns of third parties, and demonstrates that political success can be had even without electoral victories.

The same problems that third parties face in elections also serve to increase their impact on the overall political system. Their small membership, which is usually united around a small set of issues, allows them to maintain a consistency of positions throughout the entire electoral process and make strategic gambles that major party candidates would never attempt. When successful, these tactical and strategic

innovations are quickly adopted by major party candidates and, in many cases, by the mainstream parties themselves.  In many instances third party innovations have produced shifts in political styles and tactics that have had far greater impact than the innovating campaign had in the electoral process.   Examples of third parties achieving this type of success can be found in the 1992 and 1996 Perot, and 2000 Nader, campaigns for president.

In 1996, although still consolidating itself as a formal party, the Reform Party held its national convention.  Designed as a two-part process, with meetings a week apart in Long Beach, CA and in Valley Forge, PA, this convention would prove to be a watershed event in the use of the Internet by political parties in the United States.   In advance of the Long Beach meeting, millions of ballots were sent out to party members to select nominees, with H. Ross Perot and former Colorado Governor Dick Lamm on the ballot as well as the option to write-in a candidate.  In the week between Long Beach and Valley Forge, party members would be allowed to vote for their eventual nominee.  Party members could vote through the mail, by phone, or, in a first for a national party in the United States, over the Internet.  Although returns through Internet voting were very low, largely because the technology itself was still new to most Americans, this was the first attempt to utilize the technology as a voting tool.  The 2000 Reform Party convention would again utilize a combined mail, phone, and Internet nomination process.

The Reform Party experiment with Internet voting would, however, be adopted in at least a limited form by major parties by the next election cycle.  In 2000, the Alaska Republican Party had allowed Internet voting in a non-binding straw poll, but later that year the Arizona Democratic Party became the first major party to allow Internet voting

in a binding state presidential primary. Voters were given the option to request a special identification number in order to cast their primary vote through the state Democratic Party website over a three-day period (Gibson 2001; Solop 2001). Despite a non-competitive race (Democratic challenger Bill Bradley had dropped out of the race at the beginning of the balloting), a record number of votes were cast, with nearly half (39,942) of the total of 85,970 ballots cast over the Internet. Although several court challenges related to voter access concerns and disparate impact were raised, the process was hailed by most observers as a success, particularly in terms of increasing young voter turnout. Security issues are a primary source of concern regarding Internet voting, however, and the lack of a solution to this issue has limited the usage of Internet voting since Arizona's experiment. The Pentagon attempted, and eventually rejected, Internet voting as an option for overseas service members, although Michigan's Democratic Party successfully used Internet voting for their 2004 primary (Wired 2004).

In the 2000 campaign, Green Party nominee Ralph Nader faced a daunting task of overcoming resource and perception barriers in his presidential campaign. Locked out of the debates by high FEC eligibility requirements, Nader's campaign also had little money available to fund large-scale voter outreach efforts like buying network television time. Recognizing that the campaign's appeal skewed generally (although not exclusively) towards younger voters, and that unregistered or infrequent voters represented their largest potential base of support, the Nader campaign launched a series of events called Super Rallies in cities across the country. These Super Rallies featured a speech by Nader, voter registration opportunities, and fundraising appeals, but also prominently featured celebrities and musical acts who supported Nader and appealed to the key

demographics the campaign sought to reach (Green 2000).  Ticket prices were low, no

more than $20 and often under $10, for these events held in arenas in major cities such as

Washington DC, New York City, and Seattle.  Tickets to every Super Rally were either

completely or nearly sold out, despite their being arranged only a few weeks in advance

to take advantage of lower rental rates on empty venues.  With such a short lead time and

a very small campaign budget, the Internet was used as the focus of publicity and

advertising, with websites and email lists used to spread the word.  These rallies served to

raise the profile of the campaign among the key (and often seemingly unreachable)

"young voter" demographic and raised what represented a significant amount of money

for a low-budget campaign.

In the 2004 presidential election, the Democratic Party and Kerry campaign

attempted to duplicate the Super Rally model by taking the "Vote for Change" tour across

the United States.  These concerts featured such acts as the Dixie Chicks, REM, Pearl

Jam, and (taking a political stance for the first time his career) Bruce Springsteen

(Gardner 2004).  Appearing in major venues across the country, the eighteen dates

throughout the fall of 2004 reached not only those who attended the shows, but most of

the country due to the news coverage associated with acts of such high profile.  These

rallies, which served as fundraisers as well as get-out-the-vote efforts, represented the

first major effort by a political party to directly utilize the vehicle of a concert tour, and

can be traced to the efforts of the 2000 Super Rallies organized by the Green Party.

Third parties have often been ahead of the curve on issues and approaches to

politics, and they continue to exercise influence disproportionate to their vote totals

simply by virtue of being able to take risks with strategies and tactics that major parties

are unable or willing to take.  Appealing directly to voters through the use of available

media, and thereby controlling the content and context of the message, allows parties to

make detailed cases based on issues and positions.  A strategy of relying on entertainment

industry endorsements, while certainly not new, has become much more central to

campaigns through the use of national concert tours of musicians in support of candidates

and parties.  The use of the Internet as a political tool and a means of organization is no

different, with third parties forging new uses for the technology and increasing

opportunities for member involvement through the Internet.  While it appears that the

Green and Reform parties have peaked in terms of their national electoral impact since

the 2000 presidential election, their impact on politics more generally is still being felt;

particularly in how parties utilize the Internet.


**Background**

The United States is a two-party system in theory and practice, although third

parties have had some success in the electoral process.  The Republican Party itself began

as a third party in 1856, and won the Presidency with Abraham Lincoln in 1860.  Parties

such as the Populists, Socialists, Progressives, and Dixiecrats all played significant roles

in deciding presidential elections during the twentieth century.  Throughout the 1990s,

independent and third party campaigns began to make inroads at the local and state

levels, most notably in former professional wrestler Jesse "The Body" Ventura's victory

in the Minnesota governor's race in 1998.  However, in what is structured as a winner-

take-all political system, the potential for electoral success of third parties in the United

States is limited.  Considered "spoilers" at best, and some form of stealth opposition

campaign trick at worst, the two major parties have seemingly directed more vitriol against third parties since the late 1990s than they have at each other.  In recent years, this hostility towards third parties can be traced to two parties and their presidential campaigns: the Reform Party in 1992, and the Green Party in 2000.

The Green and Reform Parties are ideal cases of third parties in the United States, as not only do they meet the criteria identified for case selection in this study but they also started as organizations before they adopted the Internet.  This allows for a more detailed consideration of the adoption process, which is not possible in the other two cases (Dean for America and MoveOn.org) as they began in the post-1996 era.  The adoption of the Internet, and the way in which usage evolved in these two parties, offers a unique insight into the claims of the perspectives being tested in this project.  A detailed examination of this pre-Internet adoption period is included in this chapter in order to draw out these experiences.

For the purpose of simplicity, even though the Reform Party did not formally come into existence until 1996, the term will be used for the 1992 Perot organization as it formed the core of what eventually became the Reform Party.  In all cases the term Reform Party refers to the Perot organization and the later-created Reform Party of the United States.  State, local, and competing national parties under the Reform banner will be referred to by their full names to avoid confusion.  Green Party will be used here to refer to the Green Party of the United States.  State, local, and competing national parties under the Green banner will be referred to by their full names to avoid any confusion.

Third party electoral campaigns are generally marginal affairs, and increasingly so as we move up the levels of politics to the national stage.  Third parties rarely have a

significant effect on elections, and it is even rarer for a third party candidate to win an election. Republicans and Democrats have dominated American politics since the late 1800s and, despite the high-profile campaigns of the Reform and Green parties in the past decade and a half, these major parties have maintained their duopoly at the federal level. With the high-profile exception of Minnesota Governor Jesse "The Body" Ventura's victory in 1998 as a Reform Party candidate, third parties have also had little success at the level of state politics. A combination of increasingly strict party eligibility requirements, financial barriers, voter misgiving, and the winner-take-all characteristics of the electoral system serve to limit third party prospects in electoral politics.

However, from 1992 through 2000 two third parties did undertake this seemingly impossible task and had a significant influence on the outcome of two national elections. In 1992, Perot's campaign took more votes away from Bush than Clinton, which likely helped to shift a few critical states to the Democratic candidate. In 2000, a combination of Nader voters and the defection of registered Democrats shifted the state of Florida to the Republicans (Zarrella *et al*. 2000). In addition, poor ballot design in Palm Beach County, Florida is alleged to have resulted in several thousand voters either miscasting their Gore votes for Buchanan or voting twice for president and having their ballots discarded. These effects on the outcome of elections, however important they might be, have produced a general backlash against third parties in the United States since 2000. However, these electoral effects are only part of the story of the impact these campaigns had on American politics.

In 1992 Ross Perot, a Texas computer industry billionaire, announced an Independent run for the White House against Republican George H.W. Bush, the sitting

president, and eventual Democratic nominee Bill Clinton, the Governor of Arkansas. Early polls of the three-way race showed Perot in the lead, and he was proclaimed the winner of two of the three presidential debates by a majority of analysts. He was never able to reclaim his position as frontrunner after he suspended his campaign in the summer of 1992, however. Soon after getting back into the race, he appeared on 60 Minutes with allegations that he had left the campaign because the Bush campaign was spying on his family and had planned to ruin his daughter's wedding (Barrett 1992). In the end, Perot won 19% of the vote despite his curious campaign strategies, and his campaign has been blamed by many for costing Bush the election. Analysis of exit polling and election results by Menendez (1996) demonstrates a significant correlation between support for Perot and shifts from a 1988 Republican win to a 1992 Democratic win in numerous key local and state data. Within just three years, and in time for the 1996 campaign, the major parties worked together to craft new election laws designed to shut third parties out of the process by effectively blocking their access to debates, raising ballot access requirements, and making public financing more difficult to obtain.

The 1996 election saw Ross Perot again run for president, having formalized his "United We Stand America" independent campaign into the Reform Party of the United States of America in an announcement on CNN's Larry King Show in September, 1995 (Nordin 2001, 27). However, shifts in the FEC criteria used to determine debate eligibility, left Perot shut out of the debate process and he was unable to gain traction among the electorate despite buying tens of millions of dollars of time on major networks to outline his positions. Perot eventually finished with 8.5% of the vote, enough to qualify the Reform Party for federal matching funds in 2000 but less than half of his 1992

total.  Perot would continue to be involved in the Reform Party, but would not run for president again.

In 1998, the Reform Party experienced it highest-profile electoral victory when Jesse "The Body" Ventura, a former professional wrestler, was elected Governor of Minnesota.  While at first an independent candidate, Ventura sought and won the Reform Party of Minnesota's nomination for governor and eventually won with 37% of the vote in a three-way race against Republican St. Paul Mayor, Norm Coleman (later elected United States Senator in 2002) at 34% and Democrat state Attorney General, Hubert H. Humphrey III at 28% (Hauser 2002, 40).  As the highest elected official from the Reform Party, Ventura quickly became a national symbol for the organization, stepping into the void left by Perot's reluctance to take a more visible role in the party.  In 2000, tensions over the leadership of the party would lead Ventura to challenge Perot's supporters over the selection of the national Reform Party leadership, leading to a showdown that eventually led to Ventura leaving what he publicly termed a "dysfunctional" party (Hauser 2002, 291).

The Reform Party struggled to identify a 2000 candidate after Ross Perot declined to consider the nomination.  A power struggle within the Reform Party over the leadership and direction of the party created a fractious nomination process, which eventually produced a nominee but also led to many state parties disaffiliating themselves from the national party and a series of lawsuits and other legal proceedings.  The appeal of access to $12.6 million in federal matching funds based on Perot's 1996 showing, combined with a lack of leadership, resulted in the nomination of former Nixon advisor, television pundit, and onetime Republican presidential candidate Pat Buchanan.

Although Buchanan was new to the party, he was able to parlay his existing national political organization (known as Buchanan's Brigades) into enough delegate support to receive the nomination. The resulting split in the party over the 2000 nomination process and the poor performance of the Buchanan ticket greatly weakened the Reform Party.

1996 also saw the first presidential run by Ralph Nader as a Green Party candidate. Nader, a longtime consumer advocate and founder of numerous public interest groups, accepted the request of several state Green parties to run for president in their states although never received a national endorsement from the party. In some states, Nader was listed simply as an Independent, although he was considered the Green nominee at the national level. In a campaign in which he spent under $5,000 and never registered to vote as a Green or joined the party organization itself, Nader pulled in just under 1% of the vote nationally. However, his campaign had the effect of mobilizing state-level Green parties to conduct petition drives, resulting in ballot recognition and an increased profile for the party across the nation.

The 2000 United States presidential election remains controversial to this day, and continues to generate a backlash against third party candidates across the nation. The 2000 election matched Republican George W. Bush, Governor of Texas, against Democrat Al Gore, the sitting Vice President who faced no meaningful primary challenge. Entering the mix, however, was Ralph Nader who had again received the formal nomination of the national Green Party organization. Facing concerted efforts by both the Republicans and Democrats to block third party access to presidential debates and other national forums, Nader's campaign stalled and he eventually received less than 3% of the national vote. Nader's influence, however, was felt in the state of Florida,

which after a short-lived and disorganized dispute over ballot counts delivered the election to Bush.  The blame for Gore's loss was laid squarely (and probably unfairly) on Nader and the Greens, making them the target of Democrat's anger for the failure of Gore's campaign.

The 2004 election presented a challenge to the Green and Reform parties.  Angry voters and pundits continued to blame Nader and the Greens for Gore's defeat, and with a polarized electorate in general there seemed to be few opportunities for third party candidates to make headway with voters.  A split in the Reform Party in the wake of Buchanan's disastrous 2000 campaign had torn the party apart, and a lack of organizational direction had led to the loss of ballot access in most states and the defection of the majority of the membership.   In addition, continued revisions to electoral law after 2000 had created almost-insurmountable barriers for third party candidates to participate in presidential debates or receive federal matching funds.  In order for candidates to be admitted to the debates in 2004, for example, they had to have at least 15% support nationwide based on an average of five polls.  To qualify for matching funds, a party must have received at least 5% of the nationwide vote in the previous election.  Internal disputes and schisms within the Green and Reform parties weakened both even further, with both parties undergoing substantial reorganization and experiencing splits of various degrees within their national organizations.

As the 2004 election grew closer, both parties determined that they would field a presidential ticket, although there was no consensus within the parties as to who these candidates would be.  The Greens, still stung by their scapegoating after the 2000 election, were deeply divided over whether to run a candidate, and if so whether to

nominate Nader again.  In no small part due to Nader's continued reluctance to register as a Green or actively participate in the party nomination process, the party eventually decided that Nader would not be an appropriate candidate and nominated David Cobb, a long-time political activist and General Counsel for the Green Party.  With little party support, and a very low-profile campaign, Cobb received just over 100,000 votes in the 2004 election, about one-sixth the total of Nader's 1996 non-campaign and well short of the over 2 million votes Nader received in 2000.

After the turmoil following the disastrous Buchanan candidacy of 2000 and the intervening years of disorganization, which cost them ballot spots in many states and the splitting off of state parties, the Reform Party began to reorganize in 2003 after removing most of the Buchanan leadership from the national party structure.  Realizing that they could not mount a credible national campaign given the condition of the party organization, the party offered their nomination to the most high-profile Independent candidate that they could find –  Ralph Nader.  Without ballot access in most states, and with no effective national party organization, Nader's Reform Party campaign gained little traction, made no significant impact, and eventually received well under 1% of the nationwide vote.

In 1992 and 2000, third party presidential campaigns played what has been perceived in the conventional wisdom as a major role in deciding the eventual winner of the contest.  In 1992 the Perot campaign actually led the three-candidate race in the polls at one early point in the campaign, while the Nader campaign of 2000 has been roundly castigated as a spoiler campaign that delivered the White House to George W. Bush over Al Gore.  This chapter will not attempt to analyze these claims in detail, as these claims

are irrelevant to this project and have been considered from numerous perspectives already.  However, the result of the 1992 and 2000 campaigns was that, rather than building legitimacy for third parties in the United States, these elections instead served to generate hostility among voters and have encouraged the two major parties to enact increasingly high barriers to third party candidates in each successive electoral cycle.  In large part due to these external factors, both the Reform and Green Parties have experienced internal turmoil and reconfiguration in recent years, both of which have been enabled by the Internet.

**Technology and the Green and Reform Parties**

The role of technology in the Green and Reform parties has been quite different through the years, which offers two clear alternatives for how the Internet can be applied to politics.  The Reform Party is a top-down organization, in that it is primarily organized at the national level and there is not a firm organizational structure connected to state and local politics.  The party's use of the Internet reflects this approach, in that the technology is largely used to deliver messages to members rather than to encourage dialogue or to involve members in decision-making.  The Green Party, on the other hand, evolved from the bottom-up, expanding on a history of established local organizations allying (and occasionally competing) around issues and campaigns.  As a result, their approach to the Internet as a party reflects this structure, with the local organizations taking the lead in most cases.

The very different starting points and unifying ideologies of these parties has led to vastly different party structures and applications of Internet technology.   Although

they are engaged in the same general political activities, they have very different origins and, as we will see, values and unifying principles. As a test of the impact of the Internet on political organizations, it then makes sense to examine these parties together, side by side. By comparing these two organizations, we can gain a clearer picture of the impact of the Internet on third parties in the United States. Examining the ways in which these two parties converge, diverge, and maintain their differences will be instructive for the purposes of evaluating the effect of Internet usage on political organizations.

*The Green Party and Technology*

The Green Party in the United States is best thought of as a coalition of many parties rather than one cohesive whole. The Green Party did not begin as a national party until 2001, following years of local political organizations forming under the Green banner. Local Green organizations created independent structures based on a variety of European parties rather than using one common model, resulting in a myriad of groups with differing organizing principles and political programs. Some Green parties were very narrowly concerned with environmental issues, and included members of a broad variety of political philosophies and persuasions that agreed on only environmental issues. Other Green parties were focused on much broader social justice issues, often with left-leaning economic positions, and concerned with the environment within the context of much broader social reforms.

Local U.S. Green organizations began reaching out to each other and building networks in the 1970s, but the concept of a national party did not become reality until 1984 when the first national meeting of Green parties took place (Green Party 2006).

Rapid growth in local organizations took place through the 1980s, but growth of a national party slowed after a split among Greens in 1991 over the direction of the Green movement. This dispute revolved largely around whether active participation in electoral politics was the appropriate vehicle for the movement, or whether the political system was so corrupt that involvement in it would require too great of a compromise of Green values. By 1996, there were two national Green Parties, the Greens/Green Party USA and the Association of State Green Parties. The Association of State Green Parties changed its name to the Green Party of the United States in 2000, and was recognized by the Federal Elections Commission as a national electoral party in 2001 (Green Party 2001). Efforts to reunite the two Green Parties have been unsuccessful, with both groups claiming status as the legitimate representative of the Green movement in the United States.

The approach of the Green Party to adopting Internet technology has been a deliberative and iterative process, with each step carefully considered in relation to the organizing principles of the party itself. As early as 1997, the official adoption of Internet technology by the party was debated within the national organization. At a meeting in October of that year, the issue of Internet communication appeared on the agenda as part of the Communication Committee's presentation to the group. Their discussion focused on the use of email, defining what role email would play in facilitating discussion among the party Coordinating Committee members. Specifically the discussion focused on two issues: how much discussion should take place in a virtual manner (i.e., was it to be used as a forum for substantive and controversial issues, or limited to coordination issues and basic information sharing) and the means of insuring

that all members could participate in discussions taking place online (Green Party Minutes 1997). As an additional point, a member of the Communications Committee offered the possibility of online Chat as an option for virtual meetings. The minutes also note a discussion about proposals to raise funds by selling Green Party merchandise online and to use their newly-created website for party outreach. No final resolution was reached on these issues, in large part due to concerns about uneven access to the Internet among members.

Minutes of the 1998 meeting of the national Coordinating Committee indicate that these debates continued, with little progress towards defining a single strategy for the party's use of the Internet (Green Party Minutes 1998). However, the minutes indicate that email usage within the Coordinating Committee had become commonplace in the intervening year, with numerous mentions of documents being emailed between members and of email being used for collaborative work and as a coordination tool. The Accreditation and Platform Committees were singled out in particular for their use of online tools to complete their work over the previous year, and again mentions were made of the potential for fundraising online through the sale of green (i.e. environmentally-friendly) products and party paraphernalia. However, no specific resolution of these issues was reached, and no unified party program for the use of Internet technology existed.

By the 1999 meeting, Internet usage had become normalized for the party, and their annual meeting notes report the use of email listserves for members and that they had established a permanent website presence (Green Party Minutes 1999). The 2000 meeting minutes indicate that an email decision-making system had been successfully

adopted by the Steering Committee, and that the party was continuing to use web pages

for outreach and fundraising efforts (Green Party Minutes 2000a).  Later in 2000, we see

the first mention of creating a formal network of state party webmasters, in an effort to

coordinate and standardize online efforts among the state organizations, and numerous

mentions of email as a standard operating tool for communication, including voting on

internal party issues (Green Party Minutes 2000b).

The process of adopting the Internet within the Green Party was led from the

bottom, with committee members and local organizations devising approaches on an ad-

hoc basis and then presenting them for consideration by the organization as a whole.

Experimentation and learning resulted in accepted usage models that were consistent with

party philosophies regarding participation and access, as well as environmental concerns.

This served to slow down the adoption process for the Greens, yet produced outcomes

that were satisfactory for the organization and that did not result in significant disputes

within the party.  Although individual members of the Green Party were, based on the

data available, early adopters of the Internet and local and state organizations utilized it

by the mid-1990s, the national party took a slower approach to identify an inclusive

approach to the Internet.  By the 2000 election, arguably the high water mark for the

national Green Party, the organization had arrived at a strategy that included a national

party web presence as well as a presidential campaign web strategy.  In part this was due

to regular usage and increased access to the technology in general, but also due to

realization within the party that the technology could be an effective political tool

consistent with the values and philosophies of the party itself.

