

CREATING NET ROOTS:
INCUMBENT SENATORS AND THE DIGITAL SELF

By

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By

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Dedicated to the Cohen, Relyea, and Wertz families. Also dedicated to my dissertation committee members, Beth Rosenson, Dan Smith, Larry Dodd, Dave Hedge, and Kendal Broad.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	4
LIST OF TABLES.....	9
LIST OF FIGURES.....	10
ABSTRACT.....	11
 CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	12
2 EXPLORING PERTINENT LITERATURE.....	19
Symbolic Interactionism.....	19
The Significance of Erving Goffman.....	20
The Dynamic Nature of Home Style and WebStyle.....	22
Recent Attempts at Measuring the Senatorial Presentation of Self.....	23
The Importance of Political History.....	25
Considering Web Consistency and Context as a New Senatorial Puzzle.....	26
Potential Benefits of Digital Inconsistency.....	28
Development of the Internet as a Campaigning Tool.....	30
1996.....	30
1998.....	31
2000.....	34
The Federal Government Considers Web-Based Campaigning.....	35
2004.....	37
The Rise of 527/501 (c) Organizations.....	39
2006.....	41
Looking Ahead.....	43
3 METHODOLOGY.....	44
Initial Questions.....	44
Determining the Population.....	45
Timeline.....	45
Identifying the Web Pages.....	46
Methods Selection.....	47
The Importance of Reflexivity.....	48
In-Depth Interviews.....	49
Methodological Approach.....	50

	Analytical Strategy.....	52
	Quantitative Analysis.....	53
	Setting Parameters.....	55
	Images as Insights into the Self.....	56
	Issues as Insights into the Self.....	56
	Functional Features and Other Considerations.....	58
	Case Study.....	59
	The Importance of Lieberman.....	60
	What the Case Study Explores.....	61
	Looking Ahead.....	62
4	UNDERSTANDING WEB PRESENCE QUALITATIVELY.....	63
	The Senatorial Puzzle.....	63
	Web-Based Tools as Enhancement of the Self.....	64
	Web Page Layout and Content Construction.....	65
	Perceptions of “The Basics”.....	68
	Template features.....	69
	Up-to-date content.....	69
	Strategic Functions of Campaign and Senate Sites.....	70
	Campaign Web Pages.....	71
	Mobilizing existing supporters.....	71
	Empowering existing supporters.....	72
	Intimidating the opponent.....	74
	Give information to the media.....	76
	Senate Web Pages.....	77
	Offering accessible constituent information.....	77
	Providing contact information.....	77
	Updating senatorial activity.....	78
	Coordination as Strategy?.....	79
	Considering the Law.....	82
	Consistency through Visual Queues.....	85
	Constructing a Complete Self.....	85
	Political History as Self-Definition.....	85
	Defining the Message.....	87
	Conclusion.....	88
5	UNDERSTANDING WEB PRESENCE QUANTITATIVELY.....	91
	Introduction.....	91
	Ideal Types.....	91
	Issues.....	92
	Issue Constituency within the Campaign Context.....	95
	Highest ranking issues.....	95
	Lowest ranking issues.....	96
	Issue Consistency within the Senate Context.....	97

	Highest ranking issues.....	97
	Lowest ranking issues.....	99
	Issue Consistency between Campaign and Senate Contexts.....	99
	The “Issue Candidate” Ideal Type.....	102
	Images.....	103
	Slideshows as a glimpse of the dynamic self.....	106
	Images and the “localized candidate”.....	107
	Digital tools.....	109
	Considering Overall Consistency and Change.....	110
	Change in Competitive Versus Non-Competitive Races.....	112
	Conclusion.....	116
6	JOE LIEBERMAN’S CHANGING FACE OF INCUMBENCY.....	118
	Background.....	118
	Joe Lieberman, the Incumbent.....	119
	Ned Who?	119
	Choice Time for the Lieberman Campaign.....	120
	The Value of this case.....	121
	The Four Faces of Lieberman.....	124
	The Democratic Phase.....	124
	The Transitional Phase.....	127
	The Independent Democrat Phase.....	129
	The Hijacked Phase: The Case for a Forth Identity.....	133
	Conclusion.....	136
	The Reaches of Media Influence.....	138
	“Candidate in Crisis”.....	140
	Political Histories.....	140
7	CONCLUSION.....	143
	The Evolving Digital Self.....	144
	Conclusions.....	144
	The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective.....	146
	The Question of Consistency.....	147
	Benefits of Change.....	150
	Respondent Insights.....	151
	Critiques.....	151
	Considering Political Histories.....	153
	The Implications of Subjectivity.....	154
	Future Research.....	157
	Final Thoughts.....	160
APPENDIX		
A	CAMPAIGN SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	162

B	SENATE OFFICE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	164
C	IRB APPLICATION.....	166
D	CAMPAIGN WEB PAGE CODING SCHEME.....	172
E	SENATE WEB PAGE CODING SCHEME.....	174
F	ISSUE CODING CATEGORIES.....	176
G	TEXT FROM HILLARY CLINTON’S PRESIDENTIAL WEB PAGE.....	177
H	TEXT OF JOE LIEBERMAN’S TRANSITIONAL PHASE.....	179
I	TEXT OF JOE LIEBERMAN’S HIJACKED LETTER.....	181
J	LIST OF SENATORS INCLUDED IN STUDY.....	182
K	NOVEMBER 8 th COOK REPORT.....	183
L	IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS.....	185
	REFERENCES.....	186
	BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	193

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
3-1 Image codes.....	56
5-1 Highest and lowest ranking issues.....	100
5-2 Issue similarities between time and context.....	101
5-3 Slideshow usage.....	107

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
3-1 Stages of grounded theory.....	53
5-1 Extremely important issues in 2006.....	93
5-2 Highest ranking campaign issues.....	95
5-3 Lowest ranking campaign issues.....	97
5-4 Highest ranking .gov issues.....	98
5-5 Lowest ranking .gov issues.....	99
5-6 Home page images.....	104
5-7 Digital Images.....	105
5-8 Most Popular Web Tools.....	109
5-9 Web Page Changes.....	111
5-10 Competitive Versus Non-Competitive Races.....	114

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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Senators are complex animals that work in the depths of multiple contexts. As elected officials, they represent a large geographical space, attempting to appeal to different groups within that area. Concurrent with this role, the vast majority of senators seek re-election, providing a window where these individuals hold a dual identity as senator and candidate, office holder and office seeker.

This dissertation takes a mixed-methodological approach to understanding how senators create a presentation of self on multiple Web contexts. By examining the Senate.gov and campaign pages of all 2006 Senate incumbent candidates, as well as interviews with members of these offices and a case study of the changing digital image of incumbent Joe Lieberman, this study explores online self presentation over digital space and time. Analysis reveals intriguing trends of consistency and inconsistency both within and between contexts. The greatest amount of consistency occurs within contexts. Ultimately, differing office goals, political histories of each politician, as well as the unique larger political climate of each role, work to create these differences both between and within contexts.

CHAPTER 1 INTROCUCTION

Technological advances often cause political change, with the Internet's impact on American politics being no exception. From the advent of the printing press to the digital boom of the 80s and 90s, candidates and elected officials have sought to capitalize on new technology to enhance the likelihood of political success. These technological advancements may enhance representational linkages, increase political participation, and help build social capital. With blogs, online video diaries, list-serves, and streaming video becoming commonplace for actors seeking electoral influence, the Internet has become an increasingly pivotal part of American politics. This dissertation takes a mixed-methodological approach to understanding how senators create a presentation of self on the Web. By examining the official Senate.gov and campaign pages of all 2006 United States Senate incumbent candidates, as well as interviews with members of these offices and a case study of the changing digital image of powerful incumbent Joe Lieberman, this study explores senatorial presentation over digital space and time.

We are extremely fortunate to be living in this time of digital politics. New technologies are continually emerging, bringing about an exploration into new Web-based political tactics. Scholars in political science, communication, and sociology have been highly active in this area of scholarship, particularly after the Internet began to take its place in candidates' repertoires during the 1996 election cycle (Browning, 1996; Casey, 1996; Rash, 1997). This continual treading into new territory in the online politics literature means that, more than ever, we understand who goes online, what they do there, and how politicians use this information for electoral success (Xenos & Foot, 2005; Bimber & Davis, 2003). We also have a steadily increasing knowledge of the central

features of candidate Web pages (Kaid et al, 2003), basic aspects of how congressmen present themselves on the Web (Gulati, 2004), and more broadly, the Web's impact on our democracy (Anderson and Cornfield, 2001; Abramson et al., 1998).

Scholars have brought a variety of methodological approaches to this deepening understanding of Web politics. Bimber and Davis (2003) used a combination of surveys and in-depth interviews to better understand online campaign decision-making and the impact it has on political consumers. Gulati (2004) utilized content analysis to better understand national versus local campaigning presentations of the senatorial self. Scholars such as Solop (2001) and Cornfield (2004) have considered case studies in better understanding the details of candidate Web page development. All of these methodological approaches offer scholars unique ways to better understand our online political realities, helping to illuminate the benefits and limitations of certain methods in answering particular questions and paving the way for areas of future research. Utilizing a mixed-methodological approach, tackling some of the same questions with multiple lenses, gives us a fuller picture than any one method alone can offer. This dissertation employs three approaches, utilizing content analysis, case study, and in-depth interviewing methodologies to better understand Web-based senatorial presentation of self.

Beyond mixed-methodological approaches, another way scholars can bring a greater wealth of information into their scholarship is by taking an interdisciplinary approach to the theoretical framework. Knowledge can be created in many ways, with one way being the merging of multiple abstract ideas in consideration of a central topic. Interdisciplinary studies help scholars to broaden the depth and scope of their

investigations. They illuminate new theoretical frameworks, help us to understand the benefits and limitations of new methodologies, and offer new networks of scholars to draw upon. Some of the most interesting scholarship comes when academics of different orientations approach the same questions. This brings about new theories and debate that swell much needed lines of communication between our academic disciplines.

This dissertation draws on concepts and methods from political science, sociology, and communication. Sociologists from the Symbolic Interactionist camp, particularly Erving Goffman (1959), help set the stage for considering presentation of self. The Symbolic Interactionist camp informs us as to how people create meaning in their individual lives and how this meaning can change between and within contexts. This framework is drawn upon to argue the importance for understanding online senatorial presentation of self on multiple contexts and over time. This literature also helps one to consider why we may see different or similar online presentations, and how the intended Web audience helps congressmen to create a sense of meaning in any given digital context.

The field of political science also offers this dissertation invaluable information on why incumbent candidates may present themselves in particular ways on different Web contexts, as well as over time. Foundational scholars in American politics offer a useful source of reflection. Fenno (1978) helps us to place the Symbolic Interactionist framework in a political context. Scholars such as Fiorina (1977) and Mayhew (1975) help us to unravel why we may or may not see online senatorial consistency, and also provide a theoretical basis for the numerous dimensions of senatorial self explored in the content analysis. Political science and sociology come together in this research for a

highly innovative explanation as to why self-presentation of the same individual differs between these contexts. These fields help us to realize the dynamic nature of senatorial presentation of self over digital space and time.

Finally, the field of communications is also instrumental in the theoretical grounding of this dissertation. Scholars in communication and political science have already realized great value from combining forces, creating a wealth of new knowledge in the area that has come to be known as political communication. Scholars in this field, particularly Kaid (2003) and Bystrom (2004), inspire this dissertation to reach new heights in the scope and breath of its content analysis. Like political science, political communication also offers a strong basis for many of the dimensions of self-presentation explored in this study. Aspects of the technological self, including the consideration of the interactive tools and coding technology, stem from prior work on digital campaign content analysis.

In conducting the in-depth interviews for this research, some of the respondents questioned the importance of this research, saying that they failed to see its impact on practical politics. They attempted to direct me to “hotter” areas of online campaigning. These topics included the construction of Web-based negative campaigning through third-party URLs, third-party blogs, and the usage of home videos, such as on YouTube. Receiving this type of criticism is never easy; it caused me to question the ultimate importance of this research to the non-academic community. I took some time away from my writing to explore leads on their suggested topics, finding more than I ever could have expected. It was humbling to more fully realize the minor magnitude of my dissertation topic when it is considered in the larger scope of online politics.

However small this research may feel at times, it is important to keep perspective on why this study is important and what it adds to our larger understanding of Web politics. This research is innovative in its interdisciplinary approach. Also, by examining the two Web contexts over a period of nine months, this research adds the dynamic dimension of time to our knowledge of digital politics. We will explore how real-world events potentially influence the construction of the digital self, giving us an invaluable sense of comparison both between and within different political Web contexts.

Finally, we will delve into new territory in exploring the relationship between the Washington and campaign office staff in constructing an online senatorial presentation. We will explore if, when, and under what conditions one office will look at the Web page of the other office. We will gain a deeper understanding as to what “informal” collaboration may be going on behind the scenes of the two offices in constructing a self. Even though formal collaboration between campaign and office staff is illegal under the Hatch Act when communicating on Washington staff’s business time, this regulation does not prohibit the offices from talking during non-business hours.

To preview what is coming up, chapter 2 starts off by exploring the theoretical basis of self-presentation and the importance of digital context. This literature review will also consider different theoretical sides as to why we may or may not expect to see senatorial online consistency between and within digital contexts over time. We will also briefly explore developments in the online campaigning literature, as well as a few key recent articles that helped set the stage for this dissertation. It is here where we first see the Symbolic Interactionist framework applied to online politics.

Chapter 3 sets the stage for chapters 4, 5, and 6, detailing the methodological approach utilized in the analysis. First, we get a grasp on the central questions of who was studied and when. We then explore the nature of the content analysis, followed by the interviewing approach. The pros and cons of the two major methodological instruments—the coding and interview guides—will be discussed.

Chapter 4 offers qualitative insights in-depth interviews with campaign and Senate office Webmasters. This section explores what technological tools campaigns and Senate staff used to highlight senatorial image, the nature of the relationship between the different offices, and the amount of consideration staff members gave to creating a consistent Web-based senatorial image. We will also gain valuable insights into staff members' interpretations of the Hatch statutes as they apply to Web collaboration.

Chapter 5 offers a quantitative approach to understanding online presentation of self between and within Web contexts. Using a coding guide that measures different digital characteristics, one will better understand what elements of the incumbent Senator are highlighted or downplayed in different Web contexts. Images, text, and digital features such as blogs are all considered in this analysis.

Chapter 6 offers an exciting case study of Connecticut Senate incumbent Joe Lieberman. This chapter details Joe's Web transformation through four stages. We progress through Lieberman's first stage as a powerful incumbent U.S. Senate candidate, to a second period of uncertainty and senatorial re-creation, to the final product of an Independent candidate. We also explore hacking as a fourth stage. Here, we see how Joe's online transformation acted in response to the larger political climate surrounding the dynamic election of 2006. It also serves as a reminder that even the most powerful

people in the U.S. Senate are subject to senatorial makeovers, both in the digital and real world.

Finally, chapter 7 offers conclusions and implications for further research. It offers solid advice for scholars seeking to build upon this study and illuminates budding areas of future inquiry. Centrally, this chapter places the collective findings of the dissertation in the larger scope of our politics. While there is still much to learn about digital American politics, in sum, this dissertation offers us a deeper understanding into how congressmen come to establish, maintain, and project images of the digital self.

CHAPTER 2 EXPLORING PERTINENT LITERATURE

This chapter offers a core literary understanding for the rest of this study, placing the dissertation within a broader political and sociological context. First, it introduces a central theoretical framework of this dissertation, Symbolic Interactionism (SI), tracing its roots through influential figures such as George Herbert Head and Erving Goffman. This discussion leads us to Richard Fenno's connection of the S.I. perspective on senatorial behavior, following its appearance in more contemporary scholarship and illuminating the place and importance of this dissertation. It then provides an overview of each election cycle, moving from 1996 through 2006, discussing the important scholarship and technological developments that arose from each respective period. Important campaign finance decisions will also be discussed throughout the description of some election cycles.

Symbolic Interactionism

With campaign Web pages having become commonplace in U.S. senatorial elections, the Internet has become a medium for elected officials to express and negotiate their presentation of self in numerous ways. This includes wearing particular types of clothing, using specific language, and putting particular images on their Web sites. To consider the social-psychological basis for how and why this presentation occurs, it is useful to draw from sociology's Symbolic Interactionist (S.I.) perspective (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959, Cooley, 1902). Stemming from George Herbert Mead's *Mind, Self, and Society*, the S.I. framework focuses on individuals and their interactions with one another (1934). It further stresses that the mind has the ability to interpret symbols and that

society is a product of collective daily social interactions. Individuals are seen as dynamic, conscious actors who attach meaning to symbols as they progress through their life course, serving as a way to communicate different expectations, ideologies, and perceptions during their interactions with others (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959; Blumer, 1972, 1969).

Influential figures in the Symbolic Interactionist literature, including George Herbert Mead, Anselm Strauss, and Herbert Blumer, wrote in hopes of constructing an alternative to the dominant paradigms of structural-functionalism and behavioralism (see Parsons, 1951; Merton, 1957). Mead's students, Herbert Blumer and Erving Goffman, carried on their mentor's impressive framework. Like Mead, these S.I. scholars were critical of structural-functionalism in that they felt the perspective failed to acknowledge that people are the authors of their own lives and that individuals are the carriers of social processes. Goffman went on to make substantial contributions to understanding how actors present themselves in multiple contexts, further empowering individuals to create meaning within various aspects of their lives. This dissertation offers an expansion of this literature as it pertains to senatorial online contexts, drawing heavily from Goffman's contributions to explore how 2006 incumbent Senate candidates create digital presentation in the context of campaign and constituent Web pages.

The Significance of Erving Goffman

Obtaining his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1953, Goffman built his roots in the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism. Goffman carried on the S.I. orientation in his seminal work *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) by

arguing that ideas about the everyday world are socially created and that life is like a big play acted out in various contexts of this creation.

Goffman's 1959 masterpiece helps us to understand how ordinary people present themselves in a multitude of situations, as well as how individuals attempt to control the impressions that others make of them. His discussion of the dramaturgical approach illuminates how dynamic everyday social interactions are much like that of a performance. As individuals, we go through life on a variety of different stages, corresponding within the context of the different roles that we play during any given day. While in a specific capacity, according to Goffman, we will attempt to win over the audience by persuading them that we are fit for a specific role. Impression management, the goal of influencing and/or controlling the impressions of others, helps individuals build a model of consistency while playing a specific role. This dissertation will explore the level of consistency in self-presentation between two different political e-contexts over time.

From Goffman's 1959 text, readers can draw out three essential self-presentation motives: to conform to social norms, achieve our individual goals, and present a consistent self-presentation to others. While Goffman does not explicitly present these as "principles", it becomes evident after reading the text that these three concepts are central to ideas of self-presentation. One could make this argument because these concepts are central to his discussion of the dramaturgical approach and his justification for why people engage in impression management tactics.

Taken either individually or together on face, these three paradigms seem to make a lot of sense. They appear congruent, feeding into one another. As this chapter

develops, however, I will question this symmetry as it applies to our politics. Could the American senatorial reality call for an *inconsistent* presentation of self, depending on context? I believe politics is one example of where it could, with inconsistency being a calculated vehicle towards achieving an instrumental goal. We can take some steps towards exploring these concepts by understanding how scholars have applied the Symbolic Interactionist perspective to our politics thus far.

The Dynamic Nature of Home Style and WebStyle

Before the introduction of the Internet into our political system, Richard Fenno (1978) set the stage for a lively discussion regarding the presentation of the political self. *Home Style* (1978) helps us to understand how the presentation of self and ultimate construction of trust opens up opportunities for giving congressmen more policy flexibility in Washington. Indeed, as noted by Fenno, not all congressmen convey the same “professional politician” ideal, with most attempting to keep a perceived connection with their home districts as much as possible. How a congressman perceives his/her home constituency will drive how he/she constructs a unique home style. The central aspects of the self that must be emphasized in a senatorial setting, according to Fenno, are maintaining perceptions of qualification, empathy, and constituency identification. Fenno’s discussion of these three concepts places the importance of Goffman’s impression management within the context of American politics.

Fenno was the first scholar to connect sociology’s Symbolic Interactionist framework with the study of politics, after which this line of research laid dormant until the twenty-first century and the booming of online politics. In 2002, a communications scholar by the name of Branwart revived the application of this theoretical framework to

politics, developing a concept known as “WebStyle”. This concept describes a general presentation of self on the Web, focusing on such features as content, pictures, and interactivity (Branwart, 2002). Embracing the S.I. perspective, described in the next section, WebStyle illuminates the importance of a politician controlling his or her message through the presentation of self. Non-verbal content, such as colors, images, and layout collectively work to speak about the individual. Similarly, verbal content, such as attacks against opponents or discussion of policy positions, all actively work to bolster a preconceived presentation of self (Bystrom et al., 2004).

While WebStyle offers a good start on understanding senatorial Web presentation, the measures used to quantify these observations do not fully capture the multi-faceted nature of senatorial elections. This literature can be built upon to speak uniquely about the complex worlds of senators. Observing things such as color and tone serve as a good foundation for Web study but can clearly be built upon to understand how and who candidates appeal to. Institutions such as parties and interest groups also work to influence the complex nature of senatorial life, which undoubtedly shape how one projects him or herself. This dissertation expands on the way we conceptualize WebStyle, going beyond a general description of tone and images to better understand how site content, hyperlinks, blogs, and other technological tools actively work to emphasize different dimensions of the self.

Recent Attempts at Measuring the Senatorial Presentation of Self

The most recent work in the area of Web presentation, and the one that is drawn on most heavily on for the methodology of this dissertation, was conducted by Gulati (2004). His work, “Members of Congress and the World Wide Web,” applies a Goffman

lens to the question of senatorial self-portrayal on official Senate Web pages (house.gov and Senate.gov). Looking at images of 344 Senate sites, he groups politicians as having either a national, local, or neutral presentation of self. Sites giving off a national theme featured images reflecting Washington D.C., including monuments, government buildings, and official government seals, and often showed the Senator in a formal setting dressed in business attire. Sites giving off a local theme featured images from their home constituency, like buildings such as the state capitol, monuments, or state flags or seals. Congressmen often looked more casual, showing images of shaking hands with constituents. Sites grouped as neutral had no clear theme, often showing the official senatorial picture of him/her behind a desk with an American flag in the background.¹ Gulati concluded that there is no prominent style to the presentation of self applicable to all congressmen, but found some slight variations between individuals of different race, gender, and seniority status.

Without question, the work of Gulati is creative and serves as an important step for future works in the area of online self-presentation. The work has clear strengths and weaknesses in its methodological approach, lessons we can learn from to build a better study. Perhaps the most important strength was the clarity with which Gulati coded each Web page. Quantifying the national and local dimensions of his population called for seeking out visual images. Some of these images are hard to classify due to subjectivity in coding. Beyond this, there is another significant limitation to Gulati's approach. His coding scheme is limited, leaving us with a narrow dichotomous understanding of representatives. The dichotomy is that one either gives off a local or national

¹ According to Gulati, the American flag was considered a neutral symbol, as it is a national symbol that does not give off imagery specific to Washington D.C.

presentation of self. Sometimes middle ground was found by coding images as being neutral. We can build upon this model by considering other characteristics to look at. Beyond pictures, text and online features such as blogs and streaming video tell us more about politicians. This dissertation embraces the fundamental work of Gulati, while considering other dimensions of the self beyond a national and local dichotomy.

Gulati's work also gives us a strong foundation in understanding that images play a strong role in giving off a certain political portrayal. His article tells us that congressmen give off a certain presentation of self at one point in time, a single snapshot when the research was conducted. It is a whole new question to explore if this presentation of self changes over time, and even more complexly, between contexts.

The Importance of Political History

Further adding to the literature on digital presentation, it is also a brand new question to consider how political history can influence the ways that politicians present themselves online. Chapter 4 will discuss insights from Ray, one of the campaign respondents. In relaying his experience working for a Senate challenger, he highlights the past as an important part of determining the present. Scholars have yet to address this important point as it applies to online politics.

As humans, we naturally reflect on our past experiences in making decisions in the present day. We often try to replicate behavior that helped us achieve success in some prior endeavor. At the senatorial level, most candidates have a substantial level of political experience from which to draw upon. This experience may play a key role in the way an incumbent candidate chooses to present him or herself online. If something worked in a previous election cycle, the individual may be inclined to try that strategy or

tactic again. If something did not work, the individual will likely abandon any replication of that strategy.

With the Internet being a part of American elections for over a decade, incumbents not only have a political history, but more central to the questions being posed in this work, have a digital history to reflect upon. For some, utilizing the Web as a campaigning tool may have been a particularly useful strategy in the past. For others, it may not have lived up to their expectations. As we will see in the case of Joe Lieberman, he may very well feel that the liberal blogosphere played a large role in ending his bid for the presidency in 2004. Ray suggests this negative experience may have contributed to him developing a non-interactive Web presence. As we will explore in chapter 4, political histories are just another piece of the complex puzzle of creating a digital identity.

Considering Web Consistency and Context as a New Senatorial Puzzle

If humans as social actors make a conscientious effort to persuade audiences that they are good at a particular role, it is not hard to imagine why one would want to be consistent in the way we portray ourselves. This concept is directly in line with Goffman's three principles described earlier in the chapter: conforming to social norms, achieving individual goals, and offering a consistent presentation of self. Persuading your audience is a chief way to obtain an instrumental goal throughout the course of a social performance. Consistency in self-presentation aids in achieving this goal.

To consider why this would be true, before extrapolating to the political world, let us consider the context of business. While playing the role of a businessman, one wants to consistently act competent, experienced, and professional. To do this, an individual might "play" that role by wearing a suit or skirt, arriving to work before

expected, and being courteous to fellow employees. If this same individual decides one day to come to work in jeans and a baseball cap, shows up late, and interrupts colleagues during a meeting, the “audience” will regard him or her in a very different light. The consistency is broken, and the professional presentation of self is breached.

While applying Goffman’s framework to the world of business may seem intuitive on face, considering it in the context of politics gets substantially more complicated. We must reflect: do candidates *want* to project themselves in the same way all the time? The political campaigning literature informs us that this is not always the best approach to take, given the importance of targeting specific messages to specific audiences (Faucheux, 1998). If not all groups are hearing the same message, it may very well be possible that they are also experiencing different senatorial online selves. Further complicating this puzzle, incumbent representatives have two roles, that of both candidate and elected official. Is it reasonable to assume that the self-presentations in these two capacities are the same?

While one may be quick to assert that, of course, we will see a consistent presentation of self between Senate and campaign Web pages, it is important to remember the fluidity and complexity of American political campaigns. Indeed, for a multitude of reasons, it is not outside the scope of reason to believe that the presentation of a political self could be drastically different between these two sites. Campaign offices are very different entities than constituent offices, including different staff, goals, and timelines to negotiate with. Campaign offices live in a very different context of American politics, and seek to employ the most effective strategy that will help them win the election, the candidate’s primary goal (Mayhew, 1975). A campaign includes

professional staff that spends countless hours analyzing the political landscape of the constituency, creating themes and messages, writing a campaign plan, and conducting opposition research (Thurber & Nelson, 1995; Shea & Burton, 2001). They also rely heavily on surveys to test messages and gather unique up-to-date opinions about the candidate and his/her opponent(s). Senatorial staffers, conversely, have other goals, including constituency relations and policy research (Fiorina, 1977; Cain, Ferejohn & Fiorina, 1987). They likely use polling data in attempt to influence the actions and presentation of their Senator, but probably do not use survey research in the same tactical ways as their campaign counterpart. Given these core differences between the contexts in which the two offices reside, it is not hard to imagine how the staff could have a very different understanding as to how they want to frame the same individual, and consequently, how this presentation is ultimately expressed to constituents on the Web.

Potential Benefits of Digital Inconsistency

Given the unique environment of American politics, we can see how digital inconsistency may come to be a reality for many incumbent candidates. This dissertation will argue that this is not necessarily a bad thing. There may be both unforeseen and calculated benefits in the construction of different digital selves. This may be true in part because senators and their staff members have a strong understanding of who and why people visit their campaign or Senate.gov Web page. Their decision to highlight different attributes, characteristics, and digital tools may be based on this understanding.

One example of where inconsistent digital presentations may be beneficial is in the case of candidates running for higher office. In these instances, one will likely find that the most important issues at the various levels of government are different. House

members running for Senate, or Senate members running for president, may particularly find this to be the case. Local issues will likely be unique from those found in larger constituencies. For example, in her bid for the presidency, Hillary Clinton may have very different self-presentations on her Senate.gov page and presidential campaign page. New York is just one of many areas that she must consider in creating a presidential presentation of self. To have exactly the same presentation of self simply may not be appropriate given the demands of the job she is seeking compared to her current capacity.

On a more local level, incumbents running for the same office may also benefit from digital inconsistency. As we will explore in chapter 6, Joe Lieberman had a highly unpredictable campaign. While his campaign and Senate.gov page appeared very similar on the onset of the campaign, the presence of a formidable challenger forced Lieberman to deviate from his original campaign plan. His campaign home page changed dramatically over the course of eight months, all while his Senate.gov page remained stable with few changes. Ultimately, all campaigns are subject to the ebbs and flows of the larger political climate in which they are taking place. In Lieberman's case, his campaign took place amidst growing negative sentiments towards the Iraq war and President Bush. The Senator's continued support of the Bush and the war in Iraq quickly became a central issue in the 2006 Connecticut Senate election. Facing a formidable opponent and eventually losing the party primary, Lieberman's campaign had to change course to secure a win in the November general election. In the post-primary environment, what evolved was a very different Lieberman. His Senate.gov page remained steady while his campaign page changed dramatically. This campaign move to a more bipartisan Joe helped him secure electoral success in November. Had his

campaign persona stayed the same, the new Democratic Party nominee may have had a decent shot at delivering one of the biggest electoral upsets of the year.

