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**AN EXPLORATORY EXAMINATION OF THE DIGITAL
MARIJUANA POLICY MESSAGING OF LIBERAL,
GOVERNMENTAL, AND CONSERVATIVE
ORGANIZATIONS UTILIZING WEBSITES**

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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at the University of Central Florida
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to examine whether differences exist between the digital media promotion of marijuana policies by organizations based on their type (liberal, federal government, or conservative). Concerns about illicit drug use in America are apparent when looking at the current discourse on marijuana policy. This discourse has been impacted by the media's construction of the drug problem and how that problem is defined by different sources. This messaging has the potential to impact societal views on crime, justice, and related policies. In the process of media persuasion, there are various organizations conveying divergent marijuana policies through strategic efforts utilizing digital media. These campaigns are instruments through which goals of enacting social change and influencing policy are pursued. This study is an exploratory investigation into how organizations are using digital media (specifically Internet websites) to promote marijuana policies. Constructivist inquiry was employed to provide knowledge about how the selected organizations included in the sample are using digital media to advance agendas (the goal of which is to influence support for different marijuana policies). Although similarities were found when the content analysis was conducted, there was divergence on most measures. Variation between the messaging strategies of organizations, based on their type, may impact who is the recipient of the organizations' messages, how they are received, and potentially how they influence future behaviors and policies.

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responsibilities and engagements that took her away from the University of Central Florida for a time, and she could have easily resigned when I was facing issues away from my academics, she chose to stick it out with me until the end. Dr. Dziegielewski's commitment to both me and my project as well as her contributions to this work will always be appreciated. To Dr. Stephen Holmes, I will be eternally thankful that he joined my committee. When I was floundering with the statistical aspects of this project, Dr. Holmes took the time to assist me. He made sure that all of the technical aspects of this project were tight, and without him, this project would not be what it is. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Ross Wolf. When I began the Public Affairs Doctoral program at the University of Central Florida, Dr. Wolf was my faculty advisor. He took me under his wing and made sure that I was prepared to begin my life as a doctoral student and instructor. I will always remember the kindnesses that he showed me during this time. Then, when I needed assistance on this project, he was willing to come in and assist me again. His feedback and perspective were invaluable to this project, and I am thankful to have had someone like Dr. Wolf to turn to during my time as a doctoral student.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The current study seeks to determine whether there are differences in the ways in which organizations (liberal, federal government, and conservative) utilize “digital media,” a form of “new media,” (specifically Internet websites and social media) to promote marijuana policy options. It will not only look at the technical aspects of communication media or websites (through the measurement of delivery) but also its content (through the measurement of functionality and public engagement). Based on previous research, differences in the presence of technical aspects or different types and amounts of content may lead to more effective policy-influencing activities. This project will not directly test the hypotheses that the presence of these attributes on the preferred communication medium will lead to better persuasive techniques. However, it will indirectly test the assumption that they should. Specifically, if the model is correct, we would expect that organizations that are more accessible and include all of the latest digital attributes should be more likely to present a more coherent and persuasive argument for their organization’s policy position.

Since there are a number of organizations that contribute to the digital media landscape, how these organizations use digital media to influence public opinion about criminal justice policies, such as prohibitionist marijuana policy, is an important consideration. Organizations are an important part of our modern world. Just as the media is an extension of society, so too are organizations. As such, organizations are mechanisms by which certain societal goals may be pursued (Scott & Davis, 2007). As different organizations present their perspectives on marijuana policy, they compete to alter audience perceptions of marijuana use and what laws should govern such behavior.

Traditional Views of Media and Social Issues

The public's image of criminality is significantly shaped by what they see and hear in the media. This gives the media an important role in how behavior becomes defined as criminal and what policies are developed to respond to these behaviors (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielle, Morgan, & Jackson-Beeck, 1979; Graber, 1979; Surette and Otto, 2001). Further, it has been established that there is a significant relationship between the media, the criminal justice system, and crime and justice policies (Surette, 2015).

In today's world, media messages are everywhere; and they are "not neutral, unobtrusive social agents providing simple entertainment or news" (Surette, 2015, p. 2). This means that citizens cannot avoid the media and their construction of reality regarding crime and criminal justice policy. Often, the media shows a distorted image of crime and the criminal justice system's response (Marsh & Melville, 2009). This media-defined image often impacts criminal justice policy through alterations in individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors.

The media's role in creating, maintaining, or altering policy is well known. One of the ways this happens is through the impacts their messages have on American's attitudes regarding certain crimes. Deriving interpretations from media representations, the public has little factual knowledge about crime and the criminal justice system (Roberts, 1992; Surette, 2015; Dowler, 2003; Graber, 1980; Greer, 2009). This can be a problem for a criminal justice system that is legitimized, in part, by societal support and relies on cooperation from its citizens to function properly. Low public confidence in the criminal justice system has been linked to lack of political trust, skepticism of government intent, and large federal monetary investments in

technology in attempts to bolster the trust of the community (Hough, 2010; Ripley & Williams, 2017).

The media may also affect crime and justice policy by impacting the importance of crime-related issues. Which social conditions become problems often depends upon public concern and the emergence of high-profile or effective claims-makers to support the issue (Surette & Otto, 2001). Public opinion influenced and shaped by the media, then influences criminal justice policy through moral panics and voting behavior (Surette, 2015). The media play a role in this process of determining which behaviors are criminalized by providing a forum for issues to be discussed. The media also provide an arena where problems find a base, are more visible, and attract those who support criminalization and a need for governmental response (Surette & Otto, 2001).

Examples of the media's influence on policy can be seen early in the history of marijuana prohibition. Often referred to as "policy by murder," laws are often created when the media creates a moral panic over an issue that shocks the conscience of a community. Although more thoughtful and tempered legislation is often called for, politicians and those in charge of our organizations entrusted with public confidence want something to be done immediately to assuage the public's trust and support (Grisso, 1996; Petrosino, 2000).

In the 1930s and 1940s, American cinema began to focus their attention on the social problem of marijuana use. Though most Americans were unfamiliar with the plant and its use, propaganda films, such as "Reefer Madness" and "She Shoulda Said No!," labeled marijuana as the devil's weed and warned people of the dangers associated with marijuana use (Jolly, 2016). The mass media has also had similar impacts on the public's views of marijuana through other

forms of media. This includes the 1971 fictional book *Go Ask Alice*, which has been considered one of best-known anti-drug books ever published (Hendley, 2016). It was turned into a movie and later a stage play (Foster, 1993; Shiras, 1976). However, the recent efforts to legalize medicinal and recreational marijuana use have made many Americans wary of the scare tactics used in the past by the media. Campaigns, such as Colorado’s “Don’t be a Lab Rat” campaign which informs teens about the dangers associated with marijuana use, are not having the effect on public sentiment that other campaigns have had in the past. This may lead to different relationships between the media and the consuming public.

Digital Media and the War on Drugs

Americans have strong beliefs about the role of government in people’s lives. Arguments over government regulation of behaviors have been constant throughout the relatively short history of this nation. A key example of such concern is the regulation of narcotics and other intoxicating substances, from alcohol to opioids. It appears that the American populace’s general opinion regarding the legality and utility of many of these chemicals (specifically marijuana) has changed considerably over the past 20 years. The American media has played a significant part in this debate. Further, various organizations, such as the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, the Drug Free America Foundation, or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, present their policy opinions to the public through strategic campaigns using different and expanding forms of traditional and targeted digital media.

