

BLOGGING AS A CAMPAIGN TOOL:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE FRAMES AND DESIGN
USED ON BARACK OBAMA'S OFFICIAL BLOG

By

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Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
General.....	1
Background.....	2
Statement of Research Problem	3
Purpose.....	5
Methodology.....	5
Theoretical Framework.....	6
Importance of Study.....	6
Limitations	7
Assumptions.....	7
Outline of the Following Chapters	8
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	9
Agenda Setting.....	9
Framing	10
What is a Blog?	11
Who are Political Blog Writers?.....	12
Connectivity, Motivation and Credibility	13
Political Efficacy and Web Interactivity Effects	16
Howard Dean and Para-social Interaction	17
Blog Framing.....	18
Conclusions.....	20
III. METHODOLOGY	23
Introduction.....	23
Scope of the Study.....	24
Media Selected.....	25
Sample Population.....	25
Selection of Items: Primary Study.....	26
Selection of Items: Secondary Study.....	26
Research Design: Primary Study	27
Research Design: Secondary Study	28
Coding	29
Data Analysis.....	35

Tables	36
Chapter	Page
IV. FINDINGS.....	37
Primary Study Summary.....	37
Data Collection	38
Type-of-Post	38
Time Dimension.....	40
Space Dimension	40
Tone Dimension.....	42
Topic Dimension.....	43
Graphics	45
Photos.....	46
Videos	47
Tone Dimension within Time Dimension.....	48
Tone Dimension within Space Dimension	48
Tone Dimension within Topic Dimension.....	49
Tone Dimension within Type-of-Post	50
Topic Dimension within Type-of-Post	50
Topic Dimension within Space Dimension	51
Secondary Study Summary.....	52
Authors.....	53
Time of Day	54
Day of Week	54
V. CONCLUSION.....	55
Discussion	55
Implications.....	60
Limitations	62
Future Recommendations	63
REFERENCES	65

APPENDICES	70
I	70
II	71
III	72
IV	73
V	74
VI	75
VII	76
VIII	77
IX	78
X	79

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I.....	80
II.....	80
III.....	80
IV.....	81
V.....	81
VI.....	81
VII.....	82
VII.....	82
IX.....	83
X.....	84
XI.....	85
XII.....	86

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General

The 2008 McCain-Obama race reinforced the belief that multi-media platforms are a necessary tool in modern political campaigns. Although prior elections established shifts in candidates' use of the Internet, Barack Obama's online presence surpassed previous Internet adoptions with his use of a Web log, or more commonly known as a blog, and with his use of social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and MySpace. While the Internet has provided an interactive platform to reach supporters, one may ask, "How effective are these tools?" In order to study the effects, patterns in communication must be identified. The purpose of this study is to examine and compare the message content of Obama's blog posts during the 2008 presidential election versus the content of the first 100 days of his presidential term. Such an investigation will help to identify communication patterns for future studies and will aid in our understanding of potential effects for political Web content.

Background

The 1996 presidential campaign marked the first time a candidate adopted the Internet as a campaign tool. During the 1996 campaign, Bill Clinton's Web site raised \$10,000 (Bimber & Davis, 2003). However, it was not until the 2003 launch of Howard Dean's campaign Web site that the mainstream press took notice. By the end of the 2004 presidential election, 63 million people visited candidates' Web sites, 34 million researched candidates' positions online and supporters contributed more than \$100 million to campaigns (Rainie, Cornfield and Horrigan, 2005). In comparison, during the 2008 election season, Barack Obama raised more than half a billion dollars through Internet contributions (Vargas, 2008).

Obama's online presence surpassed that of his opponent, John McCain, not only in donations, but also on other social networking channels. Although the McCain camp did have an official blog, during the campaign McCain said he didn't personally use e-mail or the Internet (Harden, 2008).

In August 2008, Obama's YouTube videos reached 52 million views compared to McCain's 9.5 million. Obama's Facebook account had 1.3 million friends, six-times that of McCain. (Economist, 2008). Some of the other outlets that Obama communicated with online included: Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, DIGG, Twitter, Eventful, LinkedIn, BlackPlanet, Faithbase, Eons, MiGente, MyBatanga, AsisanAve and DNC Partybuilder, in addition to his official campaign blog (Organizing, 2009).

While the first blogs functioned as simple online diaries, today's blogs are more interactive. As an illustration of this, a 2008 Pew Internet and American Life study found that some of the major news stories in the 2008 Presidential election were either broken by a blogger or given more attention because of bloggers. For example:

- A story focused on Obama's comment about how small-town voters had become bitter over job losses and that they "cling to guns or religion or antipathy."
- The John Hagee story in which, Hagee, McCain's preacher, said Hitler was a "divine agent sent by God to chase Europe's Jews towards Palestine."

(Rainie & Smith, 2008).

These stories may have gone unreported by the national news if it weren't for the reactions of the blog readers.

As a politician's online presence becomes a necessary communication tool, the need for strategically planned messages increase. By merging personal and political blogs into their Web content, candidates can advance their political messages.

Statement of Research Problem

While a candidate's online presence appears to directly affect the amount of contributions donated to a campaign, the effects of message content has not been

fully measured. Blogging is an additional tool in strategic campaign planning with minimal scientific data to determine its effectiveness.

In 1960, presidential candidates John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon participated in the first national televised debate. Studies suggest that those who watched the televised debates perceived Kennedy as the winner of the debate, while those who listened on radio felt Nixon had won (Allen, 2009). Similar channel effects could result from a candidate's online presence and sway public opinion in their favor.

However, the focus of this study is not to measure the effects of Obama's blog content, but to study the construction of frames and design elements contained within his blog. The primary study will examine the distribution of frames among time dimension (past, present or future events), space dimension (individual, community, regional, societal or international), tone dimension (negative, positive or neutral) and topic dimension (candidate ideology, campaign trail, supporters, call to action or opponent attack). The secondary study will examine authors and their roles, time of day blog posts were published and number of posts on each day in relation to campaign events.

This study will identify patterns in the distribution of frames and design elements for use in future studies.

Purpose

In order to study the potential effects that blogging has or will have as a communication tool, patterns in online communication must be identified. The main purpose of this study is to examine the message content of 1,421 of Obama's blog posts during the general election period and during his first 100 days in office. This study aims to identify communication patterns of online political message content.

Methodology

This study used content analysis to examine and compare the message content of Obama's blog posts during the general election period and during the first 100 days of his term in office. As commonly defined in political communication research, this study defined general election period as Labor Day (September 1, 2008) through Election Day (November 4, 2008), which is 65 days. Researchers downloaded and analyzed all 1,421 known official blog posts from www.barackobama.com. This study looked only at the official posts from Obama's Web site, and not community blogs, which were also featured on his Web site. A quantitative analysis was performed to see what patterns emerged among the blog content.

Theoretical Framework

Blogging gives the author control of message content and prominence, the angle, and the amount of space used for each article. It allows the author to determine what messages are important and can bypass the mass media in message delivery. In essence, it presents an opportunity to establish political agenda.

Based on their belief that audience members learn what issues are important from the media, Shaw and McCombs (1977) published two groundbreaking studies in agenda-setting that hypothesized “the press has the power to establish the agenda of political issues.” Under agenda-setting, this same affect could apply to the Internet and blogging. Indeed, a candidate’s Web presence presents issues of importance to the campaign. In turn, voters may learn about campaign issues from these campaign-mediated sites. The tone, context and placement of blog posts could affect the way voters interpret the meaning.

Importance of Study

Today’s political campaigns are more complex than previous decades and the target is fragmented. Communication is being driven by technology, while traditional communication is disappearing (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Ruler, Verčič & Sriramesh, 2007). Instead of broadcasting, politicians must narrowcast to reach their constituents. By understanding the message content, future studies can focus on the effects of blogging to maximize the impact of their message.

Limitations

Due to the instantaneous publishing or deleting of material that the platform of the Internet allows, it is possible that some posts were removed before researchers could download them. In addition, this study does not include a comparison of previous elections and only includes one candidate's blog content. Further studies may be needed to examine the content between rival candidates.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the content on Obama's blog is targeted toward Obama supporters; therefore, the blog posts will heavily feature topics of interest to its constituents. Although anyone can read the blog, including opponents, the posts were written for the targeted audience, mainly Obama's supporters. It also is assumed that all blog posts were uploaded by Obama's staff and not an outside party. If these assumptions are found untrue, the results of this study could be affected.

Outline of the Following Chapters

In the following chapters, the blog posts downloaded from www.barackobama.com will be presented. Although there was more than one blog forum, only Obama's official blog will be analyzed.

Chapter II is a review of available studies on blogging. It defines a blog, identifies who writes or reads blogs, examines motivations and looks at political efficacy. This chapter also presents theoretical foundations and details previous applications of the framework used in this study. Chapter III covers the methodology used and defines the framing dimensions. Chapter IV focuses on the findings and analysis of the data. Finally, Chapter V contains the summary, conclusion and recommendations for future studies that are based on the findings of this research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Agenda Setting

In *Setting the Agenda, The Mass Media and Public Opinion*, Maxwell McCombs (2004) suggested that mass media have their own agenda and determines what messages are important. The main assumption of agenda-setting is salience transfer, which is the ability of mass media to transfer issues from their agendas to public agendas.

The first scientific study of agenda setting was administered in 1972. McCombs and Shaw (1972) studied undecided voters in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. In their study, they interviewed 100 respondents to determine what they believed the major issues were in the 1968 presidential campaign. At the same time, McCombs and Shaw (1972) conducted a content analysis of the mass media available to their respondents. Their findings suggested that voter perception was influenced by what the mass media published.

Although the Chapel Hill study suggested that mass media shaped public opinion, questions roused that maybe public opinion influenced mass media instead. Shaw and McCombs (1977) conducted another study to determine the direction of agenda-setting. The second study took place in Charlotte, North Carolina during the

1972 presidential election. In June 1972, a random sample of voters was interviewed to measure their opinions of what the important political issues were. The respondents were interviewed several times during the campaign. A content analysis of the local media was also conducted during this timeframe. Although the results only showed a .19 correlation from newspaper agenda to public agenda in October, down from a .51 correlation from newspaper agenda to public agenda in June, Shaw and McCombs (1977) believe the media had a casual effect in shaping public opinion.

According to McCombs (2004), “the greater an individual’s need for orientation, the more likely he or she is to attend to the agenda of the mass media with their wealth of information on politics and government.” Agenda-setting emphasizes that the audience looks to the mass media to determine an issue’s importance.

Framing

Many researchers view framing as a natural extension of agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). Framing may have a more subtle effect on its audience than bias in media. Audiences may be able to detect bias, but packaged events are not as easily detected (Severin & Tankard, 2001). In addition, frames influence an audience’s interpretation and evaluation of a story. (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Still, others view frames as structures that draw boundaries, set up categories, define ideas and generally operate to grab related ideas in an active process (Reese, 2007).

What is a Blog?

A blog, short for the combined words of Web log, is a periodically updated online journal that provides online commentary (Drezner & Farrell, 2004) and short Web postings (Gillmore, 2004). The published content is called a “post.” Typically, there is little or no external editing with posts, and they appear in reverse chronological order. Posts often include hyperlinks to other Web sites, and they provide online commentary (Drezner & Farrell, 2004).

The Web log Handbook identifies four types of blogs: (1) Self expression: a blog for discussions; (2) Keeping in touch: friends and family can keep up with the blogger, (3) Information sharing: explains new ideas or filters them to an audience, (4) Reputation building: a blogger trying to gain recognition by sharing his or her expertise (Blood, 2002).

A blog allows quick response to current events, direct contact with the audience and instant feedback. The number of hyperlinks to other blogs or Web sites, the number of comments posted by readers and other responses generally can interpret feedback. Bloggers can quickly learn what connects with the public and what does not (McKenna, 2007).

Newspapers, television networks, journals and other media institutions have added blogs to their Web sites. Their own correspondents sometimes write blog posts, but other media outlets have hired online columnists (Drezner & Farrell, 2004).

Politicians have used blogs as part of the campaign. By using blogs, a candidate can find supporters and convert them to volunteers as the campaign expands (Dignan, 2004). Interactive Web sites allow the candidate to finely target their audience (Park & Choi, 2002).