Now having a better understanding of the Symbolic Interactionist perspective, the importance of political history, and the question of digital consistency, it is useful to reflect on the history of the Internet and American politics. This brief yet influential history helps to place the importance of digital presentation in our larger politics.

Development of the Internet as a Campaigning Tool

1996

The Internet began to take its place in candidate's repertoires during the 1996 election cycle (Casey, 1996; Rash, 1997). A presidential election year, Bill Clinton and Bob Dole both utilized the Web in creative new ways that set a standard for online politics (Margolis et al., 1997). Other down ballot races did show signs of Web-based campaigning, but this was far from commonplace. Campaign Web pages were typically very bare, offering no interactivity, limited information, and very few media images (Stone, 1996). Often all one would find is a single photograph, contact and biographical information, and brief policy positions (Gibson & McAllister, 2005). Scholars believe this was likely because campaigns were still stuck in the broadcast media model, neglecting to consider the great potential benefits of the Internet as a new communications medium (Selnow, 1998).

On the presidential level, campaigns took a chance with this new medium, attempting to direct traffic to their Web pages by placing their home page URLs on campaign brochures and mentioning it in public spaces (Selnow, 1998). Senators Bob Dole and John Kerry had relative success with the number of Web page visitors. Both

campaigns estimated that one-third of their new volunteers were identified through the Internet (Noble, 1999). The Clinton/Gore ticket also had a Web page, as did Pat Buchanan and the two major parties (Stone, 1996). Dole's page was the most successful in terms of traffic, attracting three million hits and 1,700 new volunteer sign-ups (Dongen, 1996). This success stemmed, at least in part, from the fact that Dole stated his campaign URL address on live television during the second presidential debate (Selnow, 1998; Benoit & Benoit, 2000).

Beyond knowing which candidates utilized the Internet during this election cycle, scholars helped us to identify the type of constituent who sought out political information from the Internet during the 1996 campaign. The Pew Internet and American Life project has served as a great resource in this regard, estimating that 23% of Americans adopted the Internet by the 1996 election (Pew, 2005). The profile of those who went online for political information during this time has been clearly documented as skewed to younger males with high political efficacy (Pew, 2005). Additionally, reports estimate that approximately 80% of people who visited campaign Web pages during this election cycle voted (Noble, 1999). In contrast, reports during the 2004 election estimated that nearly two-thirds of Americans were online, and that an increasing percentage of online political browsers were women, older Americans, and people that lived in rural areas (Pew, 2005).

1998

The coming of the 1998 cycle saw more than two-thirds of open seat House and Senate candidates using the Internet as a medium for campaign communication (Dulio et al., 1999). As opposed to 1996, where campaign Web pages provided little more than very basic information, great advancements in contribution solicitations, interactivity, and

communication forums became a hallmark of online campaigning during the 1998 election cycle.

Independent Minnesota gubernatorial candidate Jesse Ventura proved to be one of the first cases where the Internet flexed its muscles in its ability to influence U.S. elections (Gibson & McAllister, 2005). Fineman (1999) describes how Ventura's usage of the Internet, most specifically e-mail capability, assisted him in what turned out to be a very tight election. A reform party candidate, Ventura deeply embraced the Internet as a communication medium, likely because of his limited campaign budget (Raney, 1998). His campaign site offered the capability for followers to submit their e-mail address and be added to a list-serve known as "JesseNet". During the last week of the campaign, an e-mail was sent out to this list-serve asking supporters to come out in force to help get out the vote. The tactic paid off, with 250 people showing up to help coordinate Ventura's tour of Minnesota during the last 72 hours of the campaign (Raney, 1998). Ventura went on to win the election by a margin of three percentage points over Republican Norm Coleman. While the Internet is certainly not the sole reason Ventura was propelled to victory, it unquestionably helped his campaign, with its one full-time employed staff member, organize 250 supporters in a period of two days.

Two major areas of scholarly research peaked during this election cycle. A substantial amount of literature from this period, much like that from 1996, was aimed at simply getting a handle on how many candidates at different levels of government had campaign Web pages (Sadow & James, 1999). Also of great importance was the rise of the normative debate regarding the Internet's potential impact on the future of U.S. democracy. Reflecting on social capital literature, scholars examined the previous two

election cycles to make normative arguments about the Internet's ability to strengthen or weaken our Democratic process.

Anderson and Cornfield's (2002) edited volume illuminates the contrasting perspectives that scholars took during this period, a debate which still rages on within the Internet politics literature. Some scholars in this volume, such as Berman and Mulligan, believe the Internet is the wave of the future, citing moveon.org as an example of how new technology allows for people with differing political ideologies to collaborate on economic, social, and other important issues. Others scholars contributing to the volume are much more cautious, including Vlahos, who argues that the Internet can only have a limited impact on our politics without accompanying institutional change.

Along the same line of research, important scholarship regarding digital inequality also arose during this time, leaving people to wonder about the implications of unequal access to the Internet. In Anderson and Cornfield's edited volume, authors Delli Carpini and Keeter warn us about the growing gap in political knowledge, in part due to the Internet. This critical line of research evolved with the coming election cycles, with scholars such as Mossberger et al. (2003), Warschauer et al. (2004), and Norris (2001) making important contributions to this discussion. While there is still no consensus about the depth of the digital divide or its implications for future U.S. politics, this important line of research reminds us that it is critical to reflect on the drawbacks of such new technologies.

2000

With the coming of the new century, Web pages became increasingly complex, using HTML language and multimedia flash to create impressive graphics and aid in the construction of interactive features. One of the biggest developments in the 2000 election cycle was Republican presidential candidate John McCain and his utilization of the Internet for fundraising purposes (Fritz, 2000). His online fundraising success was critical during the primary season, with estimates indicating he raised an unparalleled \$500,000 after the New Hampshire primary. He also raised multiple millions of dollars from that point through the conclusion of the campaign (Birnbaum, 2000).

McCain's page was also groundbreaking from an interactive targeting perspective, a topic that received a significant amount of academic attention in 2000. James E. Tonlison's contribution to *The Millennium Election: Communication in the 2000 Election* (in Kaid et al., 2003) describes the McCain Internet phenomenon as a case study of major mobilization via the Web. In his article, Tonlison gives readers an in-depth look into the multiple mobilization features that McCain's presidential Web page offered. Most remarkably was McCain's ability to use the Internet to organize volunteers by state. By giving the Web site a highly interactive face where users could click on their state and find out anything from upcoming events to local contact information, McCain was able to categorize and track potential supporters by geographic region. Using state-of-the-art tracking technology, the Senator personalized the Web interface each time a person came on to the page. For example, users would see such features as a personalized greeting. His success with both mobilization and fundraising raised the bar and set online politics standards that far exceeded anyone's imagination. Political

communications scholar Tonlison notes, “Senator McCain’s campaign made an indelible impression on the press, the professional political consulting community, the public, and on both sides of the major parties” (Kaid et al. 2003, 85). While Dean has since overshadowed McCain with his online presence in the 2004 election, we should not forget how cutting-edge McCain was for his time and the standard he set for interactivity and fundraising online.

Looking at academic literature, the election of 2000 prompted an explosion of new methodologies being employed in online politics scholarship. Most notably, Bimber and Davis’ *Campaigning Online* (2003) employed a complex mixed-methodological approach in their attempt to understand the strategy that goes into Web page design, as well as how this strategy influences voter’s thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors.

Campaigning Online serves as a methodological inspiration for this dissertation in that Bimber and Davis utilized elite interviewing and content analysis. Further developing their mixed-method approach, they also conducted experiments and random digit dial telephone interviews, offering the most comprehensive understanding of Web-based strategy to date.

The Federal Government Considers Web-Based Campaigning

With campaigns, organizations, parties and individuals increasingly turning to the Internet for communication and fundraising purposes, the election of 2000 was monumental in that it prompted the involvement of the federal government in online campaigning matters. The Federal Election Commission (FEC) started to consider the applicability of the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) to Web-based politics, a

debate that rages today as campaigns continually test the boundaries of campaign finance regulation under the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA).

The Federal Election Commission is an independent regulatory agency that interprets and enforces campaign finance laws. Prior to 1996, the FEC did not have to consider the applicability of campaign finance regulation to our online politics. The question never arose because the Internet had no place in American campaigning. As more and more candidates started to look to the Web as a source of fundraising and campaign communication, particularly starting with the 2000 election, important questions arose that the FEC simply could not ignore.

There are campaign finance regulations as to what types of organizations, businesses, and committees can spend money on federal candidates, as well as spending limits for individuals. Certain types of communication are also restricted. With e-mail list-serves, Web pages and blogs, any person or entity can post or send political information about a candidate. A problem is in discerning if this information has a cost, and thus is subject to FECA spending regulations (Potter, 2000; Petri, online). Additionally, it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify who is posting the information, and what their political motives might be. Given the anonymity the Web brings to our politics, in conjunction with the low cost of Web-based talk, it is challenging to determine if digital communication is considered a political expenditure or contribution.

Initially, the FEC was inclined to think that there was a cost associated with Web communication and thus this behavior should fall under the FECA statutes (Potter, 2000). The difficulties associated with this perspective became evident when the FEC was forced to consider how they would go about assigning a monetary value for online

behavior, and perhaps even more daunting, figuring out how to classify where the speech was coming from (Potter, 2000). Due to these difficulties, the issue of regulating Web-based political communication was largely tabled until new questions arose in 2002 and 2004 in light of the BCRA.² With this decision, political actors were free to push the boundaries of online campaigning even more.

2004

2004 brought the Howard Dean campaign, a phenomenon that transformed online American politics as we know it. Dean embraced the Internet as a central part of his campaign strategy, bringing political Web interactivity to a whole new plateau. He creatively reached out to constituents all over the country, using new digital technologies such as Meetup.com, interactive live blogs, and DeanTV. His interactivity and openness to constituent uploads proved to be an inspiration and template for many liberal candidates in 2006, particularly Democratic U.S. Senate challenger Ned Lamont.

Dean brought new meaning to campaign blogs, a feature that was growing in popularity. When people consider characteristics of a blog, as American culture has come to popularize the concept, they likely imagine an area where both the Web-browsing constituent and the site administrator can openly and immediately post on a Web page. This type of blog would allow for free-flowing discussion where individuals from across the globe can respond to each other's comments within seconds. It is not hard to image how this high level of interactivity and communicative freedom is potentially destructive to those with a specific agenda, such as individuals seeking political office. In attempt to control the messages being placed on their Web sites,

² Potter (2000) discusses some advisory opinions that were released by the FEC in 1999 and 2000 relating to the regulation of Web-based political communication.

candidates in the 2004 election limited this interactivity by turning their “blogs” into online campaign “journals” where the ability to post on the site is limited to those within the office (Cohen, 2005). What resulted was a type of internal communication occurring primarily between campaign staff members. This communication could be viewed by those browsing the campaign Web page, but site visitors could not post messages.

Howard Dean’s site offered a truly interactive blog where individuals both internal and external to the campaign had the ability to post text on the site in real time. This Web feature was very much in line with the overall highly interactive nature of Dean’s page, including DeanTV, where constituents could upload their own commercials, speeches, and videos relating to Dean’s campaign. Towards the end of the campaign, DeanTV had attracted enough content to stream online twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Research reflects how Web-based creativity in online campaigning features expanded beyond the Dean campaign during the 2004 election cycle. This creativity was particularly evident in campaigns’ attempt to empower site visitors to make unique contributions to the campaign (Cohen, 2005). The importance of this empowerment came in the form of personalization, letting current supporters craft their own ways of reaching out to others. One of the ways this occurred was through the “political event-in-a-box” feature (Darr et al. 2004, 6). This option allowed for supporters to download the materials for their own home-based event, such as house parties, debate watches, or meals. Downloads such as posters or recipes allowed for supporters to craft their own events at home.

Another creative way that candidates utilized the Web to empower supporters in the 2004 election, particularly at the Senate level, was by giving them tasks that could be

completed via the Internet (Cohen, 2005). Campaigns encouraged supporters to write Letters to the Editor (LTEs). This process would start with the campaign either calling or e-mailing supporters who signed up to be a campaign volunteer via the Web. The campaign would then encourage the individual to write a LTE to the local newspaper, using information provided to them on the Web site. Sometimes these pages would take the site visitor to a listing of all local newspapers, their mailing address, and their Web site, if applicable. These sections would also offer an issues page that included bullet points which LTE writers were encouraged to use as talking points. Some campaigns sent out LTE templates to volunteers via e-mail. The same template was used with radio call-ins.

Success with online fundraising was also a hallmark of the 2004 election cycle. Raising more than \$20 million dollars via the Internet, the Dean campaign flexed its fundraising muscles through the accumulation of smaller donations (Rice, 2004). Presidential candidates John Kerry and George W. Bush followed suit, subsequently having great success with online fundraising. Kerry raised an unprecedented \$82 million through online donations, while Bush raised \$14 million.

The Rise of 527/501 (c) Organizations

Enacted in 2002, the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) constituted the most sweeping reform in the history of campaign finance regulation. Aimed at eliminating the use of soft money and curbing the appearance of corruption, BCRA had three noteworthy components: the banning of soft money, increased contribution limits, and restrictions on issue advocacy advertising (Herrnson, 2005; Corrado et al., 2004).

With the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act in place, the 2004 election saw the rise of 527 and 501(c) organizations, which quickly made their presence known in the virtual and digital world. Classified and overseen by the Internal Revenue Service, these organizations proved to exploit a sizable loophole in the BCRA statutes by absorbing the unregulated soft money that the BCRA attempted to steer away from our electoral process (Petri, date unknown). The rise of 527 and 501(c) organization demonstrates the power behind La Raja's (2002) belief that, with restraints on campaign activity, organizations outside of the formal party structure would increase in importance. The Internet was an important part of this success in exploiting BCRA loopholes.

527 and 501(c) organizations were clever, mostly because their existence and ability to use funds in certain ways depended on it. For example, they had to be creative in the ways they made political advertisements and disguised them as party building activities (Petri, date unknown). This creativity bubbled over to the way they attracted and mobilized supporters on their Web pages. Organizations like Democracy for America profiled liberal candidates across the country, giving them free media attention and offering such interactive features as real-time blogs and virtual campaign training. They also made their fundraising presence known online by accepting unlimited amounts of soft money donations. Moveon.org raised close to \$44 million overall, with a large majority of those funds coming through online donations.

One can argue that one of the positive implications of the 527 and 501(c) Web presence was the rise of more global campaigns. With entities like Democracy for America profiling local candidates on a nation-wide scale, smaller campaigns gained exposure that they could have never been able to afford on their own. This globalization

of campaigns, particularly in the form of free media, was significantly built upon in 2006 with the invention of such virtual mediums as Youtube and MySpace.

2006

While significant scholarship has yet to be published on the 2006 election, one can anticipate the online developments that will be the sources of greatest attention. 2006 saw the development of third-party media pages such as YouTube, MySpace, and Facebook.³ The development of such sites allowed for constituents to play a much larger role in uploading video and public commentary on file-sharing Web pages in 2006.

Due to the growing prevalence of such file-sharing outlets, candidates have to be careful of what they say and where they go. A development in 2006 was campaigns hiring workers, often referred to as “trackers”, to follow their opponents around with video cameras knowing that this tactic could potentially produce content showing the opponent in a negative light (Brody, 2006). Now, any comment or action a candidate makes may very well end up on the Web and viewed by millions of people across the world. People everywhere became familiar with candidate mishaps, most notably, George Allen’s usage of the word “macaca”.

In the heat of a tight campaign, George Allen, an incumbent Senator from Virginia, pointed to S. R. Sidarth, a twenty year-old college student tracker from his opponent’s campaign, and laughingly called him a “macaca”. This word refers to an African monkey and is often interpreted as a racial slur (Brody, 2006).⁴ The backlash John Kerry received for his comment about students ending up in Iraq if they do not

³ The Web addresses for these sites are www.youtube.com, www.myspace.com, and www.facebook.com.

⁴ Video of this comment can be found online at <http://youtube.com/watch?v=9G7gq7GQ71c>. This video shot was taken by a tracker from the James Webb campaign. For more information, visit http://www.nowpublic.com/politicians_caught_on_internet_candid_cameras.

study is yet another example of politicians being subject to an increasing file-sharing presence on the Web.⁵

People who may not otherwise know who George Allen is now likely know at least one thing about him. Beyond sending him into a tailspin that cost him his re-election to the Senate, political analysts believe that his usage of the word “macaca” may have caused Allen his presidential run in 2008. This is because the “macaca” incident received substantial attention with people well outside of his Virginia constituency. The aforementioned YouTube events with Kerry and Allen demonstrate that, with this new type of video information sharing, one seemingly inadvertent comment can lead to widespread negative press and potential political failure.

This type of information sharing is going to continue to be even widespread given the Federal Election Commission’s highly anticipated 2006 decision to leave blogs unregulated. The only Web-based political behavior that will be subject to campaign finance regulations are those that involve monetary transactions (Petri, date unknown). Of most significance, paid political advertisements must be paid for by hard money (Holman, 2006). As if stepping on eggshells, the FEC struck a delicate balance by leaving the benefits of free political communication intact, yet placing regulations on political advertisements.⁶ The question of Web-based campaigning and campaign finance statutes will unquestionably rise again in upcoming election cycles as candidates, individuals, and organizations continue to push the envelope of current statutes.

⁵ Video of this comment can be found online at <http://youtube.com/watch?v=aP5l97wHA9c>.

⁶ The Federal Election Commission issued new rules regarding Web-based political communication in March of 2006. To view the full revised regulations, please visit http://www.fec.gov/law/cfr/ej_compilation/2006/notice_2006-8.pdf. This code of federal regulations was published in the Federal Register, volume 71, number 70, on April 12, 2006.

Looking Ahead

Having a greater understanding of how the World Wide Web has developed to take on an important place in American politics, it now may be more evident why Web-based senatorial presentation would be an important thing to consider. A 2006 Pew report reminds us of just how important a factor it may be. They published a memo reporting that on a typical day in August of 2006, a period where party primaries were taking place, 26 million Americans went online to get political information (Pew, 2006). This equates to roughly thirteen percent of Americans over the age of eighteen (Pew, 2006). These constituents may be influenced by the content of the Web pages they log on to, including statements by the candidates, photos, video, and other images.

The next chapter explores the methodological approach used in this dissertation. Exploring initial questions such as sample, selection of methods, and other topics helps to clarify how the research design for this dissertation came to be. The chapter explores the details of the case study, quantitative analysis, and qualitative interviews used in the upcoming chapters.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This dissertation takes a multi-method approach to better understanding a unique intersection between Web technology and American Politics. Intertwining in-depth interviews, quantitative analysis, and a case study, we explore how congressmen create a digital sense of self on their campaign and constituency office Web pages. This chapter offers a detailed perspective on each of these methods. Stemming from in-depth interviews with campaign and constituency office staff members, chapter 4 offers a unique qualitative perspective. These interviews helped to construct the coding guide for the quantitative analysis presented in chapter 5. Chapter 6 brings the quantitative and qualitative research together in considering the case study of Joe Lieberman's 2006 U.S. Senate campaign. Analyzing Lieberman's different Web presentations, we will see how drastically senatorial presentation of self can change in the course of a single election. Together, these three methods rival the most comprehensive research on the topic of political digital self-presentation date.

Initial Questions

When breaking into new territory, scholars are often faced with difficult methodological questions. How one chooses to answer these questions largely shapes the scope and breath of the analysis. With this dissertation, questions arose concerning the timeline for research, scope of the population, methods to utilize, and other topics. This section offers a brief synopsis of how those questions were answered, and may serve as a starting point for scholars looking to build on this research.

Determining the Population

In considering how to approach a study of political presentation of self, one of the most paramount questions is determining what members of Congress will be examined. The House and Senate are two very different animals. Among other things, we see differences in procedure, careers, size, terms, and policy making. All of these aspects make it difficult to consider the House and Senate as equal institutions.

Beyond these differences, there are clear methodological implications to studying some variation of the two chambers. With the House, the primary concern is the size of the population. Sampling would make this population more manageable, but would also take away from the researcher's intimacy with the data. Studying both the House and Senate leads to similar concerns. Although having both chambers in the analysis would serve as a great source of contrast and comparison, sampling would have to take place. Additionally, due to the aforementioned differences, we may not be doing justice to our understanding of legislative politics by treating the House and Senate as statistical equals. Ultimately, I felt that it was important to get as deep an interaction with the data as possible. Working with the Senate alone allowed for the whole population of incumbents running for re-election to be included in the study. The case study of Joe Lieberman is an example of how researchers can benefit from having an intimate knowledge of their population.

Timeline

Another critical question that arose was what election cycle(s) would be used for analysis. It was questionable if archives from prior election cycles could reasonably be obtained. There are a few Web-based resources that may have been helpful, such as

Politics1.com. There are also notable scholars in political science and communication who have done work analyzing campaign Web pages, including Bystrom et al. (2004), Gulati (2004), and most recently, Sulkin et al. (2007). The difficulty would have been in attempting to find archives of constituency Web pages from prior election cycles. To date, there has been no systematic study of these Web pages. That led me to conclude that working with the 2006 election cycle would provide the best opportunity for both quantitative and qualitative data collection. As such, this study focuses on Class I Senators, individuals who were elected to office in November of 2000 and ran again in 2006 for a term that expires in 2013.⁷ The terms of thirty-three incumbents were up in the 2006 election cycle, with twenty-eight ultimately deciding to pursue re-election.⁸ Twenty-four of these incumbents were studied in this dissertation.⁹ Four senators were not included because their campaign Web pages were not online at the beginning of the archival process.

Identifying the Web Pages

In the previous chapter, we discussed the importance of Erving Goffman and the concept of context. Drawing on multiple Web pages featuring the same individual is a great way to more fully understand the importance context plays in the construction of a digital self. There are certainly a lot of digital contexts to choose from when considering what Web pages feature senators. Third-party blogs, unofficial campaign and fan pages, political advocacy groups, campaign sites and Senate pages are all places that may come to mind.

⁷ For an explanation of the different classes, please visit http://www.Senate.gov/reference/glossary_term/class.htm.

⁸ Class I senators not pursuing re-election included Sarbanes (D-MD), Dayton (D-MN), Frist (R-TN), Jeffords (I-VT), and Corzine (D-NJ).

In selecting what Web pages to use as examples of context, the first question considered was what sites incumbent senators might have in common throughout the 2006 election cycle. While some may have unofficial fan or advocacy pages, that may not be universally true. Perhaps more importantly, these pages represent a third party's perspective on how they want to represent the Senator. This leaves us with only official pages as sources of owner-controlled self-representation, specifically, campaign and Senate Web sites. Senate Web pages serve as the online gateway to our chambers of Congress.¹⁰ They are maintained by the staff in each constituency office. Campaign Web pages, the second digital context, are maintained by campaign staff and serve as the portal into the incumbent's world as a candidate.

To identify the campaign Web pages for each Class I Senator, a Yahoo! Search was conducted on each incumbent.¹¹ Most of the time, the official campaign Web page revealed itself as the first listing on the search. It was necessary to determine that each site was indeed the official campaign page and not some spoof or fan page. Specific markers included the general professionalism of the page, a possible notation "paid for by the [insert name here] committee", and the presence of campaign contact information. Since campaign Web pages were identified very early in the election cycle, sifting through mock campaign pages was not a notable issue in the search process.

Methods Selection

Another central consideration was determining what methods would be utilized

⁹ Please see appendix J for the list of senators included in the quantitative portion of this study.

¹⁰ These pages are www.house.gov and www.Senate.gov

¹¹ The search engine home page is Yahoo.com. Typing in the Senator's name typically rendered a successful search. On a few occasions, it was necessary to type some other marker, such as "2006".

for this research. Previous studies in the field of Internet Politics have employed a wide range of methods, including case studies (Cornfield, 2004), content analysis (Bystrom et al., 2004), quantitative analysis of surveys (Mossberger et al., 2003; Norris, 2001), in-depth interviews (Bimber & Davis, 2003), personal diary (Trippi, 2004) and various combinations of these methods (Bimber & Davis, 2003).

These previous works represent a good starting point for considering the benefits and drawbacks of using certain methods. From a methodological standpoint, this dissertation was highly influenced by the work of Bimber and Davis (2003). They were the first political scientists to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches in the field of online politics, utilizing surveys, lab experiments, interviews, and content analysis. Their book, *Campaigning Online*, shows us how these methods can come together into a masterfully crafted piece of scholarship on how the Web was used in the 2000 election. Bimber and Davis note that they brought these methods together in hopes of shedding light on some gaping holes in our knowledge of online politics, with an aim to create “a fuller picture” (173). Four years after the publication of their book, having recognized some limitations in their study, I take a multi-method approach for the same reason.

The Importance of Reflexivity

During each step of the data collection process, I was highly considerate of reflexivity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1993). I constantly thought about how my presence actively worked to shape the construction of reality in my data collection process. I believe my presence was most notable in my in-depth interviews, where my existence was influential in shaping the reality my participants and I were mutually constructing. As will be explored, some of my respondents were reluctant to open up to

me about their habits in talking with the other office. These types of experiences are and should always be regarded as data. My role in constructing these realities is further discussed in the conclusion.

In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviews provide a unique lens through which to view political issues. All too often, due to their lack of generalizability, they are often overlooked as a valuable research tool in the political science discipline. This seems to be especially true in American politics, where researchers often study the entire voting electorate. As standards for hiring and tenure get more competitive in academia, scholars tend to gravitate towards the more marketable benefits of quantitative methodology. I see great benefit in employing a mixed-methodological approach to our study of politics. We can utilize in-depth interviews to inform quantitative analysis, and visa versa. As such, chapter 4 is dedicated to the results of grounded theory analysis of in-depth interviews with campaign and constituent office staff members. This analysis, in turn, influenced the coding sheet construction for chapter 5.

Numerous scholars have done remarkable scholarship using in-depth interviewing techniques. We can find a few notable examples of political scientists who conducted interviews with members of Congress. Richard Fenno (1966) conducted semi-structured interviews between 1959 and 1965 to find out more about the congressional appropriations process.¹² In his methodology, he describes how he asked certain key questions of all respondents, then left the rest of the interview open-ended.

¹² To access Fenno's interview notes, visit <http://www.archives.gov/legislative/research/special-collections/oral-history/fenno/interview-notes.html>

A few years later, Fenno (1978) wrote a text that serves as a major inspiration to this dissertation. Craftily blending observation techniques with in-depth interviews, he gives us insight into how congressmen interact with others while in their home constituency. He describes the phenomenon of how members of Congress create a “home style”, detailing how incumbents deal with their districts in different ways. In this dissertation, we examine how and if incumbents create this type of “home style” on their campaign and Senate Web pages.

Methodological Approach

This dissertation is based on the combined results of two separate rounds of in-depth interviews. The first sets of interviews were conducted with twelve U.S. Senate campaigns during the 2004 election cycle.¹³ The second set of interviews consisted of interviews with twelve campaign staff members and twelve constituency office staff members during the 2006 election cycle, giving us a total respondent base of thirty-six unique individuals. In both the 2004 and 2006 data collection cycles, respondents consisted of staff members in charge of Web-based decision-making, the selection process of which will be described in further detail. All of the interviews were semi-structured in nature, using a series of pre-constructed questions as a conversational guide.¹⁴ Specific questions inquired about what decisions were made in selecting specific Internet-based tools such as blogs and streaming video, the strategy behind these tools and the site in general, and perceptions of what tools worked best throughout the course of the election cycle. The interview guide for the campaign and constituency offices was

¹³ These interviews were completed as part of a pilot study for this dissertation. They offered such substantial data, results were included in this study.

¹⁴ Please refer to Appendix A and B for the interview guides.

designed to be as similar as possible, allowing for some degree of comparison between the two groups.¹⁵

An important part of this study was getting the most knowledgeable respondent on the telephone. This process was slightly different in the two interview cycles. When calling campaigns in 2004, virtually none of the offices telephoned had a staff member whose sole responsibility was considering and implementing Web-based strategy. Often, this individual had multiple roles. This included acting as the Webmaster, political director, or some other specialized task. This issue was similar when contacting constituency offices in 2006. Thus, with the blurring and combination of staff member duties, the exact title of this person varied from office to office. To ensure that the call was directed to the most knowledgeable person in the office, I asked the person who answered the phone to put me in touch with, “The person who is responsible for making decisions regarding Internet-based strategy”. This opening worked well, as only a few circumstances arose where there was confusion as to who was responsible for such tasks. In those circumstances, I spoke with the political director, and he or she put me in touch with the right person. Interestingly, when contacting campaigns in 2006, there was an increased number of staff members who were dedicated to online strategy. With these campaigns, the duties of online content, implementation, and uploading fell clearly in one person’s lap. That was the individual’s only responsibility in the campaign.

During the 2004 cycle, telephone interviews with the twelve Senate candidate staff members were conducted between June 2nd and November 10th, 2004. During the

¹⁵ The intention behind this qualitative research is to illuminate general concepts and expand our theoretical understanding of how the Internet is used as an election tool from the perspective of Web decision-makers. Inherently, generalizability is sacrificed to achieve this depth (Esterberg, 2001). The comparisons described in the upcoming chapters may not apply to all campaign and constituency offices.

2006 cycle, campaign and constituency offices were contacted between July 18th and November 13th. Some of the campaigns contacted close to Election Day asked me to call back at a later date. In most of those situations, an appointment was made to speak with the appropriate person a day or two after the election had taken place.

We should consider the implications of conducting interviews with staff members two years apart. Campaigns can change a lot from election cycle to election cycle. Specific to this study, Web technology and tactics can change significantly over the course of two years. Grounded theory analysis helped to illuminate that many of general concepts applied to both election cycles. While some of the Web features may have changed, many aspects relating to the importance and utilization of digital technology remained common. The analysis presented in chapter 4 offers a broad view of these similarities discussed by respondents in both election cycles, intertwined with details that are specific to campaigns of that election cycle.