*The Reform Party and Technology*

In 1992, Reform Party presidential candidate H. Ross Perot entered the [ race as an independent candidate.  Experiencing difficulty in getting the media to cover his positions in detail and facing an uphill struggle against the major parties, his campaign spent nearly $1 million on October 1 to buy simultaneous hour-long chunks of national television network time to provide an uninterrupted forum for his campaign positions (Nordin 2001, 21).  Perot, a billionaire who was able to commit substantial amounts of his own money to the race, appeared in person behind a desk with a series of charts and graphs explaining the economic costs of free trade and outlining his alternatives to the then-pending North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Nordin 2001, 21).  Although his admittedly awkward on-screen presentation style was derided by many pundits and parodied mercilessly by comedians, it proved to be a breakthrough moment for his campaign and for the concept of direct candidate communication with voters.  Throughout the rest of the campaign, Perot's campaign would spend additional tens of millions of dollars on television time, mostly in 30 and 60 minute chunks, to air infomercials and program-length campaign advertisements in an effort to reach out directly to voters.  Although not an Internet-based campaign strategy, it used commonly-available technology at the time in a new, and arguably revolutionary, way.

This tactic of reaching out directly to voters on a massive scale with detailed policy substance rather than merely style and soundbites has become a staple of insurgent as well as mainstream campaigns in the years since it was embraced by the Perot campaign in 1992.  Although reminiscent in some ways of Franklin Roosevelt's fireside chats, the opportunity for a third party candidate to address the nation on a scale

previously reserved for sitting presidents is a remarkable shift.  Of course, Perot had

practically unlimited resources at his disposal and was already deemed a credible

candidate at that point.  Perot would later use the same television strategy in 1996,

although on a smaller scale and with less of an impact than in 1992.  Since 1996,

however, the advent of the worldwide web has enabled even campaigns without massive

amounts of money to control content and provide detailed and concrete content to voters.

This has become even more important since Perot's 1992 television appearance as major

media outlets spend less time covering substantive matters in favor of entertainment and

lifestyle news.

Through the Internet, campaigns of all sizes and financial resources can now

reach out directly to voters in a variety of formats, including text, sound, and video.  In

the 2004 Democratic presidential primary, the insurgent Howard Dean campaign

introduced "DeanTV", a website exclusively devoted to making video and audio of Dean

speeches, campaign events, and media appearances available on demand to anyone with

Internet access.  The ability to provide substantive content directly to the public in its

entirety has allowed campaigns to reach out more directly to issue-focused voters.  In

addition, making this content available on the Internet lowers the outreach cost of the

content to nearly zero.  The Republican (http://www.gop.com/News) and Democratic

(http://dscc.org/news) parties have since produced their own versions of this format on

party websites designed to provide the same sort of direct, unfiltered access to audio and

video content.  Campaigns and parties continue to increase their presence on the Internet

with similar presentations, now not only limited to official websites but also posting on

such public sites as Youtube.com and Myspace.com.

It is interesting to note that despite being founded by computer industry billionaire H. Ross Perot, the Reform Party experienced great difficulty in adopting a coherent Internet strategy for politics. This is likely in no small part due to the somewhat difficult growing pains the party had in evolving from the independent 1992 Perot campaign for president, although it may also have some correlation to the political values of the party itself. In fact, these two factors are likely interrelated. The Perot campaigns of 1992 and 1996 were very much personality-driven affairs, in that Perot's background as a successful businessman and his limited (but high-profile) experience in foreign and domestic affairs were very much the driving force behind his candidacy, as described in Posner (1996). Notably, in 1992 there was no party at all, but rather the party was created *ex post facto* around Perot's run to secure benefits such as matching funds and ballot access that his showing earned.

In 1996, the Reform Party became the first party to use the Internet as an option for voting at its presidential nominating convention. The process of nominating the candidate was open to anyone legally eligible to vote who had officially registered with the party by mail, phone, or through the Internet. 21 million ballots in total were distributed by mail, each with a unique identifier number to ensure that each ballot would only be used to cast one vote. A total of 1.3 million ballots (roughly 6%) were returned, with 88 percent of these returned by mail, 8 percent by phone, and somewhere between 1 and 4 percent (between 1,700 and 6,800 depending on the source of the information) cast through the Internet (Washington Technology 1996). Even within the context of the very low overall voter participation rate, the Internet response was quite underwhelming. However, in the summer of 1996 only 19% of Americans were online at all (and roughly

half of them were new to the technology from the same period in 1995), so this number can be assumed to reflect the general lack of access and unfamiliarity with the technology (Harris Poll 2006).

In 2000, the Reform Party again undertook an open nomination process for their presidential candidate.  A total of 877,928 ballots were sent out by mail to party members identified by the candidates in July 2000, which could be returned by mail over the next month (Keegan 2000).  Each ballot also included a unique identifier to allow Delegates the option to cast their ballots online during a three-day period in August.  79,148 ballots in total were returned (around 9%), with 5,437 (just under 7%) of these cast through the Internet, while 248 attempts to vote both ways were caught due to the identification details on the ballots and 35 unsuccessful attempts to hack the online system were blocked (Keegan 2000).

The increase in online balloting was representative of the overall increase in Internet usage by the population (around 57% in 2000 versus 19% in 1996) but was still a small percentage of the votes cast (Harris Poll 2006).  The eventual Reform Party nominee, Pat Buchanan, won with just over 63% of the total vote to John Hagelin's nearly 37%, although Hagelin carried the online vote by a nearly 2-1 margin (3,475 to 1,962) (Keegan 2000).  A dispute erupted at the convention over the refusal of the Buchanan campaign to release information about the delegates it had sent ballots to, and the disputes that were building since 1996 within the Reform Party led to the breakup of the party shortly afterwards.  Within a matter of weeks, the state organizations began choosing sides between Buchanan and Hagelin, resulting in a number of court cases over which candidate would be on the state Reform Party ballot lines in the election (Ritcsh

2000).  Eventually, Buchanan won this dispute, with Hagelin running on the Natural Law Party ticket (as he had before) and many of the state organizations deciding to leave the national organization altogether.

As a party that was essentially organized as an afterthought, it is not a great surprise that there was, and continues to be, substantial internal disagreement about what, exactly, the party stands for.  Despite gaining 19% of the vote in 1992 and a respectable 8.5% in 1996, the party has since split into several competing parties.  Representing a disparate coalition of opponents of free trade, disaffected members of the major parties, and traditionally independent voters attracted by the moderate positioning of the party, Perot's Reform Party had little in the way of a core unifying philosophy or ideology. Perot himself filled that void with the force of his personality and his absolute confidence in his beliefs.  In a political system populated by calculatedly bland candidates with focus group-tested moderate positions, Perot's appeal to many voters was simply his general aura of confidence and authority.  With the power of the party leader as the central ideology, it is easy to see how the party that grew around his bid for the White House would embrace a rigidly hierarchical structure.

The Reform party began as a single campaign by a single candidate seeking the highest office in the country.  After the party was officially established, independent campaigns and candidates from across the country began to affiliate themselves with the Reform organization as a means of tapping into existing activist networks and gaining ballot access on the Reform Party line.  The party itself, however, struggled to establish a single common identity among these partners, which included candidates from the left and right and a multitude of positions on issues.  In some states, more than one

organization laid claim to the Reform Party name, with court cases dragging out over years and paralyzing the Reform Party movement across the nation.

The demands of simultaneously trying to build the party into a national competitor and establishing an identity separate from H. Ross Perot resulted in the party imploding in the run-up to the 2000 election. The rigid hierarchy that the party began with was simply not compatible with the variety of campaigns and local organizations working under the Reform banner. Perhaps the biggest blow to the unity of the party, and certainly the biggest public relations disaster, occurred in 2000 when Minnesota Governor Jesse "The Body" Ventura split with the party amid a series of very public criticisms over the continuing role of Perot and his perception of a lack of "seriousness" within the organization (Hauser 2002, 291). Disputes over the identity of the state-level Reform Party organizations soon erupted, as groups fought over the financial and ballot access resources attached to the party name. Allegations of improper ballot distribution by Pat Buchanan at the 2000 party convention proved to be the final straw in breaking up the Reform Party organization, which contributed greatly to the resulting poor showing by Buchanan in the general election. Much of this bitter breakup of the Reform Party would take place online, with rival websites run by competing factions leading the fragmentation of the organization.

**Green and Reform Party Members**

Third parties by their very nature attract supporters who are unhappy with the status quo and have rejected the two major parties. The wide variety of third parties in the United States ranges from parties with broadly defined ideological agendas such as

the Libertarian and Socialist parties, to very narrow single-issue parties like the Prohibition Party (active since 1869) and Marijuana Party, and parties such as the Libertarian National Socialist Green Party and the Pansexual Peace Party that are as much a critique of U.S. politics as they are serious political contenders (Gunzberger 2007). While third parties have tended to have little electoral success in the United States (with a few exceptions notable mostly for their uniqueness), they have proven to be effective over the long-term in shifting public debate and moving the major parties in different directions. Members of abolitionist third parties found a home in the newly-formed Republican Party in the late-1800s, as did the segregationist Democrats who formed the Dixiecrats a century later – forming the nucleus of the larger shift of what would become known as "Reagan Democrats" since the 1980s.

The Green and Reform parties have been populated by members that are equally dissatisfied members of the major parties as well as ideologically-driven voters seeking a vehicle for furthering their agendas. Both parties capitalized on the grievances of voters, focusing on their feeling that their concerns were being ignored in mainstream politics. Candidates and members of both parties expressed a "Republicans and Democrats are the same" philosophy, excoriating the "Washington elite" for their corruption by "special-interests" and "corporate influence" while offering an alternative political party that would focus on repairing economic and social problems. During the height of their influence, from 1992 to 2000, these two parties offered a critique of the major parties and gained nationwide attention, if not quite legitimacy, by offering the promise of new political norm. These parallels between the Reform and Green parties, however, neglect the fact that the characteristics and motivations of the two party memberships are in

reality quite different. This section will examine the characteristics of the memberships

of the two parties and explore how that impacted their adoption of the Internet and

influenced the results that these parties experienced.

*Green Party Members*

The national Green Party exists as a confederation of state and local Green Party

organizations. These sub-national parties are the primary actors in the party, with the

national level of leadership taking the secondary role of coordination and serving as a

central unifying point without exercising a great deal of authority over the sub-national

levels. The average Green Party member is primarily a member of their local party, and

therefore it is difficult to put together a single profile of the average Green Party member

in the United States. However, some general demographic trends can be found in exit

polls of voters and studies that have been conducted at the local and state levels.

In the 2000 presidential election, Ralph Nader received nearly three million votes

– a number far greater than the total Green Party membership in the United States. The

general public perception of Nader voters is that in both 1996 and 2000 they tended to be

white, educated, financially well-off, more likely to be engaged in progressive politics,

and Democratic-leaning in their affiliation. While this model is representative of a large

portion of Nader's 2000 base, it is not a completely accurate profile. Nader also received

a large percentage of the Latino vote in 2000 – an astoundingly disproportionate 14%

nationwide – despite the general assumption that Latino voters tend to be more moderate

to conservative in their political leanings (Simmons and Simmons 2006, 234).

Furthermore, analysis of voter data reveals that of those who actually voted for Nader in 2000 only about one-fourth would have voted for Gore had Nader not been a candidate, while almost 12% would have voted for someone other than Gore (including Bush) and the remainder would not have voted at all (Simmons and Simmons 2006, 239). Taking these results into account, it appears that the Green Party campaign managed to mobilize significant numbers of non-voters and a wider variety of political leanings than the general assumptions about Nader voters would suggest. While it is difficult to ascertain the motivations of individual voters, it is clear that the Nader voter of 2000 was not limited to Green Party members or traditional progressive activists.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, many Greens were inspired by the electoral successes of European Green Parties and began to organize for participation in electoral politics. However, many members of the party were uncomfortable with the prospect of entering the political system that they were so critical of, and this internal disagreement led to the split of the party in 1991 into the GreenParty USA, which opposed involvement in electoral politics, and the Association of State Green Parties (eventually the Green Party of the United States), which wanted to form an electoral party (Green Party 2006). Internal disagreement over the Nader presidential campaigns of 1996 and (especially) 2000 created additional splits within the national party, resulting in little support by local Green organizations for the 2004 Cobb presidential campaign. Although the Green Party's forays into national politics became a disruptive factor for national party unity, it has not weakened the state and local parties.

The unifying core value of the party at all levels is environmentalism. This concern for the environment led to the founding of the first U.S. local parties in the early

1970s, and has been the basis of the local parties over the decades since. However, the party also addresses a number of other issues, offering a political program that addresses key economic, political, and social issues as well as environmental concerns (Green Party 2000). The Green Party is based on a set of "Ten Key Values", which at the national level include:

- Grassroots Democracy

- Social Justice and Equal Opportunity

- Ecological Wisdom

- Non-Violence

- Decentralization

- Community-based Economics and Economic Justice

- Feminism and Gender Equity

- Respect for Diversity

- Personal and Global Responsibility

- Future Focus and Sustainability

However, state and local levels are free, and in fact encouraged, to create their own version of these ten values or to interpret the meaning of the national set of values in their own way. Some variations, and links to many others, can be found at http://www.greens.org/values/. In general, the average Green Party member's own ideological beliefs drew them to the Greens and keep them involved with the Party.

The Greens, then, stand in contrast to the Reform Party in that the basis for the party itself is member ideology, and the local organizations are encouraged to interpret party values based on local concerns and to choose their level of involvement with the national party. This grassroots approach has proven to be resilient, and despite the aftereffects of the 2000 election the Green Party has continued to make inroads at the local level. Having a set of shared core values, even with slight variations, has maintained cohesion within the party. Even though the competing national party structures have been unable to reconcile their differences to this point, local organizations from each of these camps continue to affiliate with each other and work together on common issues and local campaign efforts.

*Reform Party Members*

The Reform Party grew out of the appeal of an independent presidential bid by one man, but was able to build a working coalition with many other groups throughout the 1990s and become a legitimate national party. Over the course of its brief history, however, the Reform Party has seen many changes in its membership. Reform Party members initially represented many backgrounds, ranging from committed supporters of other third parties to disaffected Republicans and Reagan Democrats. Members of the Reform Party included many voters who were new to third parties but found Perot's message of moderate social policies and economic chauvinism appealing, as well as longtime members of other third parties that found common purpose with his campaign and, post-1995, found opportunity with the formation of the Reform Party itself. Upon closer examination, however, we see that the characteristics of members have continually

changed in each presidential election from 1992-2004.  The Reform Party peaked

nationally in the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections and, with the exception of the

election of Jesse "The Body" Ventura as governor of Minnesota in 1998, it has had little

impact at the state and local levels.  However, the political style and goals of the party

have been far more successful in the political arena than Reform Party candidates, in

large part due to the Republican Party reaching out to party members.

In the 1992 election, Perot was able to tap into several notable factors in those

states and localities in which he did particularly well.  Two main factors were key to his

support: areas that were experiencing economic distress and had a history of supporting

third party candidates at some point in the past (Menendez 1996, Part One).  Perot 1992

voters were predominantly white, middle class, from areas that had not benefited from

the Reagan-Bush economic program, and who found themselves facing new economic

competition from free trade.  Perot did particularly well in states that had recently

supported candidates such as George Wallace and John Anderson, since there was an

existing acceptance of voting for third parties.  Additional characteristics, such as living

in an area with high growth and holding moderate views on social issues, also tended to

favor Perot in 1992 (Menendez 1996, Part One).  These voters were part of the key

"swing vote" demographic that major parties compete over in elections, and their support

gave Perot's campaign a politically moderate tendency.  The 1992 Perot campaign

membership can therefore best be seen as a collection of dissatisfied individuals who

found an appeal in Perot's message and supported his candidacy as a means of expressing

their frustration with the two major parties.  This would change by 1996 as internal and

external pressures were brought to bear on the Perot movement.

After the Reform Party was formally founded in 1995, many state-level third parties that had worked with Perot's 1992 campaign, such as the Independence Party of Minnesota, formally joined the new national organization. This provided both organizations with immediate strategic advantages: the national Reform Party gained statewide ballot access and the advantages of existing local organizations, while the state party gained the benefits of being part of a national party such as a higher profile and access to significant financial resources. These immediate gains for the state and national organizations proved, in the end, to be more than offset by the ideological and strategic differences among them, and would contribute to the near-total collapse of the Reform Party just a few years later. The Reform Party had moved from a collection of aggrieved individuals seeking new leadership to a coalition of sympathetic, but hardly united, parties with competing leadership agendas and ideologies.

By 1996, a sizable percentage of Perot's 1992 base had joined the Republican Party, in large part due to the promises of political reform contained in the 1994 "Contract with America", such as term limits and fundraising reform, which were designed specifically to appeal to Perot supporters (Koch 2001, 80). The success of this electoral strategy was two-fold: in the short-term it returned a Republican majority to Congress, but in the long-term it recovered the "swing" voters lost to Perot in 1992 for the Republicans. The newly formed Reform Party would again nominate Perot in 1996, but it would not be able to recapture the appeal of his 1992 campaign and would instead rely on new alliances with state-level third parties as its key base of support. The average Perot voter continued to be predominantly white, middle class, from areas that had not benefited from the Reagan-Bush economic program, and confronted with new economic

competition from free trade as in 1992, but many voters in this demographic had either

joined the Republicans or felt less threatened (and therefore less likely to vote) than in

1992.  The Reform Party base of support had largely shifted from individuals to third

party coalitions, narrowing his appeal in some areas and setting up what would become a

disastrous struggle for the leadership of the party in 2000.

By 2000, the Reform Party had begun to decline on the national stage due to

infighting and continued adoption of its message by the two major parties.  Leadership of

the Reform Party had devolved into factions, with Perot still exercising some influence

over the party but the direction of the party being contested by factions backing John

Hagelin (a previous presidential candidate with the Natural Law Party), and newly-

arrived Reform Party member Pat Buchanan, a former Republican Party presidential

candidate.  Amid allegations of vote fraud in the nomination process, and fierce

competition over the $12.6 million in federal matching funds for the party earned by

Perot's 1996 campaign, the two factions were forced to take the case to court in a number

of states to decide which candidate would be the Reform nominee (Ritsch 2000).  The

split of the Reform Party into Hagelin and Buchanan factions after the 2000 Reform Party

convention would weaken the party and render it essentially a non-factor in the 2000

general election.  Pat Buchanan eventually won the court cases and was named the

official Reform Party nominee, receiving the federal matching funding for his campaign.

Buchanan would finish with less than one-half of one percent of the national vote

(448,895), while Hagelin (running again with the Natural Law Party) received even fewer

votes (83,714) (Federal Election Commission 2001).

The results of the 2000 election further weakened the Reform Party, having split into two factions during the 2000 nomination process, and saw further defections of state parties and the key moderate voter base of 1992. After the dust settled, the Reform Party membership in 2000 consisted largely of the "Buchanan Brigades", state and local groups organized around the anti-immigration and far-right social conservatism of Buchanan himself. By 2004, the Reform Party had ceased to be relevant on the national stage, was wracked by continued internal dissension, and had lost matching fund status. Mismanagement of the party by Buchanan's faction resulted in the loss of ballot lines in most states, while neglect had eroded the linkages between the state and national leadership. In an act of apparent desperation, the party nominated Ralph Nader (former Green Party presidential candidate) as their nominee for the 2004 election. The core of the 1992 and 1996 Perot supporters had largely left the party, and even the nomination of a high-profile (albeit unpopular) candidate such as Nader was not enough to regain the national attention the party once had. As of 2007, the Reform Party is a shell of what it once was, with two factions claiming leadership and little in the way of voter support.

From 1992 through 2004, the Reform Party membership shrank from a credible national political party to a small, and increasingly divided, fringe group. The composition of its membership changed dramatically over the decade in which it was active nationally. With much of its political program co-opted by the Republicans through the mid-1990s, and the organization itself captured by the extreme right-wing Buchanan elements in 2000, the Reform Party no longer has the appeal that it once had to its initial base of socially moderate fiscal conservatives. Although it continues to run candidates at the state and local levels (a total of only three active candidates nationwide

as of 2007) and still has ballot status in a few states, the party exists at the national level in name only  (Reform Party 2007).

**Organization Activities**

The Green and Reform Parties represent different approaches to politics in general, and therefore have utilized the Internet in very different ways over the period of observation.  The organizational structures of the parties are completely opposite of each other, as are their political philosophies, and these differences influenced not only the expectations of leadership regarding the role of the Internet in their respective parties, but also to a large degree that of their members.  The differences in organizational structure between the parties influenced the way the parties approached politics in general, and specifically the ways in which they used the Internet as an organizational tool.

The Reform Party has, since its inception, been a top-down hierarchy with a strong, and exclusive, national leadership directing the national party.  Citizen participation was a large part of the founding message of the Reform Party, with Perot himself embracing the "Citizen Perot" moniker as part of his campaigns.  However, upon closer analysis we can see that member participation was encouraged in some aspects  to a much greater degree than in others – Reform Party members were given specific participation opportunities by the leadership, but decision-making remained largely located at the top.  This political philosophy produced a specific approach to the use of the Internet, which, as we will see, eventually also produced unintended consequences for the organization as a whole.

The Green Party, on the other hand, is organized around local organizations and therefore the national leadership is responsive to, rather than holding authority over, these organizations. As with the Reform Party, this organizational structure informed the adoption and usage process of the Internet within the national organization and produced unintended consequences for the organization as a whole. The fairly informal linkage of local organizations to the national party has resulted in the Internet serving two seemingly contradictory functions - contributing to the strength and effectiveness of local organizations while also simultaneously increasing connections to the national Green Party and building a national party identity.

*Green Party Activities*

The 1996 Nader presidential campaign was a loose and informal affair, which made it fairly incompatible with the purpose for which it existed. One of Nader's central campaign pledges was that he would spend no more than $5000 on his campaign, a promise that he kept while also refusing to allow the Green Party to use his name in fundraising appeals (Silverstein 2000). The 1996 Nader campaign website was a bare-bones affair, rarely updated and without a great deal of substantive content beyond justifications for his candidacy. With such a minimalist approach to the campaign, there was little emphasis on the Internet or any other communications medium in 1996. The Green Party itself, forbidden from using Nader's name in conjunction with fundraising appeals, focused its efforts on general party-building efforts and achieving ballot access instead. Although the national party undertook some of the coordination and publicity elements of this task online, the bulk of these efforts were focused at the local level.

After making a commitment to serious campaigning and fundraising, the 2000

Ralph Nader – Winona LaDuke ticket adopted the Internet as a key component of its

strategy.  This was due to several key factors.  First, the Internet was incredibly cost-

effective relative to other communications tools, and therefore an ideal option for a

campaign lacking a large campaign war chest.  Campaign materials and information

could be updated frequently and widely shared with little expense through the Internet.