In 1999, there were about 50 blogs. As of May 2007, there were more than 70 million (Drezner & Farrell, 2008). About 7 million bloggers write daily (McKenna & Pole, 2008).

Who are Political Blog Writers?

McKenna and Pole (2008) generated a 28-question survey to examine the activities of political bloggers. They found that the majority of political bloggers are Caucasian, well-educated and male. Only one-fourth of the respondents were female. Eighty percent were Caucasian, 58% were between the ages of 26 and 41, 39% had a bachelor's degree and 33% had a master's degree. Eleven percent had either a doctoral, law or medical degree.

Kim (2006) found similar demographics. However, Kim (2006) also found that most political bloggers are democratic, their motivations are multifaceted, political bloggers read others' blogs and post comments, and political bloggers are more involved in off-line political activities than non-political bloggers. Although, he did find that bloggers are more politically efficacious than the general public, blog frequency did not predict the level of political efficacy.

Political bloggers post entries and read other blogs more frequently than

non-political bloggers. One-third of political bloggers post entries once or twice a day, while 25% post three or more times a day (Kim, 2006).

About two-thirds of political bloggers revealed personal information, such as name, occupation and location. Students were the highest group to reveal personal information at 38% (Kim, 2006).

The majority of blogs, 81%, were written by a single author, 7% were written by two authors and 11% were written by three or more authors (Kim, 2006).

Connectivity, Motivation and Credibility

Kim (2006) explored the connections and motivations between political and non-political bloggers. He found that 7% of political bloggers felt they were connected with friends and family through blogging, 22% believed they potentially communicated to millions of people and 37% said that blogging made them feel influential. Nearly four-times as many non-political bloggers, 27%, felt that blogging connected them with friends and family, while only 8% believed they were influential (Kim, 2006). Nearly 90% of blog readers said they became more knowledgeable about politics after reading blog posts (Johnson & Kaye, 2004).

Research also indicates that blog users consider blogs to be credible. However, 75% of blog readers found blogs to be moderately to very credible, compared to printed newspapers at 47%, printed news magazines at 44%, online newspapers at 43%, broadcast television at 29% and online radio at 27%. Blog

readers view traditional media as being only somewhat credible (Johnson & Kaye, 2004).

On the other hand, a more recent study contradicts this finding. A study conducted at Michigan State University, which surveyed MSU communication students about their habits using blogs and other media, suggests that blog credibility actually rates lower than traditional media. In fact, compared to newspaper, television and radio, blogs rated the lowest (Lin, 2009).

Still, other studies find no differences. Using an experimental design, Banning and Sweetser (2008) studied third-person effects with a post-test-only survey that measured the credibility among sources. The sources were listed in advance. For example, the blog source was listed as “taken from a Weblog, or blog,” while the news source may be listed as “taken from an online version of a newspaper, like NYTIMES.com.” This study found no significant difference in the credibility among blogs and traditional media.

Banning and Sweetser (2008) did note that their sample included participants that did not read blogs regularly, while Johnson and Kaye’s sample focused only on blog readers.

Although results are mixed, some studies suggest that the amount of time spent on a blog contributes positively to its perceived credibility. Lin (2009) compared four types of blogs: news, entertainment, sports and fashion, to 17 other traditional media. In each of the blog categories, participants rated the blogs somewhat higher in credibility than the traditional media. However, those who participated in blogs, with either their own blog posts or posting comments on

someone else's blog, did not appear to perceive blogs as more credible than traditional media (Lin, 2009). Story type does not have an effect on blog credibility (Johnson & Wiedenbeck, 2009).

While blog content does appear to rate somewhat higher among participants than traditional media, there may be a correlation between blog layout and credibility.

Thirty percent of Lin's (2009) participants slightly agreed that using photographs in blogs made them more likely to trust the information. The participants also agreed that the use of video, audios and links to other Web sites contributed to the blogs credibility. About two-thirds of the participants agreed that using more than one type of presentation made them more likely to trust the information, while only 9% disagreed with this perception. Using text only appears to make readers trust the information slightly less.

Several other factors appear to impact blog credibility. Spelling or grammar mistakes, unnamed sources, bloggers who did not publish their name and blogs with advertising lowered the perception of blog credibility slightly. Posting corrections, in-depth posts and naming sources increased a blog's credibility. The blogger's background did not appear to affect credibility (Lin, 2009). However, perceived credibility does appear to rate highest when author information and hyperlinks, links to other blogs or Web sites, are both included in the post (Johnson & Wiedenbeck, 2009).

Johnson and Wiedenbeck (2009) believe that hyperlinks, whether clicked or not, are cues to additional information. This engagement with the readers increases

credibility. Furthermore, “bloggers who reference but do not link material that might, in its entirety, undermine their conclusions, are intellectually dishonest” (Blood, 2003).

Although some of these results appear to contradict one another, previous studies related to media attributes found connections between source and credibility. A study that compared the same articles in a tabloid newspaper versus traditional newspaper found the traditional newspaper rated higher in credibility (Gunther, 1991).

Political Efficacy and Web Interactivity Effects

Kim (2006) compared the respondents in his study to the 2000 and 2004 American National Election Study; he found that bloggers are more politically efficacious than the general public. He also found that bloggers share several characteristics that highly efficacious people have: high level of education, higher income and being male. These traits appear to affirm what McKenna and Pole (2008) found in their study about political bloggers.

According to a Pew (2005) survey, 18 to 29 year olds are the most likely of any age demographic to use the Internet for political purposes.

During the Bush-Kerry race, Tedesco (2006) conducted an experiment to measure whether the Internet’s interactivity could affect the user. Participants were divided into two groups. One group was instructed to visit several Web sites and perform certain tasks, such as posting comments or signing petitions. The

second group, the control group, was modeled as one-way flow of communication. The interactivity was limited in the control group. To measure political efficacy, the participants completed a short online pre and post-test questionnaire. Tedesco found that the interactive participants demonstrated an increase in political efficacy, while the control group demonstrated a decrease (Tedesco, 2006).

Howard Dean and Para-social Interaction

Howard Dean's campaign generated "a great deal of attention for its technological innovations." In January 2003, Dean "was a blip on the radar screen of politics" (Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2006). He polled at 1% in Iowa, had only seven staff members and little money for a campaign. Dean's campaign manager, Joe Trippi (2004), suggested he decentralize the campaign. Since Dean was behind in the polls, he could take risks the other candidates could not. In March 2003, Dean's Call for Action blog was launched (Trippi, 2004). That same year, Dean's blog received more coverage in *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* than any other presidential candidate's blog (Park, 2004).

Through Dean's Web site, campaign staff established the expectation that supporter comments were being read and that their concerns would be addressed. Staff posted statements on Dean's blog that they were "listening," (Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2006). However, Stromer-Galley and Baker's (2006) research suggests that Dean's campaign created an interactive façade and Dean's supporters felt deceived.

The question, “Are you listening?” was frequently directed to the campaign staff, which suggests staff was not as responsive as supporters would have liked.

According to Stromer-Galley and Baker (2006), Dean’s campaign used the blog to facilitate para-social interaction, which is the “illusion of face-to-face interaction.” Originally, scholars used the para-social interaction theory to describe the imaginary interactions between television variety show hosts and their home audiences (Horton & Wohl, 1956). It also appeared that many supporters believed they had authority over the campaign, for example, one commenter stated, “Look at what the campaign has done, and look at what we have done. We started the meetups ... if you have an idea for getting the word out, GO FOR IT!! Don’t wait for the campaign. We are strong. They can barely keep up” (Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2006). Eleven months after Dean launched his Web site, he withdrew from the campaign.

Blog Framing

One of the first studies administered to define blogging and politics was by Bichard (2006). Bichard assessed the angles used by the George W. Bush and John Kerry in their blog postings as a first step to measure framing effects. This study explored possible methods to analyze the framing of political campaigns.

For the analysis, Bichard (2006) used a Chyi and McCombs (2004) four-dimension methodological approach to code the blog postings: time, space, tone and topic. Time consisted of three levels: (1) Past: prior events with no link to the

2004 election; (2) Present: events around the 2004 election; or (3) Future: focus on long-term effects of the 2004 election or a call to action. Space consisted of five levels: (1) Individual: limited to individual involved; (2) Community: relevant to community or town; (3) Regional: population larger than a community, such as city or state; (4) Societal: limited to the United States or (5) International: outside the United States (Chyi & McCombs, 2004).

Bichard (2006) also used McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas' (1996) frames to categorize Tone and Topic. Tone consisted of three levels: (1) Negative: hostile, aggressive or conflict; (2) Positive: optimistic, stressed fairness or sensitive tone; (3) Neutral: only facts were stated. No judgment or opinion. Topic consisted of five levels: (1) Candidate Ideology: focused on candidate positions and agenda; (2) Campaign Trail: focused on campaign events and activities; (3) Supporters: testimonials or endorsements; (4) Call to Action: requests made to readers or supporters; or (5) Opponent Attack: criticized the opponent (McCombs et al., 1996).

Bichard (2006) coded 1,309 blog posts. Bush posted 525. Kerry posted 784. Under the Time dimension, 92% of the posts focused on the present. Bush's blogs focused on the present 96% of the time, while Kerry's focused on the present 72% of time. On Space dimension, the majority of the samples focused on individual attributes 44% of the time, followed by regional at 28%, societal at 19% and international at 10%. On Space dimension, individual and community frames were used most often. For Tone dimension, 49% were coded as neutral, 29% were coded as negative and 22% were coded as positive.

Kerry's blogs were more likely to be negative in tone, 74% of the total sample. Kerry's blog was also more likely to feature an opponent attack (Bichard, 2006).

In the blogging and youth vote study, Trammel (2007) found that all of Kerry's posts (100%) attacked Bush, while only 38% of Bush's posts attacked Kerry. However, in traditional television commercials, 72% of Bush's ads had a more negative tone. Conversely, Kerry's television ads had a more positive tone (Devlin, 2005).

In the 2004, presidential campaign, blogging benefitted Kerry over Bush because he raised more money. Kerry outraised Bush seven to one on the Internet. Kerry also achieved more blog hits than Bush with nearly 6 million hits in August and September 2004. The average on-site visit lasted 7½ minutes (Devlin, 2005).

Conclusion

Research has shown that the general public perceives blogs to be a credible form of media. Through agenda setting, the framing of a message in a blog post could be used to influence their audience's interpretation of the message. Since agenda setting suggests that the audience looks to the mass media to determine an issue's importance, the same effects could apply to blogging since it is viewed as another source of media.

However, before these effects can be measured, patterns must be identified. What is not known are the effects blogging has on voters. The purpose of this study is to identify communication patterns with the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the distribution of type-of-post across the categories of editorial, e-mails, informational, live blogging, live event, new ad, print reprint and speech reprint.

RQ2: What is the distribution of time frames across the levels of past, present and future, and what are the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ3: What is the distribution of space frames across the levels of individual, community, regional, societal and international, and what were the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ4: What is the distribution of tone frames across the levels of negative, positive and neutral, and what are the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ5: What is the distribution of topic frames across the levels of candidate ideology, campaign trail, supporters, call to action and opponent attack, and what are the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ6: What visual elements were used and were differences noted when comparing the two time periods?

RQ7: What is the proportion of tone frames within time frames, and what are the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ8: What is the proportion of tone frames within space frames, and what were the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ9: What is the proportion of tone frames within topic frames, and what were the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ10: What is the proportion of tone frames within type-of-post, and what were the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ11: What is the proportion of topic frames within type-of-post, and what were the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ12: Who was the author during Obama's presidential campaign and how many posts did he or she write?

RQ12: Who was the author during the first 100 days and how many posts did he or she write?

RQ13: What time of day were most articles posted?

RQ14: On which days were the most articles posted?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study used content analysis to examine the message content of Obama's blog posts during the traditional election period and during the first 100 days in office. For this study, the general election period is dated from September 1, 2008 (Labor Day) through November 4, 2008 (Election Day.) Researchers downloaded 1,205 known official blog posts from www.barackobama.com during the election period. Researchers also collected 216 blog posts from Obama's first 100 days in office dated between January 20, 2009 and April 29, 2009. Although www.barackobama.com also featured a community blog that allowed supporters to write their own posts, this study looked at only the official posts from Obama's Web site. A quantitative analysis was performed to see what patterns emerged among the blog content.