The changing of public opinion through a complex set of functional designs and steps is nothing new. The United States has a history of socially constructing drug panics and wars. The current war on drugs is but one of several (with alcohol Prohibition being one of the most

notable) to be declared since the anti-opiate campaign of the 1870s. The media has played a role in each one of these panics and wars, specifically the current war against marijuana. The extant literature finds that the public generally feels as though issues that receive media scrutiny are worthy of their attention (Jensen & Gerber, 1998). Thus, not only do the media bring issues up for public attention and scrutiny, but they are able to focus attention on their topic of the day. Hence, a social condition, such as marijuana use, only becomes a social problem when claims-makers bring attention to it, often through media outlets, thus causing others to be persuaded (Jensen & Gerber, 1998).

The construction of an issue, such as illicit drug use, is important because the communication of that constructed message through the media then becomes part of the knowledge base of the consuming public. This may in turn impact the belief structures and behaviors of those within that community (Kim, 2001). Citizen groups, agencies, politicians, and/or organizations may claim the existence of social problems and call for policies designed to solve these complex issues through legislative actions. By making their claims public, notable community sovereigns (or claims-makers) attempt to garner support for social changes both directly to the local politicians and indirectly to the people who elect them through the media (Jensen & Gerber, 1998). In this century, this is done primarily through different forms of traditional and digital media.

The Evolving Digital Landscape

Since the beginning of the “war on drugs” (post-Nixon era), the media has become more sophisticated as a result of improved technology and evolving user interactions. With the method of media distribution and consumption changing, the ways in which individuals,

agencies, political entities, and organizations are able to spread their message is also evolving. The introduction of digital media is an exemplar. More engagement with and reliance on technology in our modern culture has impacted society and the criminal justice system. Media content is now readily available and shared among large groups of people easily and quickly, and users are now part of the creation process. This has led to major changes in the ways our society receives and processes information, including information about the criminal justice system and related policies, such as those related to marijuana use (Surette, 2015). As such, a study of how different groups attempt to utilize digital media to influence public opinion on marijuana policy is timely.

Additionally, with digital media having a participatory component, the criminal justice system is now more open to public involvement. Digital media channels provide opportunities for crime-related content to influence views about crime and justice, including drug-related policies. Since this is usually done to entertain the audience, rather than to provide accuracy, most consumers get a mediated reality created by the media (Surette, 2015). Within digital media, the social construction of reality is much more fluid, with more constructions competing for attention, and different audiences being reached by the diverse messages (Surette, 2015). This makes it difficult for the criminal justice system to maintain ownership over crime issues and control the images and messages that the public receives.

Current Study

The current study is exploratory as it intends to investigate the research question and related hypotheses rather than to offer definitive solutions to problems (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). This type of research is usually conducted to gain a better understanding of the

research topic. It has been stated that “exploratory research is the initial research, which forms the basis of more conclusive research” (Singh, 2007, p. 64). This approach should form an important basis for future research into the impact that these messaging strategies have on the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of those receiving the messages. The current mixed methods study will utilize constructivist inquiry, a research methodology based on the notion that knowledge is gained by constructing reality through experiences. It required the grounding of the findings as salient study elements emerged (through constant comparative analysis) during the data collection process. This made for a more robust understanding of the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Further, a directed approach was used as it increases validity and reliability by comparing emergent theories and concepts to those that already exist in the literature (Kohlbacher, 2006). Finally, the current study was cross-sectional as it sought to examine a phenomenon at a single point in time (February 2017). Figure 1 below will provide a pictorial representation of the purpose of the current study, while Figures 3-6 in APPENDIX M show the relationship between the current study’s components.

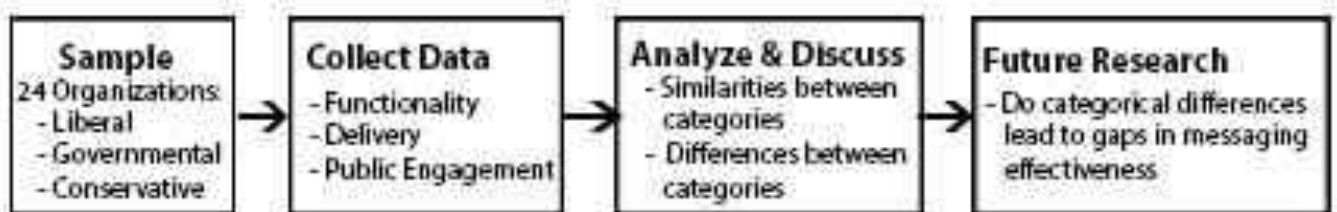


Figure 1: Study Purpose

Foundational Studies

Two studies were chosen as the foundation for measuring the technical aspects and content of organizational websites to determine if differences existed based on category (liberal, governmental, or conservative). The first of these was Gibson and Ward's (2000) study, "A Proposed Methodology for Studying the Function and Effectiveness of Party and Candidate Web Sites." The main goal of their article was to develop a methodology that would allow for the content analysis of websites being utilized by individuals, groups, or organizations to promote a candidate for political office. The researchers hoped that by approaching this study of digital media in a more qualitative and systematic way they could answer questions about a website including: (1) what the purpose of the website is and (2) how effectively the website delivers its content. They concluded that digital media only offers the possibility of a more participatory democracy, and that it is up to those using digital media platforms to decide what emphasis should be placed on the different functions that digital media platforms serve. Their study was meant to provide a means for assessing this shift into a greater reliance on digital media in the political arena (Gibson & Ward, 2000).

The second study chosen to measure the different aspects of organizational websites to determine if differences exist based on category was Hou and Lampe's (2015) study, "Social Media Effectiveness for Public Engagement: Examples of Small Nonprofits." Their study sought to determine if small nonprofit organizations adopting social media to assist in meeting their public engagement goals were doing so effectively. They addressed four questions in their study including: (1) what factors influenced decision-making regarding social media adoption, (2) how social media are used to achieve goals related to public engagement, (3) how

effectiveness of social media use is assessed, and (4) what challenges influence the use of social media to support public engagement. Their study found that, while small nonprofit organizations were using social media sites to disseminate information, build their community, and engage with the public, they were not fully utilizing their social media sites to initiate conversations or to mobilize actions. Their conclusion was that in efforts to design social media sites that support the public engagement functions of small nonprofit organizations, other factors (such as the constraints of funding, staff, and expertise) must be considered and mitigated (Hou & Lampe, 2015).

Chapter Summary

In addition to changing forms, functions, and views of criminality, digital media sources are now a primary source of information about crime and justice. These sources provide access to information for an audience that finds it inconvenient to seek information through traditional media outlets. Digital media now plays a large role in helping to shape/define social issues in the minds of the American public (Hobbs & Hamerton, 2014; Silverman, 2012). This potentially makes digital media an important factor in how criminal behavior is defined and what policies are developed to respond to such behaviors (Gerbner et al., 1979; Graber, 1979; Surette and Otto, 2001). The following chapter will provide a more in-depth discussion of digital media, its impacts on society, and how it may impact criminal justice policy.