Secondly, the key Nader demographic of well-off, educated, and predominantly white

progressives matched very closely with the Internet user demographic in 2000.  This

meant that the technology would not dissuade activity, and in fact might boost it.  Finally,

it made sense ideologically and from an image perspective.  Online materials and

communication consumed less resources than paper, and the cutting-edge appeal of the

technology itself could serve to mark the Nader campaign as something new and exciting.

The Nader 2000 website included standard fare such as position papers and news

updates, but also presented voters with opportunities to get involved in the campaign

itself (Nader2000 2000).  With the presidential campaign reflecting the national Green

Party structure, state and local Green organizations were the most important components

of gaining ballot access and conducting voter outreach.  Recognizing this, a great deal of

emphasis was placed on connecting visitors to the website to the local Green

organizations.  Site visitors were also able to watch campaign ads (which were run on a

very limited basis on television, although they gained a great deal of attention in the

press), shop for campaign items, and donate online to the campaign.  There were no

interactive components such as bulletin boards or online discussion, although a number

of the state and local sites had these elements.  The Nader campaign did, however, offer a

parallel Spanish language version of the campaign website (VoteNader.org 2000). The Nader campaign worked closely with many social issue and labor organizations in the Latino community during the 2000 campaign, contributing to the greatly disproportionate share of the Latino vote that Nader received.

The Green Party itself integrated a great deal of Nader campaign information into their website during the 2000 election, but also took the opportunity to increase outreach on behalf of the Green Party organization more broadly. A page on the Nader2000 website devoted to current officeholders from the Green Party shows that as of September 2000 there were a total of 73 elected Greens in the United States, including two mayors, and 260 Greens running for office that November. The website also offered the option of registering and donating to the Green Party online. Finally, merchandise was available online including campaign supplies, but also pre-packaged materials to assist in the formation of new local Green organizations. There was no interactive forum on the website, although there were links to local organizations and contact information for organizers and party officers at all levels to facilitate direct communication.

During the 2000 presidential election, which promised to be a close contest between the Republican and Democratic nominees in a number of states, the Internet was also used by Nader supporters as part of a nationwide strategy to allow Green Party members to vote their conscience while still ensuring that the less objectionable major-party candidate would win the election (in this case, the Democrat Al Gore). An informal network that became known as the "Nader Traders" arose on the Internet as a network in which Nader voters in so-called "swing states" (where the polls showed the contest to be within a few percentage points) could promise to vote for Gore in exchange for Gore

voters in so-called "safe states" (where there was little doubt as to the eventual winner) casting their votes for Nader (Raskin 2000). By doing so, supporters of both candidates could benefit. For example, Gore voters in strong Bush states such as Texas could trade what would be a wasted vote to help boost Gore's chances in undecided New Mexico, so that Greens could swing their state to Gore and still push for the 5% national vote total necessary to gain matching funds for 2004. As a response to the winner-take-all U.S. Electoral College system, the "Nader Trader" system appeared to be a winning solution for supporters of both Gore and Nader.

In just a few weeks in the fall of 2000, vote trading webpages (such as voteswap2000.com and votexchange2000.com) registered over 20,000 matched pairs before the California Secretary of State (Republican Bill Jones) threatened the website owners with legal action on the basis of the illegality of selling or trading votes in federal elections (Manjoo 2000). Despite questionable legal standing to actually prosecute vote traders or these websites, the threats eventually forced the Nader Trader scheme to disband or go underground. (Interestingly enough, prior to the shutdown of the network there were 1,400 Nader Traders registered to vote for Gore in Florida – more than enough to have carried the state for the Democratic candidate) (Harris 2000). It is not possible to determine how many Nader Traders followed through on their promises, especially given the threat of legal sanctions, but it represents a creative and practical approach to the situation through the Internet. Nader's campaign eventually gained only about half of the 5% nationwide total necessary to gain matching funds for the Green Party in 2004, and Gore lost the election despite gaining the majority of votes nationwide.

The 2004 campaign generated a great deal more anti-Nader web activity than it did active campaigning by the Green Party. In the lead-up to the election a number of websites such as StopNader.com, repentantnadervoter.com, Don'tVoteRalph.net, and GreensforKerry.com sprung up encouraging Nader to not run, and asking Greens to vote for the eventual Democrat nominee (Terry 2000). With former Nader supporters backing away from a Green Party presidential campaign, and public outrage over 2000 still at a high level, Greens were sharply divided internally about offering a 2004 ticket. Splits within the party over whether to field a candidate at all, as well as who that nominee should be among those who wanted to run a campaign, produced a half-hearted campaign with little support and even less energy. The eventual nominee, David Cobb, beat out a half-hearted attempt by Ralph Nader for the nomination, leaving Nader to run as the Reform Party candidate (Associated Press 2004).

Although no serious presidential campaign was undertaken by the Green Party in 2004, the national organization continues to support state and local candidates and organizations, and facilitate member activity and recruitment in general. The national Green Party, with most of its focus on state and local organizations, has found ways to utilize the Internet in support of its primary goals and has created a networked model of online political activity that works well within the pre-existing party structure. In addition to standard background, membership, and merchandise links, the Green Party website (http://www.gp.org/) currently provides news updates, links to Green candidates, and an Action Center alerting members of ongoing campaigns on issues of importance to Greens. Although the Nader campaign of 2000 was the peak of the national Green Party

in electoral politics, as an organization it has continued to be active and prosper online to the present day.

*Reform Party Activities*

The 1992 Perot campaign did not utilize the Internet to any significant degree because the medium itself was still the domain of researchers and a few devoted computer aficionados. The growing availability of the commercial Internet by 1996 afforded an opportunity for the Reform party to utilize the technology, and this usage would prove to be both remarkably innovative in some areas as well as surprisingly uninspired in others. As recounted earlier in this chapter, in 1996 the Reform Party became the first national party to allow binding Internet primary voting at any level of organization in the United States. However, despite this innovative effort to open the process up through the emerging technology, the web presence and online campaign style of the Reform Party did not continue this trend. The 1996 Perot website, although well-designed and clear in its function, did not present interactive opportunities for party members, but rather a fairly static, top-down flow of information. While this was by no means unique relative to the standard of campaign websites in 1996, the use of online voting contrasted with this heavy-handed approach to the website seems generally indicative of the odd mixture of populism and authoritarianism that seemed to underpin Perot's entire political career as well as shaping the party that he created.

After 1996, however, the number of Internet users in the United States reached the tipping point. The increasingly common use of the Internet brought a recognition of the potential it posed as a tool for political organizations. In 1998, Reform Party

candidate Jesse "The Body" Ventura used the Internet as a central component in his run for governor of Minnesota. Ventura's campaign used the Internet as a coordination tool, using email lists and immediate webpage updates to run a campaign in essentially "real time", allowing the campaign to schedule, publicize, and share the results of events within hours rather than weeks (Raney 1998). The Internet was primarily used as a top-down communications tool, although there was also significant fundraising undertaken online, with roughly $50,000 raised through online contributions – approximately 8% of the entire amount spent (Gurstein 1998). Despite spending only $626,067 on his campaign to the over $2 million spent by each of his major party rivals, Ventura was able to win the three-way race by three percentage points over his nearest rival (37% to 34% for Republican Norm Coleman) (Hauser 2002, 40). The exit polls indicate that Ventura did particularly well among voters aged 18-29, a group forming the majority of regular Internet users, taking 46% (in a three-way race) of what was a record turnout of 61% for that age group (Raney 1998). Ventura remains to this day not only the highest office holder from the Reform Party, but also the first candidate to successfully campaign with an Internet-centered election strategy.

The 2000 Reform Party presidential ticket of Pat Buchanan and Ezola Foster ran a campaign website that offered a variety of resources for voters, including policy papers, contact information for local organizations, and downloads of radio and television advertisements (GoPatGo2000 2000). Additional online resources included lists of contact information for media outlets and talk shows with encouragement for Buchanan supporters to call or write to influence their content. Missing, however, was an

opportunity for supporters to interact with the campaign or each other in any meaningful way. No bulletin board system or other interactive features were provided.

The Reform Party organization also maintained a website during the 2000 election. Conspicuously absent, however, was any mention of Buchanan's candidacy. In fact, the news ticker on the national party website declared Hagelin the party's candidate throughout the election (Reform Party 2000). Hagelin himself, although running on the Natural Law Party ballot line, declared himself the "Third-Party Coalition Candidate" on his campaign website in 2000 and claimed the endorsement of both the Reform and Natural Law Parties following a hastily-arranged coalition convention at the end of August 2000 (Hagelin for President 2000). The dueling, and contradictory, web presences of the Reform Party splinter groups continued to attack each other to establish their own legitimacy as the heir to the Reform Party organization throughout the campaign. The poor showing nationwide of both tickets, and the ensuing decline of the party at all levels, were very much a result of this internal dispute that was waged largely, and very publicly, through the Internet.

Today, the Reform Party Internet presence is limited to a few remaining state party sites and the national party site (http://www.reformparty.org/) which as of June 2007 had not been updated since the 2006 midterm elections. The national party site has a link to a discussion forum which, as of June 2007, was inoperative. Earlier views of the forum indicated, however, that they were largely unused and strictly moderated. The bulk of the current site is composed of links to outside resources and links to documents such as the party platform. Pat Buchanan (http://www.buchanan.org/) and John Hagelin

(http://www.hagelin.org/) continue to maintain their own web presences, addressing political, policy and other issues of interest to them and their supporters.

**Outcomes**

The national electoral fortunes of the Reform and Green Parties appear to have peaked in 1992 and 2000, respectively. Perot played a major role in the 1992 election, leading in the polls early in the race, and gained nearly one out of every five votes cast. Although Nader's 2000 run with the Green Party was not nearly as successful at the ballot box, his campaign has nonetheless had an impact on politics in the United States. Since 2000, both parties have experienced internal disputes and have faced varying degrees of external criticism, but have continued to present national party identities. Both parties ran presidential campaigns in 2004, although neither one attracted much attention or voter support due largely to these internal and external factors. However, although the electoral fortunes of these parties has apparently peaked at the national level, they both were early adopters of Internet technology as a means of furthering their political objectives and present dramatically different approaches and outcomes.

These two parties represent different organizational structures and styles, and have reached very different outcomes despite having had similar experiences in national politics. Both parties were early adopters of the Internet and made it a key part of their electoral and organizational strategies, yet the parties have taken very different paths since their high-water marks in 1992 and 2000. Despite being the target of rage from angry Democratic leaders and supporters since 2000, the Green Party remains active and is, in fact, growing at the local and state levels. Although the national level of the party

has assumed a lower profile since the 2000 election, it remains in place serving a coordination and identity function despite retreating from the national electoral process and offering only a token run for president in 2004.

The Reform Party, on the other hand, experienced dizzying highs and lows in the space of a decade and has for all intents and purposes ceased to exist in any practical form. Despite having a major impact on the 1992 presidential election, a significant influence on the 1996 race, and gaining its first high-profile elected official in 1998, the Reform Party devolved into infighting and was all but dissolved by the time of the 2000 presidential campaign of Pat Buchanan. It would be difficult to find two more distinct political parties along ideological and organizational dimensions, and the very different experiences of these parties presents us with an interesting opportunity for comparison and consideration of the three perspectives on the effect of Internet usage on political organizations.

**Analysis**

*The Green Party*

Despite the amount of attention it received after the 2000 presidential election, the Green Party has never had a very large presence in American politics. The high-water mark of the national party was in 2000, when Ralph Nader gained just under 3 million of the more than 50 million votes cast nationwide. With a national party membership of 305,000 Greens registered in the US as of 2005, it can be said that a combination of factors associated with the high-profile the party gained after 2000 has contributed to an overall decline in party membership and Green registration is only available in about half

of U.S. states  (Greens.org 2005).  However, the Green Party remains active across the United States, and as of June 2007 there were at least 226 Greens holding office in 28 states and the District of Columbia (Feinstein 2007).  While the Green Party has largely receded at the national level, it remains a viable party at the local level and is making inroads at the state level as well.  The national level organization continues to be an important part of supporting the state and local levels.

*Hierarchy*

The Green Party began as a networked organization, and functions in that way at the national and state levels.  Local Green organizations compose the membership of the state organizations, and the state organizations form the basis for the national organization.  With a conscious effort to create a structure resembling a network of nodes rather than a more traditional pyramid, the national Green Party has continued to remain a low-hierarchy organization.  The organizational use of the Internet has not notably changed this structure, which predates the use of the Internet, although it has served to link these nodes more closely together by facilitating communications among them.  This has had both positive and negative effects, as both cooperation and conflict within the party are enabled through the Internet.

Observed result: **No change** in Hierarchy.  **(↔)**

*Internal Communications*

Although overall party membership is low, there are Green Party groups located all across the nation.  The small, often geographically isolated nodes of the Green Party

increasingly rely, therefore, on the Internet for coordination and communication. A great

deal of coordination among the disparate levels is conducted over the Internet, through

formal mechanisms such as list serves and websites as well as through individual email

contact. Prior to the Internet becoming a major component of party strategy, many local

organizations relied on other means of communication (telephone and mail, primarily)

but the immediacy and openness provided by the Internet have greatly increased Internal

Communications in both frequency as well as availability to all members.

Observed result: An **increase** in Internal Communications. **(↑)**


*Member Intensity*

Member Intensity among Green Party members has not changed greatly with the

adoption of the Internet, and although the 2000 Nader campaign did mark a significant

spike it was a temporary outlier. The bulk of the component nodes of the party are the

local organizations, and they have not experienced a significant change in Member

Intensity through the Internet. At the national level, there have been some increases in

Member Intensity due to new opportunities to interact, but these have been slight and

largely ineffective given the relatively low profile of the national organization. Green

membership has traditionally been engaged with issues and in the party itself, and this

has not been affected in either direction by the Internet to any significant degree.

Observed result: **No change** in Member Intensity. **(↔)**


*Activity*

Green Party activity has increased since the adoption of the Internet by the organization, due to two main factors. First, the Internet has allowed the party to share best practices among the disparate nodes, so that local organizations can share their success stories and tactics widely and immediately. This has allowed, for example, local organizations on different sides of the country to easily share strategies and approaches, which encourages greater activity levels by both. Secondly, as a medium the Internet has facilitated the negotiation and planning of activities for the local and state levels. Negotiations over state-level strategy that were once conducted almost entirely face-to-face at periodic state meetings can now be resolved through the Internet, allowing decisions to be made quicker and therefore allowing the party to be more active in general.

Observed result: An **increase** in Activity. **(↑)**

*Coalitions/Alliances*

The success of the Green Party in making alliances and working in coalitions is limited, in part due to the legacy of the 2000 election but also because of internal disputes. After working with a number of labor unions and other progressive organizations during the 2000 campaign, the Greens have since been largely abandoned by these partners. Internal disputes also continue to weaken the ability of the organization to work with others, since various Green affiliates are often competing among themselves for the same potential partners. Much effort has been expended in recent years attempting to reunite the two national factions of the party, and combined with lingering resentment over Nader's 2000 campaign this has made outside alliances

difficult to attain.  At the local level, some Green Parties have made strategic, short-term alliances and coalitions with other groups, but the Green Party as a whole has not had a great deal of success in this area.

<p align="center">Observed result: A <strong>decrease</strong> in Alliances/Coalitions.  (↓)</p>

*Success*

Despite all of the obstacles facing the Green Party, it continues to make headway at the local and state levels.  Each year more candidates are running for office as Greens and the number of elected Greens continues to increase with each election.  In 2007, more than 96 Green candidates ran for elected office across the country (Feinstein and Markle 2007).  While the national party continues to struggle to find an identity, there is still a great deal of energy and activity at the local level.  As Greens begin to become more commonplace at the local level, it can be expected that these candidates will seek higher office and build the party from the bottom.  In addition, several of the core Ten Values of the Green Party have become mainstream since 2000 (environmentalism in particular) in part due to Green activism and lobbying.

<p align="center">Observed result: An <strong>increase</strong> in Success.  (↑)</p>

The Greens pose an interesting test of these perspectives, because the party has national name recognition and there is a growing consensus among the public in agreement with many of its principles such as environmentalism and sustainability.  However, the conventional wisdom about the vote count in one state in one electoral campaign has generated a strong and persistent backlash against the party across the

nation. Voters who might otherwise be in agreement with the organizing principles of the Green Party are dissuaded from joining due to the residue of the 2000 Nader vote in Florida. Despite this general sentiment, however, the Green Party has not only survived but prospered at its core level of organization. The success of local Green organizations at winning office and shaping the public debate is even more remarkable given the reputation of the party at the national level.

**TABLE 6.1**

**Results for the Green Party Compared to Predicted Results**

| | | PREDICTED OUTCOMES | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | GREEN PARTY | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | SITUATIONALISTS | TECHNO-SKEPTICS |
| Hierarchy | ↔ | ↓ | ↔ | ? |
| Internal Communications | ↑ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Member Intensity | ↔ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Activity | ↑ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Coalitions/ Alliances | ↓ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Success | ↑ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |

↓ = Decrease
↑ = Increase
↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization
? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases

As shown in Table 6.1, the Green Party shows a correlation with the Techno-Determinist perspective on three of the six variables, with the Situationalists on two, and may support the Techno-Skeptics on the remaining variable. If we consider that along the Hierarchy variable there was little to change, given the already low hierarchical

organization style, and that the Coalition/Alliance variable has been adversely impacted largely by one identifiable event (Florida 2000), the Green Party experience appears to match very closely with the Techno-Determinist perspective. Further consideration of the Member Intensity variable, which has not changed much as a national party but fluctuates a great deal between various local organizations, and the improbable success of the party in the face of numerous obstacles tends to lend credibility to the Techno-Determinist perspective. That being said, it could also be claimed to be a reflection of the core structure and ideals of the organization (per the Situationalists) or an example of something unpredictable arising from the use of the Internet (per the Techno-Skeptics).

The Green Party consciously embraced the Internet in part due to the organizing principles behind the organization, such as the desire to increase direct political participation and the preference for less resource-intensive ways of achieving goals. The careful process of Internet adoption by the party, with ample attention paid to access and procedural issues, slowed the process but produced a better end result in terms of acceptance and usability within the party structure. Overall, the Greens have experienced a successful process of Internet adoption as an organization, and despite the high-profile negativity at the national level surrounding the 2000 campaign it has benefited from the use of the Internet at the local and state levels. Whether this will translate to momentum at the national level in the future remains to be seen, although this will depend at least as much on the wishes of the local organizations as it does on the preferences of the voting public.

*The Reform Party*

In the brief period of 1992 through 2000, the Reform Party experienced a rapid rise and fall unlike that of any recent party in U.S. politics.  It began as a true national phenomenon during Perot's 1992 bid, during which Perot led the polls and was declared the winner of at least two presidential debates by pundits, but ended with a disastrous internal split and the Buchanan campaign of 2000 that essentially ended the national party organization.  During a few short years in the 1990s, however, the Reform Party elected a governor in Minnesota and influenced the two major parties to alter their approach to politics.  The use of the Internet by the organization played a significant role in some areas of Reform Party success, but also greatly contributed to its eventual downfall.  Increasing Internet usage by the organization and members served to challenge the unity of the party rather than strengthen it, and eventually facilitated the near-total collapse of the national organization.  It remains to be seen whether the competing national organizations and remaining state and local Reform Parties will be able to revive the movement that Perot started in 1992, but it appears that each of these actors is looking to the Internet as a central component of their strategy to do so.

*Hierarchy*

The Reform Party was set up as a decidedly hierarchical organization, built around the personality and beliefs of a single man, H. Ross Perot.  Perot's approach in 1992 was simultaneously secretive and authoritarian as well as open and democratic.  The Perot model of politics, later adopted in the Republican "Contract for America", was deceptively complex: it publicly set forth a series of promised policy goals and reforms,

and then asked the voters to join in support.  Despite the secrecy and authoritarian method of setting these initial goals, the appearance of an open political program appealed to voters long-accustomed to a politics of vague pronouncements and few specific promises.  The appeal of Perot was in many ways the idea that a political figure was spelling out a specific program that voters could measure progress towards and demand accountability for, vague though they may be, and communicating it in a direct and conversational manner.

This approach created an expectation within the party membership, however, that was to prove the party's undoing.  Efforts to incorporate more member input through the Internet, such as the 1996 nomination process, exposed the limitations (or cynics might say the true intentions) of Reform Party openness.  Disillusionment over the exposure of the autocratic party leadership, coupled with Republican appropriation of the contract model of politics in 1994, had already begun to weaken the Reform party by 1996.  By the 2000 campaign season, the party had split into Perot and Ventura factions, with Buchanan left to pick up the pieces.  Use of the Internet played a role in this breakup, as membership expectations of greater input were met by resistance by party leadership – leading to a fracture of the organization that was facilitated by, and in many cases located on, the Internet.

Observed result: A **decrease** in Hierarchy.  (↓)


*Internal Communications*

The national Reform Party leadership was an early adopter of Internet technology as a tool for internal communications.  However, the expectations of members and

leadership appear to have been fundamentally different about the way in which these communications channels should be used. The authoritarian model of the Perot and Buchanan national leaderships was in sharp contrast to the state and local organizations, which in most cases encouraged (or at least provided opportunities) for a more free flow of communication among members and between levels of the organization. The national party utilized the Internet for top-down communications, but provided little opportunity for member discussion and input. Active, even aggressive, moderation of party website chat rooms and bulletin board systems further limited the development of internal communications at the national level, although state and local organizations took more open approaches and experienced better results.

Observed result: **No change** in Internal Communications. (↔)

*Member Intensity*

Membership, and therefore Member Intensity, in the Reform Party has been in a free-fall since the 2000 election. A combination of Republican efforts to draw in Reform voters and the many deep flaws in the national Reform organization, has left party members with little to do other than fight with competing Reform organizations at all levels. That being said, the Internet is clearly a major venue for these organizational struggles, serving as the core vehicle for the efforts of many splinter groups. However, in terms of political activity there has been a massive decline in Member Intensity for the Reform Party organization as the use of the Internet has increased. The Internet played a major role in initiating and encouraging the internal schism within the Reform Party,

creating outlets for disputes as well as forming a challenge to the citizen participation model that many members expected from the party.

Observed result: A **decrease** in Member Intensity. (↓)

*Activity*

After a substantial period of activity in the 1992-98 period, the Reform Party activity level precipitously declined. The promise of participatory internal processes offered by the Internet primaries of 1996 and 2000 collapsed in allegations of fraud and manipulation, de-energizing the membership and leading to wholesale defections of members and party affiliates. The Internet was used in traditional ways during the 2000 and 2004 campaigns (i.e. as a vehicle for platforms and speech archives, etc.), but there was not a great deal of interactivity in 2000 and even less in 2004. With the party itself disorganized, much of the focus of member activity has been internal since the 2000 election, which stands in clear contrast to the preceding years.