Analytical Strategy

Analysis of the thirty-six total interviews utilized a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1976). An inductive method, grounded theory allows researchers to tackle specific aims of a project without any preconceptions or hypotheses (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Glaser, 1992). Through the use of constant comparisons between interviews, researchers can extract sensitizing theoretical concepts, major themes that appeared over and over (Glaser, 1992). The layered phases of grounded theory that this analysis utilized were as follows:

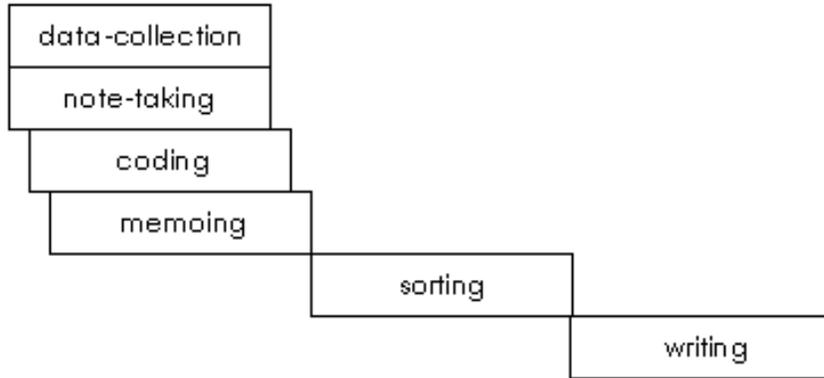


Figure 3-1 Stages of grounded theory [Reprinted with permission from Dick, Bob. 2005. “Grounded theory: a thumbnail sketch.” Available online at <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/grounded.html>.]

Open coding of the interview transcripts was crucial for the illumination of repeating concepts. Each paragraph was coded with important notations, including what the respondent is talking about, adjectives that describe the phenomenon, and the like. As coding occurred, memos were also kept on the side for additional information. They served as a reference for thoughts regarding more general themes. Using the coding notes and memos together, findings were sorted into common themes and concepts. The degree of commonality in these concepts led me to believe that I reached the point of data saturation in the interviews.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis is an excellent way to look across the cases in this dissertation systematically. Bernard (2000) shows scholars how quantitative data can be used to visualize patterns through the construction of maps, tables, and matrices. Rochefort’s 2006 edited volume compiled numerous pieces from the journal *PS: Political Science and Politics* to demonstrate the diverse quantitative approaches one can take in studying

important scholarly questions, including regression analysis to understand pivotal questions such as why people are disengaged from politics (Putnam, 2006).

We are privileged to be able to point to many solid quantitative works in the field of Internet politics. An area of developing interest in that of equality and the Internet. Using quantitative analysis of surveys, Pippa Norris (2001) explores the implications of the digital divide worldwide. This important work helps us to understand the “Democratic Divide” between those who use the Internet and those who do not. Importantly, she finds that, for now, the Internet only works to engage the engaged. This is problematic because the engaged represent a fraction of the overall population. However, despite these bothersome findings, her quantitative analysis also reveals that the online culture is a very accepting, open-minded one, enabling a value shift as modernization continues. Mossberger et al. (2003) use survey data to further argue that a dangerous inequality exists due to the rise of the Internet. The imbalance comes not only with those with the technology, but perhaps more importantly, those who know how to use the technology for their own personal gain.

Bringing together insights gained from the in-depth interviews, chapter 5 offers a quantitative look at how the twenty-four incumbent senators running for re-election presented themselves online in 2006. Both the constituent and campaign Web pages were saved on a weekly basis from March 21, 2006 through November 14th, 2006. Saving pages after the election allowed for the ability to capture good-bye messages. Web sites were typically saved on Monday mornings using Internet Explorer’s Web page complete “save as” function¹⁶. This function allowed for most images, text, and graphics

¹⁶ There are Web page saving programs on the market. Such programs allow users to save Web pages automatically by storing specific HTML addresses. I decided to use Internet Explorer’s Web Page

to be saved, as opposed to simply archiving text or HTML¹⁷. A new folder was created labeling each week, and within that folder, sub-folders were created for senatorial and campaign pages, respectively.

Setting Parameters

Each of the Web sites analyzed for this study contain numerous layers of pages and hyperlinks. All of these pages offer value to better understanding many of the questions considered in this dissertation. They also all come together to reflect the most accurate, complete digital presentation of self. However, for the purposes of this study, only home pages were analyzed. The home page is the first thing a Web browser sees, and in some cases, may be the only thing he or she looks at. It creates an immediate projection of the self and is arguably the most important part of a political Web page (Bimber and Davis, 2003).

Another issue that had to be considered was how much data saved in the Web site archive would be used for the analysis. Data was collected on a weekly basis from March 28th to November 8th, providing thirty-three weeks of archives for each incumbent's campaign and constituency Web pages. To make content analysis more manageable, each Web page was coded on a bi-weekly basis starting on March 28th and ending on November 8th. From this archive, different periods were used for the quantitative analysis in this dissertation. The analysis ultimately ended up using a snapshot of Web pages in March when the Web pages started to take form, early June when the primaries were readily upon us, and early November just before Election Day.

Complete function because I felt it was important to consistently view the pages. Manually saving the pages provided such opportunity, whereas automatic page saving programs would have not.

¹⁷ Other Explorer save functions include Web Archive (single file), Web page (html only), and Text File.

Images as Insights into the Self

Images play a tremendous role in portraying a presentation of self, giving them a key role in this analysis. To better understand the role they played in the 2006 campaign, every home page picture on both the campaign and constituent Web contexts was assigned one of the following variable status categories as shown in the table below.

Table 3-1 Image codes

CODE	VARIABLE LABEL	MEANING
1	P_NONE	Not in picture at all
2	P_SELF	In picture with self only
3	P_SGROUP	In picture with one or two others
4	P_LGROUP	In picture with group of three or more
5	P_slideshow	Slideshow of multiple pictures

These categories give us a quick overall snapshot of the dominant pictures on campaign and constituency Web pages in 2006. Statistical analysis in chapter 5 tells us if incumbents tend to select images focusing only on him or herself alone, him or herself with a small or large group, or something generic with no people in the image. We will also explore how common it is for the images to change via a slideshow presentation.

Issues as Insights into the Self

Moving beyond how congressmen present themselves in images, it is equally as important to consider how they present themselves in words. Looking at campaign and constituency Web pages, one will immediately notice the plethora of information. There are typically a lot of words on a single page, as well as access to numerous pages. When trying to measure issues, given that the level of material is so sizable, an important question is to determine what should be considered an “issue”.

The issue coding procedure for this project was adapted from the Wisconsin Ad Project, and has been successfully used by Sulkin et al (2007). Sixteen of the twenty-

three issues utilized for this project were previously identified by the Wisconsin Ad Project, with Iraq, generic helping constituents, Iraq, energy and gas, women's rights, immigration, the opponent, and state-specific issues all being unique categories added for this study.¹⁸ The following sixteen issues stem from the Wisconsin projects: agriculture, budget, campaign finance, crime, consumer issues, defense and foreign policy, education, environment, health, infrastructure, jobs and economic development, Medicare, social and cultural issues, Social Security, taxes, and welfare. Statements were coded into only one category. This category was the one estimated to be the dominant theme of the statement.

In addition to measuring what issues were talked about, another variable was added as a measure of relative space. This helps us to understand how much space one issue took up relative to other issues on the home page. As Prior (2001) helps us to understand, it would be somewhat shortsighted for scholars to treat all Web statements equally. Some issues may be talked about at length while others may be passively mentioned in a single sentence. The existence of such disparities allows for the space measurement to help us understand the relative priority one issue has in relation to another, and has been successfully used in Tracy Sulkin's work (see 2007 article for most recent work).

The construction of this relative space measurement is based on a weighting system that deciphers how much digital space was given to a particular issue. The first step in calculating this measure was to assign each issue a score. These scores ranged from zero to three. Zero means that the issue was not mentioned at all on the home page, one meaning the issue was discussed in a sentence or less, two meaning the issue was

¹⁸ Appendix F offers the full list as a reference.

described in one to three paragraphs, and three meaning there was a link to a full-page explanation or press release of the incumbent's view on the issue. Adding up these scores across all issues gives us the denominator for our Web space statistic. The numerators are the scores that each individual issue received on the one through three scale. This process is described in greater detail in chapter 5, and we will see how this comparative measure of space allows us to compare both the amount of space an issue receives and the total number of issues mentioned on any given home page.

Functional Features and Other Considerations

As we will explore in chapter 4, the in-depth interviews provide us with insight into what types of technological tools and features are viewed as digital necessities in attempting to project a certain senatorial presentation of self online. Similarly, we will explore what types of tools and features were avoided to maintain a consistent presentation. These items include the creation of blogs, fundraising capabilities, personalized log-in functions, and the presence types of media, such as photographs and television commercials. To supplement these finding, statistical analysis was performed on the campaign and constituency Web pages to determine what types of digital functions were found on the home pages.¹⁹ Some of the tools searched for included blogs (both end-user interactive and non-interactive), fundraising capabilities, and newsletter sign-up. These statistics give us an idea of what features appear on the two Web contexts, and if and how these features change over time.

Beyond photos, issues, space, and functional features, other notable variables were considered in the statistical analysis. The decision to include some of these variables arose from findings drawn out of the grounded theory analysis. For example,

some of the respondents spoke about the importance of senatorial history in the construction of the digital self. This finding prompted the inclusion of demographic variables including seniority in the Senate and age. Other demographic variables include geographic region represented, level of committee presence in the Senate, gender, and race. These variables come together in chapter 6 to help us explore presentational similarities and differences within and between groups.

Case Study

Case studies offer us detailed insight into complex worlds, helping us to understand social phenomenon in a highly in-depth way. Stephen Van Evera (1997) illuminates how case studies can be used to both test and create theory about our politics. King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) further assert that although, “the styles of quantitative and qualitative research are different”, the same logic of inference underlies both approaches (3). Case studies may initially start out with a sample size of one or two, but will grow as more scholars give the cases attention (King et al, 1994). Embracing this valuable resource, chapter 6 features a case study of Connecticut incumbent Senator Joe Lieberman. Moving from a popular Democratic incumbent to a polarizing Independent candidate, it offers a detailed account of how Lieberman’s digital presentation of self morphed over the course of the 2006 election.

Numerous scholars have utilized case studies to help illuminate interesting political phenomenon. Barbara Sinclair (1997) introduces readers to five different case studies to demonstrate different ways that a bill can become a law. Each case study shows variety in procedures of Congress.

¹⁹ Please see appendix D and E for the coding schemes.

The Importance of Lieberman

All of the incumbent senators running for re-election in 2006 made some degree of change to their Web presence. This applies to both the campaign and Senate.gov page. Often, the change simply meant updating the daily happenings of the Senator. In other instances, as in the case of Joe Lieberman, the changes were more dramatic, with the site going through a total overhaul. In Lieberman's case, despite this overhaul, he earned victory in the general election.

Lieberman provides a very unique case because, while it has happened in the past, it is very rare to see an incumbent candidate switch party affiliations mid-election²⁰. This is particularly true at the senatorial level, though there are a few notable examples. Most recently, James Jeffords of Vermont changed his party affiliation from Republican to Independent. This move changed the balance of power in the Senate in 2001 from a 50-50 split with a Republican tie-breaker to a 50-49-1 in the hands of the Democrats.²¹ Lieberman's situation is strikingly familiar to Jeffords' 2001 party change, with Vice President Dick Cheney still holding the tie-breaker. The balance of power in the Senate for the 110th Congress is 49-49-1-1. One Independent is Bernie Sanders, who took over the open Vermont Senate seat vacant from Jeffords' retirement. Joe Lieberman holds the other Independent seat, classifying himself as an "Independent Democrat".²² Lieberman has openly stated that he will caucus with the Democrats, but as scholars have come to

²⁰ For a comprehensive list of representatives who switched parties, visit <http://en.allexperts.com/e/p/pa/party_switching_in_the_united_states.htm>.

²¹ With this 50-50 split, Republican Vice President Dick Cheney represented the tie-breaking vote. After Richards switched parties, the Democrats had control until the 2002 election cycle.

²² For more information on the balance of power in the 110th Congress, visit <<<http://usgovinfo.about.com/blbalance.htm>>>

realize, political behavior is far from predictable, making his victory even more intriguing.

Beyond thinking about the balance of power and uniqueness of party shifts in the Senate, the political context in which Lieberman's victory took place is also noteworthy. One would have to consider what characteristics a state must have to elect a candidate that makes such drastic moves in the middle of a campaign. We will explore how Connecticut is comprised of a very unique constituency, with a large Independent base. Understanding this political context gives us perspective on the conditions that helped lift Lieberman to victory.

What the Case Study Explores

Lieberman's 2006 campaign provides us with such a fertile source of data, scholars will undoubtedly enrich our knowledge of multiple subfields within the American politics literature with this case study. For the purposes of this dissertation, we look at this case through the lens of attempting to better understand digital presentation of self in online political contexts. Most interestingly, even though Lieberman's Web page represents one space in our cyberworld, this space was drastically reconstructed over the course of the nine months the page was archived for this project.

The case study highlights four main phases of Joe Lieberman's presentation of self, the Democrat, transition, Independent-Democrat, and hijacked phases. Each of these phases are identified by significant shifts in some combination of tone, background, imagery, and message. Chapter 6 discusses each of these phases in great detail. Some of the more interesting highlights include the usage of language, word counts, images, and characteristics of the Connecticut electorate.

Looking Ahead

The next chapter draws on in-depth interviews to explore how a senatorial presentation of self created on our two Web contexts. Here, we begin to see how unique the two offices truly are, and how these differences lead to unique goals and objectives in the Web page. Chapter 5 offers a quantitative perspective on this question, measuring how much relative space multiple issues are given on each Web page. We will learn how consistency is most clear within contexts. Finally, chapter 6 explores the wild Connecticut Senate election of 2006. Using case study analysis, four different stages of Joe Lieberman's digital presentation of self are identified. The chapter demonstrates the power of context in the development and public acceptance of the self.

CHAPTER 4 UNDERSTANDING WEB PRESENTATION QUALITATIVELY

The Senatorial Puzzle

Senators are complex animals that work in the depths of multiple contexts. As elected officials, they represent a large geographical space, attempting to appeal to different groups within that area, appease party leaders, and work on legislation while potentially setting themselves up for a move up the political ladder. Concurrent with this role, the vast majority of senators seek re-election, providing a window where these individuals hold a dual identity as Senator and candidate, office holder and office seeker.

It is provocative to question how these individuals present themselves within the contexts of their differing capacities. Fenno (1978) argues that it is important for House members to have a consistent presentation of self at home. A consistent presentation of self helps one develop trust with the constituents. Senators, Fenno argues, have a much less personal Home Style. Since their home regions are bigger than that of House members, and their terms are six years instead of two, it may be harder for senators to have a highly consistent image. When you add in the dimension of context, meaning home versus Washington, this may become even more true.

While it may be helpful for re-election purposes, there is no unspoken rule that states that the messages presented in the context of these multiple capacities must be identical. For example, as a working Senator, an individual often talks about what he or she is doing in the present. They might present themselves as being caring, professional, and diligent. As a candidate, the same person may focus more on the future, presenting himself or herself as being creative, optimistic, and open-minded. The two presentations

may have wildly different central focuses, may be identical, or perhaps more likely, meet somewhere in the middle.

There are numerous venues that incumbent senators use to project a self-presentation including television, radio, personal appearances, and the main focus of this dissertation, Web technology. The key avenue for digital presentation typically comes in the form of a personal Web page, which may contain photos, news features, streaming video, blogs, and other features. Incumbent senators running for re-election are unique in that they have this personal online presence in two places, through their government Web page (Senate.gov), and through their official campaign site.

Based on in-depth interviews with both campaign staff working in the 2004 and 2006 election cycles, and Senate staff working in 2006, this chapter offers qualitative insight into the question of how Congressmen present themselves on these two different Web contexts. Topics covered include understanding how and why specific content gets online, the functions of each respective page, and the strategy behind utilizing or avoiding certain Web-based features to help construct a digital self. We will also explore if and how campaign and Senate staff work outside the boundaries of political advocacy laws in order to communicate with one another. We will see how surprisingly little coordination exists between the two entities, giving credence to the idea that campaign and constituency offices truly are two different beings that present a digital Senator in their own unique way.

Web-Based Tools as Enhancement of the Self

In today's technological age, Web tools are powerful ways that individuals and groups can obtain their goals online (Ireland & Nash, 2001). Features such as blogs, real-

time chats, and digital teleconferencing allow for people to communicate quickly and cost efficiently. Streaming videos, MySpace and Facebook accounts, and digital diaries also present unique ways for information to be presented to Web browsers. Interactivity and personalization allow for individuals to find the type of information they are looking for quickly, such as in the case of creating individual settings when a particular Web browser logs in (Mayer & Cornfield, 2003). The usage or avoidance of these functions says something about the agenda of the person who created the page. It points to their intentions regarding strategy, capability, and the amount of input they are willing to let end-users offer to the site. These aspects all come together to say something about the self-presentation the entity is trying to portray.

In the literature review, we explored Erving Goffman's concept of "impression management", the idea that an individual will go to great lengths to assist others in believing that he or she is successfully playing the role they are portraying. This may mean using certain language, wearing certain clothing, making references to specific topics, and so on. Congressmen running for re-election represent an interesting group of individuals because they are trying to construct and maintain their identity in two different roles simultaneously, that of a candidate and of elected official. Web technology is one arena where incumbent Congressmen can create, sustain, and project a presentation of self.

Web Page Layout and Content Construction

Before we explore what we see in these different Web contexts, and the reasoning behind them as presented through the eyes of staff members, one of the more

fundamental questions that must be addressed is getting a handle on is who creates the Web page layout and content.

All twelve campaigns contacted during the course of the 2006 election indicated that they sought out the expertise of third-party companies in constructing the template of their Web page. Campaign Solutions was the most commonly cited business used for this service.²³ The campaigns were seeking out assistance with the basic layout only, not for help with content writing or other services. This is verified on the Campaign Solutions Web page, which states that the company does not deal with writing of content or construction of a Web strategy.²⁴ The business specializes in the construction of templates for campaign photographs, online donations, press releases, and other political Web page essentials.

Unlike their constituency office counterparts, some campaign staff members had experience in Web design and layout. They often collaborated with third-party Web design companies to create the exact layout they wanted. Additionally, having these skills set the campaign up for making complex changes to the Web page more easily. With the increasing importance of the online presence and strategy in campaigns, it should come as no surprise that candidates are hiring staff members with Web design backgrounds. Some of the campaigns interviewed in both the 2004 and 2006 election cycles had an individual dedicated to online communications, often hired into the position because of their ability to mix campaign and Web design experience. We will likely see an increasing presence in this type of capacity within statewide and national campaigns as we move forward towards 2008.

²³ The Campaign Solutions Web page can be found at: <http://www.campaign-solutions.com/>

²⁴ <http://www.campaign-solutions.com/services.asp>

In addition to page layout, digital content plays a significant role in constructing and maintaining an overall Web presentation (Gulati, 2004; Bystrom et al., 2004). For campaigns, the authors of the Web content differed dramatically. Some campaigns left online communication solely to the communications director or online specialist. This person would have virtually no oversight and was typically the only person responsible for creating a Web strategy. Other campaigns made content creation more of a joint effort. Feeling that digital content played an important part in the campaign's overall strategy, these offices held staff meetings where Web text and images were brainstormed between multiple staff members. Other campaigns used a group approach, but with less collaboration towards an overall Web strategy. These campaigns allowed for staff members to upload content freely, giving very little sense of oversight and unity in content development.

As will be discussed later, some candidates embraced the idea of giving constituent control over certain Web content, a totally new interactive dimension of construction of the self. Features such as streaming video commercials uploaded by browsers, as in the case of Dean TV in 2004, or truly interactive online blogs, as in the case of Ned Lamont in 2006, give control of one's digital identity to others. Most incumbent candidates strategically stayed away from such interactive features solely for the purpose of having total control over what appeared on the Web page.

Like their campaign counterparts, all twelve of the Senate offices interviewed in 2006 indicated that they sought out third-party assistance with the construction of their Web page. Some of the offices turned to people within their party for assistance, such as in the case of one popular incumbent who turned to the Democratic Senate

Communications Center. Numerous respondents mentioned that the United States Senate puts out a list of recommendations, but offices are not required to abide by this list. All of the offices interviewed stated that they turned to third-party entities that were not on the Senate's list for help, often contacting companies where someone in the office was familiar with that agency's work.

In deciding what third-party service to ultimately use for Web page layout assistance, the office staff primarily sought out companies that offered user-friendly templates. A few of the respondents interviewed had experience with Web design, but most did not. This is perhaps best illustrated by one Democratic Senate office respondent who laughingly offered, "We were looking for something monkey proof, something that we could all do without screwing up" (anonymous DS1, 2006). Clearly, the staff wanted to be able to upload specific content without jeopardizing the page layout itself.

Given that Senate office online communication is not as high-profile as their campaign counterpart, likely because they do not receive attention from traditional news mediums like campaigns do, constituency offices do not employ a staff member dedicated to online communication. This typically falls in the lap of a general communications staff member. We can see how this is different than their campaigning counterpart, where employees may be hired specifically for the purposes of managing online communications and Web-based strategy. The result is that constituency offices have people working on the Web site that lack any significant experience with digital politics and Web site development.

Perceptions of "The Basics"

Template features

Both campaign and constituency office staff respondents talked about the importance of having “the basics” on their Web page, tools or features that they perceived as being imperative for a successful Web page. Having a template that was easily manipulated was seen as critical to staff members being able to upload and change these basic features at will, sometimes as much as on a daily basis. Perceived “basics” differed largely between campaign and constituency offices. For campaigns, basics included an issues page, the senator’s biography, a newsroom with press releases, a volunteer page, and the ability to accept credit card donations. This is in line with the suggestions presented by Ireland and Nash (2001). For constituency offices, perceived basics included a biography, contact information, current bill information, and information regarding different constituency services such as flag requests. Both constituency and campaign staff members talked about the importance of having these features prominently displayed and easily accessible through the incumbent’s home page.

Up-to-date content

Both constituency and campaign staff members viewed continually updating the Web site as very important. For constituency offices, this meant updating information on what the senator was currently working on, often including updating text on bills in progress or issuing new press releases. For campaigns, posting the most recent calendar events and public appearances, press releases, and recaps of past events was seen as critical.

As we will discuss in the next section, continually updating the Web page has different significance for the two offices. For campaigns, giving off the perception that

the candidate is very busy is of great importance. This ties into the strategic function of attempting to intimidate the opponent, as well as communicating to the media that the campaign is very active. Appearing busy is also important for constituency offices, updating Web browsers on what the senator is doing in office. This allows for both constituents and political groups to better understand the senator's position on current issues.

These findings are in line with Mayhew (1974), who describes three main activities of Congressmen. Credit claiming, position taking, and advertising are all ways that politicians attempt to reach their goal of re-election. Even though Mayhew appears to talk more about these activities as campaigning tactics, we can also reflect on the Senate office as a place where they also take place. Appearing busy, communicating to the media, and offering up-to-date digital content all support the concept that Mayhew's main ideas are true in both the online and offline worlds.

Strategic Functions of Campaign and Senate Sites

One way to more fully understand how, why, and to what degree campaign and constituent office Web contexts differ is to consider the functions that each Web page serves. By understanding these functions, we will be able to assess how and why senatorial presentations may differ in these contexts. We will also be able to more fully comment on the implications of these findings.

Grounded theory analysis of interviews conducted in 2004 and 2006 revealed four major strategic functions that campaign Web sites serve: mobilizing existing supporters, empowering those supporters, intimidating the opponent, and communicating with the

media.²⁵ Analysis of 2006 data revealed that the strategic functions that Senate.gov pages serve are offering accessible constituent information, providing contact information, and updating senatorial activity.

Campaign Web Pages

Mobilizing existing supporters

Both 2004 and 2006 campaign respondents spoke about how Web pages were most often visited by supporters, people who already decided they were going to vote for the candidate. While this is not exclusively true, having this general knowledge helped staff members understand what audience they were speaking to on their site. The trick, staffers believed, was to get these supporters together to propel their candidate to electoral success.

Blogs, a highly popular phenomenon, played a significant mobilization role in the minds of numerous 2004 campaign staff members interviewed. This finding is in concert with some of the recent literature that argues in favor of blogs' ability to mobilize and active citizens (Kerbel and Bloom, 2005; Uslander, 2004; Grossman, 1995). Some candidates stressed the importance of having a blog directly on the candidate's Web page, where others only offered links to third-party blogs. Some sites took an approach similar to Chris Dodd's 2004 "Doddblog", where the campaign would post text and images and call it a "blog". Blogs of this nature allow the campaign to fully control the content and topics featured and discussed. The only truly interactive blogs posted directly on candidate's campaign Web pages belonged to Howard Dean in 2004 and Ned Lamont in

²⁵ This grounded theory analysis encompassed interviews with incumbent senator staff members running in 2004 and 2006, respectively. These four strategic functions proved to be common in both election cycles.

2006. Regardless, the perception of having a blog seemed to trump the interactive versus passive blog dichotomy.

As noted by one 2004 Democratic incumbent, and echoed by one 2006 Democratic challenger, staff members often called or e-mailed third-party blog-posters to personally address their questions and concerns. This gives credence to the importance of blogs regardless of their placement in the digital atmosphere. As normative academic literature would likely argue, and as mirrored in the conversations with these two staff members, blogs serve as a mechanism for getting more people involved in the political process, which is both an exciting and important part of running campaigns.

Also seen as a type of basic necessity, having a volunteer sign-up was seen as a key to mobilizing online supporters. Virtually all of the 2004 and 2006 campaigns talked about the importance of having this feature prominently displayed on their home page and making it easy to use. Letting the volunteer decide how he/she wanted to help the candidate was seen as crucial as well, thus most sign-up forms had boxes of different activities that people could select to help with. In a strategic move, a few 2004 campaigns mentioned how they had pre-checked boxes on the form which the site user would have to de-select if he/she did not want those options. The pre-checked options were most often to receive e-mail campaign updates from the candidates. One 2004 candidate had a pre-checked box that asked the campaign to send postal mail to the volunteer.

Empowering existing supporters

Moving one step beyond mobilizing supporters, campaigns found the idea of empowering these individuals to be equally as important in both election cycles.

Considering the 2004 Institute for Politics, Democracy, and the Internet study that discusses “online influentials”, the power of supporters who are highly involved through online politics, this concept of empowerment makes sense (Darr et al., 2004). By empowering existing supporters to identify and influence other potential supporters, the campaign would be utilizing the human capital that the candidate’s site brings together. Empowering existing supporters also brings virtually limitless return on the campaign’s digital investment, bringing in new potential voters, volunteers, and fundraisers by simply adding a few features to the Web page.

Respondents mentioned numerous Internet-based tools that they relied on to empower their existing their supports, most of which they viewed as successful in achieving this goal over the course of both the 2004 and 2006 campaigns. It was clear that the importance in this empowerment came in the forms of creativity, freedom, and personalization; letting current supporters craft their own ways of reaching out to others. In this sense, the campaign served the role of the template, providing a basic outline and letting the current supporter do most of the work. This relates to a concept identified by the IPDI as “political event-in-a-box” (Darr et al., 2004). This feature allows for supporters to download the materials for their own home-based event, such as house parties, debate watches, or meals. Such downloads often included posters, banners, and recipes.

A fantastic way that Senate campaigns attempted to empower supporters in both 2004 and 2006 was giving them tasks that could be completed via the Internet. In particular, numerous campaigns talked about the importance of encouraging and empowering supporters to write Letters to the Editor (LTEs). This process would start

with the campaign either calling or e-mailing supporters who signed up to be a campaign volunteer via the Internet. The campaign would then encourage the individual to write a LTE to the local newspaper, using information provided to them on the Web site. For example, Senator Chris Dodd's 2004 (D-CT) Web site had an option to click on the home page called "Letter to the Editor", which would take the site visitor to a listing of all local newspapers, their Web sites (if applicable), and their mailing address. This was not an uncommon feature. Sites similar to that of Dodd's in both 2004 and 2006 would also offer an issues page that included bullet points, which LTE writers were encouraged to use as talking points. Some 2006 campaigns also sent out LTE templates to volunteers via E-mail upon request. Similarly, campaigns empowered supporters by giving them the tools to conduct radio call-ins. Much like in the case of LTEs, numerous campaign sites offered the contact information of local radio stations in the area.

Intimidating the opponent

Campaign staff members spoke extensively about using Web-based politics as a means of psychological intimidation against opponents. In considering who visited their Web page, staffers listed groups in the order of likely supportive voters, undecided voters, media, and potential rivals. Knowing this fact was something campaigns felt they could benefit from by putting feelings of doubt and inferiority in the minds of the opposition. Most notably in 2004, the integration of advanced Web-based technologies was seen as a powerful strategic intimidation tactic. One 2004 Republican incumbent spoke about new flash animation options that were utilized on his home page. This respondent had no inhibitions in telling me how proud the campaign was of their site, feeling that it was the best statewide or national candidate Web page to date.

The interesting thing about this type of psychological intimidation is that it is noticeably different from that discussed in the campaigning literature. Numerous authors have talked about the benefits of negative campaigning (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Mark, 2007). As Mark suggests, it is a delicate art form that can be highly successful. Psychological intimidation plays a significant role in this process. With digital intimidation, respondents are not talking about direct negative attacks on their opponents. This type of intimidation is much more indirect; like pulling up to a debate in a Lamborghini when your opponent arrives on a motorized scooter. The candidate driving the Lamborghini did not do anything to directly hurt the opponent on the scooter, but the disparity between their vehicles of choice is notable and may result in some consequence in how voters perceive each person.