CHAPTER 2: CHANGING MEDIA TYPES AND INFLUENCES ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY: AN EXPLORATION OF THEORY AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The current study focuses on the differential utilization of digital media (specifically websites) in the marijuana policy messaging of organizations based on their type (liberal, governmental, or conservative). As such, this chapter provides an overview of the literature as it relates to the current study. The chapter will begin with an examination of digital media and its forms. This will be followed by a discussion of digital media's impacts on society. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a look at how digital media may be influencing public perceptions of crime, criminal justice, and related policies.

Digital Media

Definition of Digital Media

Digital media has been given many definitions since its inception in the latter part of the 20th century. Some have defined digital media based solely on certain technical features or content channels (information transmission pathways). However, others reject such definitions in favor of those that focus on technological, social, political, and economic factors. They define digital media as information and communication technologies and the social contexts in which they operate (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006).

Characteristics of Digital Media

Regardless of the specific definition, digital media is known to refer to digital information that may be shared among different audiences quickly and easily (Surette, 2015). This allows for

on-demand access to content at any time, from any location, on any Internet-enabled device. For a medium to be considered digital media, it must also be digitized, interactive, networked, dense, compressible, and have the characteristics that allow for manipulation.

In addition, digital media, unlike traditional media, have the capability of real-time generation of new content (Socha & Eber-Schmid, n.d.). Unlike traditional media, digital media allows for immediate interactive user feedback and the creative participation of users. Further, digital media provides a medium where it is possible for communities (of like-minded people) to be created around shared interests almost instantaneously. However, one of the most important attributes of digital media is the “democratization” of the creation, publishing, distribution, and consumption of media content (Socha & Eber-Schmid, n.d.). This means that these interactions with media content are now open to everyone and that anyone can participate in the creation, dissemination, and consumption of media content. The characteristics of digital media and its proliferation have had a number of impacts on society, the way that we obtain knowledge, and the criminal justice system.

Forms of Digital Media

It is important to the current study to have an understanding of digital media as a whole, but it is also important to understand the different forms of digital media that will be examined. Specifically, this study will focus on the Internet and its components (websites and social media). We will begin with the Internet.

The Internet: The Global Platform for Digital Media

Many forms of digital media exist, with these forms constantly evolving and new forms being created almost every day. The Internet is a global system of digitally interconnected computer networks that use the Internet Protocol Suite (TCP/IP). These networks may contain

an unlimited number of users and private and public agencies, businesses, academics, and governments connected in a global community by a variety of electronic, wireless, and optic networking and technological processes. The Internet is the canvas upon which forms of digital media attach. The Internet allows systems to communicate and digital media websites to be accessed. During latter part of the 1990s, it was estimated that traffic on the Internet grew by 100 percent per year and, by 2019, it was estimated that 4.131 billion users or 53.6 percent of the population has access to and uses the Internet (Internet World Stats, 2012; Worldometer, n.d.).

Figure 2 below shows the increase in Internet usage over the last fifteen years, from 2005 through 2019.

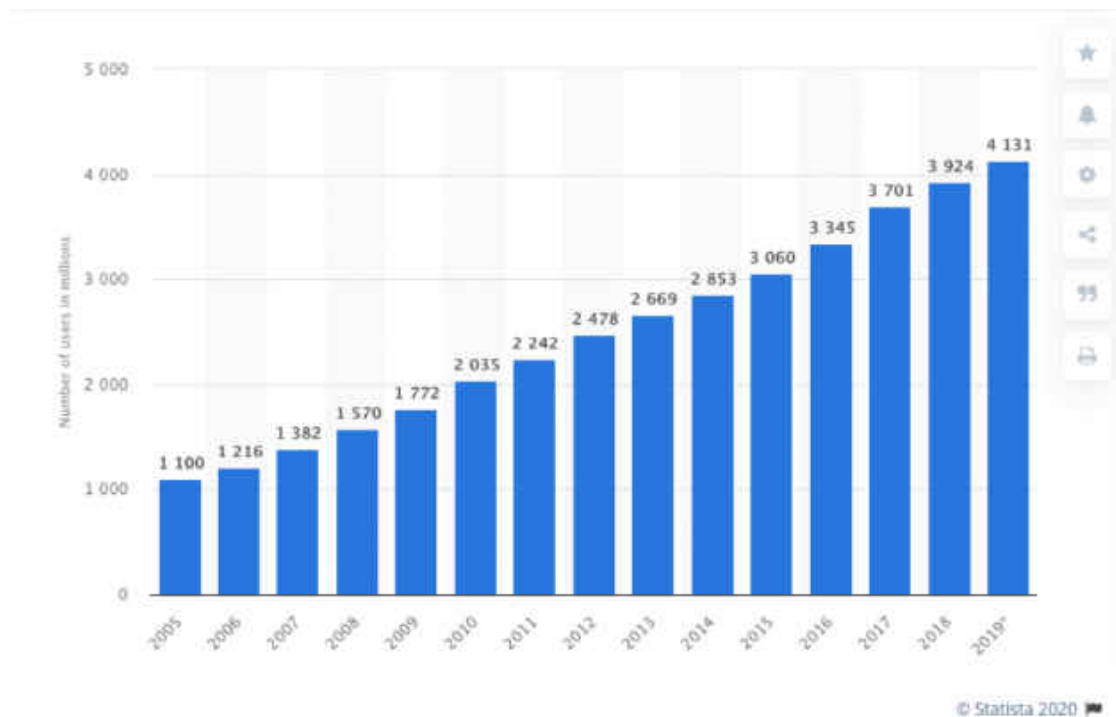


Figure 2: The Number of Internet Users Worldwide from 2005 Through 2019

Major social changes have taken place following the creation of the Internet due to the amount of information that is available to users worldwide (Coffman & Odlyzko, 1998). Two integral parts of the Internet that also warrant discussion here are websites and social media.

Websites

Websites are considered to be the most important component of the Internet (Digital Guide, 2018). They are a collection of interlinked web pages that are accessible to the public and share a common domain name. Websites allow for content such as text, images, videos and other media to be presented for public consumption (Digital Guide, 2018; Technopedia, 2019). These sites are created to inform the public about an organization's products or services; to show the organization's brand, values, or mission; to enable contact with the organization by those in the public or those within the organization itself; to distribute information and goods online; or to provide information and entertainment to the public (Digital Guide, 2018). Usually, a website contains a home page, which is the first page that users will see when searching for and browsing a website. From the home page, users will then be able to delve further into the website's subpages through hyperlinks as they search for what they need through the use of navigational tools (Digital Guide, 2018).

The use of websites has increased since the advent of the Internet largely due to the potential reach of these websites. As of January 2020, there were approximately 1.75 billion websites available to users on the Internet (Internet Live Stats, n.d.). Although websites provide an opportunity for the sharing of information, the dearth of available websites presents some competition for users' attention as well. In an effort to increase their web presence, many individuals and organizations have chosen to pair their websites and their social media network.

This increases the chances that they will be able to catch the attention of users who are like-minded or are interested in their content. This also provides a greater opportunity to reach those in the community with their messages. In the case of the current study, this is organizations' official positions on marijuana policy.

Social Media

Social media, another subset of digital media, is becoming increasingly important. Social media uses web-based and mobile technologies to turn communications into interactive dialogues between organizations, individuals, and communities. Further defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is “a group of Internet-based applications...that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (p. 61). There are many different types of social media including collaborative projects (such as Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (such as Twitter), content communities (such as YouTube), social networking sites (such as Facebook), virtual game worlds (such as World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (such as Second Life) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Figure 2 shows the relationships between the different aspects of digital media.