Content analysis is seen as a "research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952). Content analysis procedures must include the following steps:

- 1) Formulate the hypotheses or research questions to be answered.
- 2) Select the sample to be analyzed.
- 3) Define the categories to be applied.
- 4) Outline the coding process and train the coders who will implement it.
- 5) Implement the coding process.
- 6) Determine reliability and validity.
- 7) Analyze the results of the coding process (Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989).

Berelson (1952) divided the categories for content analysis into two basic classifications: substance (what is said) and form (how it is said.) In this study, substance will include category and topic frames. Form will include tone and visual content. This study also will look at who (author), when (time frame) and where (space frames). The dimensional structure used in this study is based on the structure proposed by Bichard (2006) in her study of the 2004 race between Bush and Kerry.

Content analysis is a popular technique for objective, systematic and quantitative description of communication content (Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989).

Scope of the Study

Based on the growing popularity of blogs as a political tool, it would be beneficial to understand its effects as part of a campaigns' political strategy. Before the effects can be measured, the measurable elements must be defined. By examining the winning candidate's blog, this could contribute to future studies

analyzing a blog's effects. This study also may offer practical implications for future political candidates, campaigns, etc. Findings may be relevant to other political blogs.

Media Selected

Researchers downloaded and saved each blog post to it to a Microsoft Word document. The author, time, date, text and visual elements were kept intact. Each word document was saved in the following style: Obama042409-1 or Obama103008-24, for example. For coders, this translates to the date and the number of post that appeared that day. In other words, Obama103008-24 means the 24th post from October 30, 2008.

All the blog posts were downloaded directly from www.barackobama.com. Various authors wrote the posts and some of the content was from outside sources, such as news reports and supporter contributions; but only the posts from Obama's official blog were examined, regardless of original source.

In addition, Obama's blog was selected because he was the victorious candidate.

Sample Population

Researchers downloaded a total of 1,421 posts from www.barackobama.com. The posts that were analyzed in this study were downloaded from two periods: the

general election (September 1, 2008 through November 4, 2008) and the first 100 days (January 20, 2009 through April 29, 2009.) Researchers chose to include the first 100 days due to the amount of media attention it receives as an early benchmark of success. While this study does compare the frames between the election and the first 100 days, it does not attempt to draw conclusions in pre- and post-election message effects.

Selection of Items: Primary Study

All known blog posts that appeared from September 1, 2008 through November 4, 2008 were analyzed. This totaled 1,205 posts and provided 85% of the sample. All posts from the election period were selected for analysis. This decision was based on the assumption that the content satisfied the coding structure.

Selection of Items: Secondary Study

All known blog posts that appeared from between January 20, 2009 and April 29, 2009 were analyzed. This totaled 216 posts and provided 15% of the sample. All posts from the first 100 days period were selected for the analysis. As stated above, this decision was also based on the assumption that the content satisfied the coding structure.

Research Design: Primary Study

This study used content analysis to examine the message content of Obama's blog posts in order to identify communication patterns for future studies on the effects of political blogging.

The following primary research questions were posed:

RQ1: What is the distribution of type-of-post across the categories of editorial, e-mails, informational, live blogging, live event, new ad, print reprint and speech reprint?

RQ2: What is the distribution of time frames across the levels of past, present and future, and what are the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ3: What is the distribution of space frames across the levels of individual, community, regional, societal and international, and what were the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ4: What is the distribution of tone frames across the levels of negative, positive and neutral, and what are the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ5: What is the distribution of topic frames across the levels of candidate ideology, campaign trail, supporters, call to action and opponent attack, and what are the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ6: What visual elements were used and were differences noted when comparing the two time periods?

RQ7: What is the proportion of tone frames within time frames, and what are the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ8: What is the proportion of tone frames within space frames, and what were the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ9: What is the proportion of tone frames within topic frames, and what were the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ10: What is the proportion of tone frames within type-of-post, and what were the differences when comparing the two time periods?

RQ11: What is the proportion of topic frames within type-of-post, and what were the differences when comparing the two time periods?

Research Design: Secondary Study

Content analysis also was used to determine the relationship between authors and their roles, when the content was published and which days were busiest.

These additional research questions were posed:

RQ12: Who was the author during Obama's presidential campaign and how many posts did he or she write?

RQ12: Who was the author during the first 100 days and how many posts did he or she write?

RQ13: What time of day were most articles posted?

RQ14: On which days were the most articles posted?

Coding

Three trained research coders, two males and one female, coded the 1,421 blog posts. Coding of the posts was completed in the following established guidelines:

- The coders classified each post based on the category.
- Frames were determined by the intent of the post.
- Categories were determined by the dominant frame or content elements, such as pictures, video or graphics.
- In the case coders disagreed, coders would vote on the dominant frame and the post would be classified accordingly.

The Holsti (1969) formula was used to test intercoder reliability:

- $\text{Reliability} = 3M / (N1 + N2 + N3)$.
- M = Coding decisions that the coders agreed upon.
- N1 = Coding decisions from coder one.
- N2 = Coding decisions from coder two.
- N3 = Coding decisions from coder three.

Category I consisted of the authors:

- (1) Adam
- (2) Amanda Scott
- (3) Amy Hamblin
- (4) Bradley Portney
- (5) Chris Hughes
- (6) Christopher Hass
- (7) Erik Weber
- (8) George Krebs
- (9) Greg Havenstein
- (10) Jenn Prosser
- (11) John Schueler
- (12) Kevin Goodman
- (13) Kevin Hartness
- (14) Laurin Manning
- (15) Martha
- (16) Molly Clafin
- (17) New Media Department
- (18) Nikki Sutton
- (19) Obama Road Blog
- (20) Phillip Carter
- (21) Rick Scalti
- (22) Sam-Graham Felson

- (23) Sam Teller
- (24) Sarah Ramey
- (25) Scott Goodstein
- (26) State News

Category II featured the Type-of-Post:

- (1) Editorial: commentary, personal opinion or open thread
(Appendix 1).
- (2) E-mails: reprints of e-mails (Appendix 2).
- (3) Informational: sharing information such as voter registration or
campaign trail (Appendix 3).
- (4) Live Blogging: blogs posted during a presidential or vice-
presidential debate that focused on the debate (Appendix 4).
- (5) Live Event: announcement of live campaign events or upcoming
campaign event (Appendix 5).
- (6) Print Reprint: reprints of newspaper stories or blog posts
(Appendix 6).
- (7) Speech Reprint: reprint of speeches, statements or transcripts
from Obama, Biden, campaign staff or supporters (Appendix 7).
- (8) New Ad: post featuring new ad from Obama campaign (Appendix
8).

Category III noted what time of day the blogs posts were posted:

- (1) 12 a.m. to 5:59 a.m.
- (2) 6 a.m. – 11:59 a.m.
- (3) 12 p.m. – 5:59 p.m.
- (4) 6 p.m. – 11:59 p.m.

Chyi and McCombs' (2004) two-dimensional structure was used to measure space and time, the fourth and fifth categories in this study. The Time dimension, Category IV, identified posts that focused on either:

- (1) Past: prior events with no link to the 2008 election.
- (2) Present: direct focus on events or developments that surrounded the 2008 election.
- (3) Future: focus on long-term effects of the 2008 election or suggestions to solve problems/actions to be taken (Chyi & McCombs, 2004).

The Space dimension, Category V, identified posts that focused on either:

- (1) Individual: limited to individuals involved or impacted by the election.
- (2) Community: limited to a particular community or town.
- (3) Regional: more broad than a community, such as a city or state.
- (4) Societal: topics that are focused on social or national attention.
- (5) International: topics with an international perspective (Chyi & McCombs, 2004).

McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas' (1996) frames were used for the fifth and sixth categories: Tone and Topic dimension. Category VI assessed the Tone dimension of the posts:

(1) Negative: hostile, conflictive or aggressive language.

(2) Positive: optimistic, stressing fairness, logical and sensitive demeanor.

(3) Neutral: no judgment, only statements of facts or events.

(McCombs et al, 1996).

Category VII examined the Topic dimension of the posts. During the election the posts were coded as:

(1) Candidate Ideology: focused on candidate positions on specific issues and/or agenda.

(2) Campaign Trail: focused on campaign events, campaign activities, campaign strategy or poll data.

(3) Supporters: testimonials from supporters.

(4) Call to Action: requests for donations, volunteering, interaction or voting.

(5) Opponent Attack: focused on the opponent views, opponent criticisms or defending against opponent attacks (McCombs et al, 1996).

During the first 100 days, the posts were coded as:

- (1) Presidential Ideology: focused on presidential positions on specific issues and/or agenda.
- (2) Administration Trail: focused on administration events, administration activities, administration strategy or poll data.
- (3) Supporters: testimonials from supporters.
- (4) Call to Action: requests for donations, volunteering, interaction or voting.
- (5) Opponent Attack: focused on the opponent views, opponent criticisms or defending against opponent attacks.

The remaining categories identified the visual content that was placed on blog posts: Graphics, Photos and Videos. Category VIII, Graphics, were identified by:

- (0) No Graphic: the posts may have included pictures or videos, but no graphics were used.
- (1) Outside Logos: graphics were used, but were from another source such as a newspaper or magazine logo.
- (2) Obama Themed Logo: a graphic was used that had a consistent design with Obama's campaign scheme.

Category IX, Photos, were identified by:

- (0) No: no photos were included in the post.
- (1) Yes: photos were included in the post.

Videos, Category X, were identified by:

(0) No: no videos were included or linked in the post.

(1) Yes: videos were included or linked in the post.

Data Analysis

The data were entered into SPSS statistical software, and it was screened for accuracy and the assumptions of the Chi Square Test of Independence. Frequency Distributions were used to screen for missing data and to check for out-of-range data. No missing data was found. In addition, they were screened for the percentages in each category. No category could contain 90% or more of the data (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). Chi Square assumes that an expected frequency of at least 5 in 75% of the cells and at least an expected frequency of at least 1 in all cells (Agresti & Finlay, 1986). If this assumption was not met, the cells were collapsed and the Chi Square was rerun to ensure it was satisfied.

Chi Square Test of Independence was used to analyze the data because it was measured at the nominal and ordinal level. Alpha was set at .05. If the results were significant, a Post-Hoc Analysis of Standardized Residuals was conducted to determine which cells contributed significantly to the finding (Kennedy, 1983). Again, alpha was set at .05, which is equivalent to a z-score of ± 1.96 . Finally, the strength of association between the variables and the effect size were assessed. Goodman and Kruskal's tau was selected because it can be used with tables of any size.

Tables

The tables presented include an analysis of the framing techniques identified in the blog posts for the period studied. In addition, examples of the posts are included in the appendices section.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Primary Study Summary

The primary study examined the communication patterns in Obama's blog posts during 2008 general election period and during the first 100 days in office. Each post was coded according to type of post, time frame, space frame, tone frame, topic frame and visual element. The scores for each category also were combined to examine the framing patterns among: time and tone, space and tone, topic and tone, visual element and tone, space and topic, and tone and type-of-post.

Chi Square tests were generated to explore the communication patterns and the differences between Pre-Election and Post-Election periods.

Data Collection

Three trained coders read and analyzed all of the blog posts downloaded from Obama's official blog during the general election period and the first 100 days in office. The sample totaled 1,421 blog posts. Inter-coder reliability was computed using Holsti's formula. Inter-coder reliability for the blog posts during the general election period equaled 93.6%. Inter-coder reliability for the blog posts during the first 100 days totaled 98.7%. Overall, inter-coder reliability was 94.3%.

Type-of-Post

RQ1 asked what is the frequency distribution of Type-of-Post across the categories of editorial, e-mails, informational, live blogging, live event, new ad, print reprint and speech reprint. During the general election period, the majority of posts were Informational (46.6%), followed by Speech Reprint (12.5%), Live Event (12.0%), Editorial (8.5%), Print Reprint (7.6%), Emails (6.4%), Live Blogging (3.3%) and New Ad (3.0%).