A few popular 2004 incumbents felt that their Web pages did not need to feature new technology, and thus offered only a bare skeleton of the candidate and his/her campaign themes. They felt that they were so likely to win, they could intimidate their opponent by giving off an aura of confidence through lack of Web-based content. In 2004, Republican incumbent Arlen Specter's (R-PA) Web site team clearly took this approach by offering only a home page and one other page on issues. Interestingly, very few campaigns mirrored Specter's page, with most popular Incumbents having very detailed and technologically-advanced pages.²⁶ This was the case with all incumbents running in the 2006 election cycle.

Another strategy that was viewed as important in intimidating the opponent was that of looking highly active. As noted by one 2004 Democratic challenger, "A site should be like your headquarters; it should look busy, even when you're not. It should

look strong and geographically-specific” (anonymous DC1, 2004). The strategies discussed talked about perceptions, fooling the opponent into believing he or she is seeing something that may not necessarily be true. By having lots of features on the Web site, including pictures and press releases, it gives off the impression that the campaign is highly active. Creating this perception in the opponent’s mind helps to cast thoughts of doubt and inferiority, and as will be discussed in the next section, gives off a favorable impression to visiting media representatives.

Give information to the media

The last strategic function that was discussed by campaign respondents was giving information to the media through Web-based communication. This is in line with current literature dealing with media and politics. Kedrowski (2006) describes how members of Congress reach out the media to influence public policy. One Webmaster respondent believed that the media goes to candidate Web sites to not only look for basic issue information, but mistakes, level of activity, and aggressiveness in schedule.

Speaking to a point that was also important in attempting to intimidate the opponent, giving off the appearance of being busy was seen as imperative. As noted by 2004 Republican campaign, “It’s important to give the media the impression that your campaign is a winning proposition to cover” (anonymous RC1, 2004).

A few 2004 and 2006 Web sites had specific pages devoted to press relations. This section, referred to as the “press room”, offers items such as campaign contact information, press releases, speeches, and endorsements. This allowed site visitors from the media to complete quick one-stop shopping, finding important information on the campaign’s recent activity all on one page or series of pages.

²⁶ 2004 archives from www.chrisdodd.com or www.harryreid.com serve as examples.

Senate Web Pages

Offering accessible constituent information

Constituent offices get flooded with calls on a daily basis. The biggest function of the Web page, as noted by all twelve Senate offices interviewed in 2006, was to offer accessible information on the Web page in hopes of curtailing these calls. As noted by one Republican office, “We try to direct callers to the Web page as much as possible. By placing detailed information online, we hope we can answer their questions on things we are asked a lot, such as flag requests” (anonymous RS1, 2006).

There are a few other strategies that offices employ in hopes of directing constituents to their Web page. When calling Joe Lieberman’s Senate office, one is greeted with a recorded message. It’s Joe’s voice, and before giving callers the opportunity to speak to a live person, he suggests visiting his Senate page. Other offices attempt to give their Web page an “office-like” feeling, featuring streaming video welcome or a welcome letter encouraging constituents to browse the page for specific information. One can view this function as also freeing up resources. The less time staff members spend answering phones, the more time they have to do other activities.

Providing contact information

Respondents felt that offering contact information was another very important function of the Web page. This includes contact information for the different local constituency offices, Washington office, and e-mail address for the senator. With an increasing number of Americans getting into the wired age, telephone books may be taking a back seat to digital surfing for political contact information. Making this contact

information readily accessible was seemingly important amongst respondents for this reason.

Some respondents found it more important than others to have this contact information located directly on the home page. As noted by one Republican office, “We tried to make it as easy as possible to help people find this information, so we put it on the bottom-right corner of the home page” (anonymous RS2, 2006). Others agreed that this information was important, but felt that putting a link to the information off of the home page was just as acceptable and that someone looking specifically for that information would be able to find it.

Updating senatorial activity

Mentioned by ten out of the twelve Senate offices interviewed, updating the senator’s senatorial activity was also a primary function of the constituent Web page. Respondents felt page browsers might log on to see what the senator is doing in office, if he or she is supporting a specific bill, or what issues are currently on the Senate floor. Most of these respondents reported that they update the home page on a daily basis, with a few offering that they update every few days.

Interestingly, the Web function of keeping browsers informed of what’s going on seems to hold increasing importance for people outside of the constituency. Multiple respondents talked about how political groups may use Senate.gov as a way to identify allies in office. This may be true with campaigns as well, but respondents from that camp did not raise it as a topic. This is likely because, as offered by the Senate staff respondents, their Web page offers detailed, up-to-date information on what the Senator is doing in Congress.

One feature that two Washington staff members talked about as being their next step in the wired age is to feature a live video feed when the senator is speaking on the floor. This would offer the most real-time information on what the senator is doing, speaking to the importance of offering continually updated information on senatorial activity. One Republican incumbent's office talked about following the senator around the halls of Congress with a camera and uploading the feed onto the Internet.

While mainstream television media such as C-SPAN offers constituents the ability to see what is going on inside the Senate chamber, these two respondents commented on how Web streaming video could offer more targeted information. Below is a quote as noted by one Republican incumbent's office.

“People check out our page because they want to see what Senator [name deleted] is up to. Our idea is to show people clips when he is speaking on the floor so they can get a better idea of what is going on. People will probably sit and watch a short video online but not watch C-SPAN, especially if we decide to automatically start the video when someone logs onto our page” (anonymous RS3, 2006).

While we typically think about campaigns as being the ones that target, here we see evidence that Washington offices also offer their own type of specialized, strategically planned information.

Coordination as Strategy?

Now understanding the differing functional purposes of each Web page, further considering the type of strategy campaign and constituency offices use to construct their Web page begs the question of if and how the two offices coordinate their online presence. Although we see that the functional goals of these two contexts are not identical, given that two offices are working on behalf of the same individual, it seems reasonable that the two entities might collaborate with or consult each another for

information. Sharing text and pictures would certainly speak to a cognizance towards creating a consistent online senatorial identity. Conversely, working in complete independence of one another potentially reifies the idea that the offices are truly two separate beings. This research represents the first scholarly attempt at understanding if this type of collaboration exists for the purposes of online communication.

The Hatch Act of 1939 served as the first legislation to regulate the behavior of federal employees as it applies to the engagement in partisan activities. The Act, named after Senator Carl Hatch, was proposed in response to Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers using their official government capacities to help aid the Democratic Party in the 1938 election cycle (“Hatch Act”, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2007). Even though these events were aiding his own party, Senator Hatch proposed these laws as a way to end corruption from inside Washington establishments.²⁷

In 1993, these laws were revisited by Congress to help further define what constitutes illegal activity while working in a federal, state, or local capacity. The most important update to these statutes was the broadening of political advocacy activities government employees could engage in while not on duty. The Act outlines times when government employees may not engage in political activity, including when using a government vehicle, on official duty, when wearing an official uniform, or when physically in the office (“Political Activity”, Office of Special Council, 2007). Otherwise, with the exception of individuals in specific high-level capacities, government

²⁷ To read more about the Hatch Act, please visit <http://www.osc.gov/hatchact.htm>.

workers were given explicit permission to manage and/or work on political campaigns in through the updated statutes.²⁸

Specific to this dissertation, we should consider how these regulations impact employees working in Washington constituent offices. Given that the Washington staff members are being paid to serve constituents with taxpayers' dollars, using work time to assist in campaigning efforts falls under the umbrella of illegal behavior. The implications of this means that constituent staff members cannot collaborate with campaign staff members during business time. However, campaign and constituent office staff have identified legal ways to communicate without being in violation of the law. Since the Hatch statutes do not regulate communication between these entities outside of business hours, communication in their own personal time is viewed as legal and legitimate.

In speaking with Senate staff about communicating with their campaign counterpart, the level of inter-office communication varied wildly between offices. Ten of the twelve constituency offices interviewed did not engage in this type of communication, such as in the case of one Midwestern Democratic incumbent whose office staff reified the idea that each office serves different purposes.

“We are here as a base for constituent concerns while they are working to keep Senator [name extracted from transcript] in office, so we are working for the same person but are doing different things. They have their own agenda and ways of going about things, and honestly I haven't even looked at their Web page” (anonymous DS2, 2006).

Surprisingly, this was not the only Senate office that said they did not look at the other office's Web page. Most of the offices interviewed followed suit in this regard. On

²⁸ For a full list of federal employees subject to greater restrictions on partisan activity, please visit http://www.osc.gov/ha_fed.htm#agencies.

the other side of the spectrum, two Senate offices had constant communication and collaboration with their campaigning counterpart on non-business time. The Washington office for one highly popular Democratic incumbent wrote a significant level of issue-based content for the campaign home page. The communications director in this office laughingly shared her experiences as quotes below.

“I am actually quite involved in working with the campaign. I can’t talk to them while in the office, but we talk through a personal e-mail account. They actually asked me for help writing the issue pages of the Web site because they wanted to get it right, and figured we would know, so I spent my own time on the weekends writing stuff and sent it off to them, and they copied and pasted what I wrote word-for-word” (anonymous DS3, 2006).

There is a lot of insight in this quote, with one important feature being a clear valuing of consistent, “correct” information. Here, the campaign office is looking to the Senate office as the authority on the senator’s views on specific issues. They are cognizant that offering a similar message on the senator’s issues is of some notable importance.

Although this one respondent provides evidence that collaboration exists between the two entities, this was far from the norm, with only two out of twelve respondents speaking to this idea. A topic that arose out of the grounded theory analysis that spoke to why this type of communication may be lacking is a misunderstanding of Hatch regulations.

Considering the Law

The line of questioning about inter-office communication clearly raised eyebrows with respondents, likely because it touches on legal issues and people cannot immediately verify the identity of the person conducting the phone interview. Most of the respondents got defensive at the very onset of topic, cutting the interviewer off and immediately

denying any such activity, something that may lead us to wonder how well staff members understand their rights as staff members.

As we have explored, the Hatch Act clearly allows for inter-office collaboration during non-business hours. Constituent and campaign offices can communicate legally and effectively within the confines of these laws. However, many of the respondents did not appear to realize that inter-office communication was legal in certain circumstances. As one Republican Senate staff member explained: “We cannot talk to them [the campaign staff], so we don’t speak. It’s illegal” (anonymous RS4, 2006). This seemed to be the common perspective amongst the eight of the twelve Senate offices interviewed. It was not apparent that these respondents realized the law does not extend beyond their physical time in office.

Given the fact that this line of questioning does touch on legal issues, honesty in responses may be at play. It is highly doubtful that any of the staff members would admit to breaking the law, and if respondents interpreted any form of inter-office communication as illegal, they would not talk about it to a stranger. Thus, we may not be getting a completely clear picture of the level of inter-office coordination and/or communication that may be at play here. It is not outside the scope of reason that office staff members may be instructed to answer questions in a certain way and to deny the existence of certain behaviors.

Consistency though Visual Queues

A different way to ask about the idea of inter-office collaboration is to touch on if and when campaign staff seek out visual queues from their senatorial office’s Web page, and visa versa. On face, this line of questioning would seem much more innocuous than

asking about inter-office communication, as it is unlikely that someone would interpret viewing a Web page as being in violation of the Hatch Act. Respondents were asked if they visited the other office's Web page to consult, view, or take information from the site. The value of this line of questioning is that engaging in this type of behavior could be interpreted as a very basic, inexpensive, and innocuous way to achieve senatorial online consistency between the two Web contexts.

This line of questioning revealed that the two offices rarely, if ever, consult one another's Web page. Stunningly, most respondents stated that they did not look at the other office's page at all through the course of the election. While four out of twelve campaign office staff stated that they have viewed the Senate.gov page of their candidate over the course of the 2006 election cycle, it became apparent that they were looking at the page for the purpose of getting an overview of the digital tools used, not reading the content itself. These campaign staffers stumbled when asked what issues were discussed on the Senate Web page.

This finding offers evidence that there is not only a lack of digital collaboration, but more broadly, speaks to a larger disconnect between the two offices. It is surprising that the staff in each respective office do not look to one another for guidance. This chapter demonstrates that this disconnect applies to both phone conversations and Web browsing.

With that said, given the apparent lack of communication and collaboration between the campaign and Senate offices, one must begin to wonder how and if the Web pages differ in terms of senatorial presentation. Do they contrast with one another? Are the stated priorities and issues the same? These are all new questions that will be first

addressed on a scholarly level here. An important step we can take to better understand how a senatorial presentation of self is created on these Web contexts is to consider common frames of reference campaign and constituent offices may rely upon in constructing their respective pages.

Constructing a Complete Self

Understanding that inter-office collaboration for the purposes of senatorial self-presentation is extremely rare, we have to ask ourselves where the basis for this presentation may stem from on each respective page. This section offers additional insights by the twelve campaign and twelve Senate office staff interviewed in the 2006 election cycle.

Political History as Self-Definition

Many of the incumbent senators running for re-election in 2006 brought a deep senatorial history to their campaign. Class I incumbents included a former first lady (Hillary Clinton, NY-D) and presidential and vice presidential candidate (Joe Lieberman, CT-D). Having a rich political history, particularly as a candidate, plays into the contemporary construction of self in both the online and offline worlds. Victory in some former campaign may set the stage for embracement by the populous, while defeat and scandal may mean the end of a political career.

Numerous respondents in this study relayed the important role political history played in constructing the online presence of their senator. One 2006 Democratic Party challenger was interviewed for this project and was able to share interesting insights. The candidate's campaign representative quoted below is referencing the sitting incumbent who, due to a prior electoral experience, did not embrace online interactive technology.

“And before the primary, the person who went on to be the [Democratic incumbent’s] campaign’s communications director in an official capacity, before the primary, was talking off the record with reporters about spreading...I guess they weren’t really rumors. I guess he would find comments here and there, one or two comments out of thousands of comments out of the people that read the blogs, and try to sell it to reporters as being representative of all the blogs. Like, look at [Democratic challenger] supporters” (anonymous DC1, 2006).

From this quote, we better understand how prior experience with the online blogosphere altered campaigning strategy in the current day. This perspective is of particular interest to this line of research because it shows how the implications of digital technology are perhaps more far-reaching than scholars have recognized to date.

Both the campaign and Washington staff can reflect on an incumbent senator’s political history when constructing online content. In that way, political history serves as a common frame of reference that may help to shape a Senator’s digital identity.

Certainly, staff members are free to interpret political histories in multiple ways. A staff member’s own upbringing, current political context, and other characteristics will aid in the person’s interpretation of previous events. Thus, reflecting on these common frames of reference may not lead to identical interpretations. However, incumbents’ histories often include political facts which are interpreted with much less subjectivity.

In the case of Hillary Clinton, her political history as a former First Lady is of great significance to her contemporary being. That experience afforded her the ability to lead efforts on multiple social and economic issues, including women’s rights, adoption rights, and health care. First Lady represents a unique, high-profile, and virtually universally known capacity. It would seem like a clear aspect of her self-presentation that both a Washington and campaign office would want to highlight.

Indeed, analysis shows that this is the case, and that this aspect of Hillary's political history plays an important role in her two digital contexts. The following represents text from the second sentence on her 2006 Senate biographical page.

“She is the first First Lady of the United States elected to public office and the first woman elected Independently statewide in New York State” (“First Lady”, Hillary for Senate, June 3rd 2006 archive).

Under her 2006 Senate page campaign biography, similar to what we see on her 2008 presidential Web page, we find a section dedicated to her identity as a First Lady. Her 2008 presidential page features a 292 word political history describing her in this capacity.²⁹ Her presidential campaign Web page offers the information below.

“When her husband was elected President in 1992, Hillary's work as a champion for women was recognized and admired around the world. She traveled the globe speaking out against the degradation and abuse of women and standing up for the powerful idea that women's rights are human rights” (“First Lady”, Hillary for President, April 1 2007 archive).

This example shows us how Hillary's capacity as former First Lady plays a role in the construction of self on three different digital contexts, her 2006 U.S. Senate and 2008 presidential campaign Web pages, as well as her 2006 constituency office page. It appears and shapes the online discourse because, as offered by 2006 Democratic Party challenger respondent, political histories matter in the shaping of contemporary candidates and office holders. This represents one mechanism for the construction of a consistent online self on multiple Web contexts, and does not require any inter-office communication or collaboration.

Defining the Message

Going along with the theme of political histories, politicians who have held

²⁹ The full text of this page can be read in Appendix G.

office for a long time often become known as championing certain social or economic issues. Themes arise in the type of legislation politicians gravitate towards, again providing a common frame of reference for constituency and campaign offices in the construction of the digital self. A 2004 Republican campaign respondent spoke about how her candidate was very well-known for his work on education.

“When coming with stuff to put on the Web, we knew the major thing we would talk about. Senator [name deleted] is very well-known for his work on education throughout the state, which was a great place to start, so we basically researched some of the major bills he had worked on in the past few years and talked about them” (anonymous RC2, 2004).

One benefit of being a senior senator is that the person can portray him or herself as being a specialist in a particular area. The respondent quoted above describes how the campaign used that frame of reference as a starting point in writing the Web page content. Even though inter-office communication did not take place between the campaign and senatorial offices of this Republican incumbent, similar to the example of Hillary, his political history was an important element of self-presentation on the Web contexts of those two offices. A strong record on specific issues is yet another aspect of political history that provides a common frame of reference for the designers of these pages.

Conclusion

Web contexts provide unique opportunities for politicians to create and display a sense of self. This chapter has offered new viewpoints on better understanding how this presentation is constructed, what functions certain political Web contexts have, and the importance of political history in the construction of a digital self. Perhaps most surprisingly, we have learned that inter-office communication is not a popular mechanism

for constructing a consistent senatorial presentation of self between the campaign and constituency offices. More broadly, respondents seemed to have a general disinterest in viewing the other office's page for substantive content.

Reflecting on some of the questions posed in the literature review chapter, this evidence speaks to some implications of the two offices having different staff members and varying objectives. These motives translate into different priorities, foci, and strategies. With the digital incumbent/candidate being a product of different offices, that senatorial presentation of self may be just as diverse as the office he/she came from. For some senior incumbent candidates, deep political histories provided one avenue for online consistency. Similarly, some candidates offer histories that point to heightened interests towards certain policy areas. In these instances, this background was usually recognized and reflected by both the campaign and constituency offices, because the offices had a common frame of reference.

In some ways, this chapter poses more questions than answers. If the two offices are not communicating with one another in hopes of creating a consistent online presentation of self, with a few exceptions, how are these two digital self presentations different? How are they similar? What are the larger implications of finding evidence one way or the other? Up to this point, scholars have yet to raise or research these and other related questions.

The next chapter represents the first step in analyzing these questions quantitatively. The research we just explored offers evidence that these Web contexts are indeed uniquely different, and that these differences are expressed in many ways. Staff members from the campaign and constituency offices are cognizant of this difference,

and further, show little signs of trying to reconcile the implications it may have as it applies to senatorial presentation online. Armed with this knowledge, chapter 5 offers a more systematic approach to understanding how these contexts offer both similar and different digital presentations. It considers how the functions of these Web pages, as offered by the respondents described in this chapter, play into the construction of a unique digital self. Together, the qualitative and quantitative analysis offers us insights into why senatorial presentation of self differs, how they differ, and how they are similar. The final chapter offers insight into the implications of these findings and suggestions for further exploration of political contexts and self-presentations.

CHAPTER 5 UNDERSTANDING WEB PRESENTATION QUANTITATIVELY

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we explored different perspectives on how senators come to create a presentation of self on campaign and Senate Web contexts. Based on in-depth interviews with Webmasters, we learned about the importance of technological tools, political history, and template features in the construction of the digital self. In the next chapter, Joe Lieberman's re-election campaign will show us how one can change these features and content drastically yet still find a way to electoral victory.

The interviews and case study represent an insightful yet somewhat limited perspective on how a senatorial presentation of self is developed. Each interview and case study represents a single perspective, and leaves us wondering how much of this information applies on a broader scheme. We can consider the previous two chapters as a strong starting point from which to pursue more generalizable information, which is offered in the coming pages.

The beauty of a mixed-method approach is that one method can inform another in unique and insightful ways. Insights from the Webmaster respondents played a central role in the development of the quantitative measurements presented here. Like Bimber and Davis state in their 2003 work, I hope that the case study, interviews, and quantitative methods presented here show the power of a mixed methods approach and set a high benchmark for future scholarship in the area of digital American politics.

Ideal Types

Different examples of ideal types will be intertwined with the quantitative analysis throughout this chapter. A concept invented by sociologist Max Weber in his

description of bureaucracies, ideal types describe characteristics that help one approximate a specific reality (Weber, 1949). Utilized in disciplines throughout the social sciences, they provide a mental framework for others to understand essential characteristics of a larger concept. While not all of the characteristics of an ideal type must correctly apply to the larger phenomenon being described, the case is generally an excellent overall description of a specific reality one is trying to illuminate (Weber, 1949).

In this chapter, two ideal types that will be explored are the “issue candidate” and the “localized candidate”. We will also set the stage for chapter 6, where Joe Lieberman will provide an example of a “candidate in crisis”. These cases are being supplied throughout the chapter to demonstrate that incumbents take on certain types of candidacies, and that we can pick out individuals that exemplify these realities.

Issues

One way that we can capture the level of consistency in senatorial presentation of self is by examining what issues are discussed over time, as well as how much relative space those issues received on each Web page. Exploring these general patterns gives us a sense of the role and importance each issues plays in creating an overall digital self.

When considering the relative importance of issues, it is useful to understand the larger political climate of the time. Every election takes place in its own unique context. To get a better sense of the political climate in the time frame explored here, we can take a look at poll results from a survey of American adults.³⁰ As reflected in the bar chart below, Iraq, economy, terrorism, immigration, and moral issues came to the forefront

when Americans were asked what issues they viewed as “extremely important” in determining how they would vote in the 2006 general election.³¹

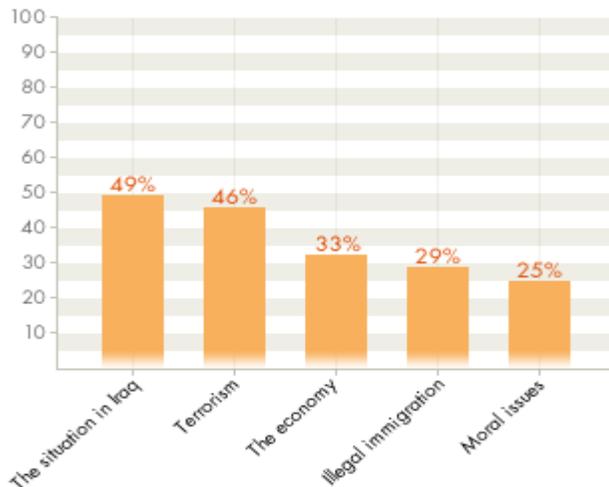


Figure 5-1 Extremely important issues in 2006

With exit polls reflecting that 57% of Americans disapproved of the War in Iraq, we have since come to learn that these anti-war sentiments perhaps had the greatest role in turning the tides on the Republican Party (CNN Online). The chart above indicates Iraq was the single most important issue in determining how a person intended to vote in the 2006 cycle. Terrorism was not far behind at 46%, followed by the economy (33%), illegal immigration (29%), and moral issues (25%).

We now turn to the analysis of 2006 incumbent senators armed with a better knowledge of what was important to the American public. To track the importance of and space dedicated to select issues, data was collected at three points during the 2006

³⁰Data is retrievable from <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2006/special/issues/>. Results are based on a phone survey of 1, 104 American adults on October 27th through October 29th, 2006. The sampling error is +/- 3. The survey was conducted by Opinion Research Corporation.

election cycle.³² The first point was the end of March, representing the time when Senate candidates started to carve their own space in the digital world. All incumbent candidates had some form of official campaign presence at this time. The second data collection point was at the beginning of June, representing the time surrounding the party primaries. This time proved to be more critical than expected for some of the incumbents, particularly Joe Lieberman. The final collection point was the beginning of November, giving us a final showing of where these issues stood just prior to the general election. Examining issues at these three points in time gives us a unique perspective on how and if the dominant issue changed throughout the course of the campaigning season.

While it is useful to know what issues were talked about on digital contexts, getting a sense of how much these issues were talked about gives us yet another dimension on which to compare incumbents and visualize trends over time (Sulkin et al., 2007). Recall the zero to three scoring as a measure of relative space. Zero means that the issue was not mentioned at all on the home page, one means the issue was discussed in a sentence or less, two means the issue was described in one to three paragraphs, and three means there was a link to a full-page explanation or press release discussing the incumbent's view on the issue. The average score for each issue was determined at each of the three points in time, illuminating which issues were talked about using the highest average Web space.

³² Archived data for additional periods dating from March through November are available. Please contact the author at dtcohen@ufl.edu if interested in accessing these archives.

Issue Consistency within the Campaign Context

Highest ranking issues

To start, we can examine issues as presented on a single context across time. The data as reflected in the chart below indicates a relatively high degree of consistency in the highest and lowest scoring issues on campaigning Web pages throughout May, June, and November. “Jobs and economic development” ranked as one of the top four issues at all three points, scoring the highest ranking issue space mean in March with .75, the fourth highest rank in June with .50, and the third highest rank in November with .63. The issue category “defense and foreign policy” received high marks at the beginning and end of the campaign, scoring a second best .54 in March and third-highest .63 in November, but trailed off in the middle of the election cycle with a mediocre score of .25 in June. The issue category “helping constituents” received low marks at the beginning and end of the campaign, scoring a third best .30 in March and a second best .85 in November, but trailed off in the middle of the election cycle with a mediocre score of .65 in June.

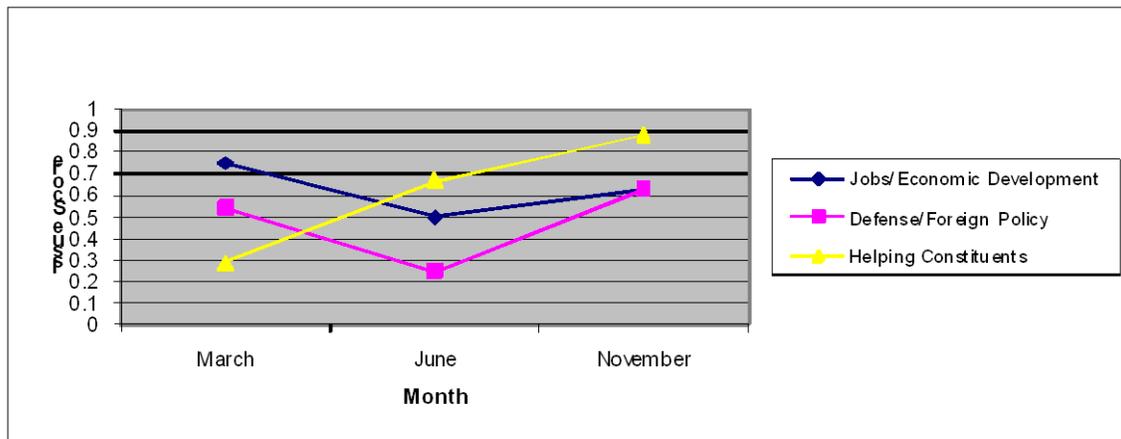


Figure 5-2 Highest ranking campaign issues

We also see that the general “helping constituents” category had an increasingly important presence as the campaign cycle inched towards November. While not addressing any specific issue, these statements typically reflected a general expression of the candidate wanting to help his or her constituency. This topic had great movement as the campaign cycle inched its way to Election Day. It received a mediocre space ranking

in March with .29, and then rebounded with the highest ranking issue scores in both June (.67) and November (.88).

Lowest ranking issues

We also see consistency with the lowest ranking issues on the campaign digital context across our three points in time. While most of the twenty-three issues saw some digital space, a few consistently were ignored on campaign home pages. Campaign finance, the budget, and consumer issues were three topics that failed to receive coverage across all three periods of time. This is a striking finding, and may appear somewhat unbelievable on face, particularly in the wake of raising gas prices. However, recall how issues were classified into categories. Statements could only be classified into one category, this being the dominant theme of each statement. If these three issues were peripheral to a larger issue within a statement or press release, they were not recognized as taking up space on the Web page.

Besides the aforementioned issues that failed to receive any coverage, other categories consistently received low coverage scores within the campaign context. Agriculture, social security, and women's rights and all received low scores throughout our three points in time.

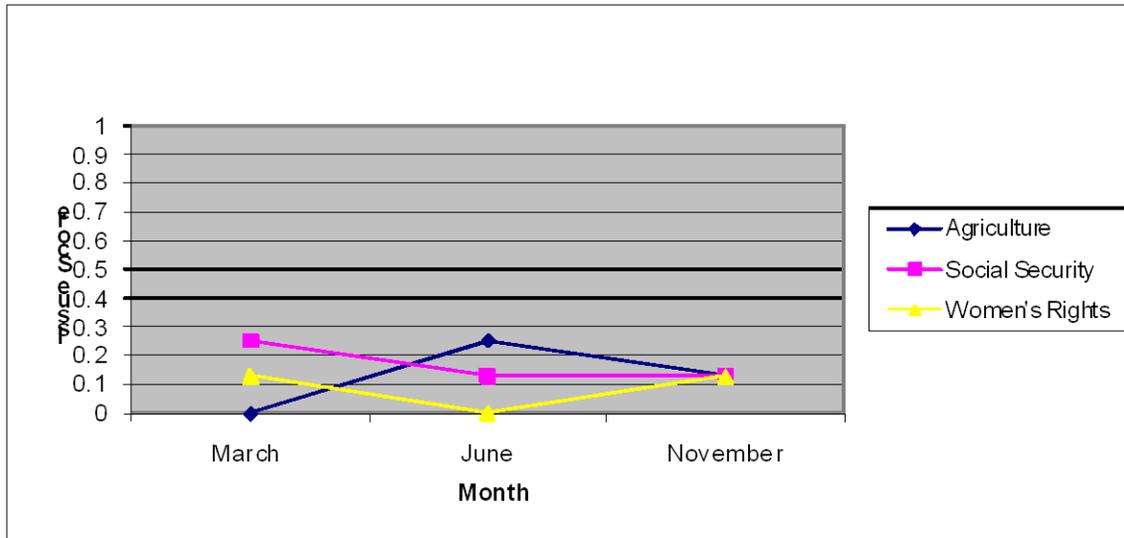


Figure 5-3 Lowest ranking campaign issues

From a normative perspective, it is particularly disappointing to see women's rights as a reoccurring low-score issue. One bright spot is that, out of those candidates who did discuss the issue on their campaign home page, those individuals did so consistently. Hillary Clinton was particularly prolific in that way, discussing the topic at all three points in time on her campaign home page, and has continued to offer women's issue as a point of discussion in her current digital campaign for the presidency.