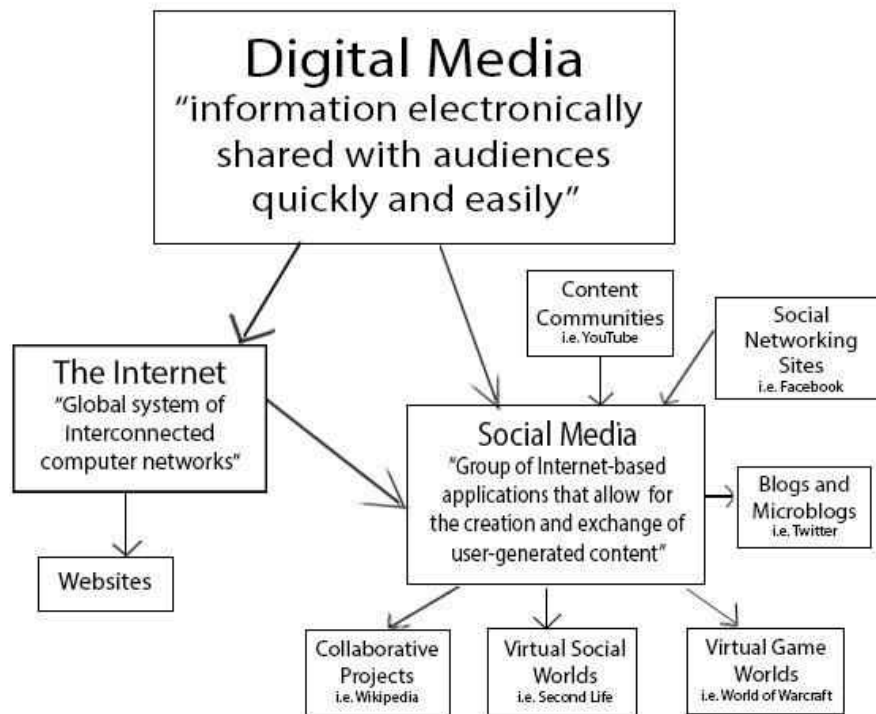


Figure 3: Digital Media Relationships

Despite the type of social media that is being used, it is clear that its use has increased. Social media websites have been growing in popularity since the first website went live in 1991. Social media sites now comprise four of the top ten most visited sites (as of 2016), including the top two (Facebook and YouTube) (Digital Guide, 2018). According to one report, social media comprised 75 percent of Internet surfing in 2008. This was measured by individual users joining social networks, reading blogs, or contributing reviews to a website. This was a significant increase from the previous year in which engagement with social media comprised only 56 percent of Internet surfing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). By 2019, it was estimated that 83.9 percent of Internet users will use social media. In America, 69% of adults use at least one social media site, with the average American Internet user having 7.1 accounts (Newberry, 2019). The

vast number of users in these interactive forums displays the potential of social media to influence the attitudes and behaviors of these users through content that is largely created by the users themselves and is largely unregulated. Due to this potential, it is important to understand the potential social and policy impacts of digital media.

Digital Media Impacts

Social Impacts

Our modern computer-dependent culture has impacted society in a number of ways. People are now less likely to have face-to-face encounters and are more likely to seek attention through different digital media outlets, such as social media platforms. Personal social groups are now broader; and how a person defines themselves, as well as how they are defined by others, is largely determined by their digital interactions with others (Surette, 2015).

In addition to these social changes, digital media is also changing the ways in which people gain knowledge and use that knowledge to interact with the world. One of the most important changes is that media content is now readily available and shared among large groups of people easily and quickly. Further, audience members are now participants in the creation process. Digital media users are able to communicate at any time from any place. Users are also able to access vast amounts of information on a wide range of topics, on-demand, with users having the ability to contribute to the information source (Surette, 2015). This has led to major changes in the ways our society receives and processes information, including information about the criminal justice system and related policies (Surette, 2015).

One such change that has occurred as a result of a greater reliance on digital media sources is the trustworthiness of information that is available to individual consumers. Digital media allows content generators to pass off disinformation or misinformation more readily. Those who promote disinformation on digital media platforms are able to prey on the vulnerabilities or partisanship of recipients. Those receiving those messages then serve as amplifiers or promoters by passing along this misinformation to others through other digital media channels like the spread of a virus. This may be especially impactful when looking at the potential effects that digital media may have on the formation of governmental policies like that of criminal justice.

Criminal Justice Impacts

Inevitably, some of the impacts of digital media are being felt by the criminal justice system. While, as researchers, it is important to understand different policies and their effectiveness, it is also important that we understand the cultural, social, economic, and political forces that often play a role in driving such policies. Among these influences is the media (Hobbs & Hamerton, 2014; Silverman, 2012). “Crime--and the criminal justice system’s response to crime--has long fascinated the public” (Roberts, 1992, p. 99). Many issues that are of concern in American society center around crime and justice and the public’s image of criminality is significantly shaped by what they see and hear in the media. This makes the media an important factor in how criminal behavior is defined and what policies are developed to respond to such behaviors (Hobbs & Hamerton, 2014; Gerbner et al., 1979; Graber, 1979; Surette and Otto, 2001).

In today's world, the media are ubiquitous, and they are "not neutral, unobtrusive social agents providing simple entertainment or news" (Surette, 2015, p. 2). This means that citizens are unable to avoid the media and their construction of reality. Deriving interpretations from media representations, the public may possess little factually accurate knowledge about crime and the criminal justice system (Roberts, 1992; Surette, 2015; Dowler, 2003; Graber, 1980; Greer, 2009). Evidence suggests that the general public is more likely to view issues that receive prominent media attention as more important than those that receive little, or less, attention. Thus, the media plays an important role in the formation of key political opinions about specific social issues through their content (Beckett & Sasson, 1998).

Digital media content is often dominated by images meant to draw on the emotions of the user to increase audience size and revenue. This has major implications for the criminal justice system considering that most people use social media as their primary source for crime and justice information. The selective culling of criminal justice news and information often undermines traditional criminal justice customs. It may also lead to the creation of a crime-related moral panic, which keeps the issue in the media and creates an echo chamber which prolongs the span of attention given to a particular social issue.

With digital media having a participatory component, the criminal justice system has also been opened to public involvement. Digital media has

"altered how offenders, victims, and police react to crime; how crimes are committed and investigated; how the courts operate and process cases; and how sentenced prisoners behave and corrections operate. The administration of justice, the investigation of

crimes, the prosecution and defense of the accused, and the administration of corrections have all changed” (Surette, 2015, p. 228).

Although there are few researchers who believe that the mass media has the ability to move large audiences to the extent once believed, digital media advances have increased the potential reach of digital media messages (Petty, Brinol, & Priester, 2002). The success of digital media persuasion efforts in influencing individual behaviors is dependent upon whether the transmitted messages are successful in changing the attitudes of those in the audience and whether those attitudinal changes are likely to lead to changes in behaviors, such as voting (Petty et al., 2002). It is clear that digital media is impacting modern society in new and important ways. Thus, the potential impact that this may have on public policy must be examined to add further context to the current study.