RQ1 also asked what is the frequency distribution of frames during Obama's first 100 days in office. The majority of posts during the period were Speech Reprints (38.0%), Informational (28.7%), Editorial (11.6%), Live Event (10.2%), Print Reprint (10.2%), E-mails (0.5%), Live Blogging (0.5%) and New Ad (0.5%).

A statistically significant difference was found [X^2 (d.f. = 7, N=1421) = 111.053, $p = .0005$] when comparing Post-Election to the Pre-Election period. During the election 46.6% of the posts were Informational, which dropped to 28.7% after the election.

Although Speech Reprints comprised 12.5% of the blog posts in pre-election period, this more than tripled and became the most common type of post in the post-election period at 38.0%. The use of Editorials and Print Reprints also increased. Editorials moved from 8.5% (pre-election) to 11.6% (post-election), and Print Reprints increased from 7.6% (pre-election) to 10.2% (post-election). Pre-election percentages of E-mails (6.4%), Live Blogging (3.3%) and New Ad (3.0%) each dropped to 0.5% during the first 100 days.

A post-hoc analysis was conducted to determine which cells contributed significantly to the findings. The cells for E-mails by Post-Election ($z = -3.2$), Informational by Post-Election ($z = -3.4$), Speech Reprint by Pre-Election ($z = -3.3$) and Speech Reprint by Post-Election ($z = 7.8$) were statistically significant. Fewer E-mails were posted during the Post-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter. In addition, fewer Informational posts were posted during the Post-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter. Also, fewer Speech Reprints were posted during the Post-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter. However, more Speech Reprints were posted during the Pre-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter.

Finally, Goodman and Kruskal's test of association was conducted to determine the strength of association and the effect size. Tau was significant ($\tau = .078$, $p = .0001$), thus the two time periods explained 7.8% of the variation in Type-of-Post. Tau's square root ($\sqrt{\tau} = .28$) was calculated to determine its strength of association. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero's guidelines, the association had a weak relationship.

Time Dimension

RQ2 asked what is distribution of time frames across the levels of past, present and future. One cell had an expected count of less than 5, which violated the assumption. Consequently, Past and Future were combined into Non-Present.

During the general election period and the first 100 days in office, the majority of the blog posts focused on the Present, with 84.9% in the post-election period and 83.6% in the pre-election period. When comparing the two time periods, there was no significant difference [X^2 (d.f. = 1, N=1,421) = .147, p = .701].

Space Dimension

The distribution of space frames across the levels of individual, community, regional, societal and international were analyzed in RQ3. During the general election period, more than half of the blog posts focused on Society (55.9%), followed by Regional (16.8%), Community (14.8%), Individual (10.6%) and International (1.9%).

RQ3 also analyzed the distribution of space frames during the first 100 days in office. The majority of those posts also focused on Society (81.5%), followed by Regional (6.5%), International (5.6%), Community (5.1%) and Individual (1.4%).

When comparing the Pre-Election and Post-Election periods, there was a statistically significant difference in the Space Dimension [X^2 (d.f. = 4, N=1,421) = 72.759, p = .0005]. Although most topics were based on social or national attention (Societal), the percentage of those posts jumped from 55.9% (pre-election) to 81.5% (post-election). Topics limited

to individuals involved or impacted by the general election period or impacted in the first 100 days (Individual), dropped from 10.6% (pre-election) to 1.4% (post-election period). Fewer posts that focused on Community and Regional were also written after the general election period. The only frame, other than Society, to increase was International, which moved from 1.9% to 5.6%. Overall, the majority of posts focused on Society (59.7%), followed by Regional (15.3%), Community (13.3%), Individual (9.2%) and International (2.5%).

A post-hoc analysis was conducted to determine which cells contributed significantly to the findings. The cells for Individual by Post-Election ($z = -3.8$), Community by Post-Election ($z = -3.3$), Regional by Post-Election ($z = -3.3$), Society by Post-Election ($z = 4.1$) and International by Post-Election ($z = 2.9$) were statistically significant. Fewer Individual posts were posted during the Post-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter. In addition, fewer Regional posts were posted during the Post-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter. However, more Society and International posts were posted during the Post-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter.

Finally, Goodman and Kruskal's test of association was conducted to determine the strength of association and the effect size. Tau was significant ($\tau = .051$, $p = .0005$), thus the two time periods explained 5.1% of the variation in Space Dimension. Tau's square root ($\sqrt{\tau} = .26$) was calculated to determine its strength of association. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero's guidelines, the association had a weak relationship.

Tone Dimension

RQ4 asked what were the tone frames across the levels of negative, positive and neutral. During the general election period, the majority of the blog posts addressed a Neutral tone (81.7%), followed by Positive (11.7%) and Negative (6.6%). During the first 100 days in office, Neutral (86.6%) was also the most common tone, followed by Positive (12%) and Negative (1.4%).

When comparing the two time periods, a statistically significant difference was found [X^2 (d.f. = 2, N=1,421) = 9.011, $p = .011$]. Neutral posts increased 5.1% from 81.7% (pre-election) to 86.6% (post-election). Negative posts slightly increased from 11.7% (pre-election) to 12.0% (post-election). Only Positive posts declined, which dropped from 6.6% (pre-election) to 1.4% (post-election). Overall, the majority of posts demonstrated a Neutral tone (82.5%), followed by Negative (11.8%) and Positive (5.8%).

A post-hoc analysis was conducted to determine which cells contributed significantly to the findings. The cells for Negative by Pre-Election ($z = -2.7$), Neutral by Pre-Election ($z = -.3$), and Neutral by Post-Election ($z = .7$) were statistically significant. Fewer Negative and Neutral posts were posted during the Pre-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter, while more Neutral posts were posted during the Post-Election period that would be expected if period of posting did not matter.

Finally, Goodman and Kruskal's test of association was conducted to determine the strength of association and the effect size. Tau was significant ($\tau = .006$, $p = .011$), thus the two time periods explained 0.6% of the variation in Tone. Tau's square root ($\sqrt{\tau} = .08$) was

calculated to determine its strength of association. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero's guidelines, the association had a very weak relationship.

Topic Dimension

RQ5 asked what were the distributions of frames across the levels of candidate ideology, campaign trail, supporters, call-to-action and opponent attack during the general election period. The majority of the Pre-Election posts focused on Call-to-Action (34.8%), followed by Campaign Trail (33.3%), Candidate Ideology (15.8%), Supporters (8.2%) and Opponent Attack (8.0%).

In the Post-Election period, items that would have been coded as Campaign Trail during the general election period were coded as Administration Trail during the first 100 days. Items coded as Candidate Ideology during the general election period were coded as Presidential Ideology in the post-election period.

During the first 100 days, the majority of posts focused on Administration Trail (46.3%), followed by Presidential Ideology (25.9%), Call to Action (18.5%) and Supporters (9.3%). There were no Opponent Attacks.

Among the two time periods, there was a statistically significant difference [X^2 (d.f. = 4, $N = 1,421$) = 52.149, $p = .0005$]. Most of the Pre-Election posts were Call-to-Actions (34.8%), but this dropped to 18.5% in the post-election period. Opponent Attacks dropped from 8.0% (pre-election) to 0.0% (post-election). Campaign/Administration trail and supporters both increased after the general election period. Candidate/Presidential Ideology increased from 15.8% (pre-election) to 25.9% (post-election), while

Campaign/Administration Trail increased from 33.3% (pre-election) to 46.3% (post-election). Supporter-focused posts also saw a slight increase from 8.2% (pre-election) to 9.3% (post-election). Overall, the majority of posts focused on Campaign/Administration Trail (35.3%), Call to Action (32.3%), Candidate/Presidential Ideology (17.3%), Supporters (8.4%) and Opponent Attack (6.8%).

A post-hoc analysis was conducted to determine which cells contributed significantly to the findings. The cells for Candidate Ideology by Post-Election ($z = 3.0$), Campaign Trail by Post-Election ($z = 2.7$), Supporters by Post-Election ($z = .4$), Call-to-Action by Post-Election ($z = -3.6$) and Opponent Attack by Post-Election ($z = -3.8$) were statistically significant. More Candidate Ideology posts were posted during the Post-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter. Also, more Campaign Trail and Supporter posts were posted during the Post-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter. However, fewer Call-to-Action and Opponent Attack posts were posted during the Post-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter.

Finally, Goodman and Kruskal's test of association was conducted to determine the strength of association and the effect size. Tau was significant ($\tau = .037$, $p = .0005$), thus the two time periods explained 3.7% of the variation in Topic. Tau's square root ($\sqrt{\tau} = .19$) was calculated to determine its strength of association. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero's guidelines, the association had a very weak relationship.

Graphics

RQ6 examined what visual elements were used during the general election period and the first 100 days. With graphics, the majority of the posts contained No Graphic (69.0%), followed by Obama-Themed Graphic (21.9%) and Outside Graphic (9.1%). During the first 100 days, the majority of posts contained No Graphic (90.7%), followed by Obama-Themed Graphic (5.6%) and Outside Graphic (3.7%).

Between the two time-periods, there was a statistically significant difference in the use of graphics [X^2 (d.f. = 2, N=1,421) = 43.731, $p = .0005$]. While the majority of blog posts used no graphic, the Post-Election period (90.7%) used them less often than the Pre-Election period (69.0%). The use of Outside Graphics dropped nearly one-third from 9.1% (pre-election) to 3.7% (post-election), while the use of Obama-Themed Graphics dropped almost four-fifths from 21.9% (pre-election) to 5.6% (post-election). Overall, most of the blog posts used No Graphic (72.3%), followed by Obama-Themed Graphic (19.4%) and Outside Graphic (8.3%).

A post-hoc analysis was conducted to determine which cells contributed significantly to the findings. The cells for No Graphic by Post-Election ($z = 3.2$), Outside Graphic by Post-Election ($z = -2.3$), Obama-Themed Graphic by Pre-Election ($z = 2.0$) and Obama-Themed Graphic by Post-Election ($z = -4.6$) were statistically significant. More No Graphics were posted during the Post-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter. In addition, fewer Outside Graphics were posted during the Post-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter. Also, more Obama-Themed Graphics were posted during the Pre-Election period than would be

expected if period of posting did not matter, while fewer Obama-Themed Graphics were posted during the Post-Election period than would be expected if period of posting did not matter.

Finally, Goodman and Kruskal's test of association was conducted to determine the strength of association and the effect size. Tau was significant ($\tau = .031$, $p = .0005$), thus the two time periods explained 3.1% of the variation in Graphics. Tau's square root ($\sqrt{\tau} = .17$) was calculated to determine its strength of association. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero's guidelines, the association had a very weak relationship.

Photos

RQ6 also examined the use of Photos during the general election period and the first 100 days. During the general election, Photos were featured in 26.6% of the posts, while during the first 100 days Photos were used 21.8% of the time. No statistically significant difference was found [X^2 (d.f. = 1, $N=1,421$) = 2.273, $p = .132$] when comparing the usage of photos during pre and post-general election period. Overall, 25.9% of the blog posts contained photos.

Videos

RQ6 also examined the use of Videos during the general election period and the first 100 days. Videos were featured on 28.0% of the posts in the pre-election period and in 21.3% of the posts during the first 100 days. A statistically significant difference was found

[X^2 (d.f. = 2, N=1,421) = 43.73, $p = .040$] when comparing the usage of Videos in the pre- and post-election period. The use of Videos in blog posts increased 4.8% from the general election period to the first 100 days in office. Overall, 27.0% of the posts contained videos.

A post-hoc analysis was conducted to determine which cells contributed significantly to the findings. Standardized residuals were generated for each cell. Alpha was set at .05, therefore a standardized residual of ± 1.96 or higher would be statistically significant. No cells contributed significantly.

Finally, Goodman and Kruskal's test of association was conducted to determine the strength of association and the effect size. Tau was significant ($\tau = .003$, $p = .040$), thus the two time periods explained 0.3% of the variation in Videos. Tau's square root ($\sqrt{\tau} = .05$) was calculated to determine its strength of association. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero's guidelines, the association had a very weak relationship.