Issue Consistency within the Senate Context

Highest ranking issues

Turning to the Senate.gov pages, we also see consistency throughout the three points in time. Amongst the issues that consistently received high issue space rankings for the March, June, and November observations, we see the defense/foreign policy and state-specific issue categories take center stage.

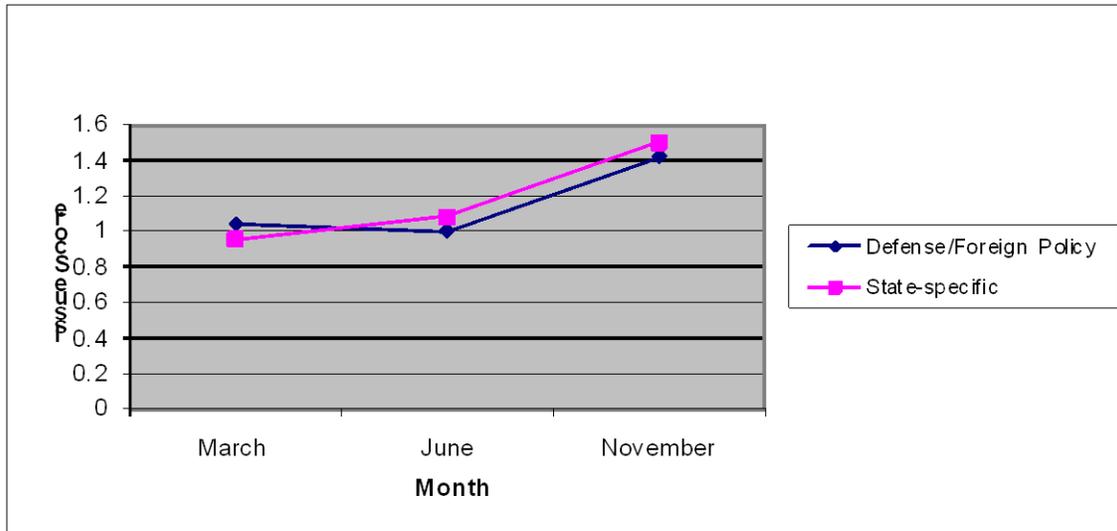


Figure 5-4 Highest ranking .gov issues

The defense and foreign policy category consistently rated in the top three issues at each of the three points in time. It was the most discussed issue in March with a rating of 1.04, the third-highest ranked issue in June (1.0), and concluded as the second most talked about topic in November (1.42). State-specific topics also received lots of digital airtime. Issues were coded into the state-specific category when the nature of the discourse made the state as the main focus. Often, a discussion of an issue was framed in a larger discussion of the state's needs. For example, when home page sentence talked about a state's need to protect its local parks, that sentence would be coded as a state issue. While such a statement could also have been interpreted as an environmental issue, recall that the coding scheme only allows for statements to be coded as the most dominant topic. There is a degree of discretion involved with this coding category in particular. As will be further discussed in the next chapter, this is also an example of how allowing statements to fall under multiple categories could be beneficial to understanding the importance of peripheral issues.

Lowest ranking issues

In our final glimpse of trends within single digital contexts, we see that the campaign finance category once again received zero space across the three time points. Discussions of the incumbent's campaigning opponent also received zero attention on the Senate home page context. As reflected in the figure below, social security and women's rights were the next low-ranking issues that received non-zero scores.

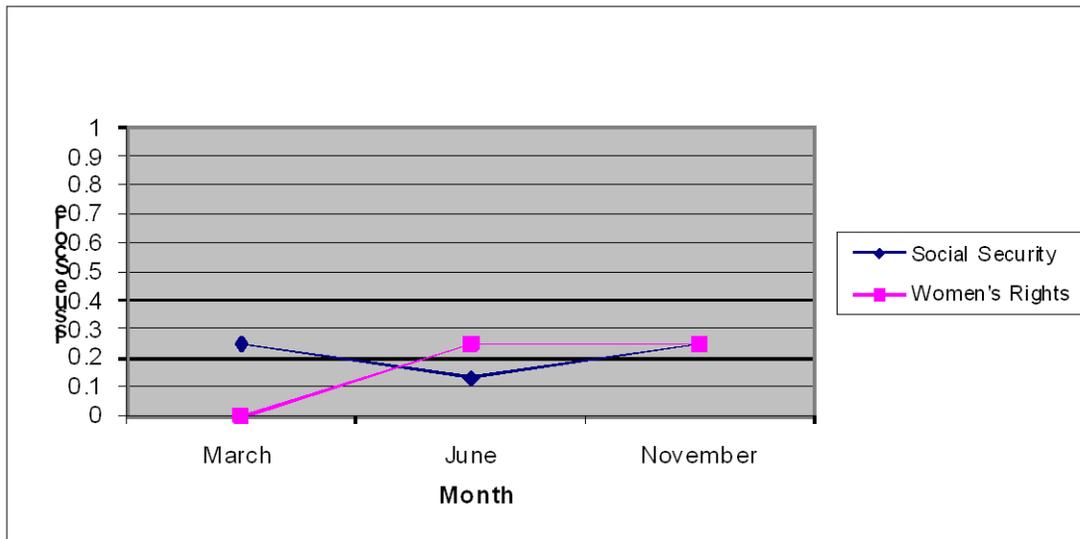


Figure 5-5 Lowest ranking .gov issues

As with our analysis of the campaigning online context, we see social security and women's rights representing low scoring issues. In this context, Hillary Clinton does not present herself as the champion for women's issues. Debbie Stabenow and Ted Kennedy both received the highest possible score on the issue in both June and November. As the chart reflects, women's rights received no attention in March.

Issue Consistency between Campaign and Senate Contexts

We have multiple ways that we can examine the importance of issues in constructing the senatorial self. Looking within a single context, we can track the relative

importance of issues at three points in time, March, June, and November. The previous two sections provide evidence for some degree of consistency within the campaign and Senate online contexts. The fact that common issues were able to be identified at all three points in time within contexts is encouraging for the idea of stability and consistency in the construction of the digital self. To add another analytical dimension, we can look at issues between two contexts during these three points in time. This means that we can look at issues in any variation of six different ways, with the most possible depth being across the two Web contexts (campaign and Senate) at three different points in time (March, June, and November).

Below is a summary of the highest and lowest ranking issue categories within the campaign and constituent Web contexts. These issues were calculated by ranking the presence and issue space given to each context during March, June, and November. The categories listed below were ones that fell in the top or bottom three issue space means across all three time periods.

Table 5-1 Highest and lowest ranking issues

	Campaign	Senate
High	Jobs and economy	Defense and foreign policy State-specific content
Low	Campaign finance Budget Welfare Consumer issues	Campaign finance

To look at this slightly differently, we can also look at the commonalities between contexts over the course of the three points in time. The table below reflects the highest and lowest ranking issues, considering both time and space.

Table 5-2 Issue similarities between time and context

<u>Low</u>		<u>High</u>
	March	
Campaign finance Welfare		Defense/foreign policy
	June	
Campaign Finance Welfare		Immigration Energy/Gas
	November	
Campaign Finance		Defense/foreign policy

Looking between the two contexts, we see the defense/foreign policy category makes its way into the top three issues in both contexts for two of the three observation periods (March and November). Campaign finance finds its way into the bottom three issues in both contexts across all three periods. Welfare proves to be a close follower to campaign finance, making an appearance in the bottom three issues two out of the three months (March and June).

Out of the twenty-three coded issues, we see a clear level of consistency between the highest and lowest ranking categories across both time and space. While this consistency is not absolute, looking at the highest and lowest ranking issues, it is substantial. The most important issues stood the tests of time and space, as did the least important ones. These issues did not represent isolated incidences of discussion. They were highly cited topics that actively worked to shape the online presence for 2006 Senate incumbents across time and space.

Looking at the broader picture, we also see consistency between the five major election issues identified by voters and the issues most frequently discussed on campaign and Senate Web contexts. Although the Wisconsin Ad project issue categories used for

this dissertation's coding scheme differed from those discussed in CNN's election coverage, we can still see clear patterns between the two data sources. Recall the CNN bar chart on page two. They cited the most important issues as being the War in Iraq, terrorism, the economy, immigration, and moral issues. The chart above clearly shows the relative importance of defense and foreign policy in this dissertation, giving us the first of a few similarities. Looking deeper beneath the surface, we see that the economy and moral issues were also very important to incumbent senators in both contexts, falling in the top five issues mentioned. The consistency between these two data sources points to an intriguing type of connection between incumbent senators and their constituents.

The “Issue Candidate” Ideal Type

Having just explored the place issues have on campaign and Senate.gov web pages, we can point to an example of an incumbent that really stood out as being “issue candidate”. We can think of this candidate as representing an ideal type because she exemplifies someone who places issues well beyond any other element on her Web page. As we will explore, there were a few characteristics on her Web page that helped her to stand out above others in terms of her dedication towards a single issue.

In 2006, Maria Cantwell was the Democratic Party incumbent from Washington State, an “issue candidate” ideal type. Her major issue was protecting the environment, a theme that ran throughout her campaign and Senate.gov Web pages. Most of the other issues she discussed, such as energy independence, were couched within the larger theme of protecting the environment.

While some other candidates devoted substantial levels of Web space to one particular issue, such as Hillary Clinton to the theme of women's rights, there were a few

characteristics that helped Senator Cantwell stand out as an ideal type. Starting with the April 4th archives, her campaign home page featured a petition, making her one of only two candidates that offered this resource. She dedicated her whole campaign home page to discussing President Bush's recent elimination of federally protected areas, and asked citizens to co-sponsor the Roadless Area Conservation Act. At the same time, her Senate.gov Web page had a video clip of her talking about the environment and the benefits of exploring natural energy sources.

Senator Cantwell's dedication of Web space to one particular issue both between and within the campaign and Senate.gov contexts was striking. The inclusion of an online petition, online videos, and letter to constituents regarding this one issue helped to distinguish her as an "issue candidate" ideal type.

Images

Beyond considering issues, another approach to measuring senatorial consistency is to examine the images presented on the multiple Web contexts over time. Like the discussion of issues or tools, images represent yet another piece of the overall puzzle of senatorial presentation.

Recall that every home page picture on both the campaign and constituent Web contexts was assigned a score from 1 to 5. One means that the incumbent was not in the picture at all, 2 meaning the Senator was the only one in the picture, 3 meaning he or she was in the picture with one or two others, 4 meaning the Senator was seen with three or more others, and 5 representing the presence of a pictorial slideshow. Images were captured along the same timeline as the issues, with data being collected in late March, early June, and early November. Also similar to the issues section, we can take a mean

score across these three timelines to understand more about how these images changed throughout the course of the election.

We see that the way the incumbent senators elected to present themselves through images remained very consistent within but not between the two contents during our three observation points. On their campaign home page, incumbents utilized 114 total pictures in March, 95 in June, and 95 in November. These figures are noticeably lower than those on their Senate Web pages, observed at 139 for March, 114 for June, and 123 for November.

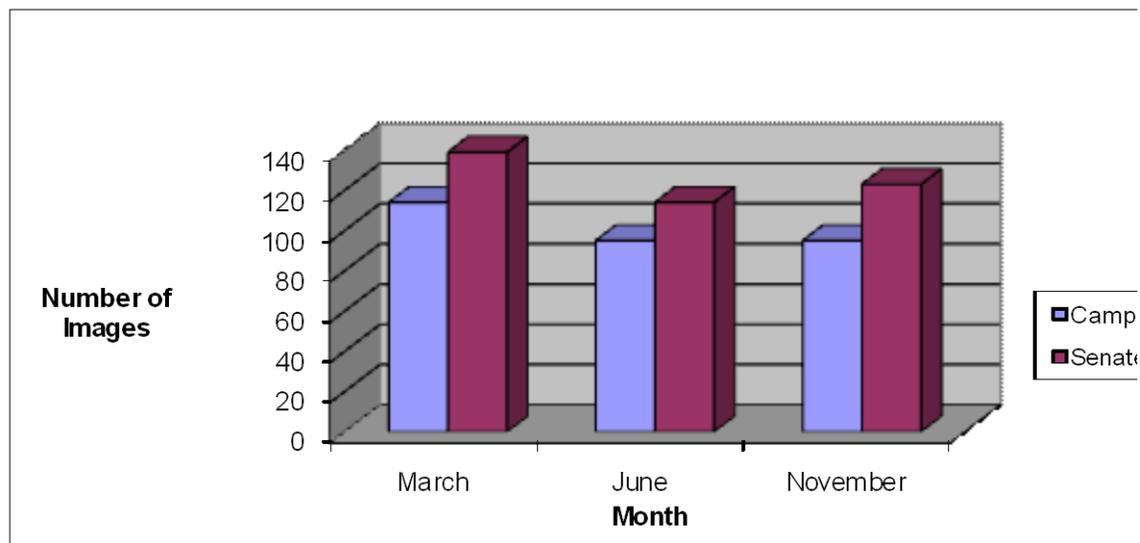


Figure 5-6 Home page images

There are a few interesting trends to note in the table above. First, the number of images on the Senate page, when taken in the aggregate, outnumbers those on the campaign page 376 to 304, just shy of 20% more imagery.³³ Another interesting trend is the overall decrease in images around the primary season. One may intuitively expect to see the amount of images go up as the election cycle progressed to November,

particularly on the campaign page. We see this is not the case for either context. This may be because the images are being displaced for other things, such as digital tools.

To get a sense of the types of images that are present on the home pages, we can take a look at the mean, median, and mode statistics between our two contexts over time.

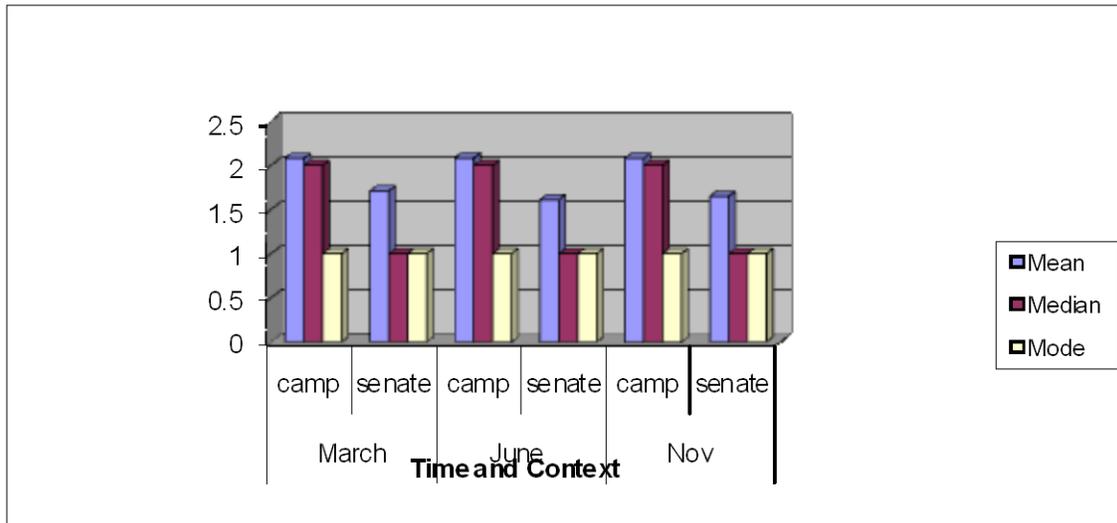


Figure 5-7 Digital images

We see a consistent mode of one both between and within the campaign and Senate contexts across throughout the three periods. This indicates that the most common type of image on both contexts was one that did not include the incumbent. Some of the more frequently shown images included American and state flags, state seals, images of state-specific landscape, and the U.S. Capitol. Further bolstering the evidence for pictorial consistency, the mean, median, and mode statistics remain constant when we look within contexts. The median and mean are higher for campaign contexts across all three data observation points, indicating a greater prevalence of pictures that include the Senator in campaign home page images.

³³ These figures represent counting each image on the page across all three contexts. It is likely that some of the pictures remained the same, thus these statistics include duplicates. It does not represent statistics for

Slideshows as a glimpse of the dynamic self

As new technology develops, candidates increasingly will have new and creative ways to present themselves on digital contexts. In present day, the usage of virtual slideshows is still rather new in the online political circle. Slideshows allows for politicians to change the content of their images and video while a person's browser is sitting on their page. Slideshow images fade in and out, creating an engaging atmosphere while the web browser is in a passive state. The notion that images no longer have to be considered on a static dimension allows for the possibility of a much more dynamic presentation of self in political contexts. Yet, while virtual slideshows are ever-present in contexts such as Myspace.com, political Webmasters have yet to catch up to this technology.

Campaign Web pages are typically the venue where we first see new technology being tried out in the political sphere. This is likely because, as reflected in some of the in-depth interviews, candidates use the digital context as a means of competition and constantly trying to outdo their opponent. This type of competitive perspective lends itself well to delving into new digital ideas. One of the more memorable pages to successfully employ slideshow technology was Senator Harry Reid's 2004 campaign re-election page. Drawing on the interactive power of Flash coding technology, Reid's Webmaster created sliding home page menus that revealed unique pictures when touched. Even with the Web developments over the past two years, Reid's page is still ahead of its time.

In 2006, the usage of flash and other similar technology for the construction of imagery and animation was surprisingly low. While incumbent pages were loaded with

features and information, overall, they lacked this dimension of developing technology. As reflected in the table below, we barely saw a more basic form of changing imagery in the usage of digital slideshows.

Table 5-3 Slideshow usage

	March	June	November
Senate	0	0	0
Campaign	2	3	3

We see that slideshow technology was not used at all in Senate Web pages, and used relatively sparingly on campaign sites. The incumbent candidates who embraced virtual slideshows as windows into the self were Senators Ensign, Allen, and Akaka. The rotating presentation of self allowed for these candidates to interchange between different types of images. While it is somewhat surprising that slideshows are not yet used on Senate Web pages, it is likely something to look for on the near future.

Images and the “localized candidate”

Images played an important role in helping with the identification of a “localized candidate” ideal type. As discussed in Gulati’s 2004 article on local versus national digital presentations, local candidates often downplay their relationship with Washington in favor of having more items that help connect them to their home constituency. Recall our earlier discussion of Senator Maria Cantwell and her usage of online petitions and streaming video to set her apart as an “issue candidate” ideal type. Here, images play an important role in helping to identify Democratic Senator Dan Akaka of Hawaii as a “localized candidate” ideal type.

Most of the candidates studied in this dissertation dedicated some digital space to talking about the needs of their constituents. For some, this came in the form of a letter on either their campaign or Senate.gov page. Others highlighted their support for local legislation on these two Web contexts. Dan Akaka's usage of language, imagery, and content help set him apart as having a significant focus on the people of Hawaii. His connection to Washington was minimized on both his Senate.gov and campaign pages.

Being a representative of a non-contiguous state, Senator Akaka had some notable advantages to help him distinguish himself from Washington. These included the usage of both verbal and non-verbal cues relating back to his home area. His campaign home page used terms such as "aloha" and "mahalo nui loa" [thank you very much]. Images feature him wearing a lei. Landscape photos are unmistakably of Hawaiian shores and flowers. Other candidates lack the ability to relate with constituents through their own unique language, and imagery may be mistaken for other contiguous states. The presence of such unique characteristics, and his consistent usage of them on both his Senate.gov and campaign Web pages, helps Senator Akaka to stand out as "localized" ideal type.

As discussed in the previous section, the usage of slideshows helped Senator Akaka to reveal a dynamic digital self. It also assisted him in creating a deeper localized self. His campaign slideshow images all featured pictures of Hawaii, either landscape alone or the Senator with Hawaiian constituents. These pictures actively capture the Web browser's attention. Since the focus of these changing images is on his localized self, the slideshow helps to accentuate this aspect of his digital presentation. Thus, the usage of slideshow technology helps one to identify Senator Akaka as a localized ideal type.

Digital Tools

A third important facet of digital presentation described by the Webmaster respondents was the presence of specific online tools and features. For Senate sites, these included things like contact information and constituent service links. For campaign pages, features included items such as press releases and the ability to contribute money. These and other items come together to create a digital sense of self. With technological tools continually developing, it is useful to understand the frequency with which these tools are used. It is even more interesting to compare these tools across different contexts.

We can start off by examining the most popular Web tools across the campaign and Senate digital contexts. These statistics stem from the November archives, giving us a snapshot of the tools utilized just before the election. The most popular features were the existence of a photo gallery, welcome letter or video, contact information directly located on the home page, and a link to a biographical page.

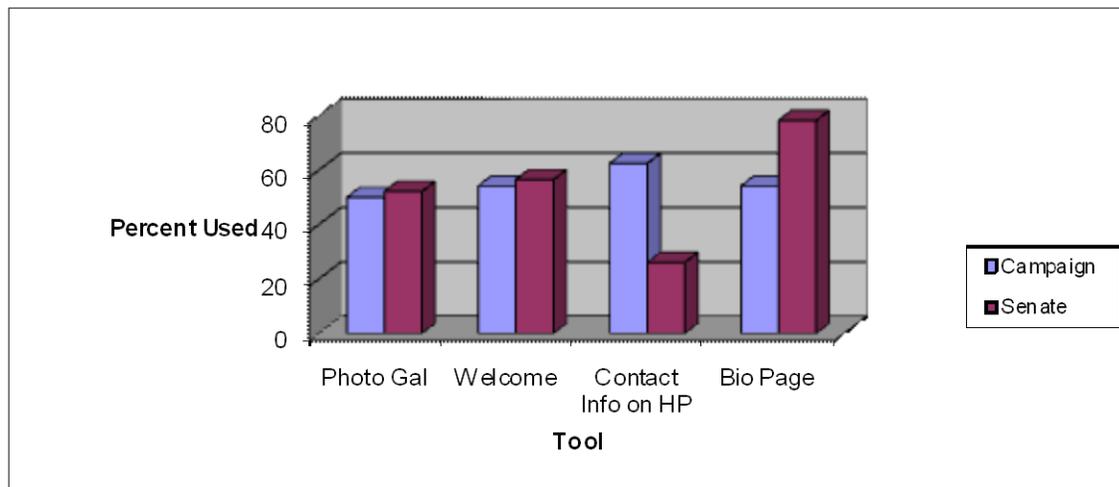


Figure 5-8 Most popular web tools

Even though campaign and Senate Web pages represent two different contexts and have two unique agendas, we do see overlap in the usage of certain tools and features. However, we see signs that these unique agendas do lead to a degree of divergence in the tools used. There were numerous items that appeared on one context but not the other.

Some items that received attention only on the campaign home page were the ability to donate money (66.7%), volunteering through the home page (54.2%), mentioning the opponent (27.3%), and offering a familial presence (25%). Only one incumbent offered a familial presence on the Senate home page. Conversely, the Senate-specific items included offering a link to constituent services (82.6%), a link to or about the state (20.4%), a link specifically for students (50%), and offering a section about their activities as mentioned in the news (91.3%).

The fact that some of these items appear in great frequency in one context and not at all on another shows us that consistency is not a thought when creating certain features. Campaigns need to solicit money and volunteers, while Senate offices need to help constituents find different services. It makes sense that total consistency cannot and should not be achieved. While it is intriguing that family presence appears on a quarter of the incumbent's campaign Web pages yet only on a single person's Senate page, it is helpful to remember that home pages are finite spaces. Information must be prioritized.

Considering Overall Consistency and Change

Thus far, we have individually considered the role that images, issues, and tools play in the development of the digital self. Reflecting on the presence of these items in isolation of one another is both interesting and insightful. To take it a step further, the

next progression is to see how all of these elements come together on the campaign and Senate Web pages. As in the previous analysis, we can look at the two online contexts across a span of three observations.

The chart below shows the number of home page changes across both digital contexts. In compiling this data, each senatorial Web page was compared with itself from period to period. For example, the June campaign data was calculated by comparing the March site for an individual senator to the June site for that same individual. The number of changes from one period to the next were tabulated. These changes could be pictorial, issue-based, tool-based, headlines, or other categories. The June page for a particular senator was then compared to the November page of that same individual, giving us the basis for the November figures. These figures were then calculated for each context.

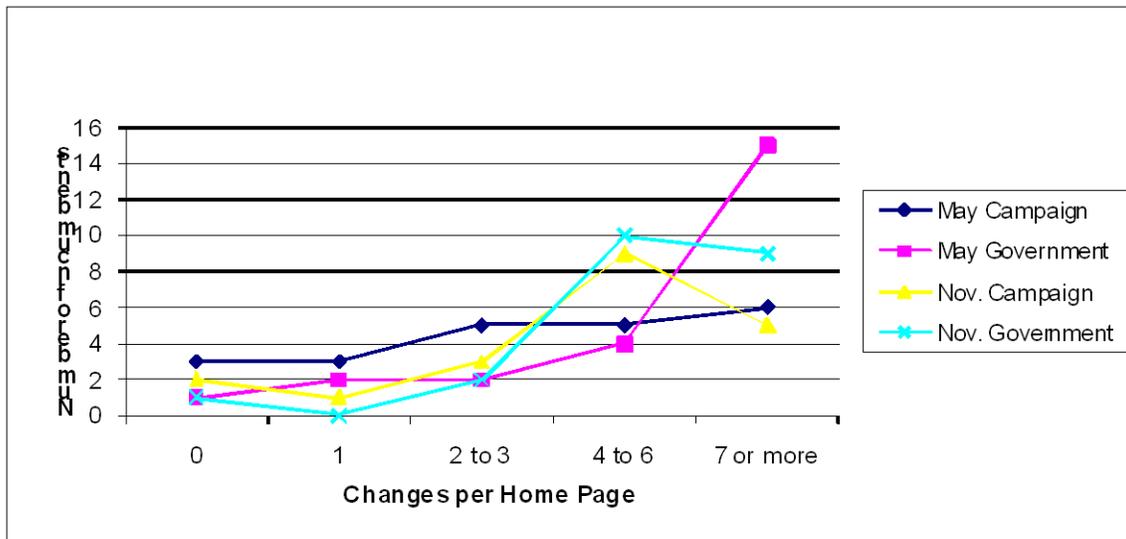


Figure 5-9 Web page changes

The figure above reflects a modest number of changes for both contexts as measured in both June and November. All four lines indicate that there were a handful of

senators who did not change their home page between points in time. We see steady amounts of change leading up to the 4 to 6 changes per home page category. The June Senate pages were most dynamic, with fifteen senators making seven or more changes to their Senate page at that time. Only one person made zero changes in their Senate page between the March and June observations.

There is definitely a degree of subjectivity when interpreting the above chart. On one hand, we can see evidence of change amongst both contexts at all observed periods of time. On the other hand, one can easily question how significant these changes are. To make four to six changes to a home page may not be regarded as meaningful. In the scope of a detailed home page with many photos and headlines, making more than seven changes may not be that substantial either. Considering the implications of these findings leaves us to wonder when and how “change” can make a substantial impact on potential Web browsers.

Change in Competitive Versus Non-Competitive Races

One can also consider overall consistency and change in respect to race competitiveness. It is thought-provoking to consider how much incumbent candidates in competitive races change their digital image when compared to incumbents in non-competitive races. One may be quick to assert that if an incumbent feels they will likely win, he or she may take a conservative approach to changing their online presence. In other words, why change a good thing? As the campaign respondents described in chapter 4, change can be a good thing in itself. It can give the impression that the incumbent is busy and that he or she is responding to the ever-changing needs of the

constituency. With that perspective, one could make strong arguments for both sides of the coin.

A useful resource to learn more about the vulnerability of incumbents is the Cook Political Report, a non-partisan Web site that reports on House, Senate, gubernatorial, and presidential races.³⁴ Charles Cook, editor and publisher of the Report, posts various documents detailing different races. One of these documents is a race rating where all of the seats up for re-election are placed into four categories: toss-up, lean, likely, and solid. The placement of each incumbent into one of these four categories helps site browsers to understand the chances of any given seat switching parties in the upcoming election. Using the Cook Report as a resource in conjunction with the Web page data archived for this dissertation, it is possible to compare seat vulnerability with the number of Web page changes.

For this analysis, the November 8th Cook Report was used to help determine the average number of Web changes in different types of races.³⁵ We can regard races falling into Cook's "solid" and "likely" categories as being non-competitive, and races categorized as either "lean" or "toss-up" as being competitive. We see that, on average, candidates in both competitive and non-competitive races make similar amounts of changes to both their Senate.gov and campaign Web presentations.

³⁴ To learn more about the Cook Political Report, see <http://www.cookpolitical.com/about/default.php>.

³⁵ Please see appendix K for the November 8th Cook Report.