Digital Media Influences on Criminal Justice Policy

In addition to changing forms, functions, and views of criminality, social media sources are now a primary source of information about crime and justice. Digital media provides access to information for an audience that no longer seeks information through traditional media outlets. This may lead to an undermining of long held criminal justice conventions as rare and heinous crimes are highlighted by the media. Digital media then picks up these stories and continuously repeats them. “In the new media echo chamber, discussions of crime and justice will be constructed without objectivity and with statements of outrage replacing factual claims” (Surette, 2015, p. 245).

Although previous research has largely focused on the media in general, digital media has the potential to exert influence through many of the same processes. However, due to its on-

demand access, interactive user feedback, and extensive content digital media has even greater potential to exert that influence. Public opinion is often influenced and shaped by the media. This can be a problem for a criminal justice system that is legitimized, in part, by support from society and relies on cooperation from the masses to function properly. Low public confidence in the criminal justice system has been linked to skepticism that can come from a misinformed public and a similarly misinformed public opinion (Hough, 2010). Public opinion influences criminal justice policy (support for or opposition against) through voting behavior, moral panics, and social movements (Surette, 2015). Therefore, the lack of factual crime and justice information distributed to the public through digital media is an important source of public opinions about crime and justice policy creation.

The influence of digital media on crime and justice in America will likely continue into the future. Although their role may be controversial at times, digital media plays a key role in the process of policy formation, shaping political reality through its impacts on public opinion (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2004). Many have pointed out that public attitudes are often shaped by media portrayals of social issues (McClosky & Zaller, 1984; Stimson, 1991; Page & Shapiro, 1992) as different outlets are used to communicate elite opinions to the masses (Jasperson, Shah, Watts, Faber, & Fan, 1998). Even when the media do not tell the audience exactly what to think, they influence beliefs through the amount of attention that is given to various political issues.

As noted throughout this chapter, there is existing knowledge on the potential power that the media, and those who use the media, have in influencing public opinion as it relates to crime and justice policies, such as those related to marijuana. Although much has been said about the

differential forms such a relationship may take, the study of the influences of digital media forms, such as websites and social media, is relatively modern. As exploratory research, the purpose of the current study is not to test theory but rather to gain insights into a subject that has received little previous attention from researchers. The subsequent chapter will present the methodology that was used to gain those insights into whether differences exist in how organizations utilize their websites (in terms of functionality, delivery, and public engagement) based on their category (liberal, governmental, or conservative).

Central Research Focus

The media has played an important role in the current war on drugs, providing extensive coverage to bring the drug problem to the public's attention and framing the issue in the public's mind (Elwood, 1994; Jensen, Gerber & Babcock, 1991; Johns, 1992). However, since the advent of the current war on drugs, the media has become more sophisticated as a result of improved technology and evolving user interactions. With the method of media distribution and consumption changing the ways in which individuals, agencies, organizations, and political entities are able to spread their message is also evolving.

The central goal of this study is to determine whether organizational messaging using digital media differs based on the type of organization (liberal, governmental, or conservative). It is assumed that organizations play a role in the digital media messages that the public receives. Thus, the media (websites for the purposes of the current study) that organizations are using to convey their messages also plays an important role in shaping public opinion. Consequently, it becomes important to understand the digital media utilization efforts of these organizations so

that future research may examine the role that these efforts have on influencing public opinion and, ultimately, voting behaviors and public policy. However, the focus here will be on one area:

Are there differences in the digital media marijuana policy messaging efforts (functionality, delivery, and public engagement) of liberal, governmental, and conservative organizations based on category?

The following chapter will provide a deeper discussion of the research hypotheses associated with this research focus as well as an explanation of the methods used to test the presented hypotheses.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the current study's hypotheses as they relate to the research focus presented in the previous chapter. This will be followed by an explanation of the population and sampling method (quota) employed in the current study, the data collection methods, and a description of the methodology, constructivist inquiry. This chapter will then move into the research method that will be used in the current study, a mixed-methods approach. Further, this chapter will explain the techniques that will be used. In conducting the current study, a content analysis using directed and cross-sectional approaches was employed. Although content analysis was chosen as the appropriate technique, the focus of the current study is not exclusively on the content of the websites but also on a comparison of their structure (in terms of functionality, delivery, and public engagement). The chapter will then conclude with the ethical considerations.

Research Hypotheses

The focus of this study is on how different types of organizations (liberal, governmental, and conservative) are using digital media (specifically Internet websites) in attempts to influence public support for marijuana policies through their messaging. That is, do they differ across categories, or are they essentially similar in their use of digital media? Again, the goal is to provide knowledge as to how powerful societal entities (organizations) are using emerging and growing technologies (digital media forms such as websites) in different ways. A complete summary of the hypotheses that will be tested in the current study can be found in Table 1, which is followed by a discussion of each hypothesis to be tested.

Table 1: Study Hypotheses

Functionality	
H ₁ : Downward Information Flows	Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include downward information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories
H ₂ : Upward Information Flows	Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include upward information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories
H ₃ : Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows	Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include lateral/horizontal information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories
H ₄ : Interactive Information Flows	Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include interactive information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories
Delivery	
H ₅ : Presentation/Appearance	Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include presentation/appearance elements on their websites than organizations in the other categories
H ₆ : Accessibility	Governmental organizations will make more attempts to include elements on their websites that will make them accessible than organizations in the other categories
H ₇ : Navigability	Governmental organizations will include elements on their websites that will make them more navigable than organizations in the other categories
H ₈ : Freshness	Liberal organizations will have fresher websites than organizations in the other categories
H ₉ : Responsiveness	Liberal organizations will be more responsive than organizations in the other categories
H ₁₀ : Visibility	Liberal organizations will be more visible than organizational websites in the other categories
Public Engagement	
H ₁₁ : Diversity of Stakeholders	Liberal organizations will make more attempts to connect with a diversity of stakeholders than organizations in the other categories
H ₁₂ : Awareness of Information	Liberal organizations will make more efforts to increase awareness of information than organizations in the other categories
H ₁₃ : Community Building	Liberal organizations will make more efforts to build their community than organizations in the other categories
H ₁₄ : Mobilizing Action	Liberal organizations will make more efforts to mobilize actions than organizations in the other categories

As each measure of functionality, delivery, and public engagement is tested, when less than 25 percent of the variables reach statistical significance, the hypotheses will not be supported. If 25 to 49 percent of the variables tested reach statistical significance, limited

support will be found for the hypotheses. And, hypotheses will be supported if 50 percent or more of the variables tested reach statistical significance.

Functionality

Gibson and Ward's (2000) proposed methodology for studying the purpose and efficiency of party and candidate websites was used to provide initial coding categories for the classification of the collected data as well as informing the data collection process. The first component looks at functionality, whether organizations are performing the activities we assume; and if they are, how effectively are they doing so (Gibson & Ward, 2000). The current study used the initial coding categories presented by Gibson and Ward's (2000) study but will employ the categories for the purposes of measuring attempts by organizations to communicate a marijuana policy message to their audience.

The different components of functionality are organized according to the direction of communication flow on a website and included: downward information flows, upward information flows, lateral/horizontal information flows, and interactive information flows (asynchronous). Table 2 reiterates each of these elements of functionality and their direction for further clarification. For the current study, it is expected that organizations use Internet websites to provide information, campaign for a marijuana policy position, generate resources, network, promote participation, and disseminate content.