Tone Dimension within Time Dimension

To further assess how the posts were framed, the Pre-Election and Post-Election periods were examined separately to determine the tone of posts within each period. The categories of Tone Dimension were Positive, Negative and Neutral. The categories of Time Dimension were Present and Non-Present.

RQ7 asked what the proportions of time frames were within the Tone Dimension (Table I). Although the majority of posts were coded as Neutral and focused on the Present (82.3%), Negative and Positive posts were more likely to feature topics in the Past (25.0%).

RQ7 also asked what the proportion of Tone Dimension within Time Dimension during the first 100 days in office (Table II). As with the pre-election posts, Neutral posts were also more likely to focus on the Present (88.3%). Negative posts were more likely to be in the Present (1.5%).

Tone Dimension within Space Dimension

To further assess how the posts were framed, the Pre-Election and Post-Election periods were examined separately to determine the tone of posts within the Space Dimension. The categories of Tone Dimension were Positive, Negative and Neutral. The categories of Space Dimension were Individual, Community, Regional, Society and International.

RQ8 compared the proportion of Tone dimension within Space dimension (Table III). During the election, Negative posts were more likely to be focused on International topics (17.4%), Positive posts featured were mostly Individuals (53.3%), and Neutral posts were more likely to focus on Community (91.6%).

RQ8 also compared the proportion of Tone Dimension within Space Dimension during the first 100 days in office (Table IV). Negative toned posts were more likely to focus on Individuals (33.3%). Positive toned posts were more likely to focus on International topics (50.0%). Topics with a Neutral tone were more likely to focus on Society (90.3%).

Tone Dimension within Topic Dimension

To further assess how the posts were framed, the Pre-Election and Post-Election periods were examined separately to determine the tone of posts within the Topic Dimension. The categories of Tone Dimension were Positive, Negative and Neutral. The categories of Topic Dimension were Candidate/Presidential Ideology, Campaign/Administration Trail, Supports, Call-to-Action and Opponent Attack.

The proportion of tone dimension within topic dimension was examined for RQ9 (Table V). During the election, Negative posts were more likely to feature an Opponent Attack (43.8%), Positive posts were more likely to focus on Supporters (27.3%) and posts that featured the Campaign Trail were the most Neutral post (94.3%).

RQ9 also analyzed the proportion of Tone Dimension within Topic Dimension during the first 100 days in office (Table VI). Unlike the pre-election posts, Negative posts were more likely Call-to-Action (5.0%). Positive posts were more likely to focus on Presidential Ideology (28.6%).

Tone Dimension to Type-of-Post

To further assess how the posts were framed, the Pre-Election and Post-Election periods were examined separately to determine the tone of posts within the Topic Dimension. The categories of Tone Dimension were Positive, Negative and Neutral. The categories of Type-of-Post were Editorial, E-mails, Informational, Live Blogging, Live Event, Newspaper Reprint and Speech Reprint.

RQ10 compared the proportion of Tone Dimension within the Type-of-Post. During the election (Table VII), Negative posts were more likely to feature a New Ad (36.1%), Positive posts were more likely to focus on Editorials (34.3%), and announcements of Live Events to most likely to be Neutral (98.6%).

RQ10 also compared the proportion of Tone Dimension within topic dimension during the first 100 days in office (Table VIII). Negative posts were more likely to be Editorials (4.0%) while Positive posts were more likely to be Speech Reprints (24.4%).

Topic Dimension within Type-of-Post

To further assess how the posts were framed, the Pre-Election and Post-Election periods were examined separately to determine the Topic Dimension within the Type-of-Post. The categories of Topic Dimension were Candidate Ideology, Campaign Trail, Supporters, Call-to-Action and Opponent Attack. The categories of Type-of-Post were Editorial, E-mails, Informational, Live Blogging, Live Event, Newspaper Reprints and Speech Reprints.

RQ11 compared the proportion of topic dimension within the type of post. During the election (Table IX), topics that focused on Candidate Ideology were more likely to be from Speech Reprints (56.3%). Blog posts that were used to announce Live Events (80.0%) were the most commonly used on the Campaign Trail. Supporter posts (56.9%) were most often Editorials, and rarely any other type of post. Reprints of E-mails (80.0%) were more likely to feature Call-to-Actions. Finally, Live Blogging (92.5%) was the most often used for an Opponent Attack.

RQ11 also compared the proportion of topic dimension with type of post during the first 100 days in office (Table X). As with the pre-election period, topics that focused on Presidential (Candidate) Ideology were more likely to feature Speech Reprints (56.1%). Posts that featured Supporters were more likely to be Editorials (76%).

Topic Dimension within Space Dimension

To further assess how the posts were framed, the Pre-Election and Post-Election periods were examined separately to determine the Topic Dimension within the Space Dimension. The categories of Topic Dimension were Candidate Ideology, Campaign Trail, Supporters, Call-to-Action and Opponent Attack. The categories of Space Dimension were Individual, Community, Regional, Societal and International.

RQ11 compared the proportion of topic dimension within space dimension. During the election (Table XI), topics that focused on Candidate Ideology were more likely to have an International Space Dimension (78.3%). Posts that focused on the Campaign Trail were more likely to feature Communities (70.2%). Supporter-focused and Call-to-Action posts were more likely to feature Individuals: Supporters (24.2%), Call-to-Action (67.2%). Posts that focused on Society were more likely to be Opponent Attacks (12.2%).

RQ11 also compared the proportion of topic dimension within time dimension during the first 100 days in office (Table XII). Similar to the pre-election posts, topics that focused on Presidential Ideology were more likely to have an International Dimension (83.3%). Posts that focused on the Campaign Trail were more likely to feature Communities (63.6%), as well as Regions (64.3%). Post that focused on Supporters for

more likely to use the Society Dimension (10.8%), as opposed to Individuals during the election. Unlike the pre-election posts, all posts that focused on Individuals were Call-to-Action (100.0%).

Secondary Study Summary

The secondary study examined the relationship between the authors and how many posts each author published during the 2008 presidential general election period and during the first 100 days in office. The secondary study also looked at what time of day and days that the most articles were posted. In addition to the categories listed in the primary study summary, each post was also coded for author and time of day.

Authors

RQ12 examined the number of authors and the numbers of posts each author published during the general election period. Thirty-five cells had an expected count of less than 5, which violated the assumption. Since this violated the assumption, categories were collapsed. Bradley Portnoy, Kevin Goodman, Kevin Hartness, Laurin Manning, Sam-Graham-Felson, State News, Nikki Sutton, Amy Hamblin, Rick Scalti, Martha, George Krebs, Sarah Ramey, Phillip Carter, Adam, Scott Goodstein, Erik Weber, Chris Hughes, New Media Department, Sam Teller, Jenn Prosser, Greg Havenstein and John Schuler were combined into Contributors. The collapsed data was examined for expected frequencies.

Although 26 authors published posts on Obama's official blog during the 2008 presidential general election period (Table XVII), 22 of the authors (Contributors)

accounted for only 12.4% of the posts. Amanda Scott, an Illinois blogger who worked on Obama's campaign during the general election period, published the majority of the posts (38.3%). Christopher Hass, another Illinois blogger who worked on Obama's campaign during the general election period, published 26.4% of the posts, followed by Obama Road Blog (12.5%), Contributors (12.4%), and Molly Claflin (10.4%). Hass and Scott accounted for more than half of Obama's posts during the election.

RQ12 examined the number of authors and the amount of posts each author published during the first 100 days in office. After the general election period, the number of authors dropped to one author, Christopher Hass (94.9%) and Contributors (5.1) (Table XVIII). Since the nominal variable (Hass) is out-of-range for the Post-Election period, further comparisons between the two time periods cannot be made.

Time of Day

RQ13 calculated what time of day were the most articles posted during the election. The majority of the posts were published in the prime time hours of 6 p.m. to Midnight (37.5%), followed by 12 p.m. – 5:59 p.m. (35.7%), 6 a.m. – 11:59 a.m. (22.7%) and Midnight to 5:59 a.m. (4.1%).

Day of Week

RQ14 looked at what day of the week the most articles were posted. The majority of posts were published on Tuesday (18.5%), followed by Monday (15.5%), Wednesday (15.3%), Thursday (14.6%), Friday (13.7%), Saturday (11.2%) and Sunday (11.2%).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify patterns in online communication and to better understand the strategy used in Barack Obama's official blog. By examining the frames, design elements and political message content, researchers will have a basis for studying the effects that blogging has as a campaign tool.

Some effects of blogging are already evident. For instance, Obama raised half-a-billion dollars from his official blog, which is nearly five times the amount George W. Bush raised in 2004. Obama's online fundraising techniques appeared more polished than with previous political blogs with the use of "Donate" buttons at the bottom of posts (Appendix I). For example, a post might focus on an individual, but close with "Sign up, vote and be part of the change (Appendix I)." A "Get Involved" and "Donate" button would often follow this closing. In addition, when a New Ad premiered, a blog post would feature the ad with a statement that read, "Donate today to help put this one air (Appendix VIII)." Obama raised more money than any candidate to date, but since the effects of blogging are not known, its potential as a campaign resource has not been maximized.

Present-day political campaigns have changed significantly from a generation ago. Communication is driven by technology. Today's target audience has 24-7 access to information and high-tech devices. The design of the traditional campaign no longer fits

the audience it is meant to reach. Broadcasting to a mass audience is not as effective as in the past. Political candidates must narrowcast their content to reach constituents. With 70 million bloggers in the U.S. and 7 million who write daily, there is a huge potential audience to narrowcast a political message. However, to accomplish this, candidates must understand how to effectively communicate their message through blogging and other emerging technologies.

Through blogging, Obama's team updated traditional communication strategies. For example, e-mails from Barack, Michelle Obama, Joe Biden or campaign manager David Plouffe, would be uploaded as a post (Appendix II). This could be viewed as an updated press release. Furthermore, print news, televised news, debates, political advertising and campaign speeches, which are traditionally one-way communication, appeared more engaging through two-way communication. Constituents could post comments, respond to other comments and engage in a nationwide conversation with campaign staff and other supporters (Appendix IX).

To better understand Obama's communication strategies, researchers investigated content dimensions and frames of 1,421 official blog posts. To code the blog content, trained coders were instructed to determine the true intent of each post. For example, an entire post may have featured an Individual, which could have been viewed as Supporter or Editorial under the Topic Dimension. However, if the post closed with a Call-to-Action, such as a request for donations or an appeal to register to vote, coders concluded the intent was a Call-to-Action and not another Topic (Appendix I). In fact, during the election the most common Topic was Call-to-Action, which could be an indicator as to how Obama generated more than \$500 million through online donations.

Due to coders analyzing the post based on intent, the majority of posts were coded as Neutral (87.1%), which differs from Bichard's (2006) study that found 46% of Bush-Kerry's posts were Neutral. Of course, this finding was likely due to the mudslinging of the 2004 election between Bush and Kerry. Generally, the challenger is more negative toward the incumbent. Since the 2008 election featured two non-incumbents, it is expected that each candidate would adopt a more neutral tone. However, in this study, coders may have viewed posts as more neutral since the posts' author did not write the majority of Obama's posts. The author is the person who publishes the post. Since the author did not write many of the posts, they were viewed as passing on information and coded as Neutral. Many of the Neutral posts featured reprints of newspaper articles, voter information or campaign trail events. If the author published a post written by anyone in Obama's campaign staff, then it was coded for Positive, Negative or Neutral. As expected among this study's researchers, the majority of Negative posts were Opponent Attacks. Some Opponent Attacks were coded as Neutral, since the attack focused on rebuttals of the opponent's statements or originated from a source outside Obama's campaign team, but did not use hostile or conflictive language. Researchers did note that many of the Negative posts from Obama's staff were e-mail reprints from Obama's campaign manager, while Obama's e-mails tended to be positive. While more than four-fifths of the posts were coded as Neutral, nearly one-fourth of e-mail reprints were viewed as Negative.