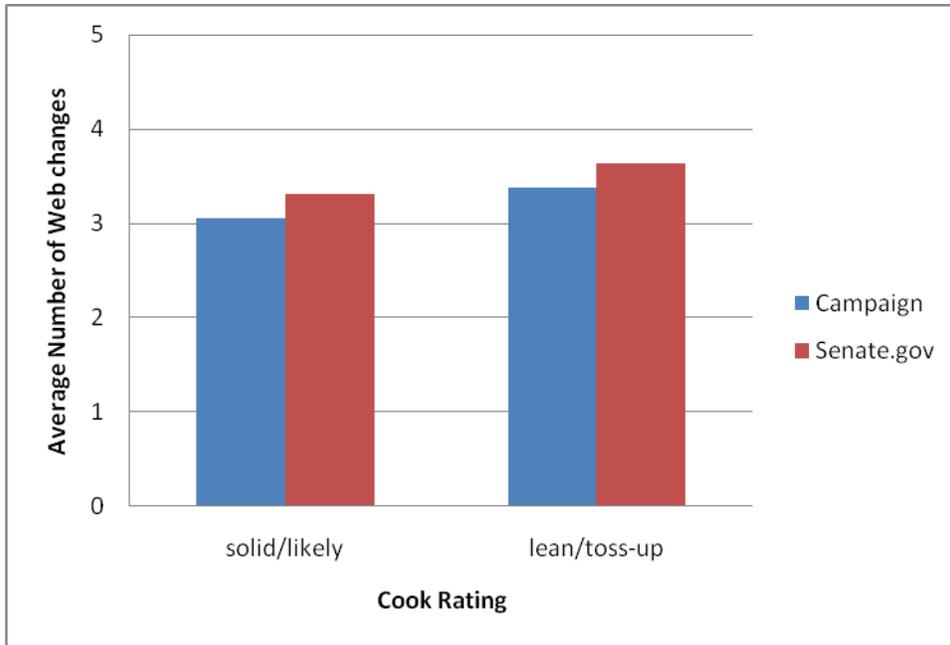


Figure 5-10 Competitive versus non-competitive races

We see that the “lean/toss-up” category has slightly higher means for both the campaign and Senate.gov contexts, but by a very small margin. It is interesting to see that candidates in different types of races are making similar amounts of changes to their digital selves. This likely speaks to the fact that change is not necessarily a bad thing, and cannot be predicted based on competitiveness of the seat. Both successful and troubled candidates engage in this behavior. Lincoln Chafee, Republican from Rhode Island, was one of the more prolific candidates in terms of making changes. Categorized by the Cook Report as being in a “toss up” election, Chafee found himself in the maximum change code category, over seven changes between archives, during all three observed periods. This applies to both his campaign and Senate.gov web site. Also finding herself in the maximum Web page change code category was New York Senator Hillary Clinton. Listed in the Cook Report as a “solid democrat”, she also had over seven changes between archives on her campaign and Sen.ate.gov Web page throughout all

three observed periods. While we cannot be certain what prompts digital change, looking at the aggregate, the data provided above indicates that competitiveness of the seat does not appear to be a significant factor.

Unfortunately, this dissertation cannot shed light on the tangible implications of making one change, for to six changes, or seven or more changes per home page. As will be discussed in the next chapter, exploring that question through Web-based experiments would give scholars a unique perspective on this question. However, this lack of concrete empirical evidence does not preclude us from making some educated guesses. We can draw on some of the insights from our in-depth interviews to help us in this exercise.

Recall some of the goals Webmasters talked about in the construction of their pages. A few of the campaign respondents talked about the importance of trying to intimidate their opponent. If a candidate has a static Web page, they are not actively working to achieve this goal. The one Democratic challenger Webmaster interviewed for this project spoke laughingly about how pathetic his opponent's Web page was. Describing it as a "joke", this respondent felt that the opponent's lack of digital presence gave his candidate confidence that he could dominate the liberal online constituency.

A second reason for and potential implication to changing one's presentation of self, also as spoken to by some of the Webmaster respondents, is giving the media and constituents the appearance of being busy. One respondent equated the perception of being busy with the perception of covering a winning campaign. By changing images, headlines, and features, it gives off the perception that the campaign is actively working on their digital presence. Additionally, offering updated press releases and online

calendars gives potential incentive for the media to come back to the page at a later point in time. Thus, some degree of digital change has positive implications for both the Senate and campaigning contexts.

Conclusion

The question of context is a central consideration in politics. Thinking about who you are talking to, what their needs are, and what appeals to them to gain their vote are all important in a campaigning and representative context. This dissertation considers campaign and Senate.gov Web pages as two different political e-contexts. These places both reside within the world of our larger politics but are created by different staff members who have separate agendas. Senate offices are the first line of contact for constituents, offering help and services to people living in the incumbent's home state. Campaign offices aim to get the candidate elected or re-elected, emphasizing the person's perspectives and persuading constituents that he/she is worthy of their vote. In both contexts, a presentation of self must be constructed. Here, we are attempting to understand how consistent these selves are on the two digital contexts, and how they are similar and/or different.

In considering how this self is developed, we first individually considered the topics of issues, images, and technological tools. These elements were then considered collectively to get an overall measure of change and consistency between and within the campaign and Senate digital context. The data reveals an interesting mixture of similarities and differences between the two e-contexts. The exploration of issues shows consistency with the least and most cited topics both between and within contexts over time. Our exploration of pictures reflected a little more diversity between contexts, with

campaign home pages more frequently showing images that include the incumbent by him or herself, as well as with others. Senate pages offer more pictures of landscape and images with unidentifiable people. Finally, our exploration of tools also gave us mixed results in terms of consistency between contexts. While biographical statements, contact information, photo galleries and welcome messages all played an important role in home pages on both contexts, there was great diversity in some of the other features and tools. Numerous tools were common on one context, while not seen at all on the other.

In thinking about why some issues, images, or tools may take privilege over others, we must remember that space on any given home page is limited. It represents a finite context. Some pages are atypically long, such as Myspace profiles. Campaign and Senate home pages do not take on this type of look, likely because Webmasters want to give off a clean appearance. From that perspective, incumbents must be selective in what they choose to put on this valuable real estate. What we see is a byproduct of this difficult selection process, for which many factors play a role.

The next chapter brings together findings from the qualitative and quantitative chapters. Through an analysis of Joe Lieberman's changing presentation of self, we will see how drastically incumbents can alter their digital presentation when faced with a challenge. This chapter will ultimately illuminate the importance of context in the development of the self.

CHAPTER 6 JOE LIEBERMAN'S CHANGING FACE OF INCUMBENCY

Background

The election of 2006 proved to be dynamic in many respects, with the political world watching Democrats gain six seats in the Senate, thirty seats in the House, and six governorships across the country (CNN online, 2006). Fueled in part by a general disapproval with the war in Iraq, powerful Republican incumbents tumbled, including Jim Talent (R-MS), Rick Santorum (R-PA), and George Allen (R-VA). Other incumbents dodged bullets by changing the nature of their candidacy, as is in the case of Joe Lieberman (I-CT), who changed party affiliation after his upset in the Democratic primary.

This chapter explores how Lieberman's digital presentation of self changed throughout the course of the 2006 election. Four phases will be described in detail. We begin with Lieberman presenting a conservative yet informative image of a powerful incumbent. After losing the primary, we see a clear phase of redefinition, with his Web page being nothing but a brief letter to constituents. His Independent-Democrat phase offers a striking contrast to the previous two phases, offering harsh criticism of Ned Lamont and a much more aggressive styling. The final stage is that of a hijacked identity, a period surrounding the party primary where Lieberman's digital self was taken away from him. All together, these four phases represent a dramatic spectrum of senatorial presentations.

Joe Lieberman, the Incumbent

It was no surprise when Democrat Joe Lieberman announced he would be seeking his fourth term in the U.S. Senate. A very popular incumbent, Lieberman came to power in 1988 by upsetting moderate Republican Lowell Weicker by a margin of 10,000 votes. Lieberman never looked back, winning his next three elections by significant victories. In 1994, he landed the biggest landslide ever in the history of Connecticut Senate races, raking in sixty-seven percent of the vote (Lieberman Senate Web page, 2006). While Lieberman had an unsuccessful bid for the vice presidency in 2000, and again four years later for the presidency, he was still able to retain his Senate seat, winning reelection in both 2000 and 2006. The race in 2006 was a far cry from his previous landslide victories, with no political forecaster being able to predict the viability of Democratic challenger Ned Lamont.

Ned Who?

Ned Lamont, a successful businessman from the Southwest region of Fairfield County, announced his candidacy for U.S. Senate on March 13, 2006. A virtual political newcomer, his only experience in office was in the capacity of a selectman for the town of Greenwich, as well as various civic boards. Starting the campaign as a virtual unknown throughout the State, nobody could have imagined the fight he would give Lieberman throughout the course of the race.

Amidst heated negative sentiments towards President Bush and the Iraq war, Lamont consistently attacked the popular incumbent on television and the radio throughout the duration of the race. Accusing Lieberman of being a loyal Bush supporter, Lamont painted his opponent as a staunch Republican and disloyal Democrat.

He continually reminded constituents that Lieberman voted in favor of the Iraq war resolution, and attacked his attendance on the Senate floor. This message began to take hold in route to the primary, and Lamont slowly started to gain name recognition throughout the State.

By July, Lamont found himself in a statistical dead head with the Lieberman in statewide polls. It became increasingly obvious that Lieberman was in trouble and that his primary victory was far from certain. The Senator's ads became increasingly defensive and he began to flounder in his support of the Iraq war. Lamont creatively used the incumbent's words to make his point about the need for new blood in the Senate. Taking a clip from Lieberman's 1998 debate against Republican incumbent Lowell Weicker, Lamont captured a video file of Lieberman stating he would never run for four consecutive terms in the Senate. This message bombarded airwaves in the weeks leading up to the election, and on August 8, 2006, the previously unknown challenger made national headlines by beating the three-time incumbent in the Democratic primary.

Choice Time for the Lieberman Campaign

In the days leading up to the primary, Lieberman began collecting signatures to get on the ballot as an Independent candidate. While he likely would have preferred to keep this move silent, keeping it quiet until after the primary, he was forced to abide by Connecticut campaign laws. State statutes required him to submit 7,500 valid signatures the day after the primary in order to earn a place on the November ballot (Associated Press, 2006).

Despite narrowly losing the primary by 10,119 votes, Lieberman was ultimately able to capitalize on the large Independent base in the State, as well as the lack of a viable

Republican challenger. He took 70% of the Republican vote in the general election (Hartford Courant, 2006). Lieberman went on to win the November general election by 115,648 votes over his Democratic challenger (CNN online, 2006).

The Value of this Case

Negative sentiments surrounding the war in Iraq helped to bring us numerous interesting House and Senate races in 2006. Many Republican incumbents were forced to consider how to run their campaign in light of the growing disapproval with the Party's agenda. This meant making difficult decisions regarding how to present themselves to the public during the course of their campaign. These types of decisions likely included considering what issues to stress, what alliances to highlight, and how to portray a party allegiance while appealing to voters.

While it has happened throughout the course of U.S. history, it is relatively rare that an incumbent will switch party affiliation, particularly at the senatorial level.³⁶ It is even more notable when this switch occurs during the course of an election. Due to this rarity, the Connecticut Senate race provides a particularly unique context for exploring how Congressmen tactically change their Web presentation of self. The reality of Lamont winning the primary forced Lieberman to make a very difficult campaign decision: to continue running for U.S. Senate without the backing of the Democratic Party, or to drop out of the race all together. Believing he could draw strength from Democratic-leaning Republicans and Independents, both of whom were ineligible to vote in the primary, Lieberman decided to stay in the race under the newfound label of

³⁶ For a comprehensive list of representatives who switched parties, visit <http://en.allexperts.com/e/p/pa/party_switching_in_the_united_states.htm>.

“Independent Democrat”.³⁷ With this new label came a significant shift in his presentation of self, both in the online and offline worlds.

In the study of politics, scholars often find themselves engaging in “chicken and the egg” type of arguments, debating what entity first influenced the behavior of another entity. We particularly see this debate within the subfield of political communication, with the unresolved question of if the media influences the larger politics, or if the larger politics influences the media. I believe this case study is important, in part, because it offers unique pieces of evidence for both sides of this debate. We will see substantial evidence that Lieberman’s Web page content arose in response to the larger politics of the race. On the other side of the spectrum, we will explore how the hacking and hijacking of Lieberman’s Web page lead to an outburst in the offline political world, including harsh accusations in various offline mainstream media contexts. Thus, this case study provides us with evidence that the online media both influences and is influenced by our larger politics.

Scholars in the field of political science are fortunate in that politics are far from predictable. Initially, conducting a case study of the Connecticut Senate race was not part of my methodological approach, as it was nearly impossible to predict that this race would come to play out the way it did. It was through the weekly Web page archiving process that the excitement of this case became clear. By viewing and saving each Web page frequently, I became intimately familiar with each incumbent’s look and message. This is an important reason why I ultimately decided to focus this study on Senate incumbents, as opposed to both House and Senate. I felt that the small number of cases

³⁷ Lieberman’s placement on the ballot was under the party label “Connecticut for Lieberman”. The term “Independent Democrat” is used because that was how Lieberman referred to himself in the media.

would allow me to gain an intimacy with the data that likely could not have been gained otherwise. The Lieberman case study arose from this benefit.

While other incumbents made image changes in both their senatorial and campaign capacities during this time, as the other chapters in this study explore, no change was as dramatic as Joe Lieberman's. This case is unique in that Lieberman went through a complete candidate overhaul. Quantitative analysis simply cannot adequately capture the scope or depth of these changes, giving this chapter an important place in this study.

One additional element that makes this case interesting is an interview that I was able to obtain with a staff member of the Lamont campaign, Ray.³⁸ Ray interested me as a respondent because of his high level of activity on the Lamont campaign and local liberal blogs. I got in touch with him electronically through the Lamont blog, and he agreed to be a part of this study. A forty-five minute telephone interview was conducted approximately a week after the general election. Quotes from this interview are offered throughout the piece, as Ray gave great insight into Lieberman's online campaign. This brings a unique breath of life into this case study, offering perspective from the Senator's opponent and someone who is very active in and familiar with the Connecticut blogosphere. The depth of the topics brought up by Ray again lead us to consider the great benefit of qualitative research.

Scholars may be quick to dismiss the findings in this chapter because it talks about a sample of one. Since quantitative analysis is privileged because one can generalize from the results, this is an easy trap for people to fall into. However, some

³⁸ Ray is a randomly assigned pseudonym used to protect the true identity of the respondent.

political scientists attempt to remind us that a case study of one holds substantial value.

Most notable, King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) offer

“...a single observation can be useful for evaluating causal explanations if it is part of a research program. If there are other single observations, perhaps gathered by other researchers, against which it can be compared, it is no longer a single observation” (211).

This Lieberman case study is offered in hopes that it encourages others to bring new examples to the political science and sociological literatures.

The Four Faces of Lieberman

The Democratic Phase

While vying for the Democratic nomination, Lieberman kept a very up-to-date, conservatively bland campaign home page. The upper-right hand said “Fighting for Connecticut” and had an accomplishment of the day that changed daily. The center of the page featured a letter from Joe, or on days where a special campaign event was occurring, a recap and pictures from the day’s events. Scrolling down the page, one would find a bar with multiple options that can be clicked, surrounded by the text “Join Joe’s Fight”. Like most other campaign home pages, Lieberman had links leading Web browsers to his stances on different issues. Elements that were immediately striking upon reading the content were how he consistently embedded the topics under the umbrella of being a fighter, offered scarce mention of his opponent, and used a lot of words to describe himself.

Lieberman’s page was also notably conservative, offering virtually no interactivity. There was no blog, no streaming video, and no personalized interactive feature. As noted by Ray, the Lamont campaign respondent, “Before the primary, his Web page was a joke. It was not interactive. It just had a few articles that were updated,

no blog” (Ray interview, 2006). The closest thing a browser could do to be “interactive” was to submit a story on how Joe’s work in the Senate impacted their personal lives. This feature was a far cry from many other incumbent candidates’ Web-based interactive features, as well as Ned Lamont’s. Lieberman was informative yet conservative, giving out information but taking little in return and offering no personalization. The message was all about Joe, controlled solely by Joe.

In addition to pictures, logos, and other media, the usage of language is very important in setting the tone of an online campaign. Content analysis of Lieberman’s pre-primary campaign home page reveals strong support for his self-portrayal as a fighter. Variations of the word “fight” were identified seven times on the July 22nd home page, giving credence to Lieberman’s usage of this concept as a major theme in the campaign.³⁹ We also see virtually no mention of his opponent, something that will change dramatically as we explore later phases of Lieberman’s Web page. The campaign home page uses the words “Lamont” and “Ned” one time, respectively.⁴⁰ This leads to a clear emphasis on the self. “Joe” or “Joseph” can be found twenty-six times on the home page, and “Lieberman” can be identified forty times. Overall, we see that Lieberman relied heavily on language, using approximately 1,209 words on the home page alone.⁴¹

During the pre-primary period, Lieberman stressed his relationship with other Democrats on his campaign Web page. This became evident through three main home page features. First, he often highlighted campaign events he had with other Democratic Party figures. This feature would often include a picture of Lieberman with his

³⁹ More specifically, these variations include the words “fight”, “fighter”, and “fighting”.

⁴⁰ This content analysis is from Lieberman’s July 22nd campaign home page. The archive of this Web page is available upon request.

⁴¹ The 1,209 word count comes from the campaign home page archive dated July 22, 2006.

Democratic ally, brief text about the event, and a quote from the ally focusing on Lieberman's candidacy. A powerful example of this is when Bill Clinton came to Connecticut to campaign on behalf of Joe.⁴² The campaign archive dated July 30th features Clinton's visit towards the top of the page. Directly under the headline "President Bill Clinton in Waterbury" reads a quote, " 'He is a good Democrat, he is a good man, and he'll do you proud' –Bill Clinton" (Lieberman campaign home page, July 22nd, 2006). Looking at the entire home page, this quote is the only one that appears in bold text.

The second way Lieberman featured his relationship with other Democrats in a section called "Who's Supporting Joe", which was located on the bottom right corner of his home page. This feature included an image of a person and a caption that described who the individual was. Featured supporters included Democratic candidate for Connecticut's Forth Senatorial district Diane Farrel (July 30th) and Planned Parenthood (July 22nd). While a similar feature was present in the post-primary version of his Web page, Lieberman did not specifically refer to those supporters as Democrats during this time, again demonstrating the importance of his party connection in the pre-primary stage.

The third main feature that reflected the importance of Lieberman's partisanship in his self-presentation was a hotlink on his campaign home page titled "Democratic Links". This feature could be found towards the bottom of topics browsers could click on, and took users to a page of links to other Democratic candidates, the DNC, and other Party-related pages. As the primary campaign moved forward, the title of this hotlinked

⁴² This highlight could be viewed on the July 22nd and 30th archives.

was changed to “Election Websites” (starting with the June 15th archive). This feature did not appear on his campaign Web page after his primary loss.

The Transitional Phase

After losing the Democratic primary, Joe’s campaign Web page remained relatively barren for approximately one month.⁴³ The campaign left up the same image of Joe in the upper-left hand corner, along with the “get involved” and “contribute” links. These were the only hyperlinked options on the page, which went unchanged during this month. The essence of the transitional Web page was a letter explaining why Joe wanted to continue his candidacy.⁴⁴

The vagueness and lack of information present on his campaign Web page resembled the suddenly quiet persona he gave off in the real world immediately following the primary loss. This was likely a time of redefinition; a time where the Senator and his campaign staff had to decide what it meant to be Joe Lieberman, “Independent Democrat”. The campaign home page, mostly in the form of a letter to browsers, contained approximately 271 words.⁴⁵ This is in stark contrast to the 1,209 words used in the first phase of the campaign home page, a time when his candidacy had definition and direction. The information he provided in the letter did give us insight into one element of his future campaign, that of a bipartisan orientation.

During this transitional time, site visitors that read the letter got hints as to the bipartisan tone that Lieberman would be taking on. Multiple phrases in Lieberman’s Web letter alert us to this re-creation as a bipartisan candidate.

⁴³ Lieberman’s new campaign page came online between the August 30th and September 10th archiving.

⁴⁴ See Appendix H for the text of Lieberman’s campaign home page during this transitional phase.

⁴⁵ This word count was conducted on the Lieberman campaign home page archive dated August 14th, 2006.

“So much needs to be done, but so little is actually getting done in Washington because our politics have become so partisan and polarized”

“I hope you will join me in this cause, no matter your political persuasion....”

“I do not and will not hesitate to work across party lines when it will get things done for my constituents” (Lieberman for Senate, 2006) ⁴⁶

These quotes give us a good feel for the candidate Lieberman is about to transform into, foreshadowing his shift to a more bipartisan entity that becomes apparent in the third stage of his campaign. As we will explore in the next section, it is indeed true that the bipartisan theme in these statements becomes one of the major platforms for the Independent stage of Lieberman’s campaign.

An interesting point regarding the transitional phase in Lieberman’s online identity was the length in which it existed. During this period, Lieberman was in the national spotlight, and vigorously continued his campaign activity in the offline world. On August 9th, one day after the party primary, Lieberman’s offline campaign moved on to the new stage of his candidacy, but his online campaign was very slow to follow suit. The fact that Lieberman’s online transition from Democrat to Independent-Democrat took over a month could be the result of a few factors. It could be that the campaign was under a high degree of stress, and the development of Web content was not a high priority in the redefinition of the Senator’s candidacy. Conversely, it could be that the campaign gave very careful consideration to the development of the new Web content and needed the month to put out a quality product. Since the layout of the page went through a complete overhaul, as we will explore in the next section, programming and Web design may have taken the full month. Brainstorming new Web content may have added to this design delay. According to Ray, our respondent from the Lamont

campaign, Lieberman brought new communication staff members on board after his primary loss, and they may have needed time to get acquainted with the campaign in order to make this online transition.

Either way, it is reasonable to consider that the Senator's online senatorial presence took some sort of a queue from his new offline candidacy. Since Lieberman's campaign as an Independent Democrat was already in motion in the real world, that offline self-definition likely helped the campaign staff to determine how to project the Senator online. As we will see in the next phase, there was a high degree of media sharing between the radio, television, and Web streaming video. This type of connection between the online and offline campaign did not exist in the pre-primary stage. Now, the connection between the Senator's online and offline presence took more of a center stage, with offline media flexing its muscles in Lieberman's online campaign.

The Independent Democrat Phase

After Lieberman's month-long transitional period came to an end, what emerged was nothing like what Web browsers had seen before. The Senator completed his Independent-Democrat persona with a Web page that would last throughout the duration of the campaign. The background was different, the color scheme had changed, new headlines filled the home page, and perhaps most critically, the demeanor and content surrounding Lieberman's self-presentation was radically altered. The time the campaign spent with the Web page down was clearly not for maintenance purposes; it was to construct a whole new candidate in the digital and real world.

There were many dramatic changes to the new campaign Web page, with one of the most striking being the difference in word count compared to the previous two

⁴⁶ Quotes taken from Joe Lieberman's e-letter, August 9th through approximately September 10th

phases. Where the pre-primary home page featured 1,209 words, the post-primary page had only 153 words.⁴⁷ This is an amazing transition, giving those 153 words on the new page a heightened importance.

Beyond a significant change in the number of words used, we also saw a dramatic shift in the nature of the content. Whereas Lieberman had a clear focus on himself in the pre-primary stage, defining his opponent took on a much more prevalent role in the Independent-Democrat phase of this online campaign. Recall that the pre-primary phase of Lieberman's page only mentioned the words "Ned" and "Lamont" once, respectively. Now, we see "Ned" mentioned three times and "Lamont" used once. While this may not seem like that significant of a change, examining the placement of those key words gives us a much clearer picture about how important those words are in the scope of the page. Also, considering how those words are used in context gives us a better sense of their relative importance.

In the home page archives leading up the primary, it was very difficult to find Lieberman's opponent mentioned anywhere on the page. One would have to scroll down about halfway down the page, where they would see Lamont's name used in a description of the senatorial debate that took place on July 6th. The Lieberman campaign writes, "Debate Highlights Lieberman's Strong Record of Delivering for CT and Lamont's Uncertainty and Inexperience" (Lieberman for Senate, July 22nd, 2006). Ned's name is mentioned one more time in that article. In a dramatic twist, Lieberman becomes much more cynical in the contexts in which he refers to his opponent in his post-primary

⁴⁷ The 153 approximate word count comes from the campaign home page archive dated September 10th, 2006.

presence. These quotes below come from a September archive of the Lieberman campaign home page.

“Ned’s got foot-in-mouth disease”

“The FULL Lamonty: The Whole Truth about Ned”

“No less a figure than Senator Dodd is calling out Ned’s growing double talk habit” (Lieberman for Senate, September 10, 2006).

While Lieberman ran a few negative television ads against Lamont prior to the primary, his Web page had virtually nothing of the sort. Space on his new page was largely dedicated to painting Lamont in a negative light. This strategy persisted from the September 10th archive through the end of the election. Examining the October 29th archive, Lieberman has two attacks on Lamont that are clearly visible upon visiting the site. They come in the form of creative icons, both of which have messages contained within the images. The first attack can be found on the lower right-hand corner of the home page, and comes in the form of a brown piece of paper with a wrinkle on the corner. Red writing states, “The *Full* Lamonty”, while black text underneath that reads, “The Whole Truth About Ned”. Even if the viewer does not click on the link to find out what specifically the reference is about, there is a clear message that constituents do not know everything they need to know about Ned. This message entices browsers to explore the Web page further, a creative element that was nonexistent in the Democratic straight-edged Joe.

More than in the previous two stages of the campaign, Lieberman visibly mixed his offline and online campaign presentations during his Independent-Democrat phase. The top right corner of his new Web page featured commercials the campaign was airing

on local television programming. These commercials clearly had a bipartisan tone, focusing on experience and desire to help the Connecticut constituency. One commercial that ran on television and on his Web page featured the Senator at a chalkboard. With a line drawn through the middle of two polar opposite labels, Democrat and Republican, the Senator talks about the importance of a bipartisan effort. He recites his new campaign slogan, “It’s about people, not politics”.

Looking at the new campaign home page, one would not be able to determine what party Lieberman was associated with. The top of the home page had an image of a flag, with the words inside the borders spelling out “Vote Joe for Senate”. Another headline just under this box read “Team Connecticut”. Lastly, the color scheme of the page was red and blue, encompassing both the traditional Democrat and Republican colors. As the general election came closer, the campaign uploaded an icon of a sign that read “Dems for Joe”, attempting to revive an online Democratic connection.⁴⁸ This image linked to a page detailing various Democrats who were supporting Joe’s candidacy as an Independent. For a period of two weeks, from October 1st through October 15th, a new hyperlink appeared where browsers could view the Connecticut and national list of Democrats who were supporting Joe. Interestingly, this hyperlink disappeared before the next weekly Web archiving took place.

Towards the end of October, the Lieberman campaign spent a lot of time attempting to educate voters on how to find Joe’s name on the ballot. His name appeared on the very bottom, a reality that clearly worried the campaign. Both Lieberman’s offline and online campaigns made ballot placement a major issue, and again, we saw offline

⁴⁸ This icon was visible from the archives dated October 1st through the general election. As noted, the nature of this icon did change.

media's influence arise in the Senator's online presence. Radio and television ads once again made their way onto campaign Web space. The campaign created a jingle which aired on local radio channels, which subsequently found its way to a center headline on the campaign home page. Lieberman's staff also created a new television commercial on the topic, which aired in the upper right hand corner of the Web page. The presentation of radio and television ads on the campaign Web space was a new phenomenon that occurred only during this third phase of the Senator's online presence.

The Hijacked Phase: The Case for a Forth Identity

The three phases of Lieberman's identity discussed thus far all have one important commonality: they were all identities that were consciously created by the campaign. The campaign Web page represented Lieberman's own piece of digital space; a place where he was in total control of his message and could upload whatever images and text he chose appropriate at the time. The next identity that will be described is different in that control was clearly taken away from the campaign, with the message being created by some unauthorized author. A hacked identity offers a forth identity for the Lieberman campaign, however unwanted this identity may be.

Content analysis reveals that Senator Lieberman's Web page was hacked at least three times, including a hijacking period that included the day before, of, and after the primary.⁴⁹ It is possible the Web page was hacked or hijacked more times, taking place between the weekly Web archiving. When the Web page was hacked, the nature of the content alteration made it clear that the authenticity of the page had been violated.

Excluding the page hijacking the night before the primary, the hacker went out of his or

her way to advertise the accomplishment of breaking into the security of the site. The content of the altered page varied. In one instance, the hacker left just a white home page and thick black text that read, “This page has been hacked”. Other times, when hijacked, including the day before, of, and after the primary, the page went offline completely.

With Lieberman and Lamont clawing for primary votes, the 72-hour hijacking surrounding the primary became the center of a heated political battle. The Lieberman campaign accused Lamont supporters of disabling his Web page the day before the primary. Ray, our Lamont campaign respondent, describes how the Lieberman campaign was quick to point fingers at Lamont supporters:

“[Lieberman] screamed about being hacked, he mentioned that the bloggers did it, which is the most ludicrous thing in the world. Nobody I know who’s worked close to the campaign would even know how to do that...so that was like the first big hit. He made us seem like we were nefarious forces attacking his Web site” (Ray interview, 2006).

The Lieberman campaign accused Lamont’s supporters of inflicting what is known as a “Distributed Denial of Service” attack, or DoS. This type of Web-based attack occurs when a hacker wants to have a specific Web page unavailable to online browsers at a particular point in time. It is executed by attacking the Web server such that it cannot adequately communicate with the site browser’s computer (Carnegie Mellon University, 1997). It is considered a cybercrime to initiate Dos attacks, and as a result, the Lieberman campaign asked the Connecticut Attorney General’s office to launch a criminal investigation.

The evidence tends to support the fact that the Lamont campaign, as well as its supporters, played no role in the disabling of the Lieberman Web page the day before the

⁴⁹ It is possible that the number of successful hacking attempts is higher, indicating the Web site was hijacked between the weekly archival for this dissertation. It is also possible that there were other

primary. Multiple sources confirmed that the Lieberman campaign used a very low budget Internet host, paying \$15 a month. By comparison, the Lamont campaign was paying \$1500 to have their Web page hosted online. On December 20, 2006, the Connecticut Attorney General concluded that no criminal activity had taken place in the disabling the Lieberman Web page. While we can never be sure what or who was ultimately responsible for the site disabling, it is difficult to overlook the basic fact that one often gets what they pay for. Paying \$15 a month for Web hosting means that the capacity of the Web server to take on significant traffic is limited, making the page prone to such outages. Interestingly, Lieberman never pointed fingers or referenced the multiple previous hackings that took place well before the primary. This meant that Lieberman either had no knowledge of the previous hackings, or was attempting to make the final hack seem much more despicable by painting it as an isolated incident that was waged at such an important time. If he admitted to previous hackings, his campaign could be criticized for not taking action to better protect their Web page from hackers. Any form of sympathy would likely be significantly diminished, if not lost, in that case.