Table 2: Elements of Functionality

Element	Direction of Communication
Downward Information Flows	Information comes from the organization down to the individual user (unidirectional)
Upward Information Flows	Information flows from the individual user up to the organization (unidirectional)
Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows	Information is provided by the organization to outside individuals or individuals within the organizations (unidirectional)
Interactive Information Flows (Asynchronous)	A substantive response follows a user's initial communication after a particular time interval and cannot be modified contacts (multidirectional)

Downward Information Flows

For the purposes of the current study, downward information flows are unidirectional communications with information coming from the organizations down to the individual user (Gibson & Ward, 2000). This will be measured by looking for specific information as it relates to the organization and their mission, with variables chosen to measure the amount and type of information coming from the organization. This analysis includes: a mission statement; a section with information about the organization (“about us” or history sections, for example); a vision/values statement; a listing of the organization’s leadership (board of directors, president, CEO, for example); a staff listing; the organization’s policy position (prohibition, reform, decriminalization or legalization); newsletters (or a place to sign up for newsletters); media releases; frequently asked questions; and pages that have been targeted to specific user populations.

This measure is included as users may want to know more about their source of information and their credibility. Having these features allows users to find this information easily and make judgements about the legitimacy of the information source. A testing of downward information flows will analyze whether differences exist between organizational

categories on this measure. It is theorized that organizations that make more attempts to pass information down to users may have a greater chance of creating marijuana policy meaning for individual users through their use of Internet websites.

- H₁: Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include downward information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories.
- H₀: There will be no differences in the downward information flows of organizations based on category.

Upward Information Flows

As information seeking is one of the primary reasons that individual users visit organizational websites, it is important for organizations to meet this need through certain forms of content (Masters, 2016). Providing information about the organization, its mission, and its advocacy efforts, as well as providing factual information that offers a supportive basis for their efforts (provided in the form of downward information flows) is clearly an important function for an organizational website. However, these websites provide opportunities for other forms of communication between the organization and the individual user as well. One of these is upward communication flows, which are defined by the current study as one-way, “transactional communications” where the information flows from the individual user to the organization (Gibson & Ward, 2000). In the analysis, this included donations and merchandising.

Looking at upward information flows will assist in determining whether differences exist on this measure based on organizational category. It is theorized that those organizations that have stronger upward communication flows may have a greater chance of receiving proceeds from individual users to help ensure their survival. This is an important inclusion in the current study as it may speak to the viability of some organizations who may not have other revenue streams to ensure their survival.

- H₂: Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include upward information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories.
- H₀: There will be no differences in the upward information flows of organizations based on category.

Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows

In addition to the two previous one-way forms of communication, there is a final unilateral form of communication that must be considered as well. Lateral (or horizontal) information flows are defined in the current study as unidirectional communications whereby information is provided by the organizations to outside individuals (outward information provision) or individuals within the organizations (inward information provision) (Gibson & Ward, 2000). The measurement of lateral information flows includes different types of hyperlinks on the organizational websites' homepages. In the current study, this includes: the number of advocacy links on the website's homepage, the number of reference (external) links on the homepage, the number of suborganizational (internal) links on the homepage, and the number of local links on the homepage.

Analysis on lateral/horizontal information flows will assist in determining whether there are differences in how organizations are linked based on category (liberal, governmental, or conservative). It is theorized that those organizations that have greater linkages to internal or external information and resources may also have a greater chance of spreading their message to individual users. This measure is included in the current study as it speaks to the amount of information that may be found on organizational websites as well as the sources of information presented. As information seeking is one of the key reasons that people visit websites, this is an important measure (Masters, 2016).

- H₃: Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include lateral/horizontal information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories.

- H₀: There will be no differences in the lateral/horizontal information flows of organizations based on category.

Interactive Information Flows

In addition to the one-way forms of communication previously discussed, there is also a form of multidirectional communication that must also be considered in a discussion of digital media and its properties of interactivity (Socha & Eber-Schmid, n.d.). Interactive communication flows are those in which an initial communication from one side is made with the expectation of receiving a response from the other side. The original Gibson and Ward (2000) study delineated between synchronous and asynchronous information flows. As no variables from synchronous flows (chat rooms and online debates) presented during the preliminary data collection, this measure was dropped from the current study. Asynchronous interactive information flows are included in the current study and are defined as multidirectional substantive contacts between organizations and individuals in which a response follows a user's initial communication (which cannot be altered) after a particular time interval (Gibson & Ward, 2000). Asynchronous interactive information flows will be measured by looking for: the ability to contact the organization, the presence of blogs, the ability to contact the organization via email, the opportunity to join an email list, the opportunity for users to provide feedback, the presence of certain social media platforms (including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+, etc.), the presence of apps, the presence of podcasts, and the total number of social media platforms available.

Asynchronous interactive information flows will be tested to determine if differences exist in organizational efforts on this measure based on categorization. It is believed that those that promote more interactive information flows may have a greater chance of connecting with

individual users in hopes of promoting a particular marijuana policy. Digital media tends to be interactive in nature. Thus, this is an important measure for inclusion in a study, such as this one, that is examining digital media (in the form of websites).

- H₄: Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include interactive information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories.
- H₀: There will be no differences in the interactive information flows of organizations based on category.

Delivery

Gibson and Ward's (2000) study also included measures to analyze message delivery. The current study assumes that certain website design elements assist in delivering the organizations' marijuana policy messages. Again, Gibson and Ward's (2000) proposed methodology for studying the purpose and efficiency of party and candidate websites was used to provide initial coding categories. These initial categories include the elements of presentation/appearance, accessibility, navigability, freshness, responsiveness, and visibility.

Presentation/Appearance

The first measure of delivery is the presentation/appearance of the organizational websites. This is the "glitz" factor or the showiness of the website, and it includes flashiness (graphics) and dynamism (multimedia components) (Gibson & Ward, 2000, p. 308). When examining the delivery aspects associated with presentation/appearance, the current study will consider: the total number of images, pictures, or imaged hyperlinks on homepage; homepage content (such as moving icons, slide shows, audio, video, and live streaming); the length of the homepage (whether scrolling was required); and the amount of information on the homepage (word count and number of topics).

As stated by Gibson and Ward (2000), “the visual appeal and entertainment that such features add to a site are considered to make it more effective in delivering its message than static, plain-text pages” (p. 308). This measure is being tested in the current study to assess whether differences exist in the attractiveness of websites based on organizational category. The display of information may be important to the users that are receiving it which may then influence if and/or how the information is received. It is believed that those organizational websites that contain components considered to make them more attractive and entertaining may have a better chance of delivering their marijuana policy messages.

- H₅: Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include presentation/appearance elements on their websites than organizations in the other categories.
- H₀: There will be no differences in the presentation/appearance of organizational websites based on category.

Accessibility

While it is important to study how information is presented on organizational websites, whether that information can be accessed quickly and easily by the user is another aspect of message delivery as well. Although a site may have an attractive presentation/appearance, if the website is not working, working too slowly, has parts of the site that are not fully functional, or has elements that are not available to those with disabilities (those who visually or hearing impaired for example), an organization may not have a strong messaging effort (Gibson & Ward, 2000). The standards that will be used to measure accessibility include: the presence (or absence) of foreign language translations, the presence (or absence) of a statement of alternative access to electronic and information technology, the size of the homepage (in kilobytes), the time it takes to initially access the homepage of the organizational websites, whether the website was operational at the time of data collection, and the presence (or absence) of plug-ins.