Observed result: A **decrease** in Activity. (↓)

*Coalitions/Alliances*

Starting in 1992 and extending through 1998, the Reform Party was able to build an impressive array of coalitions and alliances with other third parties, particularly at the state and local levels. Many state-level third parties joined the Reform Party as soon as it was formally created, providing mutual benefits for both national and state organizations. The resources and outreach potential that the national Reform Party offered at the state level were immense in the early- and mid-1990s. However, increasing disillusionment

with the national party coupled with the availability of alternative methods of party-building and outreach (particularly those enabled by the Internet) made the benefits of being part of the national organization less important to the state and local parties, and allowed ideological disagreements to take the fore. Since the late 1990s, the majority of state and local affiliates have left the Reform Party and either resumed their independent identities or joined with rival Reform factions. State and local Reform Parties continue in a diminished form in some states, but as direct subsidiaries of the national party rather than as separate organizations that have joined in a coalition or alliance.

Observed result: A **decrease** in Coalitions/Alliances. **(↓)**

*Success*

Overall, the Perot organization that became the Reform Party peaked in the early 1990s, and even though it made a respectable national showing in 1996 and won the 1998 Minnesota governorship, it never again posed a serious threat to the two-party U.S. system. Electoral success, however, represents only one aspect of the Reform Party's founding purpose. The secondary goal of changing (reforming) the way in which politics are conducted in the United States proved to be more fertile ground for the Reform movement. Both major parties have adopted versions of the contract model of politics that Perot championed, while major party candidates have also made the effort to run, at least in appearance, responsive, movement-based campaigns. However, the very forces that the Reform Party movement brought to mainstream politics proved to be its undoing as it fell considerably short of the promises of openness and responsiveness that the party seemed to promise to its members. In no small part, the exposure of these failings and

the eventual internal schisms behind the party's decline were greatly facilitated by the Internet.

Observed result: A **decrease** in Success.  (↓)

| TABLE 6.2 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Results for the Reform Party Compared to Predicted Results** | | | | | |
| | | PREDICTED OUTCOMES | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | REFORM PARTY | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | SITUATIONALISTS | TECHNO-SKEPTICS |
| Hierarchy | ↓ | ↓ | ↔ | ? |
| Internal Communications | ↔ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Member Intensity | ↓ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Activity | ↓ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Coalitions/ Alliances | ↓ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Success | ↓ | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| ↓  = Decrease<br>↑  = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br>?   = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases | | | | | |

As Table 6.2 indicates, the Reform Party shows an almost complete inverse correlation with the predictions of the Techno-Determinists, with direct correlation only for the Hierarchy indicator.  Internal Communications correlates with the Situationalists, however, and over time we see mixed results.  It is perhaps possible to make a stronger case that the Techno-skeptic predictions are the most accurate for the Reform Party: the unintended consequences of Internet usage proved to be unmanageable for the organization and created the conditions that led to the rapid decline of the party.  The

breakdown of the national Reform Party and later split into competing factions occurred during the same time period as the Internet was becoming a major factor in American life.  While it is difficult to link the decline of the Reform Party solely to the rise of Internet usage in politics, or any other factor for that matter, there are some general conclusions that we can draw about the relationship.

In some ways, the Reform Party case can be used to support or weaken the position of all three of these explanatory perspectives.  The Techno-Determinist model falls woefully short along five of the six variables, and even though it does predict the results for one variable (Hierarchy) the effect of the decline of Hierarchy proved to be a net negative overall for the organization.  This can be parsed from a different perspective, however, and it could also be said that the resistance of the national organization to the technology, evidenced by attempts to manage the resulting pressures from below rather than allowing the organization to adapt, produced the eventual schisms and defections from the party.  A similar argument could be made from the Situationalist perspective as well, in that perhaps the eventual decline of the party was not solely a result of Internet adoption, but rather that the existing weaknesses of the organization (Perot-centered, ad hoc, etc.) made such a result almost inevitable regardless of the application of the technology.  The technology served as a vehicle, and probably increased the speed, of the demise but it did not play a direct causal role.

The Techno-Skeptic perspective is perhaps best able to claim accuracy for predicting the Reform Party case, in that the party essentially opened itself to limited applications of the technology early on but found itself unable to control or predict the consequences it would produce.  Having given the Internet validity within the

organization by starting email distribution lists and allowing Internet voting during the 1996 nomination process, the party found itself unprepared to handle the expectations this created or to manage the Internet-enabled reactions of disgruntled members. Perhaps since the party had little formal structure and hierarchy prior to coalescing into a single party among the national, state, and local levels, the introduction of the Internet as a component of the newly-organizing party put too great of a strain on the process at too early of a point. Regardless of the explanation, it appears that the Techno-Skeptics could make a case for predicting the experience of the Reform Party.

**Conclusion**

The experience of third parties in the United States in the past century has been difficult, with limited success at the ballot box and little organizational longevity. The Green and Reform Parties have followed this trajectory to a large degree, although their fortunes have diverged since 2000. Much of this divergence can be explained by the organizational principles behind the formation of these parties, with the Reform Party organizationally rigid and hierarchical and the Greens quite the opposite. Without Ross Perot in a visible leadership role, which enabled the rise of competing leadership factions, the Reform Party soon collapsed. The Green Party has not only survived the villainization and subsequent departure of its most high-profile candidate, it has continued to grow and win elections at the local level. In both cases, the Internet played a major role in the path the party would take and in shaping the condition these parties find themselves in today.

The legacy of third parties is not measured in ballot success in most cases, but by the changes that they encourage in the mainstream political landscape. On this count, both the Reform and Green parties have already had effects well beyond their modest electoral successes. The Reform Party pioneered the use of Internet balloting in the United States with their 1996 nomination process. A number of state and local election boards have since experimented with online balloting, and there is momentum to continue development of adequate procedures to make this option more broadly available. These parties took a more forceful and direct approach to voter outreach through traditional media outlets and organized public events, an approach that both major parties have since adopted. Perot's contract approach in 1992 became the Republicans' Contract for America in 1994. Adaptations of the Greens' environmental protection and political reform messages of 2000 became platform planks for both Democrat and Republican candidates four and eight years later, respectively. The continually increasing use of the Internet by third parties will almost certainly continue to impact U.S. politics in similar ways for the foreseeable future, pioneered in no small way by these two organizations.

# Chapter 7

# A Case-Based Comparative Analysis of the Perspectives

**Introduction**

So far this work has presented in-depth case studies of four political organizations and their usage of the Internet.  Case studies of the experiences of four political organizations, the Dean for America campaign, MoveOn.org, and the Green and Reform parties, have been individually tested against the three predictive models.  The three predictive models, Techno-determinists, Situationalists, and Techno-skeptics, all make specific and observable claims about the effect of Internet usage on political organizations.  This has produced a series of results for each of the cases in isolation, but this has not yet been a complete comparative test of the models themselves.

Each of the case study chapters (Chapters 4-6) have concluded with an analysis of predictions made by the three perspectives compared to the actual results of those cases.  This chapter provides a comparative analysis of all of the cases simultaneously against the predictions made by the perspectives.  Flipping the focus of analysis from the cases to the perspectives will provide another means of judging the accuracy of the predictive elements of these views through a rigorous examination of the evidence at hand.  The intent is to neither praise nor bury these perspectives, but rather to provide a more complete and objective analysis of their claims and assess which, if any, of these three perspectives demonstrates the greatest degree of explanatory power.

The methodology in this section is straightforward and complementary to the work so far.  The same matrix used in the case studies will be applied once again, but in a

slightly different format. Instead of the results of one case being compared to the predictions of the three perspectives, the predictions will be compared with the results of all four cases simultaneously. Through this approach, we will be able to assess the accuracy of predictions versus the actual results in a systematic, comparative way. Each perspective is presented in turn, and then a final overview of the results is presented at the end of the chapter. As a reference, the original testing matrix (first presented as Table 3.1) is included here again as Table 7.1.

| TABLE 7.1 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Predicted Results for Variables by Perspective** | | | |
| | PREDICTED OUTCOMES | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | SITUATIONALISTS | TECHNO-SKEPTICS |
| Hierarchy (Int.) | ↓ | ↔ | ? |
| Internal Communications (Int.) | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Member Intensity (Int.) | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Activity (Ext.) | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Coalitions/Alliances (Ext.) | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| Success (Ext.) | ↑ | ↔ | ? |
| (Int.) = Internal variable<br>(Ext.) = External variable<br>  ↓   =  Decrease<br>  ↑   = Increase<br>  ↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br>  ?   = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases | | | |

**Testing the Techno-Determinist Perspective**

The Techno-determinist perspective is based on the belief that Internet technology is a transformative force that will, by virtue of its capabilities, alter the internal structure and affect the external activities of an organization. Once introduced into a political organization, we should therefore see a number of specific and predicable outcomes for the organization at both the internal and external levels. This perspective offers clear predictions of directionality for these changes, which affords an ideal opportunity for testing within the construct of this study. The results of the cases and the predictions of the Techno-determinists are presented side-by-side in Table 7.2, with accurate predictions for each case underlined.

**TABLE 7.2**

**Case Study Results Compared to Techno-Determinist Predictions**

| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Hierarchy | ↓ | <u>↓</u> | ↔ | ↔ | ↔ |
| Internal Communications | ↑ | <u>↑</u> | ↓ | <u>↑</u> | ↔ |
| Member Intensity | ↑ | <u>↑</u> | <u>↑</u> | ↔ | ↓ |
| Activity | ↑ | <u>↑</u> | <u>↑</u> | <u>↑</u> | ↓ |
| Coalitions/ Alliances | ↑ | ↔ | <u>↑</u> | ↓ | ↓ |
| Success | ↑ | ↔/? | <u>↑</u> | <u>↑</u> | ↓ |

| |
|---|
| ↓ = Decrease |
| ↑ = Increase |
| ↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization |
| ? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases |
| <u>Underline</u> = Accurate prediction |

As this Table demonstrates, the Techno-determinist perspective was not completely accurate for any of these cases, although it had significant predictive power (predicting four of the six indicators) for the Dean and MoveOn cases. It predicted outcomes for three out of the six indicators for the Green Party, but predicted none for the Reform Party. It proved most successful in predicting the Activity indicator, being accurate for three of the four cases. However, it was accurate for only one case along the Hierarchy indicator (Dean) and for the Coalition/Alliances indicator (MoveOn). The results for each indicator are pulled out individually and examined in turn here.

*Hierarchy*

| TABLE 7.2a | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Hierarchy for Techno-Determinists** | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLE | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Hierarchy | ↓ | ↓ | ↔ | ↔ | ↔ |
| ↓  = Decrease<br>↑  = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br> ?  = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases<br> Underline = Accurate prediction | | | | | |

From these results, we can see that the use of the Internet by the Dean campaign resulted in a breakdown of hierarchy, with decision-making increasingly dispersed throughout the various levels of the organization during the campaign. The integration of ideas from the Blog for America and the inclusion of member input through binding referenda on issues such as matching funds supports the prediction of the Techno-

determinist perspective in the Dean case. While it is the case that the Dean organization

was less hierarchic at the start, and had a certain predisposition to such outcomes, the

hierarchy flattened beyond even their expectations during the brief life of the campaign.

The other three cases did not experience similar results, however, with their hierarchical

structures remaining essentially unchanged by their use of the Internet. The Green Party

is somewhat of an outlier in that the national organization was already directed by the

state and local organizations, and therefore remained unchanged. For MoveOn and the

Reform Party the results are due to these organizations not offering open opportunities

for their members to provide input to the national leadership, which is counter to the

claim that the existence of the technology itself will act to flatten the hierarchy.

*Internal Communications*

| TABLE 7.2b | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Internal Communications for Techno-Determinists** | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLE | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Internal Communications | ↑ | <u>↑</u> | ↓ | <u>↑</u> | ↔ |
| ↓  = Decrease<br>↑  = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br> ?  = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases<br> <u>Underline</u> = Accurate prediction | | | | | |

The Techno-determinist perspective was more accurate in predicting the level of

Internal Communications, successfully predicting the results for two of the four cases.

Internal Communications within as well as between levels of the organization increased

for the Dean and Green cases through their use of the Internet. In both of these cases, there was a determined effort by the organization to create mechanisms to facilitate this outcome as well as encouragement from leadership for members to utilize these channels. MoveOn, although it has an immediate outreach mechanism for leadership to access members through its email network, has closed channels for members to interact and communicate over the past year and therefore has actually seen a decline in Internal Communication. From its pre-Internet beginnings the Reform Party did not offer member-initiated mechanisms for Internal Communication, and has experienced no change over the past decade.

*Member Intensity*

| TABLE 7.2c | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Member Intensity for Techno-Determinists** | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLE | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Member Intensity | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↔ | ↓ |
| ↓ = Decrease ↑ = Increase ↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization ? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases Underline = Accurate prediction | | | | | |

MoveOn and the Dean campaign both experienced significant increases in Member Intensity through their use of the Internet. Dean members earned the nickname "Deaniacs" from detractors due to their fervent support, while MoveOn's member participation rate has surged with each new application of the technology. Green Party

members have used the technology as a replacement for other methods, and the carefully-considered approach the organization took to Internet adoption specifically aimed to replace existing, often resource-intensive, methods with the technology, therefore producing minimal change.  The Reform Party, however, experienced a major decline in Member Intensity as they struggled to manage the technology through the late 1990s, culminating in the split of the party and the eventual capture of the organization by the Buchanan faction.

*Activity*

| TABLE 7.2d | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Activity for Techno-Determinists** | | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLE | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY | |
| Activity | ↑ | <u>↑</u> | <u>↑</u> | <u>↑</u> | ↓ | |
| ↓  = Decrease<br>↑  = Increase<br>↔  = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br>?  = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases<br><u>Underline</u> = Accurate prediction | | | | | | |

The experiences of three of the four cases show correlation with the predictions of the Techno-determinists for the Activity indicator.  The Dean, MoveOn, and Green parties all experienced greater external activity through their use of the Internet, including individual member initiatives and high response levels to calls for action by the leadership of the organization.  Dean and MoveOn demonstrated the ability to generate a massive response in terms of financial contributions and member actions through

Internet-based approaches, while the Greens have created a network of local

organizations to support each others activities through sharing of best practices and

outreach tactics through the Internet.  The Reform Party is the outlier here – increased

Internet usage within the Reform Party actually served to break the party down, serving

as a major vehicle for the collapse and eventual split of the organization during the 2000

nomination process.


*Coalitions/Alliances*

| TABLE 7.2e | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Coalitions/Alliances for Techno-Determinists** | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLE | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Coalitions/ Alliances | ↑ | ↔ | <u>↑</u> | ↓ | ↓ |
| ↓  = Decrease<br>↑  = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br>?  = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases<br><u>Underline</u> = Accurate prediction | | | | | |

MoveOn has shown a remarkable ability to construct virtual alliances through the

Internet, partnering with a wide array of left- and right-leaning political organizations on

specific issues and events.  The other three cases, however, did not demonstrate the same

result in this indicator.  Some explanations for these results can be identified, but the

technology showed little ability to overcome these existing barriers, countering to the

claims of the Techno-determinist perspective.  Since the 2000 election, the Greens have

become arguably the most despised third party in American politics, making non-Green

coalitions and alliances very difficult to make.  The internal turmoil of the Reform Party

led to the splintering of existing coalitions with state and local groups, resulting in most

defecting during the 2000 election cycle.  The Dean case is more complex.  There were a

number of high-profile endorsements by labor unions and other political organizations,

for example, but the campaign was unable to make these key partnerships work "on the

ground" with local groups to deliver votes once the primaries began.

*Success*

| TABLE 7.2f | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Success for Techno-Determinists** | | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLE | TECHNO-DETERMINISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY | |
| Success | ↑ | ↔/? | <u>↑</u> | <u>↑</u> | ↓ | |
| ↓  = Decrease<br>↑  = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br> ?  = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases<br> <u>Underline</u> = Accurate prediction | | | | | | |

The Green Party and MoveOn have been successful through their usage of the

Internet, but in very different ways.  MoveOn has been able to utilize the technology to

successfully generate mass responses and actions at the national level, and has become a

major force in national politics.  The Green Party has focused its efforts at the opposite

end of the spectrum, focusing mostly on local politics with only a few state-level efforts

and no meaningful national political activity after 2000.  However, and perhaps even

remarkably given the political climate, the Greens have been effective in winning local

elections and continue to increase their number of elected officials across the nation. The

Dean campaign and Reform Party, on the other hand, proved unsuccessful in meeting

their goals, with both now essentially defunct at present. The Dean campaign was not

expected to win when it began, and despite a period as the frontrunner was unable to

translate excitement into votes. It transitioned into Democracy for America and remains

active in fundraising and activism, although at a much-diminished level in terms of

national profile. The impact of the Dean campaign on other political organizations may

prove to be a form of lasting success, so the final impact is unknown at present but should

become clearer after the 2008 elections. If the example of the Dean campaign serves to

transform the average political organization in some as-yet unknown way, then there may

be some general support for the Techno-determinists from this case.


**Evaluating the Predictions of Techno-Determinists**

  The Techno-determinist perspective provides specific directional predictions for

each of the six indicators examined in this study. It falls short of providing an accurate

predictive model for the broader question of the impact of Internet usage on political

organizations, but does provide a limited level of predictive power related to some of

these indicators. It appears clear, if we set aside the Reform Party case temporarily, that

political organizations can reasonably expect to have a more active and engaged

membership through their use of the Internet. This translates into a generally more

effective organization in terms of the indicators examined here, which is at the core of the

predictions made by this perspective.

Using the Internet can be beneficial to organizations, although from the results here these benefits will be unevenly dispersed among the indicators and may not translate into broader external success for the organization. But although the Techno-determinists do not provide an accurate model for all aspects of the topic, this perspective offers some useful insights into the effect of Internet usage by political organizations under certain conditions. These conditions appear, however, to be more closely related to leadership decisions about the use of the technology rather than any innate characteristics of the technology itself, which challenges the core assumption made by adherents of this perspective. Organizational leaderships that actively encourage the use of the Internet can achieve better outcomes for some indicators, but remain unlikely to completely overcome existing barriers such as being an insurgent or representing minority viewpoints. The availability of the technology by itself does not produce predictable outcomes, there must also be guidance and agreement from the organizational leadership to allow the technology to produce these outcomes. That is not to say that the Internet alone is not a significant force, however, because as we see with the Reform Party there are significant consequences for organizations that mismanage (or are in fact actively hostile to) the adoption and usage of the technology by membership.

**Testing the Situationalist Perspective**

The Situationalist perspective accepts that the technology is a potentially important tool, but conceptualizes it in a utilitarian, rather than transformative, manner. Organizations with strong and strategically sound structures will be able to utilize the attributes of the technology to their advantage, but it will not change the results for those

that face existing challenges such resource limitations or unpopularity.  This perspective

does not provide predictions of directionality for these changes, therefore, but instead

predicts a general maintenance of the status quo for organizations with the potential for

some improvements in the form of a multiplier effect of existing traits resulting from

effective application of the tool.  The results of the cases and the predictions of the

Situationalists are presented side-by-side in Table 7.3, with accurate predictions for each

case emphasized.

**TABLE 7.3**

**Case Study Results Compared to Situationalist Predictions**

| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | SITUATIONALISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Hierarchy | ↔ | ↓ | <u>↔</u> | <u>↔</u> | <u>↔</u> |
| Internal Communications | ↔ | ↑ | ↓ | ↑ | <u>↔</u> |
| Member Intensity | ↔ | ↑ | ↑ | <u>↔</u> | ↓ |
| Activity | ↔ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↓ |
| Coalitions/ Alliances | ↔ | <u>↔</u> | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ |
| Success | ↔ | <u>↔</u>/? | ↑ | ↑ | ↓ |

| | |
|---|---|
| ↓ | = Decrease |
| ↑ | = Increase |
| ↔ | = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization |
| ? | = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases |
| <u>Underline</u> | = Accurate prediction |

Three of the four organizations examined in the case studies showed essentially

no change in hierarchy through their use of technology, matching the predicted outcome

of the Situationalists. Despite all of the buzz and excitement about the Dean campaign's

Internet usage, it matches the predictions here for the Coalition/Alliance and Success

indicators. The Greens (Member Intensity) and Reform Party (Internal Communications)

also saw no significant change along some indicators, matching the predictions of the

Situationalist perspective. The Situationalist perspective was less successful than the

Techno-determinists in terms of the number of accurately predicted observed outcomes

for these cases, although a more detailed analysis produces a more nuanced appraisal of

this perspective. The results for each indicator are pulled out individually and examined

in detail here.

*Hierarchy*

| TABLE 7.3a | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Hierarchy for Situationalists** | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLE | SITUATIONALISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Hierarchy | ↔ | ↓ | ↔ | ↔ | ↔ |
| ↓  = Decrease<br>↑  = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br>?  = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases<br>Underline = Accurate prediction | | | | | |

Three of the four cases studies support the Situationalist perspective on the

Hierarchy indicator, with the lone exception being the Dean campaign. The basic

hierarchical structure of these organizations remained unchanged, with their usage of the

Internet essentially taking the form of the existing organizational structure.  (Rigidly

hierarchical in the Reform Party, a bottom-up structure in the Greens, and MoveOn

generally a traditional hierarchy with a slight shift to greater top-level control over time).

The Dean campaign, however, became increasingly flatter throughout its existence, with

rank-and-file assuming greater control over the organization throughout the 2004 primary

campaign.  However, a close look at the Dean organization reveals that this decline in

hierarchy was the result of the leadership of the organization making a conscious decision

to facilitate this outcome, which could be interpreted as supportive of the Situationalist

perspective as well.

*Internal Communications*

| TABLE 7.3b | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Internal Communications for Situationalists** | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | SITUATIONALISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Internal Communications | ↔ | ↑ | ↓ | ↑ | ↔ |
| ↓ = Decrease<br>↑ = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br>? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases<br>Underline = Accurate prediction | | | | | |

Three of the organizations experienced directional changes in Internal

Communications, counter to the outcome that we should see according to predictions of

the Situationalists.  The lone organization that remained unchanged was the Reform

Party, largely due to the rigid hierarchy it maintained.  This lack of opportunity for

internal dialogue led rather directly to the final split of the party in 2000, as it contributed

to the disaffection of the Ventura faction and the eventual fragmentation of the state and

local organizations.  The Dean and Green cases both experienced increased internal

communications, as the rank-and-file embraced the channels open to them.  MoveOn has

moved to limit internal discussions since the 2006 midterm elections by shutting down

some website features, most likely related to their efforts to reposition themselves based

on the shift of the balance of Congress in 2006.  After years of encouraging members to

criticize and demand change from the government, MoveOn leadership now faces the

difficult challenge of managing dissent directed against a government led by their

political allies.