The analysis of the dimensions within dimensions, such as Tone Dimensions within Topic Dimension, were only measured for frequency as a further analysis of framing. Chi Square's could not be generated since the sample was not large enough in the Post-Election period. Only 3 posts were coded as Negative during the first 100 days, which did not

provide enough cases for measurement. However, the frequencies did indicate the tone of the posts had changed. Since Obama was no longer campaigning and in office, there was less to criticize and there were no more opponents to attack.

During televised presidential and vice-presidential debates, campaign staff capitalized on its online audience. On television debate days, Obama's staff blogged live and uploaded posts with fact-check updates (Appendix IV). For example, during one debate McCain said, "Maybe that's why he ... proposed \$860 billion worth of new spending and wants to raise people's taxes in a time of incredible challenge and difficulty and heartache for the American people." During the debate, Obama's team rebutted with a blog post that read, "McCain's claim about Obama's spending plans have been debunked as 'misleading.' Obama's plan would cut the deficit far more than McCain's, and even Alan Greenspan has said we can't afford McCain's tax cut for wealthy corporations." The online presence enhanced the televised debate. Obama's staff gave immediate responses and posted online "fact checks" when they disagreed with the opponent's key messages. Once the debate ended, posts were uploaded with excerpts from media sources that declared Obama or Biden as the winner of that debate. This also allowed Obama's team to respond to critics during the debate rather than afterwards.

Another noted strategy was Speeches that were uploaded as posts (Appendix VII). The author would post entire speeches before, during or after an event, with the time, location and speaker included. Anyone could read, comment and discuss speeches before being presented to the audience. Through this technique, Obama's team could gauge public opinion before giving a speech, which allowed the campaign team to finely tune their message.

Obama used his blog to create an aura of interactivity. Unlike Dean's blog during the 2004 election, Obama's blog felt interactive. Photos and videos that featured supporters were posted daily. In fact, there were several posts that invited supporters to interact. Obama's blog catered to his supporters and encouraged them to become part of the campaign. As part of the campaign, many supporters became the center of a Call-to-Action in the Topic dimension.

The Web log Handbook (Blood, 2002) identifies four types of blogs: self-expression, keeping in touch, information sharing and reputation building. The Type-of-Posts and topic Dimensions used on Obama's official blog employed each of these categories (Appendix VIX):

(1) Self Expression: Editorials, E-mails, Speech Reprints and Candidate/Presidential Ideology.

(2) Keeping in Touch: Campaign Trail/Administration Trail, Supporters

(3) Information Sharing: Informational, Live Event, New Ad and Call-to-Action.

(4) Reputation Building: Live Blogging and Opponent Attack.

The online strategy in his campaign was used to create discussion, allowed constituents to keep up with Obama, gave staff the option of filtering ideas and messages to the public by bypassing traditional media, and built upon Obama's brand image.

After the election, Community and Individual based posts decreased while Society and International topics increased. While the official blog still communicated to supporters after the election, it became more of a tool focused on Administration Trail and Presidential Ideology rather than a Call-to-Action tool. In fact, Speech Reprints became the most common Type-of-Post.

The overall appearance of Obama's official campaign blog was consistent with his brand image. Coders agreed that the layout and design followed a similar style that would be found with a publication, such as a magazine or newsletter (Appendix X). With a magazine design, a header is often used to identify various sections. Although the sections are different, the header identifies each section while maintaining the publication's brand. Variations of the logo were used throughout the blog. For example, content that focused on gay-rights issues used a logo in which the red and white stripes were replaced with rainbow stripes. Below the logo was the title "Hometown Pride," whereas "Women for Obama" posts used a header with the standard Obama logo with an additional cross at the bottom, similar to the symbol for woman. Separate logos were used for Latinos for Obama, Republicans for Obama and other groups that the blog posts featured. Previous studies found that the use of graphics, photos, videos, author information and links to other blogs or Web sites increased blog credibility (Lin, 2009). Obama's blog used each of these elements, which could have contributed to Obama's credibility. The layout and use of visual elements helped position Obama as not only a candidate, but also as a brand choice.

More than 10 years has passed since the first political blog appeared as a campaign tool. Conversely, decades of communication research over the effects of television, radio and print media have been published. Political teams use this research in their campaigns to send the most effective message from their candidate. Although research has defined what a blog is, who reads it and how it is used, there are not many studies that have examined the potential effects. However, before the effectiveness of blogging can be measured, parameters must be defined. The purpose of this thesis was to define elements that will be applicable to future studies in the area of communication research.

Particularly, this study examined Obama's official blog, which was praised for its interactivity and fundraising capabilities.

Not only is this study useful for future research, the findings could also be used in current political campaigns, classroom discussions, marketing research and corporate blogs.

Implications

While some politicians have benefitted from blogging, such as Obama raising \$500 million from online donations, others may have suffered. Howard Dean's campaign did well initially, but researchers of this study believe it was his blog that hurt his campaign due its lack of interactivity. Political bloggers need to ensure their blog is interactive since blogging creates a sense of community. Furthermore, blogging allows the voter to participate in the candidate's campaign, or at least have a sense they are participating. It also allows supporters to connect with other constituents who share their opinions and beliefs. By engaging online discussion of political issues, politicians have access to a broader number of voters. However, most of the members of the virtual community of the blogosphere are anonymous, which means many components of interaction are phased out, such as body language and facial expressions.

One major drawback to blogging is the lack of regulation. Anyone can start a blog at no cost. Furthermore, since the platform of blogging can be anonymous, bloggers can post any material, whether it is true or false. The same forum used to benefit a politician can be used to damage his or her reputation.

Finally, the main goal of this study was to provide a base for future studies into the effects of political blogging. However, it must be understood that not everyone understands what a blog is, the key point being the differences between a blog and a Web site. The difference is with how each tool is used. A Web site creates a monologue, while a blog creates dialogue. Web sites tend to remain static, but blogs are updated frequently. In addition, there exists a generation gap among those who grew up with digital technology and those who grew up without digital technology. Audiences raised on computers are more likely to view blogs and social media as an extension of who they are, while older generations may view such tools as simply a trend or another means of communication. It needs to be understood that blogging can create a sense of community among its readers.

Limitations

Due to the instantaneous publishing or deleting of material that the platform of the Internet allows, it is possible that some posts were removed before researchers could download them. In addition, this study does not include a comparison of previous elections and only includes one candidate's blog content. Further studies may be needed to examine the content between rival candidates.

It also was assumed that the content on Obama's blog was targeted toward Obama supporters; therefore, the blog posts likely feature topics of interest to his constituents. It was assumed that all blog posts were uploaded by Obama's staff and not an outside party. If these assumptions are found untrue, the results of this study could be affected.

Furthermore, because this study is a content analysis, framing dimensions were based on the coders' best judgment. Therefore, it is possible that coder bias exists

Despite study limitations, these results contribute to the current body of literature on political blogging.

Future Recommendations

Future studies should explore the relationship between blog content and emotional connectivity among a candidate's blog and supporters. A study focused on the comparison of blogs to traditional media also could measure a blog's effectiveness. Furthermore, it might be beneficial to further study the perceptions of blog credibility to the respondents' degree of participation, especially among a candidate's supporters. Finally, future research should be conducted during an election to thoroughly measure the respondents' attitudes.

Conclusion

Obama reached millions of voters online by embracing current and emerging technological trends. In fact, researchers of this study argue that Obama's blogging strategies may have helped him win the election. While Obama probably did not win through blogging alone, it is clear that blog communication has untapped potential to impact future campaigns. However, before this audience can be strategically tapped, the effects of blogging must be understood. Before the effects can be measured, parameters

need to be defined. By understanding how to effectively frame blog content, bloggers and politicians can maximize the impact of their message.

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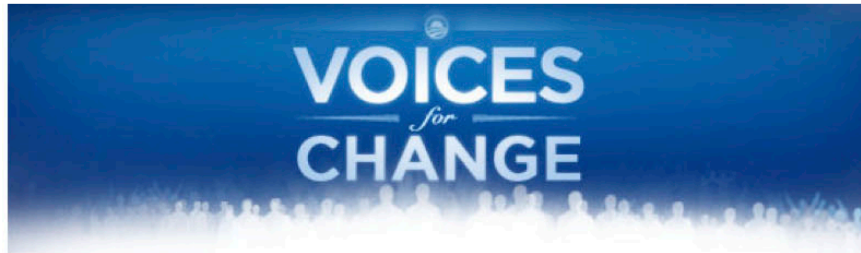
APPENDIX 1

Voices for Change: Helen in California

By *Molly Clafin* - Oct 27th, 2008 at 9:52 pm EDT

[Comments](#) | [Mail to a Friend](#) | [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Tags: [hq-voices-for-change](#)



"I have been donating to Obama's campaign since January," says Helen in Toluca Lake, California. "However, I was hesitant to set up a personal fundraising page; it's just hard to ask friends for money – especially when times are tight."

"But, I believe so strongly in Obama-Biden and the change they will bring to this country that I had to do all I could for the campaign. So, I decided that I was asking my friends to make an investment in their future, and set a fundraising goal of \$1,000."

A short time later, [Helen has raised \\$3,375](#).

I was blown away. I was in tears when I checked my page and saw the contributions.

Helen has been involved with the campaign since the primaries, [phonebanking](#) and even traveling to [Pennsylvania](#) and [Colorado](#) to knock on doors.

Helen decided volunteer for Obama because:

I just felt like I could do it. I felt like this was an investment and my future and the future of my country. I don't live in a vacuum; I live in the United States of America. Everything that happens affects me.

Helen says she supports Barack because "I really believe that he can make a difference. I haven't been involved in politics since I was in college in the 60s. I never worked on a campaign before, and never donated to a candidate – but I really believe in Obama."

America needs to be going in a different direction, and I believe Barack can lead up to that change. But the only way he can do it is if he wins this election. And that's up to us.

Join Helen and be part of bringing Barack's change to Washington. We've only got eight days left to make a difference.

Sign up to volunteer, vote, and be part of the change.

[GET INVOLVED](#)

[DONATE](#)

Voices for Change is a series featuring profiles of Barack Obama's grassroots supporters from across the nation. The people who make up this movement come from all different backgrounds, but they share a common goal of helping bring about fundamental change in Washington.

APPENDIX II

Message from Barack: "Tomorrow"

By *Christopher Hass* - Nov 3rd, 2008 at 7:33 pm EST

[Comments](#) | [Mail to a Friend](#) | [Report Objectionable Content](#)

With just one day to go until Election Day, Barack sent out the following email to supporters:

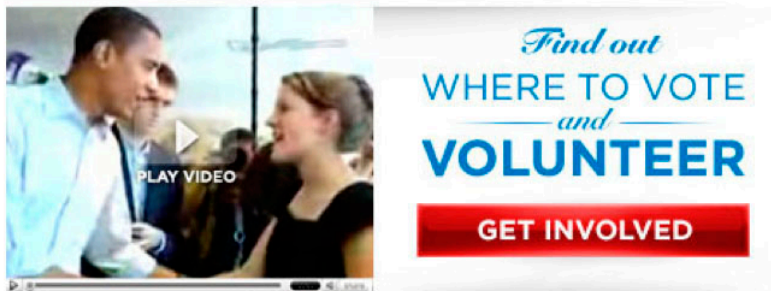
We're just one day away from change.

Election Day is tomorrow -- Tuesday, November 4th.

We've asked you to do a lot over the course of this campaign, and you've always come through.

Right now, I'm asking you to do one last thing -- vote tomorrow, and make sure everyone you know votes, too.

Watch a short video about how far we've come, and how close we are. Then find or confirm your polling location and make sure your friends and family do the same:



When this campaign began, we weren't given much of a chance by the pollsters or the pundits.

But tomorrow, we can make history.

We've made it this far because supporters like you never stopped believing in your power to bring about real change.

Take the final step now.

[Watch the video](#), [find your polling location](#), and [get everyone you know involved](#) on Election Day.

APPENDIX III

Ohio: One-Stop Early Vote

By *Amanda Scott* - Oct 1st, 2008 at 9:08 pm EDT

[Comments](#) | [Mail to a Friend](#) | [Report Objectionable Content](#)



For the next six days, if you live in Ohio you can register to vote and early vote at the same time. It's one week of [One-Stop Early Voting](#) that can give Barack a lead in one of the crucial battleground states.