Accessibility will look for proactive features of the websites that show the organizations have a commitment to user friendliness (Gibson & Ward, 2000). This is an important feature to measure as it relates to the amount and types of people who may be able to receive information by visiting an organizational website. It is thought that the more accessible a website is, the more individual users who may receive the organization's marijuana policy messages.

- H₆: Governmental organizations will make more attempts to include elements on their websites that will make them accessible than organizations in the other categories.
- H₀: There will be no differences in the accessibility of organizational websites based on category.

Navigability

Although a site may be easily accessible to users, this matters little if it is difficult for users to move around a site and locate the information that they are seeking. The navigability of the organizational websites will be judged in the current study by how easily the user is able to move around the website and find information. For the purposes of the current study, this will be measured by looking for the presence or absence of key website features, including navigation tips, a site search, a homepage icon on each page of the website, major site area links or menus bars on each page of the website, and a site map or index.

These features to be measured allow users to easily navigate the organizational websites to directly find the information they are seeking. This is important because it provided more chances for the delivery of the organizational marijuana policy messages. It is thought that the more easily users are able to navigate the organizational websites, the better chance that the organizational messages will be delivered (Gibson & Ward, 2000).

- H₇: Governmental organizations will include elements on their websites that will make them more navigable than organizations in the other categories.
- H₀: There will be no differences in the navigability of organizational websites based on category.

Freshness

Locating information on a website is important to users as that is likely the reason for their visit to the website (Masters, 2016). In order to be an informed citizen, it is also important that the information that they are accessing is current, especially when dealing with a social and legal issue, like marijuana policy, that is shifting and has important societal implications. The fourth element of delivery that will be measured in the current study is the freshness of the organizational websites. For the purposes of the current study, freshness was to be measured by analyzing the copyright date of the websites (if present) and the publication dates of the research that the websites have available. However, the measurement and comparison of copyright dates is only valid for liberal and conservative organizations since governmental websites cannot have copyright dates. As governmental websites have a legal inability to copyright their websites, this measure was removed (Digital.gov, n.d.). Thus, publication dates will be the sole measure of freshness. This feature allows users to see how current the posted information is.

Gibson and Ward (2000) state that freshness is “considered the key to effective delivery of site content” (p. 308). Although measuring effectiveness is beyond the scope of the current study, it is likely that a website whose content is updated regularly may generate more interest among users than one that is not. Accordingly, websites that are updated and have the latest available news surrounding their marijuana policy position are more likely to attract users. It is believed that fresher websites thus provide more potential for those organizations to deliver their message than organizations that have websites that are stale (which may discourage users) (Gibson & Ward, 2000).

- H₈: Liberal organizations will have fresher websites than organizations in the other categories.

- H₀: There will be no differences in the freshness of organizational websites based on category.

Responsiveness

Although having a website that is fresh is key to the delivery of a message, not all information that is being sought by users of the websites will be found. This is when it is important for organizations to be responsive to the inquiries of users to ensure that users can get the essential information that they need and want. Responsiveness is the next measure of delivery and refers to the capacity of the organization to respond to simple information requests submitted to their websites. It is broken down into two components. One looks at the speed of the response, while the other looks at the quality of the response (Gibson & Ward, 2000). For the purposes of the current study, this measure will be broken down into the speed of email response (measured after an inquiring email was sent to the sampled organizations), the speed of social media response (measured after an inquiring tweet was sent to the organizations), and the quality of the response (in terms of both word count and relevance to the inquiry).

This is an important feature to measure in the current study as users expect quick responses to inquiries, and they expect responses that are meaningful. As organizational websites seek to promote participation in the policy process as well as to provide information, responsiveness assists in determining if organizations are attempting to deliver on those goals. It is thought that those organizations that are more responsive may have a greater chance of delivering their marijuana policy messages to individual users (Gibson & Ward, 2000).

- H₉: Liberal organizations will be more responsive than organizations in the other categories.
- H₀: There will be no differences in the responsiveness of organizations based on category.

Visibility

Although having all of the other elements of delivery are important to the online messaging efforts of organizations, they mean little if users are unable to locate the organizational website on the World Wide Web. This ease of locating the organizational websites online is the next measure of delivery, known as visibility. The two components of visibility in the analysis are the search engine optimization (SEO) and a website description keyword search. The SEO provides the natural search results when a user enters search terms into a search engine, such as Google. Although there are questions about the updating of search engine algorithms and whether possibly outdated techniques will produce the results that they once did, SEO is just as important as ever. As a marketing strategy, the organic traffic that results from SEO is responsible for 51 percent of website visitors (StableWP, 2019). So, although SEO may have its problems, it is still one of the most reliable ways to test the visibility of a website on the World Wide Web through search engines such as Google. The website description, through a keyword search, also impacts how visible a website is on the search engine.

How visible the organizational website is to the user may have an impact on how the organization is able to disseminate their marijuana policy message to their audience as well as if/how they are able to grow their audience. It has been theorized that the more easily a website can be located, the more likely that there will be increased traffic on an organizational website. As stated by Gibson and Ward (2000), “to deliver its contents effectively, a site has to be relatively straightforward to locate” (p. 308).

- H₁₀: Liberal organizations will be more visible than organizational websites in the other categories.

- H₀: There will be no differences in the visibility of organizational websites based on category.

Public Engagement

How well organizations are attempting to engage with individual users is also a prime consideration in the current study, so public engagement will also be measured. Hou and Lampe's (2015) study of social media effectiveness for public engagement using a sample of small nonprofit organizations will be the basis for the measures included in the coding. This will include attempts to connect with a diversity of stakeholders, increase awareness of information, build community, and mobilize actions.

Diversity of Stakeholders

The first measure of public engagement will look at attempts made by the organizations to connect with a diversity of stakeholders. This entails efforts on the part of the organizations to utilize their websites to interact with different groups of people (members, volunteers, funders, other organizations, reporters, individual users, etc.). For the purposes of the current study, attempted engagement with a diversity of stakeholders will be measured by looking for the presence of membership opportunities, volunteer opportunities, appeals from the organization for information/input, networking opportunities, sponsors/funders, job opportunities, internship opportunities, connections to other organizations, and grant availability.

The function of this measure is to look for opportunities for organizations to increase their involvement with different groups of individual users. The hope is that the popularity of websites, and their connected social media, will assist in the organizations' efforts to achieve various ends by reaching people through digital forums where they seek information (Hou & Lampe, 2015). It is theorized that the greater the efforts on the part of the organizations to

connect with a diversity of stakeholders, the greater chance they will have to expand the reach of their marijuana policy messages.

- H₁₁: Liberal organizations will make more attempts to connect with a diversity of stakeholders than organizations in the other categories.
- H₀: There will be no differences in organizational attempts to connect with a diversity of stakeholders based on category.

Awareness of Information

Along with attempting to engage with a diversity of stakeholders, organizations may also use digital media platforms to increase users' awareness of information. This is the second measure of public engagement and is defined as the dissemination of information by organizations through digital media outlets in an attempt to increase knowledge of the organization, their mission, and their advocacy (Hou & Lampe, 2015). The measures for organizational attempts to increase information awareness include: the presence of educational resources and tools, the source from which posted information originates (individual sources, the organization itself, other organizations, news sources, government sources, and/or scholarly sources), and the prominence of the organizational policy position.