*Member Intensity*

| TABLE 7.3c | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Member Intensity for Situationalists** | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | SITUATIONALISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Member Intensity | ↔ | ↑ | ↑ | <u>↔</u> | ↓ |
| ↓   = Decrease<br>↑   = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br> ?   = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases<br>  <u>Underline</u> = Accurate prediction | | | | | |

For Member Intensity, we see again that three of the four cases demonstrate some directionality along this indicator, with only one (the Green Party in this case) exhibiting the predicted behavior.  The Greens carefully constructed their approach to the Internet through years of member input and experimentation, which produced an organizational strategy that is grounded in member ideology and goals.  The national level organization is controlled by the state and local levels, and most party activities occur at these sub-national levels.  Greens were committed to a firm ideology prior to the adoption of the Internet by the organization, and over time created an Internet usage norm consistent with this ideology.  Periodic increases in intensity around certain actions or campaigns occur, but these are temporary spikes rather than sustained increases.  Dean and MoveOn showed significant increases in Member Intensity through Internet avenues, while member use of the Internet enabled the disintegration of Reform Party in 2000.

*Activity*

**TABLE 7.3d**

**Activity for Situationalists**

| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | SITUATIONALISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Activity | ↔ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↓ |

↓   = Decrease
↑   = Increase
↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization
?   = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases
Underline = Accurate prediction

The Situationalist perspective did not predict the results of any of the cases for the Activity indicator. With three of the cases showing increased activity and the Reform Party disintegrating due to Internet-related effects, the Situationalist claim of no change appears to be completely inaccurate. This is especially so if we consider the prospects for these cases from their inception in relation to resource and access issues. Dean, MoveOn, and the Greens all began at a resource disadvantage and faced significant barriers due to their positions and relative unfamiliarity, yet became more active externally. The Reform Party, which began with the financial resources of billionaire Ross Perot and gained immediate national attention, saw Activity decrease over time. Partly this was a result of environmental factors, such as the appropriation of the contract model of politics by the Republicans, but even most of the Reform members that remained in the party post-Contract for America became less active and eventually left the organization. All of these results here contradict the Situationalist perspective.

*Coalitions/Alliances*

| TABLE 7.3e | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Coalitions/Alliances for Situationalists** | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | SITUATIONALISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Coalitions/ Alliances | ↔ | ↔ | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ |
| ↓  = Decrease<br>↑  = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br>?  = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases<br>Underline = Accurate prediction | | | | | |

The Situationalist prediction for Coalitions/Alliances matches only the outcome for the Dean campaign, while the other cases show some directional outcomes. To some degree, the correlation between Dean and the Situationalists is not completely accurate either but is really a product of the average of outcomes. At the formal endorsement level, the Dean campaign had a great deal of success in joining with other groups. However, the net results of these partnerships proved irrelevant when the votes were cast in Iowa, New Hampshire, and beyond. MoveOn, on the other hand, has used the Internet to make numerous (and often unlikely) partnerships, and has produced moderately successful outcomes through these coalitions. The Greens are unpopular enough in general that coalition partners are difficult to find, and the Internet has not enabled them to overcome this obstacle to any great degree. The Reform Party declined in terms of Coalitions/Alliances over the period of observation from a formidable national party to a fragmented set of groups competing for the remaining party resources.

*Success*

| TABLE 7.3f |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Success for Situationalists** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | CASE STUDY RESULTS |  |  |  |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | SITUATIONALISTS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Success | ↔ | ↔/? | ↑ | ↑ | ↓ |
| ↓ = Decrease<br>↑ = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br> ? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases<br> Underline = Accurate prediction |  |  |  |  |  |

Three of the four cases examined showed some directionality associated with Success. MoveOn and the Greens have had greater success during the observation period – substantially so for MoveOn while the Greens have progressed much more modestly. The Reform Party is no longer viable, although from 1992 to 1998 it was a serious political force at the national level and in states such as Minnesota. The Dean campaign, however, experienced much the same electoral outcome as would have been predicted from the start – Dean ended up as an also-ran in the Democratic primary. This conclusion vastly understates many important aspects of the outcome of the Dean campaign, of course, including the longer-term effects on future campaigns of the strategies it adopted and the rise in national stature of the previously-unknown governor of Vermont. However, for the purposes of this analysis it is appropriate to record the result as no change and therefore it can be interpreted as supportive of the Situationalists.

**Evaluating the Predictions of Situationalists**

Although the Situationalists do not fare well in terms of accurately predicting outcomes as observed, once the cases are considered in detail this perspective begins to show a great deal more promise. In most cases, directional outcomes in these observations can be attributed to either organizational leadership decisions or to environmental factors that had overall effects on the organization in question. This in-depth analysis serves to validate the Situationalist perspective to a much higher degree than simply comparing the observed results, although this deeper analysis also exposes many more flaws in the Situationalist view as well.

The outcomes for these cases, for example, appear to be as much an outcome of leadership decisions, and their ideological preferences, as from the technology alone. The desire of the national leadership of the Reform Party to maintain an authoritative control over the party played as much, if not more, of a role in shaping the outcomes as did the use of technology. The Dean campaign made a conscious organizational decision to hire Joe Trippi and to embrace his approach to Internet politics once it became clear that their campaign was gaining no traction among the voters. MoveOn leadership decided to keep their entire organization online, and shifts in the political landscape no doubt contributed greatly to MoveOn's successes in 2006 and their failures prior to then as well. The Greens are largely focused on, and are having success at, the local level, and the Nader presidential campaigns represent outliers for the organization when viewed in context. Clearly the structures set in place by leadership for the technology, and decisions made about its usage, make a great deal of difference in outcomes.

However, taking the analysis one step further we find that this approach falls short of explaining the overall outcomes for these cases. For example, the Dean campaign leadership chose to enable and encourage certain outcomes through technology, and were at least initially successful at erasing the disadvantages the campaign faced at the outset. Within months it was poised atop the polls, with a seemingly insurmountable fundraising advantage, but yet the campaign crashed and burned with "the scream" in the cornfields of Iowa. If the Situationalist argument is applied at this point of the case, the Dean campaign should have been able to use the advantages it gained through its Internet strategy to win the primaries and gain the nomination. This did not happen, and in fact

the Dean campaign fell farther faster than any campaign in recent memory despite having gained the advantage in resources and support.

There are more questions than answers posed by this outcome, although it is reasonable to conclude that resources obtained through the Internet, and the Internet as a political tool itself, may have unique characteristics that set them apart from other types of resources. The complete explanation is immaterial for the scope of this project, however interesting it may be. However, it is still possible to conclude that the Situationalist perspective, while accurate in describing some aspects of the usage of the Internet by political groups, is inadequate to provide a complete understanding of how the two interact in practice.


**Testing the Techno-Skeptic Perspective**

The Techno-skeptic perspective holds that technology is inherently unpredictable when applied to organizations, and that new and emerging technologies such as the Internet will rarely live up to the hype or meet the promises made by their supporters. We should therefore see a variety of outcomes in these cases, with no clear causal pattern or identifiable intervening variables to explain the random results observed. Similar organizations utilizing similar approaches will experience divergent outcomes, and neither structural nor environmental factors will play a consistent causal role. The analysis of these cases and results should therefore demonstrate that the effect of the Internet on political groups is essentially random, which should serve to caution organizations against reliance on both the technology as well as analysts who claim to

understand it.  The results of the cases and the predictions of the Techno-skeptics are

presented side-by-side in Table 7.4, with accurate predictions for each case emphasized.

| TABLE 7.4 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Case Study Results Compared to Techno-Skeptic Predictions** | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | TECHNO-SKEPTICS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Hierarchy | ? | ↓ | ↔ | ↔ | ↔ |
| Internal Communications | ? | ↑ | ↓ | ↑ | ↔ |
| Member Intensity | ? | ↑ | ↑ | ↔ | ↓ |
| Activity | ? | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↓ |
| Coalitions/ Alliances | ? | ↔ | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ |
| Success | ? | ↔/<u>?</u> | ↑ | ↑ | ↓ |

↓  = Decrease
↑  = Increase
↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization
 ?  = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases
 Underline = Accurate prediction

If we use only the predicted value of "**?**" (unknown) to evaluate the Techno-

skeptic perspective, then only the Success indicator of the Dean case was accurately

predicted.  Despite losing the nomination battle, it is still too early to tell what the impact

of the Dean campaign and its continuations in the form of Democracy for America and

Dean's Chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee will eventually be.

However, if we consider the overall position of this perspective, that results will be

seemingly randomly distributed among the cases, then we see that there is a case to be

made for the accuracy of Techno-skeptic predictions that warrants detailed consideration. The results for each indicator are pulled out and examined individually in turn here, including consideration of the variations among the cases in each indicator.

*Hierarchy*

| TABLE 7.4a | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Hierarchy for Techno-skeptics** | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | TECHNO-SKEPTICS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Hierarchy | ? | ↓ | ↔ | ↔ | ↔ |
| ↓ = Decrease<br>↑ = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br>? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases<br>Underline = Accurate prediction | | | | | |

The results for Hierarchy of three of the four cases support the Situationalists, but the existence of variation in the cases bolsters the Techno-skeptic position. Clearly the more technophile positions are proven wrong by this outcome, as the presence of the technology only produced a decrease in Hierarchy in the Dean case. In addition, the shifts in Hierarchy that MoveOn has experienced demonstrate that the directionality of the relationship is not fixed, and that even an organization that relies almost completely on the technology will see differing outcomes over time. Although the Reform and Green Parties experienced no change as an observed result, the consequences of their respective status quos are markedly different despite them being very similar cases in many ways due to being third parties.

257

*Internal Communications*

| TABLE 7.4b **Internal Communications for Techno-skeptics** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | TECHNO-SKEPTICS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Internal Communications | ? | ↑ | ↓ | ↑ | ↔ |
| ↓ = Decrease ↑ = Increase ↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization ? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases Underline = Accurate prediction | | | | | |

Again, the results show a variation in the outcomes for these organizations, with

two similar outcomes but separate and distinct outcomes for the other two. Although the

Dean and Green cases experienced increases in Internal Communications, the lack of

change for the Reform Party and the observable decrease for MoveOn challenge the

promises posed by the Techno-determinists. The MoveOn example is particularly

notable, since an organization that is based almost entirely on the Internet can, apparently

at will, decide when and in what ways individual members can communicate. For this

indicator, then, an argument can be made that not only is the Internet unpredictable, but

reliance on it to the exclusion of other methods leaves the membership of the group

reliant on elite decisions and preferences for opportunities to communicate. Members

who have committed to MoveOn as their chosen vehicle for participatory political

activism have, since the 2006 midterm elections, found themselves locked out of

previously available internal communication mechanisms by the leadership.

**TABLE 7.4c**

**Member Intensity for Techno-skeptics**

| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | TECHNO-SKEPTICS | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Member Intensity | ? | ↑ | ↑ | ↔ | ↓ |

↓ = Decrease
↑ = Increase
↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization
? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases
Underline = Accurate prediction

Again, we can see that there is variation among the results with only two cases sharing an increase in Member Intensity and the others experiencing either no change or a decline. The Reform Party case is particularly supportive of Techno-skeptics, as the Reform Party was an early adopter of some forms of the technology (specifically Internet voting) but this served to weaken, rather than strengthen, member loyalty and activity. Allegations of vote fraud undermined the party leadership in 1996 and 2000, which eventually spread into a general dissatisfaction with the organization and led to the unintended outcome of party fragmentation. Further challenging Techno-determinists, members used the Internet to defect from the national party after the 2000 nomination battle rather than using it to attempt to repair or reorganize the party.

*Activity*

| TABLE 7.4d | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Activity for Techno-Skeptics** | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | TECHNO-SKEPTICS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Activity | **?** | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↓ |
| ↓ = Decrease<br>↑ = Increase<br>↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization<br>? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases<br>Underline = Accurate prediction | | | | | |

Although three of the cases line up in agreement with the Techno-determinist prediction of increased Activity for political organizations using the Internet, the Reform Party is again the outlier. While the other organizations saw increased external activity through their use of the Internet, the Reform Party experienced quite the opposite effect. As Internet usage became more commonplace and available through the late 1990s, party members increasingly began to use the technology to attack each other and organize into factions rather than pursue party objectives. In the case of the Reform Party, member use of the Internet eventually shattered the organization, splitting it in two and resulting in the capture of the organization by an outside group.

*Coalitions/Alliances*

| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TABLE 7.4e** **Coalitions/Alliances for Techno-Skeptics** | | | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | TECHNO-SKEPTICS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Coalitions/ Alliances | ? | ↔ | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ |

↓ = Decrease
↑ = Increase
↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization
? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases
Underline = Accurate prediction

Only one of the examined cases experienced a positive outcome in terms of creating new Coalitions/Alliances through the use of the Internet, while one experienced no significant effect and the other two saw a marked decrease. The variation among the cases is, by itself, supportive of the Techno-skeptic position: technology, and specifically the Internet, is not a magic bullet that can assist organizations to reach outcomes just because the technology has attributes that may facilitate these ends. Furthermore, partnerships facilitated or enabled by the Internet do not always translate into concrete results. The Dean campaign picked up endorsements from a number of unions and other high-profile organizations, gaining access to their online membership networks and other resources, but this did not translate into positive outcomes in the real-world measure of votes. Therefore, expecting online alliances to deliver real world results can produce negative outcomes for organizations if they rely on what can be illusory support through these virtual partnerships with others.

*Success*

| TABLE 7.4f | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Success for Techno-Skeptics** | | | | | |
| | | CASE STUDY RESULTS | | | |
| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | TECHNO-SKEPTICS | DEAN CAMPAIGN | MOVEON | GREEN PARTY | REFORM PARTY |
| Success | ? | ↔/<u>?</u> | ↑ | ↑ | ↓ |

↓ = Decrease
↑ = Increase
↔ = No change, based on existing structural features of the organization
? = Unknown, but will vary even among similar cases
<u>Underline</u> = Accurate prediction

The most important measurable outcome for political organizations is success in meeting their goals, whether those goals are electoral victories or influencing public policy. Although two cases have found some success through their use of the Internet, two cases did not – despite having perceived advantages in pursuing these results. Furthermore, MoveOn really did not have any significant national success until the 2006 midterms, following a decade of intense activity, and it is debatable as to whether MoveOn had a significant impact or whether the political system had simply shifted slightly towards the positions and candidates that it supported. Although the Dean case may prove to be more successful in the long-term despite falling spectacularly short in 2004, the wait-and-see viewpoint behind that position is actually supportive of elements of the Techno-skeptic position as well – the technology is still new and evolving, and we cannot yet tell what it is capable of or in what ways it may alter politics in general.

**Evaluating the Predictions of Techno-Skeptics**

The Techno-skeptic perspective makes no claims related to directionality or predictable outcomes, so in some ways it only requires that the perspectives that do make specific claims be wrong at least some of the time. Using that standard, the Techno-skeptics are poised to be the most accurate in any analysis of multiple organizations since at least some variation is almost certain to exist. However, moving beyond that cursory overview it becomes possible to determine that there is, in fact, some evidence to support important claims made by this perspective. For example, the Dean case offers support for the claims of the Techno-skeptics about Internet usage by political organizations. At the end 2003, before votes began to be cast, the Dean campaign seemed unstoppable. It had used the Internet to generate interest, amass a record amount of donations, secure some important endorsements, and assemble a large base of national support. In many quarters speculation had already turned from a focus on the primaries to a consideration of possible Dean Vice-Presidential choices. Even the Dean campaign had begun to shift resources from upcoming primary states towards efforts to build up their organization in likely general election battleground states. The "magical" Dean Internet machine rolled on until midnight struck in Iowa, when the aura of invulnerability was dispelled and the Dean carriage turned back into a pumpkin. The strength that appeared so formidable online had evaporated at the polling stations, and the Dean campaign never recovered.

Although the Dean case provides a strong case in favor of the Techno-skeptic position, there is no general applicability across all of the cases. We can see organizational shortcomings behind the Reform Party outcomes, and even though the

results were unintentional on the part of leadership, they do not seem completely

unpredictable when closely examined.  The Greens also challenge the Techno-skeptic

perspective, as they have not only survived their scapegoating from the 2000 election but

have prospered in localities across the nation.  Their careful approach to Internet adoption

as an organization appears to have limited unintentional outcomes, further challenging

the randomness aspect of the Techno-skeptic view.  MoveOn has prospered as an

organization despite their post-2006 restructuring, and continues to be active and retains

the loyalty of most of its membership.  Techno-skeptics offer valuable cautionary advice

about the technology, but it appears from these cases that (with the exception of the

electoral failure of the Dean campaign) this model is inadequate to assist us in

understanding the interaction of Internet usage and political organizations.


**Conclusion**

A case-based analysis of political organizations and their use of the Internet

challenges the key assumptions of the three dominant perspectives on the topic.

Although each perspective has some success in predicting outcomes, none of them are

able to completely capture the observed results or explain important outcomes for all of

the cases.  The key to understanding the limitations of these perspectives is to

acknowledge their primary fault: they view the Internet as a single factor or treatment that

has a single, universal effect throughout the organization.  From the results of this

project, we can see that the use of the Internet by political organizations is, in fact, an

interactive and iterative process that can simultaneously occur along different levels and

indicators as predicted by each of the perspectives.  Internet usage is therefore more of a

process than it is a treatment, and must be studied as such.  This conceptual finding from this project will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

Based on the results of this study, none of these perspectives provides an adequate predictive or analytical model for understanding the effects of Internet usage on political organizations.  This is neither surprising nor is it a particularly useful finding by itself. However, detailed consideration of the results of this test and the specific experiences of these cases does provide the components of the next step, which is to produce a model that is more accurate and broadly applicable.  By disregarding the claims of these perspectives as sufficient for explaining the subject, but taking useful elements from each, we are left with the components of what can become a more nuanced and complete analytical approach to the topic.  These elements are considered in Chapter 8 as the basis of a tentative model to guide future research, while the lessons learned are used to offer some prescriptive guidance to political organizations seeking to utilize the Internet for their activities.

# Chapter 8

# Conclusion

**Introduction**

In late May 2007, the first ethical mini-scandal of the 2008 presidential campaign broke. This scandal did not involve illegal fundraising, sexual impropriety or any of the usual issues that are expected to affect campaigns. This scandal involved alleged impropriety in a campaign's use of a commercial social networking site called Facebook. Shortly after Facebook launched a new application that allows members to share content and information more easily, the campaign in question made their customized version of content available within the application. While other campaigns were only learning about the technology, Barack Obama's campaign had already launched their customized usage of the application days before any other campaign would be able to offer theirs.

Prior to its release, this application (Facebook Platform) was unknown to the general public or to the other campaigns, despite their regular interaction with Facebook representatives. Yet somehow, Obama's campaign had their version up and running within minutes of the public availability of the application. Other campaigns, also active on Facebook, had received no advance notice of the application and immediately began to complain about preferential treatment for their competitor. Obama was immediately accused of having received an illegal in-kind contribution from a campaign staffer, Chris Hughes, a co-founder of Facebook who left the company to work for the Obama campaign just weeks before the scandal broke (Levy and Sifry 2007). The allegation is

that Hughes had access to the code for Facebook Platform, and was able to prepare Obama's content package for the application before the official release date and therefore provide an illegal in-kind contribution for the campaign. Threats by other campaigns to make a formal complaint with the Federal Elections Commission over this incident quickly evaporated, but the uproar marked a significant change in the perceived importance of the Internet for campaigns. In 1996, there was barely a ripple when Pat Paulsen was the first to launch a website, and even as late as 2004 other campaigns were willing to cede the Internet to Dean at the beginning of the primaries. The context of Internet usage by political organizations has clearly shifted a great deal in the past four years, let alone the previous decade.

Although a very minor controversy in the broader context of presidential primary politics, this incident demonstrates how the perception of the Internet in politics has changed in only a few short years. The Internet is now perceived as an important battleground for campaigns, and allegations that a candidate received an unfair advantage are taken quite seriously. In 2003, the field of Democratic challengers was quite content to allow the insurgent Dean campaign to take the initiative and stake its claim to the Internet. When the Dean Internet approach was mentioned by other campaigns at all, it was usually in a derisive or dismissive context. Dean's campaign used the Internet to move from unknown to frontrunner in a period of months, breaking fundraising records and blazing a trail for Internet usage by campaigns in the process. From that point forward, it appears that no campaign will be willing to cede even an inch of ground in cyberspace ever again.

As the 2008 presidential election begins to take shape, candidates are continuing to organize their campaigns to undertake the long march toward their respective party's nomination.  With the nominations of both major parties up for grabs in this election, the field is large and competitive with no clear frontrunner in either party.  Beginning immediately after the 2006 midterm election results were complete, candidates began to pursue all of the traditional elements of campaigns, raising money, spending time in early primary and caucus states, increasing their appearances on television, and assembling local organizations across the nation.  However, there is one key shift in strategy from 2004 to the present: candidates from both parties began aggressively using the Internet as a major part of their campaigns from the very beginning.

Candidates are taking the Internet seriously for 2008, investing resources in high-end campaign websites that offer substantive content and a variety of interactive options and leading some to call 2008 the "YouTube Election" as a result (Tinkleman 2007).  The campaigns are conducting outreach efforts on commercial social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, generating "friend lists" of tens, even hundreds, of thousands of predominantly young potential supporters.  The architect of the 2004 Dean campaign, Joe Trippi, was hired as a consultant by the John Edwards campaign to help guide the campaign's use of the Internet, while Barack Obama (one of the first Dean Dozen designees) has been hailed as a trailblazer in online campaigning for his aggressive adoption of new technologies and effective integration of the technology into his broader campaign (Burge 2007).  As of June 2007, a long shot candidate named Ron Paul, a United States Congressman from Texas, was leading all Republican candidates in Meetup membership and YouTube campaign video views, and was using the Internet to generate

support based on his position against the Iraq War and against a federal ban on same-sex marriage (Vargas 2007).  If the early 2008 campaign is any indication, the legacy of the Dean campaign may well prove to be more than just demonstrating the usefulness of the web for fundraising, and may have an effect on the overall structure of campaigns.