One may be quick to question why Lieberman decided to point fingers at the Lamont bloggers as opposed to Lamont campaign itself. Ray gives us interesting insight into this question, theorizing that his negative feelings about bloggers dates back to his experience running for president in 2004. Ray shares

“With the blogs, I think it was genuinely held that we were all yelling, screaming left-wing whackos, and I think this comes from the presidential election of 2004. I think that’s where it really comes from, Dean. I think Joe was the frontrunner. You have to look back at the 2004 stuff, because Joe was the frontrunner. Gore took his time deciding if he was going to run in the election. He ended up endorsing Dean, he didn’t endorse Joe, and I think Joe felt just so betrayed by that...he always had this idea as bloggers being this evil force of the party. I

unsuccessful hacking attempts that went undocumented.

think he took that with him into this campaign, and it had a lot to do with why he made such poor online decisions. And it had a lot to do with why he didn't want to get involved online. I mean, he had nothing online before the primary, and after the primary it was a very cynical attempt, but it was successful. It was his online presence as he saw us, purely attack and nothing else. But he didn't need that, because he had 70% of the Republican vote, and no Republican candidate" (Ray interview, 2006)

Ray's insights demonstrate the importance of a candidate's political history in current campaigns, and provides insight as to why Lieberman started his online campaign so conservatively. Even though the presidential election of 2004 may be a distant memory for many Connecticut voters, its influence is still with us. As a candidate, Lieberman carries that losing experience with him, according to Ray, which likely includes a distaste for liberal bloggers.

While it is curious to consider who Lieberman pointed fingers at after the hack, it is less surprising that his campaign felt the need to point a finger in the first place. The disabling of the Lieberman Web page put the campaign in a very precarious situation. They lost an important resource during a highly critical point of the race. Lieberman attempted to get a positive benefit out of the otherwise negative hack by using it as an avenue to attack his opponent's supporters. He simultaneously painted himself as an innocent victim. When something as harsh as having your online identity taken away from you arises at such a critical time in the election, options are limited. This was likely one of the only defenses the Senator could muster.

Conclusion

Joe Lieberman's digital transformation was truly amazing, illuminating how Web presence and presentation of self can change dramatically in a short period of time. As we explored in the literature review, campaign Web pages were nothing more than a

basic template just a decade ago, providing very basic information about the candidate. Now, crafting a campaign digital presence is a work of art, with online campaigning being just as dynamic as the political world it lives in.

Lieberman's page was a living, breathing entity that both shaped and was shaped by its outside surroundings. As a powerful Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate, his page was busy, informative, and detailed. It served as a great source of campaign news, positional perspectives on issues, and information on the Senator's vast political experience. During the pre-primary period, Lieberman consistently presented himself as a strong fighter looking to better his Connecticut constituency. He was confident, professional, and conservative in both the online and offline worlds. As the political climate changed, starting with his loss in the Democratic primary, his online presence followed his offline tailspin. Lieberman was more silent after his loss, publicly stating that would continue running, sitting in the background of mainstream media. He sat in the background as he rethought his campaign strategy and image. During this time, his Web page once again changed to blend with the larger political climate, with the Web page lying dormant for a period of a month serving as strong evidence. When Lieberman resurrected himself in the form of an "Independent Democrat", he was a candidate with a new look, message, and presence both in the digital and real world. His online behavior took a queue from his offline behavior, as he became much more aggressive in the way he attacked his opponent. His radio and television ads began to take a role in shaping his online presence.

Many facets of this race have interesting implications for how we regard the future of Internet technology in our politics. The fact that Lieberman's Web page was hacked

multiple times, including the days before, of, and after the primary, reflects the true volatility of such technology. While many people tout online politics as the wave of the future, many still have reservations about its total replacement of traditional mediums of campaign communication. Lieberman's case study is certainly evidence for those that may agree with the latter sentiment. It further bolsters the argument that nothing beats the candidate going out and speaking to voters face-to face, simply because no hacker can eliminate or alter the existence of that presence.

The hacking of Lieberman's home page was also significant in that it potentially blocked constituents' ability to gather accurate information on the candidate. A browser may have only a few minutes to visit a campaign home page. He or she may go the hacked site and never return. Alternatively, a hacker could potentially upload a fraudulent campaign web page, representing it as the official one. All constituents can do is trust that the campaign and Senate Web pages are maintained by authorized staff members, but as with any site, tight control of that Web space cannot be fully guaranteed. It is ultimately impossible to gauge the impact Web hacking had on Lieberman's campaign, as it would be for any campaign. It's hard to believe that its impact was negligible, particularly in the context of this race, where the Senator's hijacked Web page became a hot issue in the mainstream media.

The Reaches of Media Influence

The Lieberman case study is an instance where we see both online media impacting the larger politics, and the larger politics impacting online media. The third phase of the Lieberman campaign is illustrative of how Web media responded to the larger political context. It took a long time for the new Independent Democrat Web page

to be operational, but when it was, we saw offline media injected into the online presence. This came in the form of streaming video previously aired on television stations, as well as radio commercials, being broadcasted on the home page.

During the fourth phase, the hacking period, we saw a very different dynamic. Here, activity on the Web page clearly influenced what subsequently happened in the larger political context. After the hacked Web page came back online, the Lieberman campaign wrote an accusatory letter blaming Lamont supporters for the disablement.⁵⁰ Lieberman then went to the Hartford Courant with the story and filed a claim with the Connecticut Attorney General. The online hijacking became an offline debacle that received substantial mainstream press.

Ultimately, it is hard to gauge precisely how influential Lieberman's shift in online identity was to the outcome of the election. While we know that people are increasingly turning to the Internet as a source of political information, researchers are still at the early stages of measuring how look, content, and changes to a Web page may influence potential voters. It is not outside the range of possibility that Lieberman's new digital look turned off undecided voters. Sensing the cynicism and negativity Lieberman was putting out towards his opponent, they may have decided he was not the candidate for them. Viewers may have also sensed a loss towards the featuring of local politics. Others may have liked the Independent vibe Lieberman was portraying in his new look. It is important for scholars to gain more knowledge about how what we see on the Web impacts our political behavior. This would allow us to understand the larger implications of such presentational shifts in the senatorial presentation of self.

“Candidate in Crisis”

In chapter 4, Senators Maria Cantwell and Dan Akaka were discussed as presenting us with two unique ideal types. Cantwell served as an “issue candidate”, while Akaka reflected the “localized candidate”. In both instances, the senators presented unique characteristics that set them apart from their Class I colleagues. In this chapter, Lieberman demonstrated why he reflects the ideal type of a “candidate in crisis”. After losing the primary, we witnessed a clear period of re-definition. This period was noticeable because very little information was present on his campaign Web page. When the page came back to life a month later, we saw a very different Lieberman.

While not all candidates in crisis may act this way, Lieberman certainly represents one type of reaction to a viable threat. Other candidates may have elected not to switch party affiliations after suffering a primary loss. In that sense, Lieberman provides with an aggressive ideal type when faced with crisis. He not only decided to switch parties, but attempted to align himself with both. Capitalizing on a theme of bipartisanship, he was able to dig himself out of crisis and retain his seat in the U.S. Senate.

Political Histories

Finally, this case study reminds us of the importance of the political histories candidates bring to their elections. Even someone as politically established as Joe Lieberman has biases and privileges that can rear their head in the course of any given campaign. In the Senator’s case, as Ray helps us to understand, a past vulnerability from 2004 translated into a current insecurity towards the bloggosphere. It is possible that Lieberman feels that the liberal Dean bloggers took away his presidential chances, still holding negative sentiments towards the online political world. We can see from the

⁵⁰ See Appendix I to view the content of this letter.

very early stages of the political campaign that Lieberman had little intention to use the Web as an interactive part of his campaign. While he used it to fundraise and collect the names of volunteers, browsers were otherwise passive. This was in stark contrast to his opponent Ned Lamont, who had an interactive blog and other active features. Lieberman is a good example of political history reliving itself during the first two phases of his Web presence.

This case study represents the tip of the iceberg in understanding how a senatorial presentation of self is created on the World Wide Web. Lieberman shows us that not even powerful incumbents are immune to digital facelifts, and that these facelifts can sometimes be dramatic. As the Internet becomes an increasingly important tool for the gathering of political information, it behooves us to consider how Web presentation may impact the browsing constituent. Scholars are just beginning to understand how Web presentations are created in our political world. As we refine our methods for such studies, future research can address how these presentations change both within and between election cycles.

Just as people reflect on how presentations in television debates turn the tides for political candidates, Web presence may soon gain that same type of prominence. The digital presentation of self is often a calculated, strategic creation that both shapes and is shaped by our larger politics. Lieberman is certainly not the last candidate to have to face difficult Web-based decisions. Further research can help illuminate how different aspects of Web design work to shape an online presence.

The final chapter of this dissertation brings together the questions, findings, and discussions posed throughout the course of this dissertation. We will consider what the

case study, interviews, and quantitative analysis collectively say about how and why a construction of self is created on multiple political e-contexts. We will also explore how one could expand on this research to attack important questions raised throughout this dissertation. When placed in the larger context, it will become apparent how this work represents the first of many steps that need to be taken to better understand how senatorial presentation of self is constructed and maintained across space and time.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

Just as political institutions develop, so does digital technology. With each passing election cycle, we see the Internet playing an increasingly important role in our politics. What once started out as a simple template with very basic biographical and contact information, political Web pages have developed immensely in their complexity and importance. In this dissertation, we have gained deeper insight into how incumbent senators use this technology to develop a digital self. Having explored the progression of Web politics since 1996, we can appreciate the amount of time and effort that has been spent in developing this online presence.

This research has introduced new concepts of time and space to our study of the digital self. Through a comprehensive mixed-method approach, we explored how incumbent senators running for re-election in the 2006 cycle presented themselves on their campaign and Senate Web pages.

This chapter starts off by discussing the broad findings as offered by the previous three chapters. This is followed by a reflection on some of the key points made by our Webmaster respondents, including some criticisms not included in the qualitative chapter. We then explore the implications of subjectivity, including the results of not having inter-coder reliability, weakness of the coding scheme, and the concept of reflexivity. Solid suggestions are offered for those looking to expand on this research, followed by a few final words.

The Evolving Digital Self

Conclusions

Overall, we see interesting patterns of consistency and inconsistency in the construction of the senatorial self. This research demonstrates that the greatest degree of consistency exists within similar contexts. We see consistency in the types of digital tools used, as well as the issues discussed the most and least. Evidence of consistency between contexts is apparent, but this is not as dramatic as within the same context, likely because the two venues have very different objectives.

Throughout the analysis, readers are continually reminded of how the Senate.gov and campaign contexts are indeed very different. While the two contexts explored here are representing the same person, they also represent two different offices with diverse motives. These differences actively work to shape unique constructions of the digital self.

One can begin by going back to the origination of these pages, specifically, looking at the in-depth interviews with Webmasters and their perspectives on the goal of each Web context. The respondents identified some very critical differences. For campaigns, the goals of the Web page included fundraising, intimidating the opponent, giving information to the media, and empowering supporters. For Senate pages, goals included offering accessible information on constituent services, updating senatorial activity, and offering contact information. These Web-based goals are in line with the larger needs of the office, which prove to be very different. This is elaborated on in the following sections.

The implications of these differences are illuminated in the quantitative analysis. We see the usage of different online tools and digital technology to help aid in achieving these goals. The focus on issues and images also differs between the two contexts. For campaigns, images focused more on the self. Unique tools included the abilities to donate money and sign-up for a virtual newsletter. For Senate offices, unique tools included the addition of contact information on the home page and a link to constituent services. Images not including the senator were much more prevalent on these pages.

The ultimate conclusion to be drawn is that not only office goals, but also the larger political climate, work to create differences both between and within contexts. The case study of Joe Lieberman represents a dramatic shift in self-presentation within a single context. Here, we see how an unexpectedly competitive election caused an overhaul to Lieberman's presentation of self on his campaign home page. The page went through substantial changes as the larger politics surrounding the race went in new directions.

The in-depth interviews also lead us to conclude that the construction of the Senatorial self is not directly related to the level of technologically savviness that the office workers may have. This is likely a misconception that one unfamiliar with the topic may be quick to conclude. The interviews revealed that a significant degree of the initial Web page setup is done out of house. Further supporting this argument, many campaign offices went to the same vendor, Campaign Solutions, for Web services. If the office staff members were highly Web savvy, they likely would not feel the need to secure the services of such outside vendors. This indicates that the playing field of

technological knowledge in campaign and Senate offices may be much more level than one would expect.

In finding the most appropriate respondent for the interviews, it was discovered that some of the campaigns had employees dedicated to the digital campaign. It may be possible that these employees were hired after the Web page came online, and thus did not have a chance to create the Web site. However, evidence suggests that these employees were hired for their knowledge of digital strategy, not digital programming. The best example of this came in speaking with a campaign that was accused of hacking into their opponent's Web page. The respondent, a person dedicated to the candidate's online strategy, stated that he did not know how to perform such an action, and that the campaign was innocent of such allegations. This was an intriguing finding, given the high level of interactivity on one page.

The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

Placing these findings in the scope of symbolic interactionism, this research represents yet another example of how people continually work to construct their own reality. As new information comes in to play, senators make changes in accordance to how they think others will interpret their actions. This process results in the ultimate construction of the digital self.

Erving Goffman would enjoy reflecting on this senatorial puzzle of how incumbents come to create a digital presence both between and within digital contexts over time. It represents a very complicated phenomenon, mostly because this sense of self is being created within the very volatile world of American politics. It is an interesting exercise to reflect on how some of his concepts in self-presentation apply to

our unique political world. I believe Goffman's dramaturgical approach can rightfully be applied to both the online and offline political self. Digital Web presence is a unique form of performance through which senators attempt to persuade others that they are legitimate in their roles as candidates and elected officials. Language, tools, and images all represent mechanisms of impression management, working to further persuade viewers that the incumbent is right for the role.

The Question of Consistency

Questions concerning the importance of senatorial consistency were presented in chapter 2 of this dissertation. Given that we see evidence that points to both its importance and relative subdued value, the most appropriate conclusion is that the political climate of the race determines whether or not consistency is a valuable characteristic. Looking at the case of Joe Lieberman, we see great inconsistency within a single context over the 2006 election cycle. Although he lost the primary, his inconsistency in both the online and offline world resulted in a solid victory in the general election. Although many other factors came into play in helping him retain his Senate seat, his inconsistency did not cost him the election. One could reasonably suggest that his inconsistency, specifically moving more to a bipartisan persona, helped to ensure Ned Lamont could not pull a major upset in the November election. Thus, inconsistency was a valuable characteristic in the content of the 2006 Connecticut Senate race.

On the other side of the spectrum, one can reflect on John Kerry's presidential run in 2004. The term "flip flopper", referring to his changing stance on the Iraq war,

resonated with the American public. Voters' interpretation of this likely played a significant role in Kerry's downfall.

According to the Webmaster respondents, change is a positive thing. Some respondents cited it as key way to let the media know that the candidate is keeping busy. These interviews help us to understand that inconsistency should not be looked at in a negative light. Change means the incumbents are being active and responding to what is happening around them. In that sense, change may be an important part of the impression management of incumbent senators. If the change is deemed to be too dramatic, such as Kerry's "flip flopping" on a key political issue, the candidates are no longer convincing constituents that they are made for the role of senator. If this perception of an inconsistent self is too great, voters will let them know at the voting booth. In moderation, both online and offline change is a healthy thing for our political process. The voters have a very powerful role in determining how much change is appropriate at any given time.

Voters have another powerful way of expressing what they perceive as acceptable change, public opinion polls. In this dissertation, we explored how the top issues presented on the campaign and Senate contexts compared to a public opinion poll of 1,000 American adults. We saw a striking degree of consistency between the multiple data sources, indicating a potential connection between polls and what topics receive the most Web attention. Ultimately, as the perspectives of constituents change as reflected in public opinion polls, this empowers senators to make changes to meet constituents' needs.

Fenno (1978) helps us to understand why different presentations of self take place online. Recall that he describes how the Washington and home constituency roles mix when the goals of each capacity coincide. These roles do not intertwine when the goals of each capacity do not find common ground. In this dissertation, the Webmaster respondents helped to illuminate some of the different office objectives. We explored how campaigns are attempting to fundraise and recruit volunteers, amongst other things. The Washington office is more focused on sharing information on constituent services. Fenno would likely argue that, given that these goals are different, we should not see an intertwining of the Washington and campaign roles. Consequently, the presentation of self would likely be different on each Web context.

Mayhew (1974) may help to explain why we see some degree of consistency in presentation of self. Recall that Mayhew describes three main activities of congressmen. Credit claiming, position taking, and advertising are all ways that politicians attempt to reach their goal of re-election. We found that appearing busy, communicating to the media, and offering up-to-date digital content are all online actions that support Mayhew's three activities. Since these three digital activities apply across the Washington and campaign contexts, this may help facilitate some degree of consistency. Fenno would likely agree with Mayhew on this point, stating that the intertwining of these goals represents an intertwining of capacities. Fenno would further add that the intertwining of these goals and capacities would likely lead to a degree of similarity in presentation of self.

Benefits of Change

As illustrated in the diverse examples of Joe Lieberman and John Kerry, change can, at times, be a good thing. These two candidates demonstrate that the potential benefits of change are substantially dictated by the larger politics surrounding the race. As we discovered in Lieberman's case, change enabled him to take a more bipartisan tone approaching the general election. Securing the independent base proved to be key in his successful re-election bid. Had he maintained the same persona in the online and offline worlds, Ned Lamont may have been victorious in November.

In Kerry's case, his change in persona was largely defined by his opponents. While he may have changed perspectives on an issue, it was the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, as well as President Bush, that ultimately bestowed the popular label of "flip flopper". Here, to his detriment, the larger politics defined Kerry. With the definition of his persona quickly getting away from him, he was not able to reap any benefits of change.

Change in presentation of self, when carefully calculated, can open up opportunities for candidates. As in the case of Lieberman, it may open up the opportunity to appeal to different constituent base. For others, it may bring freshness to the campaign. As noted by the staff respondents in chapter 4, change can be seen as being active, responsive, and busy. It all ultimately depends on how and if the constituency is willing to look upon these changes in a favorable light.

With that said, one may reasonably conclude that one of the most central factors associated with change is level of popularity in public opinion polls. Polls give both candidates and sitting incumbents an idea of where they stand in the eyes of their

constituents. If the individual is popular, he or she will likely not feel the need to change presentation of the self. If polls show that the probability of re-election is slipping away, the candidate will likely want to change something in hopes of attracting voters. In essence, strong politicians will question why they should change a good thing, while floundering politicians will question how they can change an unpopular thing.

Respondent Insights

Critiques

In conducting my in-depth interviews, two of the campaign office respondents questioned the importance of this research, saying that they failed to see its impact on practical politics. They attempted to direct me “hotter” areas of online campaigning, including the construction of online negative campaigning through third-party blogs and Web pages. Receiving this type of criticism is never easy, and it caused one to question the ultimate importance of their research to the non-academic community. Ultimately, commentary like this helps us to understand what people in the field feel are cutting-edge topics for scholars to pursue. It is their way of expressing their priorities to scholars, and as academics, it is important that we listen.

One of the two respondents pointed out the growing relationship between online media networks and offline politics. He made specific reference to George Allen’s usage of the word “macaca” at a public gathering, which quickly made its way onto YouTube. It was this respondent’s impression that the popularity of this YouTube video was responsible for sending the popular incumbent on a downward spiral. We now know that George Allen’s campaign never was able to recover from this incident.

The criticism and suggestions received from these respondents illuminates two key points. First, there is a vast world of digital campaigning that scholars have yet to give adequate consideration to. This is not because they do not want to, but more because there is not enough manpower to do so. Online campaigning is developing at a rate where scholars have a hard time keeping an up-to-date understanding of our digital politics. The long journal review process does not help this reality. By the time scholars can identify certain digital phenomenon, successfully submit an article, and have the issue in which it appears released for public reading, we are already seeing new technology arise.

The second major point to reflect on from the respondents' criticisms is that there is a greater need for discourse between scholars and people in the field. This was not a particularly new concept, but rather something that became reinforced as a result of the interviews. The fact that two of the respondents did not see value in understanding the implications of online senatorial presentation of self is cause for question. It could have been the instrument itself; perhaps the questions were not clear enough, the interview length was not appropriate, or the respondents did not like the interviewing style. Perhaps the respondents were having a bad day. Regardless, we must remember that the Webmasters bring a totally different frame of reference to this study. As the men and women in the political trenches, they are privy to a host of information that we as scholars must reach out to understand. Furthermore, when there are political dynamics that are so clearly changing the tides of key elections, such as George Allen and his YouTube video, other things become seemingly much less significant.

A good model to follow for future scholar-practitioner interaction is a conference that the political campaigning program at the University of Florida held in February of 2005. Entitled “The Electoral Challenge: Theory Meets Practice, program director Steve Craig brought together notable scholars and field workers to discuss issues such as the effects of political consultants, campaigning on the Internet, initiatives and referendums, and other items.⁵¹ Steve Craig later compiled articles on these subjects in an edited volume (Craig, 2006). Events such as this conference enable those working in and studying politics to come together and debate hot topics in the field. Such exchanges allow for scholars to learn about what is going on in the trenches of our politics, and provide a valuable opportunity to ask questions.

Considering Political Histories

One of the most interesting contributions to arise out the interviews was the importance of political history in developing a presentation of self. Simply, past historical experiences shape the present. Given that this research focuses on incumbent senators, the population being studied has substantial political history. One Democratic respondent made an interesting connection between Senator Lieberman’s political history and the development of the case study offered in this dissertation. Stemming from his presidential run in 2004, Lieberman’s negative perceptions of the liberal blogosphere impacted his digital strategy in 2006. According to the respondent, Lieberman has never valued the blogosphere, and blames them for his campaign page mishaps. Had his political history been different, the Senator may have elected to reach out to the blogosphere in his 2006 campaign.

⁵¹ For more information on the conference, visit <http://www.polisci.ufl.edu/campaign/new/events.html>.

George Allen's political history with YouTube likely worked to shape his decision not to run for president in 2008. Prior to the "macaca" incident, Allen had made several trips to both Iowa and New Hampshire (Heilmann, 2006). One could reasonably assume that he did so to test the waters for a presidential run. In early December of 2006, just after his defeat in the general election, he announced he was not running for president. His usage of the word "macaca" and its popularity on YouTube made his future political viability less than had it not occurred.

Not all political histories are as negative as in the cases of Senators Allen and Lieberman. Reflect on the candidacy of Ned Lamont. Running against Joe Lieberman for the Democratic Party nomination in Connecticut, Lamont created a deep online social network through the liberal blogosphere. Even though he was unsuccessful in the general election, his connection to this blogosphere still remains. He taps into it periodically to ask for help with issues pertaining to the Democratic Party, sending out e-mails to supporters. It is likely that, should he decide to run for Congress again, his positive history with the liberal blogosphere would continue to be a positive asset for him.

The Implications of Subjectivity

One of the biggest methodological drawbacks of this study was the fact that there was only one person conducting the coding section of the project. Often studies are at their best when multiple people view the same information. Typically, research that requires coding receives a "team" of graduate students and professors. As a graduate student, without having financial resources to offer to assistants, is it difficult to assemble such a team. This approach limits the ability to see how one coder's perspective

compares to that of others. While one may try to be as cognizant as possible of the importance and implications of reflexivity, this person can never fully understand how his or her own biases alter the approaches, classifications, or conclusions for any given project. Having multiple coders allows for a greater opportunity to identify and discuss researcher bias, something that was not present here. It would possibly result in the emergence of new codes, new things to look for, debates over how certain things should be coded, and so forth.

Certain content presented clear interpretive challenges. For example, general discussions about “troops” or “supporting our troops” were coded as “military/foreign affairs” instead of “Iraq”. Some scholars may not have taken this same approach, and had these discussions been coded as Iraq, that category may very well have been the number one issue in certain periods. This type of subjectivity makes quantitative analysis a very delicate process. The best that one can do is to justify the reasoning. In this circumstance, there were numerous examples of how the senators were not specifically speaking about Iraq when they mentioned supporting troops. One of the best illustrative examples came from Senator George Allen’s constituency page. The following quote was located under the title “Supporting Our Troops” on his home page.

“Senator Allen stands strong with the brave men and women who serve in our Armed Forces as they fight to protect our freedoms around the world” (Allen Archive, March 28th).

Another example of a challenging category was coding things as “state-specific issues”, or discussions that rotated around the state’s needs or accomplishments. Like the topic of “supporting our troops” this is an example where the discussion could have received multiple codes. Since the coding scheme utilized in this dissertation only allows

for statements to be coded as the most dominant issue, this falls to the discretion of the coder. Had that issue category not existed, those statements would have been dispersed to other topics, and the statistics would be different.

Given the fact that statements were coded as falling under only one category, this dissertation misses out on capturing peripheral issues. Statements may have been pigeon holed into a single category when, in reality, multiple topics were receiving digital space. In the future, it would be useful to devise a coding scheme that allows for researchers to adequately capture all of the issues being mentioned in a single sentence. This would deepen our knowledge of issues' relative importance to one another, as well as how often multiple topics are talked about in a small amount of digital space. With online real estate at a premium, this would be a worthy line of research to pursue.

Reflexivity also plays into the concept of subjectivity. As a researcher, one should always reflect on how their own biases shape the nature of the study. Here, the researcher's capacity as a graduate student at the University of Florida may have impacted this study in many ways. First, it may have played into which campaign and Senate offices were willing to take the time to complete the interview. The perceived importance of academic studies may not be as great to campaigns when compared to phone calls from various news media outlets. Some offices never returned the phone call, which may be a result of the researcher's occupational status.

Being a Connecticut resident, the Joe Lieberman case may have taken on a heightened sense of importance compared to someone living outside of the state. It is always exciting when the state in which you reside rapidly becomes the hotbed of political activity. Ultimately, though, any heightened sense of importance did not serve

as a disadvantage to this study. If anything, it helped to illuminate a very interesting case of senatorial presentation that may have otherwise gone unnoticed in the scholarly community. It also gave the researcher a more solid understanding of the background and context of the race.

Future Research

There is never a lack of things to study for scholars looking to make contributions to the field of digital politics. One benefit of this subfield is that there is room for everyone, and there is much work to be completed. Due to the fact that the subfield is in its infancy, scholars should feel empowered to move across disciplinary lines to find valuable theory and methods. By its very nature, the study of Internet politics should be a highly interdisciplinary line of inquiry. We have already seen scholars from political science, communications, and sociology make meaningful contributions to this budding line of literature.

This dissertation has drawn on sociology's Symbolic Interactionist perspective as a major theoretical paradigm. While other scholars have made such connection (Gulati, 2004; Bystrom et al., 2004), we should always seek to push the limits of a theory's applicability to different circumstances. This research is unique in that it introduces questions of digital time and space to Goffman's notion of the dramaturgical approach. Future scholars should bring in even more dimensions and circumstances to further this line of thinking. This applies whether one is applying Symbolic Interactionism or some totally different theoretical perspective to our understanding of digital politics.

Reflecting on this dissertation, there are many interesting improvements that future scholars can make. The first idea is to consider presentation of self at different

levels of government. Comparing and contrasting the House and Senate would be an insightful exercise, and the one that would likely first come to mind for people looking to improve on this project. It would be highly encouraged, however, for future scholars to broaden their perspective of levels of government. Governors have multiple Web contexts, and would provide an interesting comparison group to senators, who also have state-wide elections. Looking more locally, more fundamental questions arise. Do town officials have a digital presentation of self? If so, how complex is this presentation? How difficult is it to find this online presence?

In chapters five and six of this dissertation, we explored three different ideal types, including the “candidate in crisis”, “localized candidate”, and “issue candidate”. The identification and description of these three incumbents demonstrates that there are excellent examples of cases to help illuminate ideal types. Considering digital tools, images, and text, future scholars can attempt to identify new classifications of ideal types. This dissertation focused on incumbent U.S. Senate candidates. Future scholars should look at challengers on both the senatorial and house level. With the 2008 presidential election on the horizon, there is an excellent opportunity to examine and identify ideal types on the national level.

As the popularity of online politics grows, it is highly likely that the importance of a digital presence will trickle down to more the local levels of government. Research on digital politics at the local level would be groundbreaking at this point in time. In essence, scholars taking this path would be observing the building of the ground floor of digital politics at the local level. Just as with presidential candidates back in 1996, local candidates will likely start off with very simple templates offering very basic

information. Moving forward, scholars may be able to capture how local presentation of self develops as the prevalence of local candidate Web page increases.

Another great addition to this research would be to conduct interviews with the senators themselves. This would add an incredible dimension to this project. Such interviews would shed light on if senators are presenting themselves the way they want to on Web contexts, and illuminate the role they themselves play in developing their presentation of self. It would also help to create a connection between this body of literature and the population being studied. Simply, political science is at its best when scholars and practitioners can come together to share ideas and debate issues. One can only begin to imagine the insights that senators would bring to the table regarding how their digital selves are constructed.

One could also make numerous expansions based on the Lieberman case study. Senator Lieberman represents a case of how a competitive election can lead to great inconsistency in how one presents him or herself. An interesting step would be to find other cases that either supports or refutes such findings. It would be exceptionally interesting to compare Lieberman's case to other instances in which sitting incumbents were faced with a totally unexpected challenge. Creating a larger sample would help scholars to understand how universal the findings of the Lieberman case truly are.