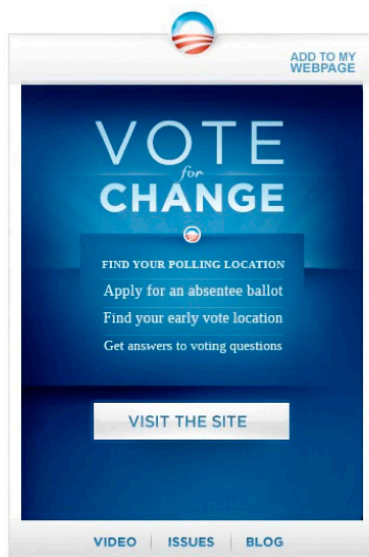
Which is why we need our supporters in Ohio to be on the ground registering voters and making sure they are voting early. The more people who [vote early](#), the more energy and resources we can devote to the Get Out The Vote efforts in the days leading up to Election Day, November 4th.

On Monday night, there were voters in a number of counties that were so excited about voting early for Barack that they camped out outside their Early Vote location, the local Board of Elections. Check out the video of why people are voting early for Barack.

Introducing the Vote For Change Widget

By *Christopher Hass* - Oct 28th, 2008 at 11:39 pm EDT

[Comments](#) | [Mail to a Friend](#) | [Report Objectionable Content](#)



In the last few days before November 4th, when many people will make their final decision as to who to cast their vote for, sharing information with friends, family, and even perfect strangers is the most valuable thing you can do. This includes information on the issues and the choices in this election, as well as information on where, when and how to vote.

Our new [Vote For Change widget](#) allows you to easily share videos, issue information, news stories, and voting information through social network sites, blogs, or your own website. You can add the [Vote For Change widget](#) to [your website](#), [your Facebook page](#), an [iGoogle page](#) and more.

[Show 210 Reader Comments](#)

[Comments RSS](#)

APPENDIX IV

Fact Check: Housing, Energy, Tax

By *Amanda Scott* - Oct 15th, 2008 at 9:43 pm EDT

[Comments](#) | [Mail to a Friend](#) | [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Fact Check on McCain's Housing Plan:

Tonight, John McCain said: "During the Depression era, we had a thing called the Home Ownership Loan Corporation, and they went out and bought up these mortgages, and people were able to stay in their homes, and eventually the values of those homes went up and they actually made money. By the way, this was a proposal made by Senator Clinton not too long ago. So, obviously, if we can start increasing home values, then there will be creation of wealth."

FACT: McCain lied again about his housing plan being based on Hillary's Clinton's

Fact Check on 2005 Energy Bill:

Tonight, John McCain said: "He voted for the energy bill that was full of goodies for the energy companies that I opposed."

FACT: The 2005 Energy Bill Raised Taxes On Oil Companies. Sen. Obama Has Introduced Legislation To Repeal Tax Breaks For Oil Companies, While Sen. McCain Wants To Give Them \$4 Billion In Tax Breaks

Fact Check on \$42,000 a year:

Tonight, Barack Obama said: "Now, with respect to a couple of the things Senator McCain said, the notion that I voted for a tax increase for people making \$42,000 a year has been disputed by everybody who has looked at this claim that Senator McCain keeps on making. Even Fox News disputes it, and that doesn't happen very often when it comes to accusations about me."

FACT: Fox News Called The \$42,000 Vote Attack "Misleading"

Debate Reality Check: Windfall Profits and Renewable Energy

By *Amanda Scott* - Oct 2nd, 2008 at 10:05 pm EDT

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Fact Check on Windfall Profits:

Today, Joe Biden said: "But John McCain will not support a windfall profits tax. They have made \$600 billion since 2001, and John McCain wants to give them all by itself separate, no additional bill, all by itself another \$4 billion tax cut. ... So I hope the governor is able to convince John McCain to support our windfall profits tax, which she supported in Alaska, and I give her credit for it."

FACT: McCain has repeatedly opposed a windfall profits tax and his tax plan gives oil companies \$4 billion in tax breaks

Fact Check on Renewable Energy:

Tonight, Joe Biden said: "[McCain] voted 20 times against funding alternative energy."

FACT: McCain has voted against renewable energy more than 20 times

APPENDIX V

LIVE: Joe Biden in Newark, Delaware

By *Christopher Hass* - Oct 31st, 2008 at 10:02 am EDT

[Comments](#) | [Mail to a Friend](#) | [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Joe Biden is at the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware for a Change We Need Rally right now. You can watch a livestream of the event below:

[UPDATE] This event has ended. Check back for more coverage from our [road team](#). You can also [sign up](#) to receive notification of upcoming live events via email.

Michelle on Ellen, Barack on MSNBC

By *Amanda Scott* - Sep 8th, 2008 at 3:40 pm EDT

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Michelle Obama will be on the *Ellen* this afternoon. Check your local NBC listings for when Ellen airs in your market and be sure to tune in.



Tonight Barack will be on MSNBC in an interview with Keith Olbermann. You can watch the interview at 8pm Eastern.

Watch Barack Tonight at 8pm EST

By *Amanda Scott* - Oct 29th, 2008 at 7:01 pm EDT

[Comments](#) | [Mail to a Friend](#) | [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Don't forget to tune in to Barack's 30-minute special tonight called Barack Obama: American Promises. It will air at 8pm EST on NBC, CBS, Univision, BET, FOX and MSNBC. Check your local listings for channel information.

And if you haven't already, find a [Last Call for Change phonebank house party](#) in your neighbor to watch the special at. Afterwards you can [call undecided voters in battleground states](#) to help the campaign's Get Out The Vote efforts.

APPENDIX VI

Morning News

By *Christopher Hass* - Oct 29th, 2008 at 9:30 am EDT

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From the [Los Angeles Times](#):

Los Angeles Times

Barack Obama on Tuesday seized on comments made by a top aide to rival John McCain about the Republican's healthcare plan, saying they amounted to a different kind of "October surprise."

"This morning, we were offered a stunning bit of straight talk . . . from his top economic advisor, who actually said that the health insurance people currently get from their employer is, and I quote, 'way better' than the healthcare they'd be getting if John McCain were president," Obama told 8,000 supporters crammed into an arena at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va., and 12,000 standing outside.

The Democratic candidate was referring to comments made by Douglas Holtz-Eakin, who was asked on CNNMoney.com about an element of McCain's healthcare plan. McCain calls for eliminating tax breaks on employer-sponsored healthcare benefits but wants to give taxpayers healthcare tax credits -- \$2,500 for individuals and \$5,000 for families -- to buy insurance.

....Independent analysts have concluded that McCain's plan would prompt younger workers to abandon employer-sponsored plans to find less expensive coverage -- leaving employers with a pool of older, less healthy workers, potentially prompting them to drop coverage completely.

Holtz-Eakin, a senior McCain advisor, was asked about young workers fleeing employer plans. "Why would they leave?" he said. "What they are getting from their employer is way better than what they could get with the credit."

Obama said the remarks proved that the Republican's plan was fatally flawed.

"This is the point I've been making since Sen. McCain unveiled his plan. It took until the last seven days of this election for his campaign to finally admit the truth, but better late than never," Obama said.

...Obama rallied supporters in the Philadelphia suburb of Chester, telling 9,000 people gathered in a muddy college quad that although McCain was trying to distance himself from Bush, he would expand his economic policies.

"John McCain has ridden shotgun as George Bush has driven our economy toward a cliff, and now he wants to take the wheel and step on the gas," he said. "When it comes to the issue of taxes, saying that John McCain is running for a third Bush term isn't being fair to George Bush."

..."The last thing we need is four more years of the tired, old, worn-out theory of John McCain and George Bush, a theory that says we should give more and more to billionaires and big corporations and CEOs, and hope that prosperity trickles down on everyone else," he told a crowd of 22,000.

APPENDIX VII

Barack in Dayton, OH: "We need steady leadership in the White House"

By *Amanda Scott* - Oct 9th, 2008 at 12:31 pm EDT

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Barack spoke to residents of Dayton, Ohio this morning as he kicked off his American Jobs Tour in Ohio. Families in Ohio, like everywhere across the country, are struggling in the economic crisis and Barack discussed what he will do to help and what kind of leadership he will provide.

In recent weeks, we've seen a growing financial crisis that's threatening not only banks and businesses, but your economic security, as well. It's getting harder and harder to get a loan for that new car or that startup-business or that college you've dreamed of attending. And if you've invested your life savings in the stock market, you've probably watched a good chunk of it disappear.

It's a crisis that's been years in the making – the result of greed and irresponsibility that stretched from Wall Street to Washington. And the truth is, it will take more than a few days to repair the damage.

...The next President will have to manage this recovery. The question is, will that President be looking out for you?

...We have to act to fix our broken economy and restore the credit markets. But taxpayers shouldn't be asked to pick up the tab for the very folks who helped create this crisis.

...We need steady leadership in the White House. We need a President we can trust in times of crisis. And that's the kind of President I intend to be.

Make no mistake: we must do more to help innocent homebuyers. I've worked on a series of proposals over the past two years to do that. And I support the Treasury's efforts to buy up troubled mortgages. But we need to do it in a responsible way. That means making sure that we're not overpaying for these mortgages and rewarding the very lenders whose recklessness helped cause this crisis. It means giving taxpayers a share of the benefit when our housing market recovers. And it means doing what I proposed more than two years ago and cracking down on predatory lenders by treating mortgage fraud like the crime that it is.

...It is time to turn the page on eight years of economic policies that put Wall Street before Main Street but ended up hurting both. We need policies that grow our economy from the bottom-up, so that every American, everywhere has the chance to get ahead. Not just corporate CEOs, but their secretaries too. Not just the person who owns the factory, but the men and women who work on its floor. Because if we've learned anything from this economic crisis, it's that we're all connected; we're all in this together; and we will rise or fall as one nation – as one people.

[Read Barack's full remarks, as prepared for delivery...](#)

APPENDIX VIII

New TV Ad: "His Choice"

By [Amanda Scott](#) - Oct 29th, 2008 at 10:37 am EDT

[Comments](#) | [Mail to a Friend](#) | [Report Objectionable Content](#)

Today, the Obama-Biden campaign introduced a new 30 second TV ad, "His Choice", which highlights John McCain in his own words admitting that he doesn't understand the economy well.

Watch "His Choice" below...



[Donate today](#) to help put this ad on the air.

APPENDIX IX

Open Thread

By [Christopher Hass](#) - Nov 4th, 2008 at 1:50 am EST

[Comments](#) | [Mail to a Friend](#) | [Report Objectionable Content](#)



This is your very last pre-election Open Thread . . .

Reader Comments

[Comments RSS](#)

Comments are closed for this post.

[first](#) | [Report to Admin](#)

By [Michael from Iowa City, IA](#) Nov 4th 2008 at 1:58 am EST (Updated Nov 4th 2008 at 1:58 am EST)
GOTV!!!

[Re: first](#) | [Report to Admin](#)

By [Dinora](#) Nov 4th 2008 at 1:59 am EST (Updated Nov 4th 2008 at 1:59 am EST)
congrats care to donate
[Link](#)

[landing](#) | [Report to Admin](#)

By [1st time in 2nd District - Omaha for Obama](#) Nov 4th 2008 at 2:02 am EST (Updated Nov 4th 2008 at 2:02 am EST)

Just saw his plane land...hope he gets some rest.

[Re: landing](#) | [Report to Admin](#)

By [1st time in 2nd District - Omaha for Obama](#) Nov 4th 2008 at 2:08 am EST (Updated Nov 4th 2008 at 2:08 am EST)

I eally wish he would just sleep tonite and sleep in this morning, because he looks so tired. Keep him in our prayers...sleep in Barack..it id okay..snuggle with your wife and kids..you ma not have another time, for a long time, to do that..you have done all you can do.

[Strong support from a French citizen](#) | [Report to Admin](#)

By [Claire](#) Nov 4th 2008 at 3:03 am EST (Updated Nov 4th 2008 at 3:03 am EST)

My dear American friends,

Today is a special day, and I am with you with all my heart. I didn't sleep well last night..