**Research Summary**

This work is a test of the claims of the three dominant perspectives about the effects of Internet usage on political organizations, based on a case-based comparative analysis of four organizations.  The Techno-determinist perspective sees the technology as a <u>force</u>, which will transform political organizations (and politics more generally) by virtue of the capabilities of the technology itself.  Generally a normative strain runs through this viewpoint, emphasizing the potential of the technology to create increased participation and deliberation within the polity.  The Situationalists see the technology as a <u>tool</u> that can function well as a component of an organization, but is equivalent in the most important ways to other resources.  This view is grounded in the Situationalist view, and therefore privileges existing environmental and organizational factors as determinants of the results of technology usage.  Finally, the Techno-skeptics see the technology as a <u>wildcard</u> that will generate different outcomes even in similar organizations engaged in similar tasks.  From this perspective, which views the history of technology as a series of largely unmet promises, reliance on the Internet by political organizations is a risky strategy at best.

The Techno-determinist, Situationalist, and Techno-skeptic perspectives each offer assumptions as to how the Internet affects external and internal variables of political

organizations, as described in Chapter 2. These assumptions can be drawn out and framed as predictions that, when applied to case studies of political organizations, form the basis for a test of their claims. Specifically, each of the perspectives offers claims about three internal variables (Hierarchy, Internal Communications, Member Intensity) and three external variables (Activity, Coalitions/Alliances, Success). Techno-determinists predict that hierarchy will decline, with the organization taking a flatter shape, while the rest of the variables will show a marked increase. Situationalists state that organizations will show no significant change in these variables attributable to Internet usage, and although there may be a slight multiplier effect due to the efficiencies of the technology it will not produce a significant shift in outcomes. Techno-skeptics predict that the results will be randomly distributed, with even similar organizations engaged in similar activities demonstrating vastly different outcomes along the same variable.

As detailed in Chapter 3, the cases used to test these claims were chosen on four criteria: they had significant and innovative usage of the Internet, they were insurgents or represented minority viewpoints, the cases were contemporaries from the 1996-2004 time period, and they were all focused at the national level of politics. The four cases that were chosen met these criteria, and should be at least somewhat familiar to most readers: the Dean for America campaign, MoveOn.org, and the Green and Reform Parties. Each of these cases met the four criteria, and were presented as case studies in Chapters 4 through 6 respectively and individually compared to the predictions of each of the perspectives. Chapter 7 flipped the analysis around to test each of the perspectives against all of the cases simultaneously in order to determine the relative predictive power

of each perspective across the different cases.  None of the perspectives was able to accurately predict the entirety of any single case or any single variable across all of the cases, although each had some predictive success.

The Techno-determinist perspective predicted the results for four of six variables for the Dean and MoveOn cases, although only two of the variables were correctly predicted for both cases (Member Intensity and Activity).  It also predicted three outcomes for the Green Party, with Activity again being one of them.  The use of the Internet to facilitate activities, whether entirely Internet-based (such as email campaigns) or "real world" activities organized through the Internet, seems to allow organizations to engage in more activities and be more effective in those that they undertake in terms of scale and scope.  However, the Techno-determinists did not successfully predict a single indicator for the Reform Party case, despite the fact that the party was both an early adopter and an innovator online, and only accurately predicted one case for the Hierarchy (Dean) and Coalitions/Alliances (MoveOn) variables.

The Situationalists fared considerably worse in their predictions, predicting none of the case outcomes for Activity, and only one case for each of four other variables (Internal Communications, Member Intensity, Coalitions/Alliances, and Success).  They did, however, accurately predict Hierarchy for all but the Dean case, accurately predicting that Internet usage would not alter the hierarchical structure of the organization over time.  The Reform Party leadership chose to resist shifts in power from the national to the state and local organizations, and was able to successfully do so until the disintegration of the party in the post-Perot era.  Furthermore, it can be argued that the lone outlier here, the Dean campaign, saw an ongoing decline in hierarchy largely due to

leadership choice. We can therefore conclude that the Situationalist perspective does explain the hierarchy variable, and the related elements of leadership decision-making, to a significant degree.

Techno-skeptics predicted variation in results, even for similar cases with similar usages, and were able to predict the results for at least one variable for each case. Evaluating their predictions therefore relied on finding incidents of variation among the cases: for example, where three of the cases might have the same result, the remaining case would support the Techno-skeptic view. This perspective accurately predicted four of the six variables for the Reform Party case, three for the Dean campaign, two for MoveOn, and only one for the Green Party. However, most of the variation in results can be explained by specific attributes of the cases or decisions made by the organization, therefore weakening the Techno-skeptic position that the effects are essentially random and cannot be predicted. There are, in fact, identifiable factors in most cases that produced the variation in outcomes for these cases. Although the Techno-skeptic perspective offers some explanatory power, it is arguably due more to the shortcomings of the other two perspective rather than to any inherent properties of the perspective itself. In short, although there is reason to agree that organizations may face unwanted consequences from the usage of new technology, the causes of these outcomes are, in fact, largely identifiable.

As a more general point, it is important to note that these conclusions may not be applicable to all political organizations since the cases chosen here represent a specific category of organizations – insurgent organizations and those representing minority views. It is not clear whether this is a significant limitation to generalizability of this

study, however.  From the Techno-determinist and Techno-skeptic perspectives, these

types of organizations offer the greatest potential for variation in outcomes (and therefore

are a better tests of their perspectives) precisely because of their size and outsider status.

Situationalists, on the other hand, would privilege the organization size and popular

support factors as among the determinant factors for the measured outcomes, and

therefore the most-similar design used here should offer a strong test of their claims as

well.  However, pending additional case studies and analysis, I can make no claims as to

the broader generalizability of these findings beyond similar types of organizations.


**A Consideration of the Perspectives**

Through a comparison of the predictions of each of the perspectives in turn with

the evidence from the cases, three specific conclusions can be drawn.  First, none of these

perspectives are adequate to explain the entirety of the effect of Internet usage on

political organizations.  Second, we do, however, see that each of these perspectives has

some predictive value, and that each offers valuable insight into the subject.  Third, since

the dominant perspectives are not adequate, a new approach to evaluating the topic of

Internet usage by political organizations is necessary; one that incorporates some

elements of each of these perspectives but provides a more complete and nuanced

understanding of the subject.  What follows is a more detailed consideration of each of

these conclusions.

*None of the Perspectives is Adequate*

The three perspectives examined in this work represent the three major strains of thought about the topic, and have many supporters from a variety of disciplines including political science. However, although each has some merit in describing certain aspects of the usage of the Internet by political organizations, there are clearly many gaps and contradictions contained within (and between) them. None of the perspectives was able to predict any of the four cases tested in their entirety, and closer analysis reveals that even though each of them captured some elements of the cases, their correct predictions were not always for the reasons the perspective stated. For example, Techno-determinists predicted the ongoing decline in hierarchy for the Dean campaign, but it was as much the result of a conscious decision by leadership as it was due to the technology itself. As a result of this study, it is necessary that we move beyond the three dominant perspectives and reconceptualize our approach to the topic.

As anticipated, none of the perspectives was able to successfully explain the effects of Internet usage on political organizations, and in fact each exhibited significant flaws in their approach to the topic. Although this result was anticipated, however, it is an important conclusion nonetheless because a) adherents of each of these perspectives do make claims to their explanatory power, and b) to this point no work has undertaken a critical, comparative analysis of these perspectives to test their respective claims. As a starting point for a more complete and sophisticated view of this topic, we now have a detailed study that demonstrates this finding and provides a substantive and methodologically consistent critique of the claims made by the three dominant perspectives.

*All of the Perspectives Offer Insight*

Although none of the perspectives are able to predict every dimension of this phenomenon, each of them demonstrates some predictive and explanatory value when we examine the cases in detail along the six indicators chosen for this study. Although we do not gain a complete understanding of the effects of the Internet on political organizations from any one of these perspectives, each of them provides valuable insights to help us understand pieces of the puzzle. As demonstrated in Chapter 7, each perspective had some predictive success when applied to the results of the cases. This apparent, albeit only partial, predictive success of these perspectives demonstrates the basis for their acceptance by many scholars – if one is focused on only one component of organizations or on only selected outcomes, these perspectives can provide adequate explanations for the observed results.

However, with a more detailed consideration that we begin to see variation in the results, and can identify the intervening variables and conditions that shape these outcomes: and consequently we can clearly see the weaknesses of each perspective as a general model for understanding the larger topic of how the Internet interacts with political organizations. For example, although the Reform Party was innovative in their use of Internet balloting in their convention, the perception of manipulation of the process served to break down party cohesion rather than strengthen it over the following months. Based on the results of this study, it is clear that a new approach to the analysis of the effects of Internet usage on political organizations is necessary. Elements of each perspective are useful, however, and should be synthesized into a new approach.

*A New Approach*

Based on the results of this study, it is apparent that the single most important reason that each of these perspectives proves inadequate is that they all consider the interaction of technology and organizations as a stable and consistent process. Specifically, the Internet is seen alternately as a dominant force that acts equally on all aspects of the organization (Techno-determinists), a tool that is acted upon equally by all components (Situationalists), or a wildcard that will have equally random effects on all that it touches (Techno-skeptics). None of these one-size-fits-all viewpoints is correct, and this aspect is at the core of their respective failings. The Internet behaves differently in interaction with each of the indicators examined here, producing different results even in similar cases. This variation in results is not random, but is instead the result of identifiable and observable factors.

The Internet is conceptualized alternately as a force, a tool, and a wildcard in these three perspectives. In reality it is all of these things simultaneously at specific times and in varying proportions. It is therefore best considered not as a single component or treatment for the organization, but as a factor *in interaction* with variable components such as comfort with the technology among members, willingness to adapt by leadership, and the opportunities available to the organization in the political environment. Similar to the Situationalist view, then, we should include considerations of the existing structural and environmental conditions affecting the organization in a more complete model. The right conditions can facilitate the technology in creating outcomes that increase participation, boost effectiveness and enable a good society model of democratic politics

to occur along the lines of the Techno-determinist predictions. Unfavorable conditions or an organizational mismanagement of the capabilities of the technology can produce inconsistent results or, in the worst case scenario, lead to the disruption and disintegration of the organization itself as Techno-skeptics warn.

The use of the Internet by political organizations is better approached not as an episode of a treatment by a variable or factor, then, but as an ongoing iterative process that requires a more complex and nuanced analysis. Using the Internet, in other words, is not a yes/no condition but rather an interactive process within (and without) the organization that constantly generates change and requires adaptation among members, leadership, and the environment. Input and reaction from members, leadership, and the environment interact with and through the technology in a dynamic process that produces outcomes in a systemic manner. In order to predict and understand the effects of this interaction, we must therefore craft a sophisticated and detailed approach that considers the elements in interaction with each other over time.

Parts of this approach can be drawn from each of these three perspectives, as they all provide some insight into the broader topic. Structure matters, as the Situationalists maintain, and must be included in a new model. A poor structure or environment can contribute to a negative outcome for the use of technology by organizations, although an enabling structure is not sufficient alone to produce positive outcomes. The Reform Party leadership was unwilling to enable more member activity through the Internet, and their attempts to exert control led to the fragmentation of the party. On the other hand, the Dean and MoveOn cases both set up the most Internet-positive structures possible but this was not enough for the Dean campaign to win, and MoveOn struggled for many

years before achieving notable success. Structure is important, but not enough by itself to produce successful outcomes for organizations.

The Techno-determinists are correct that the technology will, if enabled, take on a life of its own through member action and can transform elements of the organization itself. Although an enabling structure is important, the flexibility and adaptation potential of the technology is able to both exceed and change expectations, and can become the driving force for an organization. The Dean campaign showed that once the door has been opened to specific avenues of Internet-based member interactivity, the technology may produce more than the sum of its parts and propel an organization well beyond the expected destination. Creative and transformative energy can be unleashed by the technology, in often unexpected ways and from unlikely sources, as predicted by the Techno-skeptics. However, technology alone is neither sufficient nor does it have a universal effect on all aspects of an organization – and it is critical that the organizational structure facilitate the availability and usage of the Internet and be prepared to adapt to the results.

The interaction of structure and technology can have unpredictable results, however, even under ideal conditions. The Techno-skeptic perspective is correct in this regard. The experience of MoveOn's Bush in 30 Seconds campaign during the 2004 elections provides a good example of a potential chain of unpredictable and potentially dangerous outcomes. The member submission of the infamous video comparing Bush to Hitler became a major public relations nightmare for MoveOn, forcing the organization to expend significant resources to counter the resulting negative publicity. The fallout from the incident led to the rejection of MoveOn's Super Bowl ad, which was a major,

long-planned component of their media campaign for the 2004 election.  However, media coverage of the controversy led to free airing of the intended Super Bowl commercial and opportunities for leadership to appear on news shows.  Effective management of the issue by the organization blunted the original controversy fairly quickly and, despite the turmoil, MoveOn's message received more coverage through this potentially damaging incident than it would have otherwise.  In the end, the short-lived scandal proved to be more effective in generating attention for MoveOn than the original strategy likely would have been.  Once the Internet door is open, organizations must be prepared for unexpected results and be prepared to manage both positive and negative outcomes from the technology.

It is also noteworthy that the use of the technology by political organization appears to have the greatest impact in increasing external activity.  Three of the four cases exhibited increases in external activity through the use of the Internet, in part due to the use of the technology as a vehicle for activity itself (i.e. emailing elected officials) but also due to the immediacy of the technology.  Activities can be organized quickly and cheaply through the Internet, allowing organizations to attempt more activities but also giving them the flexibility to adapt activities essentially in "real time" as events unfold. For example, the Nader campaign organized their Super Rallies with only a few weeks notice but were able to fill large venues due to their use of the Internet as the primary mobilization and outreach tool.  MoveOn can organize a large email response within hours of a bill being introduced in Congress, and can adapt their strategy daily, even hourly, as the debate unfolds.

To summarize, a positive organizational approach to the Internet is a factor in achieving positive outcomes, and although it is not sufficient by itself the lack of such an environment is likely to produce negative outcomes. However, the Internet is at its most basic level an interactive technology, and users will determine how applications made available by an organization are utilized and the products they generate. Once members take ownership of the technology, using it in unanticipated ways and generating new ideas, organizations should be prepared to manage and adapt to these shifts. Finally, the interaction of the Internet with structure and membership will produce unintended outcomes, both positive and negative, which the organization must be prepared to effectively manage.

**How the Internet Can Benefit Political Organizations**

In a project of this type, it is impossible to make an exact determination of what might have been different in the cases had the Internet not been used. These cases used the Internet, and there is no means of definitively testing the hypothetical situation in which they did not utilize the technology. However, it is possible to make some approximate estimations based on other, contemporary cases and the previous history of each case studied here. This section will present just such a hypothetical analysis.

The Internet brought Dean several important benefits, including a vehicle for fund raising, a national organization, and media attention. The emphasis on web-based fundraising by the campaign was, at the time, a risky strategy that proved to pay huge dividends. It did so for two main reasons. First, it lowered the transaction costs of campaigning. Since the entire campaign organized around the Dean for America website,

it allowed the campaign to focus outreach efforts on essentially one central vehicle –

removing the immediate need for expensive commercials, direct mail efforts, or in-person

politicking by the candidate.  By marketing the website the campaign was able to reach

voters with its message, raise money, and provide access to the campaign organization

inexpensively and immediately.  Secondly, it provided an organizational tool that served

to replace the traditional networks used by campaigns.  The networking abilities of the

Internet served to replace the in-person networks that national candidates build over years

and decades, and which Dean notably lacked at the beginning of his campaign.

But what if the Dean campaign had not adopted Joe Trippi's Internet strategy in

2005?  Would Dean have caught the public's attention and moved to the front of the

Democratic pack, or would he have remained an asterisk candidate and slowly faded

from the race?   In order to draw a conclusion about this, it is important to again consider

where Dean fell within the candidate pool.  Dean was clearly out of the mainstream of the

Democratic Party due to his opposition to the War on Iraq and his unequivocal support

for civil rights and universal healthcare.  He was the nationally-unknown former

governor of a small, liberal state in New England.  Dean had almost no money, lacked a

significant national organization in the states, and was facing a crowded primary field of

candidates that had all of the financial, organizational, and ideological advantages that he

lacked.

Without the Internet providing some level of compensation for the shortcomings

of the campaign, it is highly unlikely that Dean would have made an impact on the race.

Certainly, it cannot be argued that his positions alone would have gained support, since

despite shifts in public opinion over the past four years, the Democratic Party remains

largely mired in centrist ideology.  The experience of Dean in 2004 without the Internet would have, in all likelihood, resembled that of other outlier candidates in recent presidential primaries such as Dennis Kucinich and Jerry Brown – candidacies that remained firmly on the outside of the process and served less as influences on the debate than as foils for the frontrunners to burnish their "moderate" credentials.

However, the Internet is also much more than merely a replacement for traditional resources.  From all three of the perspectives, it represents (to varying degrees) a challenge to the traditional models of political organizations.  Revisiting Michels (1999), it is apparent that the Internet poses, at minimum, an obstacle to the oligarchical tendencies of political organizations, and in particular of political parties.   The Techno-determinist and Techno-skeptic views of the Internet provide direct challenges to the consolidation of power among elites component of Michels' work.  Situationalists offer a view more parallel to Michels in terms of elite control, although it could also be argued that the amplification of tendencies aspect of the Situationalists also suggests that breakdown of elite control (through fragmentation/atomization of the members or the consolidation of secondary power centers) could also be hastened by the technology.

Looking at the cases presented here, it seems that oligarchical control of political organizations as described by Michels is in fact threatened by the use of the Internet in the political system.  However, it appears from these cases that the threat is external rather than internal to the organizations.  The weakening of elite power within the Reform Party, for example, did not occur internally, but rather through the defection of members and their creation of parallel organizations.  The threat appears to be less likely that a direct challenge for leadership within an organization will take place, but rather

that the technology makes it much easier to create parallel organizations to compete with the leadership oligarchy.

What this means for political organizations is not yet clear, but some preliminary conclusions can be drawn. While it appears based on this work that there is little immediate pressure for change in the traditional model of the oligarchical tendencies of leadership, there is a greater need for leadership to intervene and redirect member energies when conflicts arise. That is to say, leadership must quickly respond to member dissatisfaction or risk fragmentation. The low barriers to online organizing, discussed here in Chapter 1, provide an easy escape hatch for dissatisfied members and, therefore, a threat to unresponsive leadership. The Reform Party leadership did not do so, and collapsed. The national Green Party leadership, in concert with state and local leadership groups, did remain responsive and experienced a period of growth and consolidation despite the crisis potential resulting from the 2000 presidential election. The preliminary conclusion to be drawn, then, is that voluntary sharing of power (within leadership-proscribed boundaries) can serve to moderate, or even gain advantage from, the potential challenges to oligarchy presented by the Internet.

**The Limits of the Internet for Political Organizations**

In Chapter 1, I provided a very brief summary of the state of other communications technologies by political organizations, including print, radio, and television. In addition, I presented a section comparing the attributes of the Internet and these technologies, making the case that in fact the Internet can essentially provide all of the functions of these technologies but at less expense, greater content availability, and

283

more interactivity.  The analysis of the cases presented here has demonstrated that this is indeed the case, and suggests that continuing price drops for bandwidth and advances in computational power will only increase the gap between the Internet and other technologies.  Members who wish to have control over the information they receive, and who wish to take a more active role in political activities, are clearly well-served by the use of the Internet by political organizations.

However, that is not to say that the Internet can be the sole medium used by a successful political organization.  The committed and active users that participate online only includes a segment of the politically active, and represents an even smaller percentage of the overall polity.  An over-reliance on the technology to deliver results (such as member recruitment, votes, or influence) excludes a large portion of the target audience.  The Dean campaign, for example, gained momentum and national attention through Internet usage, but was unable to connect the online "buzz" to real-world results when the first caucus votes were cast.  The Internet is well-suited for creating virtual communities as geographic location is meaningless on the web: however, this feature is also its biggest liability when local action is required.

Those organizations that have been able to connect online organization and content with real-world action have been effective, however.  The use of traditional media by MoveOn has multiplied their online efforts and greatly raised their profile among the polity.  For example, the Super Bowl ad controversy during the 2004 election offered free publicity and numerous forums for their leadership to get their message out. The strategic usage of the Internet by MoveOn to support real-world efforts, such as rallies, get-out-the-vote campaigns, and hurricane relief, provides a best-practice model

of how the technology can be used as both a leading component as well as a supportive element depending on the objective.

Effective marketing campaigns for consumer goods use a multi-platform strategy of radio, television, print, and the Internet. This approach is primarily used to ensure that the largest possible audience can be reached, but also has a reinforcement effect. The more often a message is received, the more likely that it will have an effect. As described by Stammerjohan, et al (2005), when the same basic message is received multiple times but *in a slightly different way*, the repetition effect is multiplied as the message is interpreted by the brain as simultaneously both new and familiar. Advertisers will often prepare several different edits of the same commercial and run them sequentially for just this reason. Effective political organizations must also utilize multi-platform approaches to be effective – even though the Internet is becoming more of a mainstream communications medium, other formats are still critically relevant.

**Lessons for Political Organizations**

If we consider the outcomes of the cases that have been examined here, a number of lessons can be taken away from the innovations and miscalculations made by these organizations. These lessons can be applied by political organizations now and in the future to make their use of the Internet more beneficial in generating positive outcomes and avoiding the failures of the past. Those that seem most important are discussed here, although there are likely many more that can be drawn out of the experiences of these four cases and the many, many cases to come.

- Leadership commitment is crucial – Successful outcomes correlate strongly with positive commitment to the technology by leadership. Leadership must commit to using the technology as a component of the organization, support and participate in it themselves, and not overreact to unintended outcomes. Some users of the technology will take it in new directions, some positive (Dean's blog) and some negative (MoveOn's Hitler ad). Leadership must be prepared to manage these outcomes, but can neither overreact nor seek to exert strong elite control (Reform Party) over these member activities. Evaluation and adjustment is important, so leadership should be prepared to continually adapt to shifts driven by usage of the technology.

- Membership commitment is also vital – Members must be comfortable with the technology and motivated to use it if it is to be effective – the best application in the world is useless if members do not buy into the concept. Consultation with members and an iterative approach to tweaking the technology is key to determining the right applications and their usage; elite judgment about the uses and value of technologies are rarely accurate.