Lastly, it would be beneficial for future researchers to expand on the concept of digital space. This research examined two official contexts. Digital space is a very vast concept that includes many contexts. New official contexts have arisen, such as MySpace and Facebook accounts managed by the campaigns. It would also be insightful to see how third parties present elected officials in unofficial contexts. To start, one

could examine the Web pages of 501(c) and 527 groups and unaffiliated supporters. As one moves to more peripheral contexts of digital space, meaning moving further and further away from official contexts, it would be interesting to understand how digital presentations of elected officials change.

Final Thoughts

As this dissertation is being written, the importance of the digital self becomes more and more evident. Earlier in this dissertation, there was a discussion about how official campaign and Senate Web pages were identified. When talking about MySpace and YouTube, it is much more difficult to assess what is “official”. Recently, there was a dispute over presidential candidate Barack Obama’s MySpace account. A supporter created an account under Obama’s name, attracting over 160,000 friends. A reporter for The Examiner poses it best when she asks, “Is MySpace always mine or can it belong to someone else?” (Pickler, 2007). An unpaid supporter started the Web page with the knowledge and support of the campaign. According to The Examiner

“At first, that arrangement was fine with the Obama team, which worked with Anthony on the content, promoted the link and even had the password to make changes. But as the site exploded in popularity in recent months, the campaign became concerned about an outsider controlling the content and responses going out under Obama’s name. It told Anthony it wanted him to turn it over” (Pickler, 2007).

Such events demonstrate the value of having control over one’s presentation of self. In our current political climate that embraces the development of digital politics, control over Web design is not a small thing.

When we see presidential candidates struggling to maintain authenticity on various Web contexts, it likely makes their presence on official contexts all that more meaningful. People go to campaign and Senate Web pages knowing that they are getting valuable information. When stories such as Obama’s disseminate to both

offline and online media contexts, it heightens people's senses of the importance of an authentic presentation of self.

Just as elected officials project a sense of self while standing in front of a crowd or while appearing on television, the Internet represents another venue for this presentation to occur. As this research has shown, each Web context represents yet another unique place for the self to be developed. As we move forward, new contexts will likely come into play. They may have already arrived with venues such as MySpace and Facebook, but in all likelihood, exciting new sites are just around the corner. As they develop and take a position within the digital sphere, those contexts will challenge politicians to yet again consider how to construct a presentation of self. This dissertation implies that the level of consistency between these new contexts and the ones studied here depends on the larger political context, as well as the goals of each specific Web space.

We are very fortunate to be living in these times. From a scholarly perspective, there is so much to explore. One could easily spend a career studying the developments and implications of digital technology. From a constituent perspective, there is a vast world of opportunity. As people continue to take advantage of these opportunities, we can remain optimistic that our democracy will grow stronger.

APPENDIX A
CAMPAIGN SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction: May I speak with the person in charge of making decisions with your campaign's Web page?

Read informed consent form

1. Tell me about your Senate race.
2. How important is the Internet to the success of your candidate?

If Q2 = no Web page, SKIP to Q29

3. What factors came into play in deciding what features to include on the site?
4. How about what features to exclude?
5. Did the campaign consider the issue of money in deciding how to construct the site?
6. Who creates the Web page?
7. Who updates the Web page?
8. Does the Senator ever write content for the Web page? If so, how often?
9. Thus far, what Web site features are working well for the campaign? Why?
10. What features are not working as well as you originally anticipated? Why?
11. What unique features do you think your Web site has?
12. How did your campaign think of these features?
13. Were you targeting any specific demographics with features? If so, who and for what purpose?
14. How does the campaign attempt to attract people to the web page (if respondent asks for example: putting the web site address on literature or signs)?
15. In retrospect, are there any features you wish you put on the site that you did not originally include?

16. How important was the Internet to your candidate's overall campaign plan?
17. What functions did the site serve during the course of your campaign?
18. Were any of these functions unexpected?
19. What types of features do you think we will see on future campaign pages?
20. Do you ever look at the Senator's Senate.gov page? If so, how often? If not, why not?

IF Q20= no, SKIP to Q32

21. Why do you look at that page?
22. Do you ever borrow content from that page?
23. Do you ever talk to the Senate staff in Washington? If so, how often?
24. Why do you talk to them?
25. Do you ever discuss Web pages in your discussions with them?
26. How does your Web page differ from the Senate.gov page?
27. Do you feel that the content on the two pages are similar? If so, how?
28. Do you ever fear the two pages contradict each other? If so, how?

SKIP to Q32

29. What factors went into your decision not to have a Web page?
30. Do you think you will have a Web page later in the campaign? Why or why not?
31. Thinking about your campaign specifically, what are the weaknesses of not having a Web page?
32. What role do you think the Internet will play in future campaigns?
33. How will campaign pages be different in the future?

Interviewer read debriefing statement

NOTE: Some respondents scheduled the interview for after Election Day. In these cases, past tense was used.

APPENDIX B
SENATE OFFICE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction: May I speak with the person in charge of making decisions with your office's Web page?

Read informed consent form

1. Tell me about the Senator.
2. How important is the Internet in your day-to-day operations?
3. What factors came into play in deciding what features to include on the site?
4. How about what features to exclude?
5. Who creates the Web page?
6. Who updates the Web page?
7. Does the Senator ever write content for the Web page? If so, how often?
8. Thus far, what Web site features are working well for your office? Why?
9. What features are not working as well as you originally anticipated? Why?
10. What unique features do you think your Web site has?
11. How did your office think of these features?
12. Were you targeting any specific demographics with features? If so, who and for what purpose?
13. How does the office attempt to attract people to the web page (if respondent asks for example: putting the web site address on literature)?
14. In retrospect, are there any features you wish you put on the site that you did not originally include?
15. How important is the Internet to the Senator's ability to help constituents?
16. What functions does your Web page serve?

17. What types of features do you think we will see on future Senate.gov pages?
18. Do you ever look at the Senator's campaign page? If so, how often? If not, why not?

IF Q18= no, SKIP to Q27

19. Why do you look at that page?
20. Do you ever borrow content from that page?
21. Do you ever talk to the campaign? If so, how often?
22. Why do you talk to them?
23. Do you ever discuss Web pages in your discussions with them?
24. How does your Web page differ from the campaign page?
25. Do you feel that the content on the two pages are similar? If so, how?
26. Do you ever fear the two pages contradict each other? If so, how?
27. How will Senate.gov pages be different in the future?
28. What types of technologies is your office trying to implement for the future?

Interviewer read debriefing statement

APPENDIX C
IRB APPLICATION

1. TITLE OF PROTOCOL:

Considering Campaign and Official Government Internet Sites: An Exploration into the Web-based congressional Presentation of Self [title changed since IRB submitted]

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(352) 392-0262 (office phone)
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3. SUPERVISOR (IF PI IS STUDENT):

Beth Rosenon, Assistant Professor
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234 Anderson Hall
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4. DATES OF PROPOSED PROTOCOL: From: 2/01/2006 To: 5/01/2006

5. SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR THE PROTOCOL: Alumni fellowship, applying for AAUW Dissertation Fellowship award.

6. SCIENTIFIC PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATION:

This investigation is designed to explore how congressional incumbents use the Web to create a presentation of self. This project will deepen our knowledge not only of how congressmen portray themselves on the Internet, but also our understanding of how consistent this portrayal remains through the context of different Web pages, specifically, official campaign and official governmental page. This consistency of congressional presentation will also be explored through conversations with campaign and constituency office staff members.

7. DESCRIBE THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN *NON-TECHNICAL* LANGUAGE. The UFIRB needs to know what will be done with or to the research participant(s).

This investigation will employ an in-depth interviewing methodology. A sample of eighty subjects will be drawn from staff members of incumbent candidates running for Congress in 2006. Once the target is on the phone, the informed consent page will be read, and all questions or comments will be addressed. Once consent is given, I will begin tape recording the interview, and proceed to asking questions dealing with the Congressman's/Congresswoman's presentation of self on the Web. Questions will also be asked dealing with the significance of the Web to the individual's overall congressional self-presentation. Specifically, the following research instrument will be employed:

- 1) Who is the primary decision-maker for the content of your Web site?
- 2) How often does this individual consult with the Congressman/Congresswoman in regards to Web content?
- 3) Does your office ask the Congressman/Congresswoman for his/her opinion of the Web site? What does he/she think of it?
- 4) Do you feel that the Congressman/Congresswoman has a presentation of self online?
- 5) How did your office decide what features of the Congressman/Congresswoman you would make most prominent on the Web page?
- 6) What are those features?
- 7) How do these features relate to the Congressman's/Congresswoman's activities in office?
- 8) Did you look at other Congressional Web sites to determine how your Incumbent should look?
- 9) (If yes) How often do you look at other sites?
- 10) Do you collaborate with the [campaign/government] office when determining what to put on the Web site?
- 11) How does this collaboration work?
- 12) Do you feel that your Congressman/Congresswoman is presented similarly on his/her government and campaign Web sites?
- 13) (If no) How are these presentations different?
- 14) (If yes) How are these presentations similar?
- 15) (If Q4 = yes) Do you think it is important that your Congressman/Congresswoman continually puts out the same presentation of self?
- 16) Overall, how important is the Incumbent's Web site to [campaigning/constituency relations]?

After completion of the interview, the debriefing statement will be read (see attached).

8. POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND ANTICIPATED RISK. (If risk of physical, psychological or economic harm may be involved, describe the steps taken to protect participant.)

This protocol involves no more than minimal risk. It is possible that participants may feel awkward in discussing their Web Congressional identity to a researcher, however, this is not likely to be the case. Participants will be informed before the interview begins that their participation in this study is completely voluntary, that they do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer, and are free to withdraw their consent and to discontinue participation in the interview at any time without consequence. After the interview, during the debriefing, I will remind them that the content of the interview will be listened to by me alone, that their identities will remain confidential, and that the tape will be physically destroyed.

9. DESCRIBE HOW PARTICIPANT(S) WILL BE RECRUITED, THE NUMBER AND AGE OF THE PARTICIPANTS, AND PROPOSED COMPENSATION (if any):

This study calls for making contact with both campaign and Washington Congressional offices of candidates running for the House and Senate in 2006. Twenty House and twenty Senate candidates will be selected with consideration of geographical location, political orientation, and seniority. Once a candidate is selected, both his/her campaign and congressional offices will be contacted via telephone, for a total of eighty interviews (forty House, forty Senate). Once the respective office has been reached successfully via telephone, the following screening question will be posed: "Hello, my name is Diana Cohen, and I am a graduate student calling from the University of Florida. May I please speak with the individual who is in charge of making decisions pertaining to the features of your Web site?" If there is no such person, I will then ask to speak with the campaign manager.

Once the target respondent is on the phone, he/she will be read the informed consent form. Once all questions and comments have been addressed, and verbal consent has been given, the interview will begin. Upon completion of the interview, a brief debriefing statement will be read, and the respondent will be asked if he/she would be interested in receiving a copy of this study's results.

10. DESCRIBE THE INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS. INCLUDE A COPY OF THE INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT (if applicable). See attached

Please use attachments sparingly.

Principal Investigator's Signature

Supervisor's Signature

I approve this protocol for submission to the UFIRB:

Dept. Chair/Center Director Date

**Department of Political Science
234 Anderson Hall
PO Box 117325
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611**

Informed Consent

To be read orally to all potential participants prior to interview

Protocol Title: Considering Campaign and Official Government Internet Sites: An Exploration into the Web-based Congressional Presentation of Self

My name is Diana Cohen, and I am a political science graduate student calling from the University of Florida. I am currently conducting a study that explores how incumbents use the Internet to construct a presentation of self. In conducting this research, I am interviewing campaign staff members who make decisions regarding congressional campaign and governmental Web pages and their features.

You do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer, and are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation in the protocol or activity at any time without consequence. While there are no immediate benefits or compensation to be drawn from your participation in this study, your responses will help further our knowledge about Internet campaigning strategies. At the conclusion of the study, I will be happy to share and discuss my findings with you. Your participation will take approximately fifteen minutes.

The content of this interview will be tape recorded after your consent is given. I will be the sole person having access to this data, and will physically destroy the tape by ripping out the ribbon after its transcription. Your identity, and the identity of your candidate, will remain anonymous.

Please keep in mind that you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer, and that the identity of your campaign will be kept in the strictest of confidence at all times, unless otherwise directed by you.

If at any point during or after the interview you have any questions, comments, or concerns, I will be more than happy to assist you. My address is: Department of Political Science, 234 Anderson Hall, P.O. Box 117325, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611. My supervisor's name is Beth Rosenson, assistant professor of political science. She can be contacted at: 234 Anderson Hall, P.O. Box 117325, Gainesville, FL 32611. Any questions or concerns that you may have about your rights as a research participant can be directed to the UFIRB office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611-2250. This address information will also be repeated at the end of the interview.

**Department of Political Science
234 Anderson Hall
PO Box 117325
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611**

Debriefing Statement

To be read orally to all participants after the interview

Protocol Title: Considering Campaign and Official Government Internet Sites: An Exploration into the Web-based Congressional Presentation of Self

Thank you once again for your participation in this study. The information that you have supplied will help both academic and campaign professionals understand how Congressmen use the Internet to create a presentation of self.

Please keep in mind that all of your responses will be kept strictly confidential, and that your identity will be kept anonymous. The tape of this conversation will be destroyed upon transcription.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this interview in the future, or would like a copy of the results, I will be more than happy to assist you. My address is: Department of Political Science, University of Florida, 234 Anderson Hall, P.O. Box 117325, Gainesville, FL 32611. My supervisor's name is Beth Rosenson, assistant professor of political science. She can be contacted at: 234 Anderson Hall, P.O. Box 117325, Gainesville, FL 32611. Any questions or concerns that you may have about your rights as a research participant can be directed to the UFIRB office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611-2250. Thanks again for your participation, and good luck on Election Day.

APPENDIX D
CAMPAIGN WEB PAGE CODING SCHEME

1. Last name
2. First name
3. State
4. Party
5. Gender
6. Race
7. Change (amount of change from previous Web page, 0-7 scale)
8. Rolling image (existence of slide shows or other rolling media)
9. Party obvious (is the party identification obvious)
10. Independent (does the Senator use the word “independent” to describe him/herself)
11. P1 (what is in picture 1, 1-5 coding scheme)
12. P2 (what is in picture 2, 1-5 coding scheme)
13. P3 (what is in picture 3, 1-5 coding scheme)
14. P4 (what is in picture 4, 1-5 coding scheme)
15. P5 (what is in picture 5, 1-5 coding scheme)
16. P6 (what is in picture 6, 1-5 coding scheme)
17. P7 (what is in picture 7, 1-5 coding scheme)
18. P8 (what is in picture 8, 1-5 coding scheme)
19. P9 (what is in picture 9, 1-5 coding scheme)
20. P1_note (describe what image is of)
21. P2_note (describe what image is of)
22. P3_note (describe what image is of)
23. P4_note (describe what image is of)
24. P5_note (describe what image is of)
25. P6_note (describe what image is of)
26. P7_note (describe what image is of)
27. P8_note (describe what image is of)
28. P9_note (describe what image is of)
29. Issues 1 (agriculture, coded 0-3)
30. Issue 2 (budget, coded 0-3)
31. Issue 3 (campaign finance reform, coded 0-3)
32. Issue 4 (crime, coded 0-3)
33. Issue 5 (consumer issues, coded 0-3)
34. Issue 6 (defense and foreign policy, coded 0-3)
35. Issue 7 (education, coded 0-3)
36. Issue 8 (environment, coded 0-3)
37. Issue 9 (health, coded 0-3)
38. Issue 10 (infrastructure, coded 0-3)
39. Issue 11 (Iraq, coded 0-3)
40. Issue 12 (jobs and economic development, coded 0-3)
41. Issue 13 (medicare, coded 0-3)
42. Issue 14 (social and cultural issues, coded 0-3)
43. Issue 15 (social security, coded 0-3)

44. Issue 16 (taxes, coded 0-3)
45. Issue 17 (welfare, coded 0-3)
46. Issue 18 (generic helping constituency, coded 0-3)
47. Issue 19 (energy and gas, coded 0-3)
48. Issue 20 (women's rights, coded 0-3)
49. Issue 21 (immigration, coded 0-3)
50. Issue 22 (opponent, coded 0-3)
51. Issue other (list other items described)
52. Construction (is site under construction)
53. Letter (home page letter to constituents)
54. Account (ability to create an account)
55. Contact media (links to contact different media)
56. Campaign store
57. In news (section that describes Senator in the news)
58. Press releases (links or postings of press releases)
59. Blog
60. Volunteer (ability to sign up as a volunteer)
61. Money (ability to contribute)
62. Contact info on home page
63. Link to contact info
64. Photo gallery
65. Petition (is there an online petition on the home page)
66. Additional pages (are there links to additional pages)
67. Quotes (are there quotes from others on home page)
68. Post card (can browsers send a virtual post card)
69. Register to vote link
70. Issues (is there a link to an issues page)
71. Biography (is there a link to a biographical statement)
72. Spanish (does Spanish appear anywhere on the page)
73. Portuguese (does Portuguese appear anywhere on the page)
74. Language (does any other language appear on the home page)
75. Specific Language (what is this other language)
76. Family (does the candidate's family appear on the home page)
77. Family How (how and where does the family appear)
78. TV (is there a television commercial on the home page)
79. Cool item #1 (any other interesting items of note)
80. Cool item #2 (any other interesting items of note)
81. Opponent (is the opponent mentioned on the home page)

APPENDIX E
SENATE WEB PAGE CODING SCHEME

1. Last name
2. First name
3. State
4. Party
5. Gender
6. Race
7. Change (amount of change from previous Web page, 0-7 scale)
8. Rolling image (existence of slide shows or other rolling media)
9. Party obvious (is the party identification obvious)
10. Independent (does the Senator use the word “independent” to describe him/herself)
11. P1 (what is in picture 1, 1-5 coding scheme)
12. P2 (what is in picture 2, 1-5 coding scheme)
13. P3 (what is in picture 3, 1-5 coding scheme)
14. P4 (what is in picture 4, 1-5 coding scheme)
15. P5 (what is in picture 5, 1-5 coding scheme)
16. P6 (what is in picture 6, 1-5 coding scheme)
17. P7 (what is in picture 7, 1-5 coding scheme)
18. P8 (what is in picture 8, 1-5 coding scheme)
19. P9 (what is in picture 9, 1-5 coding scheme)
20. P1_note (describe what image is of)
21. P2_note (describe what image is of)
22. P3_note (describe what image is of)
23. P4_note (describe what image is of)
24. P5_note (describe what image is of)
25. P6_note (describe what image is of)
26. P7_note (describe what image is of)
27. P8_note (describe what image is of)
28. P9_note (describe what image is of)
29. Issue 1 (agriculture, coded 0-3)
30. Issue 2 (budget, coded 0-3)
31. Issue 3 (campaign finance reform, coded 0-3)
32. Issue 4 (crime, coded 0-3)
33. Issue 5 (consumer issues, coded 0-3)
34. Issue 6 (defense and foreign policy, coded 0-3)
35. Issue 7 (education, coded 0-3)
36. Issue 8 (environment, coded 0-3)
37. Issue 9 (health, coded 0-3)
38. Issue 10 (infrastructure, coded 0-3)
39. Issue 11 (Iraq, coded 0-3)
40. Issue 12 (jobs and economic development, coded 0-3)
41. Issue 13 (Medicare, coded 0-3)
42. Issue 14 (social and cultural issues, coded 0-3)
43. Issue 15 (social security, coded 0-3)

44. Issue 16 (taxes, coded 0-3)
45. Issue 17 (welfare, coded 0-3)
46. Issue 18 (generic helping constituency, coded 0-3)
47. Issue 19 (energy and gas, coded 0-3)
48. Issue 20 (women's rights, coded 0-3)
49. Issue 21 (immigration, coded 0-3)
50. Issue 22 (opponent, coded 0-3)
51. Issue other (list other items described)
52. Construction (is site under construction)
53. Letter (home page letter to constituents)
54. Account (ability to create an account)
55. In news (section that describes Senator in the news)
56. Press releases (links or postings of press releases)
57. Blog
58. Contact info on home page
59. Link to contact info
60. Photo gallery
82. Petition (is there an online petition on the home page)
83. Additional pages (are there links to additional pages)
84. Quotes (are there quotes from others on home page)
85. Post card (can browsers send a virtual post card)
86. Register to vote link
87. Issues (is there a link to an issues page)
88. Biography (is there a link to a biographical statement)
89. Spanish (does Spanish appear anywhere on the page)
90. Portuguese (does Portuguese appear anywhere on the page)
91. Language (does any other language appear on the home page)
92. Specific Language (what is this other language)
93. Family (does the candidate's family appear on the home page)
61. Family How (how and where does the family appear)
62. State link (are there links to other state agencies)
63. Interactive State (is there an interactive state map)
64. Services (is there a link for constituent services)
65. Students (is there a link for students)
66. Cool item #1 (any other interesting items)
67. Cool item #2 (any other interesting items)

APPENDIX F
ISSUE CODING CATEGORIES

- 1: Agriculture
- 2: Budget
- 3: Campaign finance reform
- 4: Crime
- 5: Consumer issues
- 6: Defense and foreign policy
- 7: Education
- 8: Environment
- 9: Health
- 10: Infrastructure
- 11: Iraq
- 12: Jobs and economic development
- 13: Medicare
- 14: Social and cultural issues
- 15: Social security
- 16: Taxes
- 17: Welfare
- 18: Generic helping constituency
- 19: Energy and gas
- 20: Women's rights
- 21: Immigration
- 22: Opponent
- 23: State-specific

Issues 11 and 18-23 are unique for this study, while the rest of the categories stem from the Wisconsin Ads Project.

APPENDIX G
TEXT FROM HILLARY CLINTON'S PRESIDENTIAL WEB PAGE

The text from Hillary Clinton's Presidential campaign page while running for U.S.

Senate:

First Lady

When her husband was elected President in 1992, Hillary's work as a champion for women was recognized and admired around the world. She traveled the globe speaking out against the degradation and abuse of women and standing up for the powerful idea that women's rights are human rights.

In the White House, Hillary led efforts to make adoption easier, to expand early learning and child care, to increase funding for breast cancer research, and to help veterans suffering from Gulf War syndrome who had too often been ignored in the past. She helped launch a national campaign to prevent teen pregnancy and helped create the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, which moved children from foster care to adoption more quickly. Thanks in part to her efforts, the number of children who have moved out of foster care into adoption has increased dramatically.

As everyone knows, Hillary's fight for universal health coverage did not succeed. But her commitment to health care for every American has never wavered. She was instrumental in designing and championing the State Children's Health Insurance Program, which has provided millions of children with health insurance. She battled the big drug companies to force them to test their drugs for children and to make sure all kids get the immunizations they need through the Vaccines for Children Program. Immunization rates dramatically improved after the program launched.

Hillary's 1995 book *It Takes A Village*, about the responsibility we all have to help children succeed, became an international best seller. Hillary has donated the proceeds -- more than a million dollars -- to children's causes across the country.

Hillary's autobiography, *Living History*, was also a best seller. It has been translated into 12 languages and sold over 1.3 million copies.

APPENDIX H
TEXT OF JOE LIEBERMAN'S TRANSITIONAL PHASE

The text of Joe Lieberman's letter on his campaign home page during his transitional phase, dated Wednesday, August 30th:

Welcome to Joe2006.com! We'll be re-launching our full website soon to bring you the latest news and updates from the campaign.

In the meantime, I want to take a moment to thank my supporters and explain to you why I have decided to fight on until November.

I'm staying in this race because I want to keep working for the things that matter to you and help meet the critical challenges facing our state and country.

I've been a leader in the Senate on strengthening our national security, protecting and creating jobs, stopping global warming and finding cures to diseases like cancer and diabetes.

And I'm staying because I want to help end the war in Iraq as quickly and successfully as possible, in a way that brings stability to the Middle East and doesn't leave us even more vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

So much needs to be done, but so little is actually getting done in Washington because our politics have become so partisan and polarized.

I have always followed a different path. My 30 years of experience have been about bringing people together and solving problems.

I am and will always be a proud, progressive, strong-on-defense democrat. But I do not and will not hesitate to work across party lines when it will get things done for my constituents.

That is what my campaign will be all about building a new politics of unity and purpose and delivering results for the people of Connecticut.

I hope you will join me in this cause, no matter your political persuasion, to secure a brighter future for our state and our country.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Blawie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

APPENDIX I
TEXT OF JOE LIEBERMAN'S HIJACKED LETTER

The text of Joe Lieberman's letter on his campaign home page immediately following his hijacked phase, dated Wednesday, August 9th:

STATEMENT FROM SEAN SMITH: "For the past 24 hours the Friends for Joe Lieberman's website and email has been totally disrupted and disabled, we believe that this is the result of a coordinated attack by our political opponents. The campaign has notified the US Attorney and the Connecticut Chief State's Attorney and the campaign will be filing a formal complaint reflecting our concerns. The campaign has also notified the State Attorney General Dick Blumenthal for his review."

"We call on Ned Lamont to make an unqualified statement denouncing this kind of dirty campaign trick and to demand whoever is responsible to cease and desist immediately. Any attempt to suppress voter participation and undermine the voting process on Election Day is deplorable and has no place in our democracy."

APPENDIX J
LIST OF SENATORS INCLUDED IN STUDY

1. Daniel Akaka
2. George Allen
3. Conrad Burns
4. Maria Cantwell
5. Thomas Carper
6. Lincoln Chafee
7. Hillary Clinton
8. Gaylord Conrad
9. Mike DeWine
10. John Ensign
11. Dianne Feinstein
12. Orrin Hatch
13. Kay Hutchinson
14. Edward Kennedy
15. Herbert Kohl
16. Jon Kyl
17. Joe Lieberman
18. Dick Lugar
19. Robert Menendez
20. Bill Nelson
21. Rick Santorum
22. Olympia Snowe
23. Deborah Stabenow
24. Jim Talent

APPENDIX K
NOVEMBER 8th COOK REPORT

NOVEMBER 8, 2006

2006 Senate Race Ratings

Senate Lineup: 55 Republicans, 44 Democrats, 1 Independent

- Senators with names in parentheses are retiring.
- The chart below provides a spectrum that analyzes the vulnerability (the chances of the seat switching parties) of the Senate races up this cycle.

Solid: These races are not considered competitive and are not likely to become closely contested.

Likely: These seats are not considered competitive at this point but have the potential to become engaged.

Lean: These are considered competitive races but one party has an advantage.

Toss-up: These are the most competitive races; either party has a good chance of winning.

Likely Democrat (2)

- Cantwell - WA
- MN (Dayton)

Lean Democrat (1)

- Stabenow - MI

Toss-up (2)

- Menendez - NJ
- MD (Sarbanes)

Solid Democrat (12)

- Nelson - FL
- Bingaman - NM
- Byrd - WV
- Conrad - ND
- Feinstein - CA
- Carper - DE
- Akaka - HI
- Kennedy - MA
- Clinton - NY
- Kohl - WI
- CT (Lieberman)

-Nelson - NE

Independent: Likely Democrat (1)

-VT (Jeffords)

Lean Democrat (2)

-DeWine – OH

-Santorum – PA

Toss-up (5)

-Talent - MO

-Burns - MT

-Chafee - RI

-Allen - VA

-TN (Frist)

Lean Republican (1)

-Kyl - AZ

Solid Republican (7)

-Lugar - IN

-Snowe - ME

-Lott - MS

-Ensign - NV

-Hutchison - TX

-Hatch - UT

-Thomas – WY

APPENDIX L
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Anonymous, DS1, 2006. Telephone interview. 10 November 2006.

Anonymous DS2, 2006. Telephone interview. 18 July 2006.

Anonymous DS3, 2006. Telephone interview. 21 August 2006.

Anonymous DC1, 2006. Telephone interview. 9 November 2006.

Anonymous RS1, 2006. Telephone interview. 13 November 2006.

Anonymous RS2, 2006. Telephone interview. 13 November 2006.

Anonymous RS3, 2006. Telephone interview. 18 July 2006.

Anonymous RS4, 2006. Telephone interview. 10 November 2006.

Anonymous DC1, 2004. Telephone interview. 14 June 2004.

Anonymous RC1, 2004. Telephone interview. 22 June 2004.

Anonymous RC2, 2004. Telephone interview. 22 June 2004.

Ray. Telephone Interview. 13 November 2006.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Diana Tracy Cohen was born on June 1, 1981 in Goshen, New York. She grew up in South Salem, New York with her mother and father. An avid sports enthusiast, she started martial arts in first grade. While a student at John Jay High School, she played varsity field hockey and lacrosse.

Diana got her bachelor's degree in sociology and political science in 2002, as well as her master's degree in survey research in 2003, at the University of Connecticut. She made Dean's List every semester and graduated Magna Cum Laude. While an undergraduate, she was the starting goaltender for the Division I women's ice hockey program during the 2000-2001 season. Her most memorable hockey experience was ending her Division I career with a 2-0 shutout against in-state rival Quinnipiac University. She currently holds the University record for most saves in a single women's ice hockey game (55).

Diana accepted an Alumni Fellowship from the Department of Political Science at the University of Florida in the fall of 2003. She received her M.A. in political science with a certificate in campaigning in 2005, and is currently working towards her M.A. in sociology. In the fall of 2005, she received a high pass on her American Politics field exam.

Diana is a World Taekwondo Federation certified 2nd degree black belt and active sparring competitor. While at the University of Florida, she served as President for the Sport Club Taekwondo team (2004-2006). She competed in the National Collegiate Taekwondo Championships four years in a row, winning two gold medals, one silver, and

one bronze. Her goal is to make the Armature Athletic Union and Collegiate National Teams.

Starting in the fall of 2007, she will be appointed as a Visiting Professor of Political Science at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. She currently resides in Connecticut with her husband Dan and cat Nemo.