Let us start that peaceful revolution of the hearts, let us change the world, more peace, more harmony... with Barack Obama, President of the United States of America...

With love,

Claire

[Re: Strong support from a French citizen](#) | [Report to Admin](#)

By [Montana](#) Nov 4th 2008 at 3:29 am EST (Updated Nov 4th 2008 at 3:29 am EST)

Thanks, Claire. We feel the presence of the world in this election, hoping we do the right thing this time.

[It feels like CHRISTMAS EVE!!](#) | [Report to Admin](#)

By [Sabrina vs her new President!](#) Nov 4th 2008 at 3:03 am EST (Updated Nov 4th 2008 at 3:03 am EST)

Ok, im 25... why do i feel like a kid again anticipating election day like its Christmas??

[Re: It feels like CHRISTMAS EVE!!](#) | [Report to Admin](#)

By [Noel Charles Winston-Salem, North Carolina](#) Nov 4th 2008 at 3:12 am EST (Updated Nov 4th 2008 at 3:12 am EST)

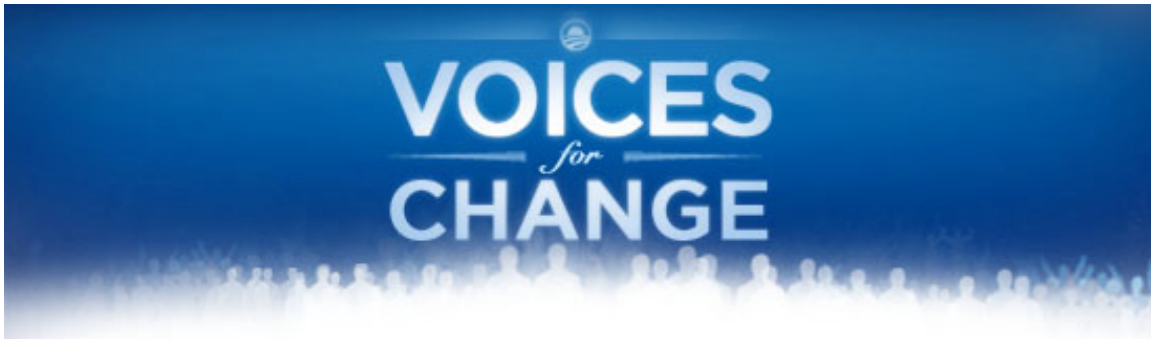
Yes. It does seem like Christmas being holidays are around the corner. Christmas, and the night right before the Super Bowl LOL.

[Re: It feels like CHRISTMAS EVE!!](#) | [Report to Admin](#)


By [SoCalHopeMonger](#) Nov 4th 2008 at 3:12 am EST (Updated Nov 4th 2008 at 3:12 am EST)

I feel the same way!

APPENDIX X



VOTE
for
CHANGE



MAKE SURE THAT
EVERYONE KNOWS
WHERE TO VOTE

TELL YOUR FRIENDS

VOTEFORCHANGE.COM

ECONOMY



FOREIGN POLICY



VOLUNTEER NEAR
YOU



**DEADLINE
MIDNIGHT**





**HOMETOWN
PRIDE**

LEARN MORE

**WOMEN
FOR
OBAMA**



**LATINOS
FOR
OBAMA**



TABLE I

PROPORTION OF TONE DIMENSION WITHIN TIME DIMENSION DURING THE 2008
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Tone	Past N=8	Present N=1,103	Future N=94
NEGATIVE	25.0%	6.3%	8.5%
POSITIVE	25.0%	11.4%	13.8%
NEUTRAL	50.0%	82.3%	77.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%

TABLE II

PROPORTION OF TONE DIMENSION WITHIN TIME DIMENSION DURING THE FIRST
100 DAYS IN OFFICE

Tone	Past N=1	Present N=196	Future N=19
NEGATIVE	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%
POSITIVE	100.0%	10.2%	26.3%
NEUTRAL	0.0%	88.3%	73.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%

TABLE III

PROPORTION OF TONE DIMENSION WITHIN SPACE DIMENSION DURING THE
2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Tone	Individual N=128	Community N=178	Regional N=203	Society N=673	International N=23
NEGATIVE	0.8%	3.4%	3.9%	8.9%	17.4%
POSITIVE	52.3%	5.1%	6.4%	7.6%	4.3%
NEUTRAL	46.9%	91.6%	89.7%	83.5%	78.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE IV

PROPORTION OF TONE DIMENSION WITHIN SPACE DIMENSION DURING THE FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE

Tone	Individual N=3	Community N=11	Regional N=14	Society N=176	International N=12
NEGATIVE	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%
POSITIVE	33.3%	18.2%	14.3%	8.5%	50.0%
NEUTRAL	33.3%	81.8%	85.7%	90.3%	50.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE V

PROPORTION OF TONE DIMENSION WITHIN TOPIC DIMENSION DURING THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Tone	Candidate Ideology N=190	Campaign Trail N=401	Supporters N=99	Call to Action N=419	Opponent Attack N=96
NEGATIVE	4.2%	1.0%	0.0%	6.0%	43.8%
POSITIVE	7.4%	4.7%	27.3%	18.6%	3.1%
NEUTRAL	88.4%	94.3%	72.7%	75.4%	53.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE VI

PROPORTION OF TONE DIMENSION WITHIN TOPIC DIMENSION DURING THE FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE

Tone	Presidential Ideology N=56	Administration Trail N=100	Supporters N=20	Call to Action N=40	Opponent Attack N=0
NEGATIVE	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	0.0%
POSITIVE	28.6%	7.0%	0.0%	7.5%	0.0%
NEUTRAL	69.9%	93.0%	100.0%	87.5%	0.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE VII

PROPORTION OF TONE DIMENSION WITHIN TYPE OF POST DURING THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Tone	Editorial N=102	E-mails N=77	Informational N=562	Live Blogging N=40	Live Event N=145	New Ad N=36	Print Reprint N=92	Speech Reprint N=151
NEGATIVE	2.9%	26.0%	2.0%	2.5%	0.0%	36.1%	0.0%	20.5%
POSITIVE	34.3%	5.2%	13.3%	2.5%	1.4%	2.8%	4.3%	12.6%
NEUTRAL	62.7%	68.8%	84.7%	95.0%	98.6%	61.1%	95.7%	66.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE VIII

PROPORTION OF TONE DIMENSION WITHIN TYPE OF POST DURING THE FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE

Tone	Editorial N=25	E-mails N=1	Informational N=62	Live Blogging N=1	Live Event N=22	New Ad N=1	Print Reprint N=22	Speech Reprint N=82
NEGATIVE	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%
POSITIVE	4.0%	0.0%	6.5%	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	24.4%
NEUTRAL	92.0%	100.0%	93.5%	100.0%	95.5 %	100.0%	100.0%	73.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE IX

PROPORTION OF TOPIC DIMENSION WITHIN TYPE-OF-POST DURING THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Topic	Editorial N=102	E-mails N=77	Informational N=562	Live Blogging N=40	Live Event N=145	New Ad N=36	Print Reprint N=92	Speech Reprint N=151
CANDIDATE								
IDEOLOGY	1.0%	1.3%	12.1%	5.0%	6.9%	25.0%	15.2%	56.3%
CAMPAIGN								
TRAIL	3.9%	5.2%	36.3%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	63.0%	9.9%
SUPPORTERS	56.9%	2.6%	4.6%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	7.6%	2.6%
CALL TO ACTION	37.3%	80.5%	45.0%	2.5%	11.7%	50.0%	13.0%	11.9%
OPPONENT ATTACK	1.0%	10.4%	2.0%	92.5%	0.0%	25.0%	1.1%	19.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE X

PROPORTION OF TOPIC DIMENSION WITHIN TYPE-OF-POST DURING THE FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE

Topic	Editorial N=25	E-mails N=1	Informational N=62	Live Blogging N=1	Live Event N=22	New Ad N=1	Print Reprint N=22	Speech Reprint N=82
PRESIDENTIAL IDEOLOGY	4.0%	0.0%	12.9%	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	56.1%
ADMIN. TRAIL	4.0%	0.0%	51.6%	100.0%	95.5%	100.0%	95.5%	28.0%
SUPPORTERS	76.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
CALL TO ACTION	16.0%	100.0%	35.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%	14.6%
OPPONENT ATTACK	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE XI

PROPORTION OF TOPIC DIMENSION WITHIN TIME DIMENSION DURING THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Topic	Individual N=128	Community N=178	Regional N=203	Society N=673	International N=23
CANDIDATE IDEOLOGY	1.6%	10.7%	5.4%	20.8%	78.3%
CAMPAIGN TRAIL	6.3%	70.2%	62.1%	21.1%	0.0%
SUPPORTERS	24.2%	1.7%	1.0%	9.1%	8.7%
CALL TO ACTION	67.2%	15.2%	28.1%	36.8%	4.3%
OPPONENT ATTACK	0.8%	2.2%	3.4%	12.2%	8.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE XII

PROPORTION OF TOPIC DIMENSION WITHIN TIME DIMENSION DURING THE FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE

Topic	Individual N=3	Community N=11	Regional N=14	Society N=176	International N=12
PRESIDENTIAL IDEOLOGY	0.0%	18.2%	0.0%	25.0%	83.3%
ADMINSTRATION TRAIL	0.0%	63.6%	64.3%	46.6%	16.7%
SUPPORTERS	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%	10.8%	0.0%
CALL TO ACTION	100.0%	18.2%	28.16%	17.6%	0.0%
OPPONENT ATTACK	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

VITA

Jeffery Wayne Mason

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: BLOGGING AS A CAMPAIGN TOOL: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FRAMES
AND DESIGN USED ON BARACK OBAMA'S OFFICIAL BLOG

Major Field: Mass Communication

Biographical:

Education: Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, OK

- Master of Science in Media Management, May 2010
- Advisor: Dr. Lori McKinnon

Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, OK

- Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, emphasis on Public Relations,
May 2008

Tulsa Community College, Tulsa, OK

- Associate in Broadcast Journalism, May 2004

Academic

Experience: Tulsa Community College (Fall 2007 – Present)
Adjunct Instructor

- **Communications Division**
- Business/Information Technology Division
- Academic and Campus Services

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Mass Communication
at Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, Oklahoma in May 2010.

Name: Jeffery Wayne Mason

Date of Degree: May 2010

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Tulsa, Oklahoma

Title of Study: BLOGGING AS A CAMPAIGN TOOL: AN ANALYSIS OF THE
FRAMES AND DESIGN USED ON BARACK OBAMA'S OFFICIAL
BLOG

Pages in Study: 86

Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Mass Communication

Scope and Method of Study: A content analysis of 1,421 blog posts from Barack
Obama's official campaign blog.

Findings and Conclusions:

Present-day political campaigns have changed significantly from a generation ago. Communication is driven by technology. Today's target audience has 24-7 access to information and high-tech devices. The design of the traditional political campaign no longer fits the audience it is meant to reach. Political candidates must narrowcast their content to reach constituents. To accomplish this, they must understand how to effectively communicate their message through evolving technologies.

This study examined the communication patterns in Obama's blog posts during 2008 general election period and during the first 100 days in office. Each post was coded according to type-of-post, time frame, space frame, tone frame, topic frame and visual element. The scores for each category also were combined to examine the framing patterns among: time and tone, space and tone, topic and tone, visual element and tone, space and topic, and tone and type-of-post.

More than 10 years has passed since the first political blog appeared as a campaign tool. Decades of communication research over the effects of television, radio and print media have been published. Political teams use this research in their campaigns to send the most effective message from their candidate. Although research has defined what a blog is, who reads it and how it is used, there are not many studies that have examined the potential effects.

Blog communication has untapped potential to impact future campaigns. However, before this audience can be strategically tapped, the effects of blogging must be understood. Before the effects can be measured, parameters need to be defined. The purpose of this study is to define elements that will be applicable to future studies in the area of communication research. By understanding how to effectively frame blog content, bloggers and politicians can maximize the impact of their message.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Lori McKinnon