- Be aggressive in adopting the technology – There are benefits to being an early adopter of Internet applications, both in terms of the benefits of the technology itself as well as in generating "buzz" around the organization. The quick pace of technology adoption means that an Internet application that is revolutionary today can become commonplace within the same election cycle (for example,

blogging during the Dean campaign), and being first has added benefits of setting the standard for the application. The use of the technology can itself draw people to your organization, providing additional, essentially cost-free outreach opportunities.

- Maintain perspective – Establishing the most current and technologically-intensive campaign is important, but the technology is not the end in itself. The Internet offers incredible cost-effectiveness and impressive potential, but it cannot overcome existing disadvantages by itself. Building the most cutting-edge suite of Internet applications alone will not change the fortunes of a political organization that faces other barriers to success or has little to offer in terms of program or substance. If you build it, they are likely to come – but you had better have something to offer when they get there.

- Connect the "virtual" and "real" worlds – There is a difference between online support and achieving results in the "real world". Although all of the reasons behind this are not clear at present, organizations must make the effort to connect online support to concrete action toward the goals of the organization. This lesson does not seem to have been factored into the strategies of the 2008 presidential primary candidates, however. For example, a quick overview of the candidate websites in June 2007 showed that none of them feature a prominent link to voter registration information websites, yet gaining votes is clearly the prime goal of their efforts. Similarly, many insurgent organizations

do a fine job of detailing their specific critiques of the status quo but offer no concrete action options to address their points.

- Maximize the value of the technology – The technology is already demonstrably good at some tasks, while less so at others. Organizations should focus their efforts on the proven applications of the technology first, such as online fundraising and generating Meetups, before attempting to utilize the technology for trickier efforts such as mobilizing voters or organizing large online communities. Utilize best practice models from other organizations as a base first, and then build from that point in attempting to reinvent applications or blaze new trails.

While these recommendations are not meant to form a complete set of strategic recommendations for the use of the Internet by political organizations, these are lessons that can be drawn from the case studies and analyses conducted in this study. It remains to be seen if the 2008 campaigns will utilize these lessons in their approach to the Internet, but we can see that organizations such as MoveOn and the Greens have experimented and arrived at these conclusions over time and have had success in doing so. Additional research and evaluation of organizations will, of course, allow for a further refinement of these recommendations and provide addition lessons in the future.

**Directions for Future Research**

This project focused on the experiences of four insurgent political organizations, representing different types of organizations active in predominantly the same time period. The results of a comparative analysis of the results of the case studies against the three dominant predictive models demonstrated the inadequacy of these perspectives. However, it is not enough to simply issue a critique of existing approaches, it is also necessary to offer at least some guidance for addressing the shortcomings that have been identified. Although the research question guiding this project is focused on the evaluation of the dominant perspectives on the topic, the findings that were produced also point to several areas for future research. This section explores some of these potential directions.

First, the aggressive adoption of Internet-focused campaign strategies by more political organizations since 2004 offers many more observable cases for study using the methodology used in this project. Additional case studies would provide more data for consideration, and would therefore allow for a further refining of the conclusions reached here. For example: have organizations demonstrated a learning behavior over time in their approach to the Internet, and if so what are the lessons that they are implementing? A study that begins with the lessons of the Dean campaign but focuses on cases from the 2006 midterms and 2008 presidential election would offer an opportunity to examine adaptations made by the campaigns over time in response to the experiences of previous campaigns. Post-2008, it appears that it might even be possible to assemble a large-N quantitative study of some key aspects of campaigns to examine correlations between specific attributes and outcomes. The largely Internet-based efforts of the newly-created

Unity08 Party to assemble a presidential ticket of a moderate from both the Republican and Democratic parties poses a potentially interesting comparison to the Green and Reform experiences (www.unity08.com).

Similarly, the normalization of the Internet as a component of political organizations is an ongoing, but substantially more developed, process now than in the 1992-2004 timeframe this study uses. The availability, acceptance, and relative power of the Internet has shifted dramatically during the period of observation of these cases. That was simply a necessary concession in order to use cases that used the technology in interesting and groundbreaking ways for this study. An application of this study's methodology to competing campaigns in the 2008 primaries and general election would afford a much more precise evaluation of the functioning of the campaigns by controlling for a number of external variables that exist in this study. Campaigns in the same electoral environment, using predominantly the same technologies, and with knowledge of previous campaigns experiences, would produce very interesting results by virtue of eliminating many of the intervening variables found in this study. This would also allow for comparison of insurgent and frontrunner campaigns from the beginning of the process, something which has not been possible to this point.

Finally, and most importantly, an effort to construct and test a new model of analysis for the use of the Internet by political organizations should be undertaken. This project provides a basis for this model, by identifying the phenomenon as interactive as opposed to the static conceptualization used by the current dominant approaches. Key elements of the iterative process that takes place exist in the three perspectives, but must be pulled out and refined in order to be more broadly applicable. The results of this work

as well as those projects identified in the previous paragraphs could form the basis of this new approach, by offering additional information about the relationship between structure, members, environment, and technology and how they interact within organizations.

One potentially valuable approach to this new model would be a process-based model, focused on decision points linked to technology-related events within political organizations. This approach would move beyond the variables and indicators used in this work, and focus instead on the key decisions and strategic dilemmas that form the basis of the iterative and interactive process identified here. The results seen along these variables would serve more as indicators of *organizational decisions*, therefore, instead of measuring the impact of technology alone. This approach would be a recognition that impacts of technology are mediated through leadership decisions, privileging leadership as the primary determining factor. While similar in some ways to the Situationalist perspective, this approach would allow for consideration of the technology as a driving force or wildcard while making an explicit connection to structure and leadership.

In order to construct this model, additional case studies would be needed to establish the decision points beyond the adoption of technologies themselves. Incidents of feedback from members, as well as the polity in general, that require decisions from leadership should be identified and captured in a methodical way to establish a taxonomy of these decision points. For example, reaction to policies related to organization blogs may represent a decision point for leadership as to the degree of openness (or, alternatively, moderator involvement) for the particular application. The creation of such a process model would allow for the accumulation of a great deal of data about the

decisions and outcomes, providing an opportunity for the construction of best-practice

models and a more refined theoretical construct of a very complex phenomenon.


**Conclusion**

In the four years since the Dean campaign pioneered the use of the Internet as a

central campaign tool, the technology has become an important, and in fact necessary,

element of political activity.  Insurgent and mainstream organizations are taking the

Internet seriously and aggressively investing their resources to construct a significant

Internet presence.  At present, however, our understanding of the interaction of the

Internet and political organizations remains incomplete, and it is uncertain just how they

should best utilize the Internet and what return they can expect to receive from their

investments in the technology.  For example, in the first quarter of 2007 Obama's

campaign raised over 25% of contributions online, but during the same period the John

McCain and Rudi Giuliani campaigns experienced setbacks due to hackers and,

apparently, a complete misunderstanding of the technology.  In the early 2008 primary

season John McCain's site was hacked by a disgruntled former staffer, while Giuliani's

MySpace page defeated the purpose of social networking sites as it was set as private,

allowing only approved friends to view it (Pierce 2007; Burge 2007).  The technology is

an important part of the modern political campaign, but for it to be effective

organizations must understand how it can be best applied, managed, and evaluated.

With the 2008 national election just over a year away at the time of this writing, it

is clear that the experiences of the insurgent organizations examined in this work have

had an impact on currently-active political organizations.  Organization websites and

online fundraising have become major components of political strategy. Campaigns are leading with the Internet in ways few thought possible even a few years ago. Candidates are investing resources into creating and managing peer networking sites like Myspace to connect with prospective supporters. Organization websites now prominently feature requests for online financial contributions and most offer supporters numerous interactive options to get involved online. CNN is cosponsoring debates with YouTube for both the Democratic and Republican fields, allowing people to post video questions online to be asked of the candidates during the live debate (YouTube 2007). The Internet is quickly becoming a critical element for political organizations, and it is likely to gain in importance as it becomes an increasingly normalized aspect of politics and society at large.

However, despite this abundance of Internet usage there is still uncertainty as to what the use of the technology actually means for politics in general, and specifically how it may affect political organizations that use it. The 2008 campaigns are struggling to balance genuine uses against dangerous over reliance on the Internet (Lawrence 2007). As the results of this study demonstrate, organizations that use the Internet for their political activity do not all experience the same results or achieve universally positive outcomes. Analyses to this point have been inadequate to explain the complexities of this phenomenon, and have, in fact, served to obscure the subject rather than illuminate it. This work is an attempt to identify the shortcomings of the dominant perspectives on this topic and, in so doing, identify the components of a more complete and nuanced approach that can provide a better understanding of the effects of Internet usage on political organizations.

As seen in this work, the Internet offers the potential of great reward as well as disaster for insurgent political organizations, and has therefore become a highly-desired, albeit poorly-understood, organizational component. Organizations are investing substantial resources into adopting technology, although seemingly without a clear concept of what they are seeking to accomplish. Organizations feel that they should have an Internet presence and use the technology, yet there is as yet no clear understanding of exactly what can be reasonably expected nor how best to apply the technology to their activities. Efforts to explain the effects of Internet usage on political organizations have, to this point, proven to be inadequate in their predictive power and have not offered a clear insight into how the technology interacts with the organizations. The lack of a clear understanding of the phenomenon has served to confuse the subject, which has misled researchers as well as organizations, undermining the potential the technology poses for increased democratic outcomes.

This study has undertaken the task of presenting a case-based, comparative analysis of the claims made by the three dominant perspectives on the topic in order to test their predictions for six key indicators of organizational outcomes. The results demonstrate that all three of these perspectives, Techno-determinist, Situationalist, and Techno-skeptic, are inadequate as explanatory models, although each has some value in explaining pieces of the overall topic. At the core of their shortcomings is the concept that the relationship between organization and technology is fixed – the technology (or organization) acts in the same fashion as a treatment on all other components. This work demonstrates that this is not accurate, and that in fact the relationship between organization and Internet is a fluid, interactive, and iterative one. In order to gain a better

understanding of this subject, we must therefore begin to construct a more nuanced and complete model that addresses the now-identified characteristics of the phenomenon. This work begins the process by framing the problem and outlining directions for future research in this topic.

# Works Cited

Aldrich, Douglas F. 1999. *Mastering the Digital Marketplace: Practical Strategies for Competitiveness in the New Economy*. (New York: Wiley and Sons).

Alterman, Eric. 2003. *What Liberal Media?: The Truth About Bias and the News*. (New York, NY: Basic Books).

Anderson, Kevin. 2005. "Bloggers' 'Victory' Over Iraq War Memos." *BBC News*, June 20. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4099120.stm (June 28, 2007).

Associated Press. 2004. "Greens Reject Nader Endorsement, Back Cobb." *MSNBC.com* http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5309611/ (June 28, 2007).

Ayres, Jeffrey M. 1999. "From the Streets to the Internet: The Cyber-Diffusion of Contention." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Vol. 566. (November). Pp. 132-144.

Bacon, Perry. 2006. "The Unmaking of a Senator: How Bloggers Pulled it Off." *Time*, August 9.

Bakardjieva, Maria. 2005. *Internet Society: The Internet in Everyday Life*. (London: Sage).

Barker, David. 2002. *Rushed to Judgment: Talk Radio, Persuasion, and American Political Behavior*. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press).

Barney, Darin. 2000. *Prometheus Wired: The Hope for Democracy in the Age of Network Technology*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Barrett, Laurence I. 1992. "Perot-noia." *Time*, November 9. http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,976969-1,00.html (June 28, 2007).

Bash, Dana. 2006. "Democratic Leadership Quickly Backs Lamont." *CNN.com*, August 9. http://www.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/08/09/democratic.primaries/index.html (June 28, 2007).

Bennett, W. Lance. 2004. "Social Movements Beyond Borders: Understanding Two Eras of Transnational Activism." In Donatella della Porta and Sidney Tarrow (Eds.) *Transnational Protest & Global Activism*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield).

Bimber, Bruce. 1998. "The Internet and Political Mobilization." *Social Science Computer Review*. 16. (391-401).

Bimber, Bruce. 2003. *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press).

Blumier, Jay G. and Michael Gurevitch. 2001. "The New Media and Our Political Communication Discontents: Democratizing Cyberspace." *Information, Communication, & Society*. 4:1. (1-13).

Boston Globe. 2006. "Lieberman Won't Rule Out GOP Caucusing." *Boston.com*, November 13. http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2006/11/13/lieberman_wont_rule_out_gop_caucusing/ (June 28, 2007).

Boykoff, Jules. 2006. *The Suppression of Dissent: How the State and Mass Media Squelch USAmerican Social Movements*. (New York, NY: Routledge).

Burge, Kathleen. 2007. "Learning to Love the Internets." June. *OMMA: The Magazine of Online Marketing and Advertising*. http://publications.mediapost.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Articles.showArticleHomePage&art_aid=61112 (June 28, 2007).

Burke, James. 2007. *Connections*. (New York: Simon and Schuster).

Burns, James MacGregor. 1978. *Leadership*. (New York: Harper).

Bush in 30 Seconds. 2004. "Child's Pay Ad by Charlie Fisher Wins MoveOn.org Voter Fund's 'Bush in 30 Seconds' TV Ad Contest." January 12. http://www.bushin30seconds.org/release-winner.html (June 28, 2007).

Buss, Terry F. and Nathaniel J. Buss. 2006. "The Internet, Politics, and Democracy." In *Modernizing Democracy: Innovations in Citizen Participation* by Terry F. Buss, F. Stevens Redburn, and Kristina Guo (Eds.). (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe).

Cameron, Carl and Liza Porteus. 2004. "Ad Comparing Bush to Hitler Gets Heat." *Fox News*, January 6. http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,107426,00.html (June 28, 2007).

Castells, Manuel. 2000. *End of Millenium 2$^{nd}$ Edition*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers).

Cairncross, Frances. 1997. *The Death of Distance: How the Communications Revolution Will Change Our Lives*. (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press).

Campaign Finance Institute. 2004. "CFI Analysis of the Presidential Candidates' Financial Reports Filed July 20, 2004." July 23. http://www.cfinst.org/pr/prRelease.aspx?ReleaseID=12 (June 28, 2007).

Chong, Dennis. 1991. *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

CNN.com. 2000. "CNN In-Depth Specials: Looking at the Y2K Bug." http://www.cnn.com/TECH/specials/y2k/ (June 25, 2007).

CNN.com. 2002. "Senate Approves Iraq War Resolution: Administration Applauds Vote." October 11. http://archives.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/10/11/iraq.us/ (June 28, 2007).

CNN.com. 2006a. "Elections 2006: U.S. Senate/Connecticut." November 7. http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2006/pages/results/states/CT/S/01/index.html (June 28, 2007).

CNN.com. 2006b. "Elections 2006: Exit Polls/Connecticut." November 7. http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2006//pages/results/states/CT/S/01/epolls.0.html (June 28, 2007).

Coakes, Elayne. 2003. *Knowledge Management : Current Issues and Challenges*. (Hershey, PA: IRM Press).

Cohn, Jonathan. 2004. "Moral Center: The Case for Howard Dean." *The New Republic*. January 19.

Cone, Edward. 2003. "The Marketing of a President." *Baseline Magazine*. November 17. http://www.baselinemag.com/print_article2/0,1217,a=112601,00.asp (June 28, 2007).

Coombs, W. Timothy. 1998. "The Internet as Potential Equalizer: New Leverage for Confronting Social Irresponsibility." *Public Relations Review*. Vol. 24(3). (Fall). Pp. 289-303.

Cornfield, Michael. 2005. "The Internet and Campaign 2004." March 6. http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/150/report_display.asp (June 25, 2007).

Cox, Craig. 2003. "Kucinich for President?: Can Cleveland's Former "Boy Wonder" Bring Bold Ideas into the Democratic Party?" *Utne Magazine*. July/August. http://www.utne.com/issues/2003_118/promo/10624-1.html (June 28, 2007).

Craig, Douglas B. 2000. *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press).

Dahlgren, Peter. 2005. "The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation." *Political Communication*. 22. (147-162).

Danitz, Tiffany and Warren P. Strobel. 1999. "The Internet's Impact on Activism: The Case of Burma." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. Vol. 22 (3). (July-September). Pp. 257-270.

Darman, Jonathan. 2004. "Censored at the Super Bowl." *Newsweek* (web exclusive), January 30. http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4114703/ (June 28, 2007).

Dartnell, Michael Y. 2006. *Insurgency Online: Web Activism and Global Conflict*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).

Davis, Richard. 1999. *The Web of Politics: The Internet's Impact on the American Political System*. (New York: Oxford University Press).

Davis, Richard. 2005. *Politics Online: Blogs, Chatrooms, and Discussion Groups in American Democracy*. (New York, NY: Routledge).

Dawn, Laura (Ed.). 2006. *It Takes a Nation: How Strangers Became Family in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina*. (San Rafael, CA: Earth Aware Editions)

Dean for America. 2003. "The Howard Dean for Iowa Game." December. http://www.deanforamericagame.com (June 28, 2007).

De Vaney, Ann. 2000. "Technology in Old Democratic Discourses and Current Resistance Narratives: What is Borrowed? What is Abandoned? What is New?" In *Technology and Resistance: Digital Communications and New Coalitions Around the World* by Ann De Vaney, Stephen Gance and Yan Ma (Eds.). (New York: Peter Lang Publishing).

Deibert, Ronald J. 2000. "International Plug 'n Play? Citizen Activism, the Internet, and Global Public Policy." *International Studies Perspectives*. 1. Pp. 255-272.

De Luca, Tom and John Buell. (2005). *Liars! Cheaters! Evildoers!" Demonization and the End of Civil Debate in American Politics*. (New York, NY: New York University Press).

Dizard Jr., Wilson. 1997. *Meganet: How the Global Communications Network Will Connect Everyone on Earth*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press).

Drucker, Peter F. 1995. *Managing in a Time of Great Change*. (New York: Truman talley Books).

During, Wim, Ray Oakey, and Saleema Kauser (Eds.). 2001. *New Technology-based Firms in the New Millennium*. (New York, NY: Pergamon).

Eagleton-Pierce, Matthew. (2001). "The Internet and the Seattle WTO Protests." *Peace Review*. 13:3. (331-7).

Edsall, Thomas B. 2001.  "In Congress, They've got Mail – Far Too Much of It."  *Washington Post*. (March 19).  Page A05.

Edsall, Thomas B. 2004.  "Dean's Quick Start Due to Gay Support."  *Washington Post*. (January 2).  Page A03.

Ensor, Jim. 2006.  *Future Net: The Essential Guide to Internet and Technology Megatrends*. (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing).

Federal Election Commission. 2001.  "2000 Official Presidential General Election Results." December. http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/2000presgeresults.htm  (June 28, 2007).

Feinstein, Lee. 2002.  "Most Americans Support War with Iraq, Shows New Pew/CFR Poll."  *Council on Foreign Relations*.  October 10. http://www.cfr.org/publication.html?id=5051 (June 28, 2007).

Feinstein, Mike. 2007. "Greens Holding Elected Office."  June. http://www.feinstein.org/greenparty/electeds.html  (June 28, 2007).

Feinstein, Mike and Kendra Markle. 2007.  "Green Party Election Results."  June. http://216.92.191.78/elections/index.php?year=2007  (June 28, 2007).

Fenton Communications. 2003.  "No Candidate Wins Majority in MoveOn.org Political Action First-Ever Democratic Online 'Primary'."  June 27. http://www.moveon.org/pac/primary/release.html  (June 28, 2007).

Flynn, Julia. 1999.  "In Europe, Labor Movement Takes Protests to the Web."  *The Wall Street Journal (Eastern Edition)*. Vol. 234: Issue 81 (October 25).  Page A36.

Fox, Susannah. 2005.  "Digital Divisions."  October 5. http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/165/report_display.asp  (June 25, 2007).

Froehling, Oliver.  1997.  "The Cyberspace "War of Ink and Internet" in Chiapas, Mexico."  *Geographical Review*.  87:2 (April): 291-307.

Gardner, Elysa. 2004.  "Springsteen, R.E.M., Other Big Acts Embark on Tour."  August 4, *USA Today*.  http://www.usatoday.com/life/music/news/2004-08-04-vote-tour_x.htm  (June 28, 2007).

Garreau, Joel. 2001.  "Science's Mything Links: As the Boundaries of Reality Expand, Our Thinking Seems to Be Going Over the Edge."  *The Washington Post*. (July 23).  Page C1.

Geels, Frank W. and Wim A. Smit. 2000.  "Lessons from Failed Technology Futures: Potholes in the Road to the Future." In *Contested Futures: A Sociology of Prospective Techno-Science* by Nik Brown, Brian Rappert, and Andrew Webster (Eds.)  (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company).

Gibson, Rachel. 2001.  "Elections Online: Assessing Internet Voting in Light of the Arizona Democratic Primary." *Political Science Quarterly* 116:4 (Winter 2001-2002). 561-583.

Goodman, David. 2000.  "A More Civil Union." *Mother Jones*.  July/August.

GoPatGo2000. 2000.  "Buchanan-Foster 2000 Homepage." *Archive.org* http://web.archive.org/e2k/20001107173009/www.gopatgo2000.org/  (June 28, 2007).

Green, Jordan. 2000.  "Nine Reasons for Nader." *CounterPunch*, October 15. http://www.counterpunch.org/gardenparty.html   (June 28, 2007).

Green Party Minutes. 1997.  "Association of State Green Parties - The Topsham Meeting." October 3-5, Topsham, Maine. http://www.gp.org/minutes/topsham.shtml  (June 28, 2007).

Green Party Minutes. 1998.  "Association of State Green Parties Meeting of the Coordinating Committee."  April 24, Santa Fe, New Mexico. http://www.gp.org/minutes/santafe.shtml (June 28, 2007).

Green Party Minutes. 1999. "Association of State Green Parties Meeting of the Coordinating Committee."  June 5-6, Moodus, Connecticut. http://www.gp.org/minutes/moodus.shtml  (June 28, 2007).

Green Party Minutes. 2000a. "Association of State Green Parties Meeting of the Coordinating Committee."  April 24, Denver, Colorado. http://www.gp.org/minutes/denver.shtml (June 28, 2007).

Green Party Minutes. 2000b. "Association of State Green Parties Meeting of the Coordinating Committee."  December 9-10, Hiawassee, Georgia. http://www.gp.org/minutes/hiawasee.shtml  (June 28, 2007).

Green Party of the United States. 2000.  "Ten Key Values of the Green Party." http://www.gp.org/tenkey.shtml  (June 28, 2007).

Green Party of the United States. 2001.  "Green Party Awarded National Committee Status by FEC."  November. http://www.gp.org/fec/index.html  (June 28, 2007).

Green Party of the United States. 2006.  "A Brief History of the Green Party." http://www.gp.org/history.shtml  (June 28, 2007).

Greens.org. 2005. "Green Party Ballot Status and Voter Registration Totals (United States)." May. http://web.greens.org/stats (June 28, 2007).

Grieve, Tim. 2007. "A MoveOn Push Poll?" *Salon.com*, March 22. http://www.salon.com/politics/war_room/2007/03/22/moveon_poll/index.html (June 28, 2007).

Gross, Mathew. 2003a. "The Vote: Your Country, Your Campaign, Your Decision." *Blog for America*. November 4. http://www.blogforamerica.com/archives/002128.html (June 28, 2007).

Gross, Mathew. 2003b. "Dean Declares Independence." *Blog for America*. November 8. http://www.blogforamerica.com/archives/002191.html (June 28, 2007).

Grossman, Lawrence K. 1995. *The Electronic Republic: Reshaping Democracy in the Information Age*. (New York: Viking).

Grossman, Lev. 2007. "Time Person of the Year." *Time* 168 (January 1): 38-44.

Gunzberger, Ron. 2007. "Directory of U.S. Political Parties." *Politics1.com* http://www.politics1.com/parties.htm (June 28, 2007).

Gurstein, Michael. 1998. "DW: Inside Story on Ventura Internet Use (fwd)." December 15, *Nettime Mailing List Archives*. http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9812/msg00038.html (June 28, 2007).

Hagelin for President 2000. 2000. "Hagelin for President 2000." *Archive.org* http://web.archive.org/e2k/20000912165600/hagelin.org/ (June 28, 2007).

Harris Poll. 2006. "Over Three-Quarters of All U.S. Adults – An Estimated 172 million – Now Go Online." May 24, *HarrisInteractive.com*, http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=668 (June 28, 2007).

Harris, Scott. 2000. "'Nader Traders' May Have Affected the Outcome in Florida." November 17, *CNN.com*. http://archives.cnn.com/2000/TECH/computing/11/17/nader.traders.help.gore.idg/index.html (June 28, 2007).

Hauser, Tom. 2002. *Inside the Ropes with Jesse Ventura*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press).

Herman, Edward S. and Robert W. McChesney. 1997. *The Global Media: The New Missionaries of Capitalism*. (Herndon, VA: Cassell).

Howard, Philip N. (2006). *New Media Campaigns and the Managed Citizen*. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press).

Institute for Politics Democracy & the Internet (IPDI). 1998. "Challengers, Candidates in Tight Races Flock to Internet." October 29. http://www.ipdi.org/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=5248 (June 25, 2007).

Intel, Inc. 2007. "Moore's Law." http://www.intel.com/technology/mooreslaw/ (June 25, 2007).

Jones, Kevin T. 2005. *The Role of Televised Debates in the U.S. Presidential Election Process (1960-2004)*. (New Orleans, LA: University Press of the South, Inc.)

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

Kaid, Lynda Lee, Mitchell S. McKinney, and John C. Tedesco. 2000. *Civic Dialogue in the 1996 Presidential Campaign: Candidate, Media, and Public Voices*. (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press).

Karr, Timothy. 2004. "CBS Cuts MoveOn, Allows White House Ads During Super Bowl." *MediaChannel.org*, January 17. http://www.notinourname.net/resources_links/moveonads-17jan04.htm (June 28, 2007).

Keegan, Daniel. 2000. "Reform Party Online Balloting Thwarts Hackers." August 17, *CNN.com* http://archives.cnn.com/2000/TECH/computing/08/17/evote.v.hackers.idg/index.html (June 28, 2007).

King, John and Kelly Wallace. 2003. "Al Gore Endorses Howard Dean." *CNN.com*. December 9. http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/12/09/elec04.prez.gore.dean/ (June 28, 2007).

Kingdon, Donald Ralph. 1973. *Matrix Organization: Managing Information Technologies*. (London: Tavistock Publications, Ltd.).

Klotz, Robert J. 2004. *The Politics of Internet Communication*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.)

Koch, Jeffrey. 2001. "Attitudes Toward Government, Partisan Dispositions, and the Rise of Ross Perot." In *Ross for Boss: The Perot Phenomenon and Beyond* by Ted G. Jelen (Ed.) (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press).

Lagorio, Christine. 2006. "Meet Joe Lieberman's Worst Nightmare." CBSNews.com. August 4. http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/08/01/politics/main1857038.shtml (June 28, 2007).

Lang, Kurt and Gladys Engel Lang. (2002) *Television and Politics*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers)

Lawrence, Jill. 2003. "Dean Bid Bolstered by Formal Major Union Endorsements." November 12. *USA Today*. http://www.usatoday.com/news/politicselections/nation/2003-11-12-labor-dean_x.htm (June 28, 2007).

Lawrence, Jill. 2007. "As a Campaign Tool, Web Has its Uses and Limits." June 13. *USA Today*. http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2007-06-13-web-campaign-tool_N.htm (June 28, 2007).

Leibovich, Mark. 2006. "Lieberman Hopes His Fate Isn't Sealed With a Kiss." *The New York Times.com*, July 16. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/16/washington/16lieberman.html?ex=1310702400&en=b423a86bccfd09af&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss (June 28, 2007).

Levy, Joshua and Micah L. Sifry. 2007. "Did Facebook Play Favorites with Obama?" June 4. http://www.techpresident.com/node/382 (June 28, 2007).

Levine, Peter. 2002. "Can the Internet Rescue Democracy? Toward an On-line Commons." in *Democracy's Moment: Reforming the American: Political System for the 21st Century* by Ronald Hayduk and Kevin Mattson (Eds.) (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield)

Lichbach, Mark Irving. 1995. *The Rebel's Dilemma*. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press).

Liloia, Tara. 2004. "Democracy for America Success Stories." *Blog for America*. November 12. http://www.blogforamerica.com/archives/005524.html (June 28, 2007).

Lizza, Ryan. 2003. "Dean.com." *The New Republic*. June 2.

Lloyd, Mark. 2006. *Prologue to a Farce: Communication and Democracy in America*. (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press).

Lofgren, Orvar and Robert Willim. 2006. *Magic, Culture and the New Economy*. (Gordonsville, VA: Berg Publishers).

Lyris Email Marketing Case Studies.  2004.  "Howard Dean Campaign Uses Lyris
ListManager to Help Build Community."
http://www.lyris.com/resources/casestudies/casestudy_dean.html  (June 28, 2007).

Magill, Ken. 2003.  "Direct-Mail Database Promotes Brand Loyalty for Republicans."
*New York Sun*, October 31, sec. National 5.

Majoo, Farhad. 2000.  "Nader Traders in a Quandry."  November 7, *Wired.com*.
http://www.wired.com/politics/law/news/2000/11/40011  (June 28, 2007).

Manjoo, Farhad. 2006.  "End of the 'Big Happy Family.'"  December 19, *Salon.com*.
www.salon.com/news/feature/2004/12/16/wes_boyd  (June 28, 2007).

Manjoo, Farhad. 2007.  "MoveOn Moves in with Pelosi."  *Salon.com*, March 23.
http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/03/23/move_on/  (June 28, 2007).

Margolis, Michael and David Resnick. 2000.  *Politics as Usual: the Cyberspace
"Revolution"*.  (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications).

Marlow, Eugene and Patricia O'Connor Wilson. 1997.  *The Breakdown of Hierarchy:
Communicating in the Evolving Workplace*.  (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann).

McAdam, Doug. 1982.  *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency,
1930-1970*.  (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

McEnroe, Colin. 2006.  "The Lieberman Spoiler."  *Salon.com*, October 23.
www.salon.com/opinion/feature/2006/10/23/alan_schlesinger  (June 28, 2007).

McSweeney, Dean.  2007.  "The Front-Runner Falls: The Failure of Howard Dean."
*Party Politics* 13 (1). 109-126.

Media Matters.  2005.  "O'Reilly Equated Giving Money to MoveOn.org with Donating
to Nazi Party."  October 25.  http://mediamatters.org/items/200510250013  (June
28, 2007).

Menendez, Albert J. 1996.  *The Perot Voters & the Future of American Politics*.
(Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books).

Michels, Robert. 1999.  *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical
Tendencies of Modern Democracy*.  (Edison, NJ: Transaction Publishers).

Mickelson, Sig. 1989.  *From Whistle Stop to Sound Bite: Four Decades of Politics and
Television*.  (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers).

Mills, Daniel Quinn. 2001. *E-Leadership: Guiding Your Business to Success in the New
Economy*.  (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall).

Morris, Aldon D. 1984. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. (New York: The Free Press).

MoveOn.org. 2005. "Annual Report: MoveOn.org Political Action in 2005." December 29. http://pol.moveon.org/2005report/ (June 28, 2007).

MoveOn.org. 2006a. "About the MoveOn Family of Organizations." http://www.moveon.org/about.html (June 28, 2007).

MoveOn.org. 2006b. "Vigils to Support Cindy Sheehan." August. http://www.political.moveon.org/cindyvigils/pics.html (June 28, 2007).

MoveOn.org. 2006c. "Operation Democracy Overview." http://www.moveon.org/team/overview.html#where (June 28, 2007).

MoveOn.org. 2006d. "Contribute to the MoveOn/Christian Coalition Ad." May. https://civ.moveon.org/donatec4/save_the_internet.html (June 28, 2007).

MoveOn.org. 2007. "Election 2006: People Powered Politics." http://pol.moveon.org/2006report/ (June 28, 2007).

Murray, Shailagh. 2006. "Lamont Relied on Net Roots – and Grass Roots." *Washington Post*, August 8, A05.

Mutz, Diana. 2006. *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy*. (New York: Cambridge University Press).

Nader2000. 2000. "Nader-LaDuke 2000 Homepage." *Archive.org* http://web.archive.org/e2k/20001107174502/www.votenader.com/index.html (June 28, 2007).

National Center for Educational Statistics. 2003. "Overall Performance of U.S. Adults." In *Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey*. http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/all/ib_overall.asp (June 25, 2007).

Negroponte, Nicholas. 1996. *Being Digital*. (New York: Knopf).

Noam, Eli M. (2005). "Why the Internet is Bad for Democracy." *Communications of the ACM*. October. 48:10. (57-58).

Nordin, Kenneth D. 2001. "The Television Candidate: H. Ross Perot's 1992 and 1996 Presidential Races." In *Ross for Boss: The Perot Phenomenon and Beyond* by Ted G. Jelen (Ed.) (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press).

Norris, Pippa. 2000.  *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communication in Post-Industrial Societies.*  (New York: Cambridge University Press).

Norris, Pippa. 2002.  *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide.*  (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press).

Norris, Pippa. 2004.  "The Bridging and Bonding Role of Online Communities." In *Society Online: The Internet in Context* by Philip N. Howard and Steve Jones (Eds.) (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications).

Noveck, Beth Simone. 2004.  "Unchat: Democratic Solution for a Wired World."  In *Democracy Online: The Prospects for Political Renewal Through the Internet* by Peter M. Shane (Ed.) (New York, NY: Routledge).

Oberst, Robert D. 2001.  *2020 Web Vision: How the Internet Will Revolutionize Future Homes, Business and Society.* (Boca Raton, FL: Universal Publishers).

O'Donnell, Norah. 2005.  "Bartlett Defends Rove's Comments."  *MSNBC.com*, June 24. http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8347159/  (June 28, 2007).

Ogden, Michael. 1998.  "Technologies of Abstraction: Cyberdemocracy and the Changing Communications Landscape." In *Digital Democracy: Policy and Politics in the Wired World*, by Cynthia J. Alexander and Leslie A. Pal (Eds.)  (New York: Oxford University Press).

On the Issues. 2004.  "Howard Dean on War and Peace."  January. http://www.issues2000.org/2004/Howard_Dean_War_+_Peace.htm  (June 28, 2007).

OpenSecrets.org 2005.  "2004 Presidential Election: 2004 Donor Demographics." May 16.  http://www.opensecrets.org/presidential/donordems.asp  (June 28, 2007).

OpenSecrets.org. 2006.  "2004 Presidential Election: Howard Dean Campaign Money." August 30.  http://www.opensecrets.org/presidential/summary.asp?ID=N00025663 (June 28, 2007).

Panagopoulos, Costas. (Ed.) 2007.  *Rewiring Politics: Presidential Nominating Conventions in the Media Age.*  (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press).

Pariser, Eli. 2007.  "Do MoveOn Members Really Support the Iraq Supplemental?" *MoveOn.org*, March 23.  http://pol.moveon.org/iraq/supplemental.html  (June 28, 2007).

Pierce, Charles P. 2007. "Mud in the Digital Age."  June 17, *Boston Globe*.
    http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2007/06/17/mud_in_the_digital_age/
    (June 28, 2007).

PoliticsOnline.com. 2007.  "E-Politics Firsts." April 10.
    http://www.politicsonline.com/content/main/firsts/  (June 26, 2007).

Posner, Gerald. 1996.  *Citizen Perot: His Life and Times*.  (New York, NY: Random
    House).

Prior, Markus. 2007.  *Post-Broadcast Democracy: How Media Choice Increases
    Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections*.  (New York:
    Cambridge University Press).

Raskin, Jamin. 2000.  "Nader's Traders: How to Save Al Gore's Bacon by Swapping
    Votes on the Internet."  October 25, *Slate.com*.  http://www.slate.com/id/91933
    (June 28, 2007).

Rainie, Lee and John Horrigan. 2007.  "Election 2006 Online." January 17.
    http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/199/report_display.asp  (June 25, 2007).

Raney, Rebecca Fairley. 1998.  "Former Wrestler's Campaign Got a Boost From the
    Internet."  November 6, *New York Times*.
    http://www.politicsonline.com/coverage/nytimes2/06campaign.html  (June 28,
    2007).

Reform Party. 2000.  "Reform Party 2000 Homepage."  *Archive.org*
    http://web.archive.org/e2k/20000912165532/http://www.reformparty.org  (June 28,
    2007).

Reform Party. 2007. "Directory of Candidates."  http://reformparty.org/candidates.htm
    (June 28, 2007).

Ritsch, Massie. 2000.  "States Sort Out Dueling Reform Party Tickets."  August 23, *Los
    Angeles Times*.
    http://archives.cnn.com/2000/ALLPOLITICS/stories/08/23/reform.party.lat/index.h
    tml  (June 28, 2007).

Robinson, John P., Meyer Kestnbaum, Alan Neustadtl, and Anthony Alvarez. 2000.
    "Information Technology, the Internet and Time Displacement."  Paper presented at
    the Annual Meetings of the American Association of Public Opinion Research,
    Portland, OR.

Rosenberg, Debra and Karen Breslau. 2004.  "Culture Wars: Winning the 'Values' Vote."
    *Newsweek*.  November 7.  http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6401635/site/newsweek/
    (June 28, 2007).

Salzman, Eric. 2004. "Dean's Scream: Not What it Seemed." *CBS News*, January 26. http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/01/26/politics/main596021.shtml (June 28, 2007).

Scheiber, Noam. 2003. "Organization Man: Joe Trippi Reinvents Campaigning." *The New Republic*. November 17.

Schneider, Steven M. 2000. "Creating a Democratic Public Sphere through Political Discussion: The Case of Abortion Discourse on the Internet." In *Social Dimensions of Information Technology: Issues for the New Millenium*, by G. David Garson (Ed.) (Hershey, PA: Idea Group Publishing).

Sclove, Richard E. 1995. *Democracy and Technology*. (New York: The Guilford Press).

Selnow, Gary W. 1998. *Electronic Whistle-Stops: The Impact of the Internet on American Politics*. (Westport, CT: Praeger).

Shapiro, Andrew L. 1999. *The Control Revolution: How the Internet is Putting Individuals in Charge and Changing the World We Know*. (New York, NY: PublicAffairs).

Sifry, Micah L. 2004. "The Rise of Open Source Politics." *The Nation*. November 22: 14-20.

Silverstein, Ken. 2000. "Candidate Nader." *Mother Jones*. July/August

Simmons, Solon J. and James R. Simmons. 2006. "If it Weren't for Those ?*!&*@!* Nader Voters We Wouldn't be in This Mess: The Social Determinants of the Nader Vote and the Constraints on Political Choice." *New Political Science*, 28:2 (June). 229-244.

Skewes, Elizabeth A. 2007. *Message Control: How News is Made on the Presidential Campaign Trail*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers)

Solomon, Norman. 2000. "Corporate versus Independent Media." *The Humanist*. Vol. 60 (4). (July/August). Pp. 3-4.

Solop, Frederic I. 2001. "Digital Democracy Comes of Age: Internet Voting and the 2000 Arizona Democratic Primary Election." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. Vol. XXXIV (2). (June). Pp. 289-293.

Stammerjohan, Claire, Charles M. Wood, Yuhmiin Chang, and Esther Thorson. 2005. "An Empirical Investigation of the Interaction between Publicity, Advertising, and Previous Brand Attitudes and Knowledge." *Journal of Advertising*. Volume 34 (4) (Winter). Pp. 55-67.

Standage, Tom. 1997. *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's On-Line Pioneers*. (New York: Walker and Company).

Stivers, Richard. 1999. *Technology as Magic: The Triumph of the Irrational*. (New York: Continuum Publishing Company).

Suellentrop, Chris. 2003. "Peer to Peer Politics: Should Howard Dean be a Little Bit Afraid of the Internet?" *Slate.com*. July 14. http://www.slate.com/id/2085610/ (June 28, 2007).

Tapscott, Don. 1996. *The Digital Economy: Promise and Peril in the Age of Networked Intelligence*. (New York: McGraw-Hill).

Tarrow, Sidney. 1998a. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. (New York: Cambridge University Press).

Tarrow, Sidney. 1998b. "Fishnets, Internets, and Catnets: Globalization and Transnational Collective Action." In *Challenging Authority: The Historical Study of Contentious Politics*, by Michael P. Hanagan, Leslie Page Moch, and Wayne Te Brake. (Eds.). (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press).

Tedesco, John C., Jerry L. Miller, and Julia A. Spiker. (1998). "Presidential Campaigning on the Information Superhighway: An Exploration of Content and Form." In *The Electronic Election: Perspectives on the 1996 Campaign Communication* by Lynda Lee Kaid and Dianne G. Bystrom (Eds.) (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers).

Terry, Sara. 2004. "Bid to Push Nader Out." June 23, *Christian Science Monitor*. http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0623/p02s02-uspo.html (June 28, 2007).

Thurow, Lester C. 1999. *Building Wealth: The New Rules for Individuals, Companies, and Nations in a Knowledge-Based Economy*. (New York: HarperCollins).

Tinkleman, Rebecca. 2007. "The YouTube Election." June 20, *The Nation* (web only). http://www.thenation.com/doc/20070702/tinkelman (June 28, 2007).

Toffler, Alvin. 1981. *The Third Wave*. (New York: Bantam Books).

Trippi, Joe. 2004. *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Democracy, the Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything*. (New York, NY: Regan Books).

Unity08.com. 2007. "Unity08 Homepage." http://www.unity08.com (June 30, 2007).

Vargas, Jose Antonio. 2007. "An Also-Ran in the GOP Polls, Ron Paul is Huge on the Web." June 16, *The Washington Post*. A01.

Viguerie, Richard A. and David Franke. 2004. *America's Right Turn: How Conservatives Used New and Alternative Media to Take Power*. (Chicago, IL: Bonus Books).

VoteNader.org. 2000. "Ralph Nader for President." *Archive.org* http://web.archive.org/e2k/20001107173119/green.votenader.org/spanish/ (June 28, 2007).

Washington Technology. 1996. "Seamless Solutions Hide Convention Wrinkles." April 11, *Washington Technology*, 11:1.

Wertkin, Jeffrey A. 2002. "Election2000.com: Internet Use and the American Voter." In *The Election of the Century and What it Tells us about the Future of American Politics*, by Stephen J. Wayne and Clyde Wilcox (Eds.) (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe).

West, Darrell M. 1997. *Air Wars: Television Advertising in Election Campaigns, 1952-1996*. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc.)

Whillock, Rita Kirk. 1998. "Digital Democracy : The '96 Presidential Campaign On-line." In *The 1996 Presidential Campaign : A Communication Perspective*, by Robert E. Denton, Jr. (Ed.). (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers).

Whillock, Rita Kirk and David E. Whillock. 2002. "Digital Democracy 2000." In *The 2000 Presidential Campaign : A Communication Perspective*, by Robert E. Denton. (Ed.). (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers).

Whisler, Thomas L. 1970a. *The Impact of Computers on Organizations*. (New York; Praeger).

Whisler, Thomas L. 1970b. *Information Technology and Organizational Change*. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc.).

White House. 2006. "Interview of the Vice President by Wire Service Reporters." http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/08/20060809-2.html (June 28, 2007).

Wilhelm, Anthony G. 2000. *Democracy in the Digital Age: Challenges to Political Life in Cyberspace*. (New York, NY: Routledge).

Wilson, Daniel M. 2007. *Where's My Jetpack?: A Guide to the Amazing Science Fiction Future that Never Arrived*. (New York, NY: Bloomsbury USA)

Wilson III, Ernest J. 2004.  *The Information Revolution and Developing Countries*.
    (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).

Wired. 2004.  "Michigan Dems Vote Online."  *Wired.com*, February 6.
    http://www.wired.com/politics/law/news/2004/02/62200  (June 28, 2007).

Wolf, Gary. 2004a.  "How the Internet Invented Howard Dean."  *Wired*.  January.
    http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.01/dean.html  (June 28, 2007).

Wolf, Gary. 2004b. "Weapons of Mass Mobilization."  *Wired*.  September.  1-4.

YouTube. 2007.  "The CNN-YouTube Debates."  YouTube.com
    http://www.youtube.com/debates  (July 11, 2007).

Zald, Mayer N. and John D. McCarthy. 1979.  *The Dynamics of Social Movements*.
    (Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers).

Zappala, Salvatore and Colin Gray (Eds.). 2006.  *Impact of E-Commerce on Consumers
    and Small Firms*.  (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishers).

Zarrella, John, Mark Potter, Bill Hemmer, and Ian Christopher McCaleb. 2000.  "Bush
    Maintains Slim Lead Over Gore as Florida Count Continues."  *CNN.com*,
    November 10.
    http://archives.cnn.com/2000/ALLPOLITICS/stories/11/09/election.president/index
    .html  (June 28, 2007).