This is a key measure in the current study as information dissemination is one of the reasons that organizations create websites and information seeking is one of the reasons that individual users visit websites (Masters, 2016). It is thought that the better that organizations can disseminate information through digital media channels, the more likely that they will be able to achieve their information goals. These goals may include increasing awareness of their organization, its mission, and its policy position.

- H₁₂: Liberal organizations will make more efforts to increase awareness of information than organizations in the other categories.

- H₀: There will be no differences in organizational efforts to increase awareness of information based on category.

Community Building

Disseminating information on organizational websites is important, as that is what people expect to find when they visit. However, another use for digital media is building a “community” (a group of individuals who come together for a purpose). In the current study, this entails digital media practices by organizations that assist in building stronger ties with existing stakeholders and local communities (Hou & Lampe, 2015). Measuring an organization’s attempts to build a community will require looking for instances where the organization has given thanks to those who had donated to/sponsored the organization as well as looking for organizational connections to the community (affiliation, association, or chapter).

This is important as it shows support for the organizational policy messages by members of the community. It is theorized that those organizations with stronger community ties may have a better chance of strengthening support for their marijuana policy position. This may then potentially lead to policy change.

- H₁₃: Liberal organizations will make more efforts to build their community than organizations in the other categories.
- H₀: There will be no differences in organizational efforts to build their community based on category.

Mobilizing Action

While the other measures of public engagement are important, the ultimate goal of the organizational use of digital media by organizations is to mobilize action. In the current study, these will be attempts by organizations to use digital media to provide stakeholders with enough information a strong enough sense of community to motivate potential action (Hou & Lampe, 2015). Attempts to mobilize action will be analyzed by searching organizational websites for

event/activity information, advocacy, advertising, direct calls for action to be taken by users, and calls for social media engagement between users and the organizations.

This measure will look for opportunities to engage with the public. This engagement may then possibly spur them into taking further actions to support the marijuana policy position of the organizations. It is thought that the more an organization attempts to engage with the public, the more likely they are to motivate individual users and possibly spur them into actions offline.

- H₁₄: Liberal organizations will make more efforts to mobilize actions than organizations in the other categories.
- H₀: There will be no differences in organizational efforts to mobilize action based on category.

Sample Selection

In their efforts to promote marijuana policy messages, organizations may utilize digital media (such as Internet websites) . Public domain organizational websites analyzed in February 2017 are the unit of analysis chosen for the current study. The population from which the sample will be drawn includes organizations with a marijuana policy stance (pro-decriminalization/legalization or continued prohibition), a public domain website advancing that policy position, and a social media connection on that website. These organizations were categorized as liberal, governmental, or conservative .

Organizational categories were chosen to represent each side of the marijuana policy debate as well as a “neutral” category. The liberal category includes organizations that support the decriminalization/legalization of marijuana. This organizational category has been labeled “liberal” as their policy views run counter to those of the traditional prohibitive policies. The conservative category includes organizations that are supportive of maintaining current

prohibitive marijuana policies. This organizational category has been labeled “conservative” as they are cautious about policy change and seek to conserve the marijuana policies already in place. The “neutral” category in the current study is that of federal governmental agencies and organizations. It should be noted that those organizations included in the “governmental” category will refer to federal agencies and organizations. While there are governmental organizations operating at the local and state levels, the focus of this study will be on those agencies and organizations exclusively at the federal level. Although the organizations in this category are most likely to support current prohibitive policies, they do so as they are tasked with the proposing, adopting, and enforcing of such policies. The organizations in the governmental category do not have the sole mission of advocating for their marijuana policy views, as do the organizations in the liberal and conservative categories. Thus, the governmental category serves as the most impartial organizational category in the marijuana policy debate. The sampled organizations and their respective websites are listed in the References section at the end of the paper.

The organizational websites that will be included in the sample will come from a search of the World Wide Web (specifically the search engine Google) and will include those that had sufficiently high SEO (search engine optimization). The SEO is the process of returning organic (unpaid) results on search engines as websites are ranked on what is considered most relevant to the user (Search Engine Land, 2019). Twenty-four organizations (and their websites) will be chosen for inclusion in the sample. Eight will be chosen from each category (liberal, governmental, and conservative) to ensure equivalence in the study of each organizational category and as an attempt to compare each category equally. As this is an exploratory study, the

sample size will be smaller so that a deeper understanding of the study's measures can be gained. Again, websites will be selected based on their search engine optimization and ranking after a keyword search had been conducted. Those that returned the most relevant results and will be used in the current study include: "organizations for drug marijuana policy reform" for liberal organizations, "government agencies organizations illicit drugs" for government organizations, and "organizations against drug addiction legalization" for conservative organizations. Google will be used as the primary search engine to find the organizations that will be included in the sample. However, it should be noted that searches performed on Yahoo! and Bing using the same search terms produced similar results during the preliminary coding process.

To locate the organizations included in the current study, quota sampling (a nonprobability stratified sampling technique where representative participants are chosen from a specific subgroup) will be employed (Economic Times, 2018). The organizational categories will be determined first (liberal, governmental, and conservative), segmenting the organizations into mutually exclusive groups. Further, the selection of organizations within categories is not random but is determined by the organizational websites' SEOs (Economic Times, 2018). Those chosen will be within the first 200 websites excluding the advertisements. If eight organizational websites cannot be located within the first 200 results, a review of the literature will assist in completing the sample for that organizational category. Those organizations that cannot be located through a search engine inquiry will then be coded "201" to indicate that they were not found during the search. "201" has been chosen to represent these organizations as the results will be truncated at 200.

Measurement

Measurement Instrument: Foundational Studies

Two studies will provide the basis for the measurement of the key constructs included in the current study (functionality, delivery, and public engagement) to note differences in the ways that organizations are using digital media to disseminate their policy messages. The first of these is a study conducted by Gibson and Ward (2000). In their study, they noted growth in the online activities of political parties and candidates. Their study focused on adding to research which is more systematic and quantitative in its approach. In addition, the researchers developed a coding scheme that addressed questions applicable to political websites: (1) what the purpose of such sites is and (2) how effectively websites deliver their contents.

Gibson and Ward's (2000) study was chosen to assist in the development of an initial coding scheme as marijuana policy (and which policy is supported) is political in nature. Thus, their comparison of political candidate websites provided an appropriate preliminary framework for the comparison of organizational websites advocating for policy. Gibson and Ward (2000) identify two major areas in their coding scheme that attempted to address their research questions. The first of these is function(ality) and is meant to address the research question of whether candidates were performing certain functions (such as information provision, campaigning, resource generation, networking, or promoting participation) through their websites. To assess functionality, Gibson and Ward (2000) organized their coding scheme around the direction of information and communication flow on a website. The second measure in the Gibson and Ward (2000) study was delivery and looked at the effectiveness of organizations and their websites in delivering certain functions.

The coding scheme provided by the researchers is one attempt to assess the capacity of digital media in a participatory democracy. Although their list of measures was seen as comprehensive by Gibson and Ward, they did not see it as definitive and expected other researchers to add or delete certain items to suit their purposes. This was the case with the current study as some measures were revised to meet the needs of the current study. This study has also been cited as a source in a number of other studies (Stein, 2009; Farrell, 2012; Loader, 2007; Dimitrova, Shehata, & Nord, 2014; Oates, Owen, & Gibson, 2006), further lending to the ability of other researchers to use their measure in their own work.

The second study utilized by the current study is that of Hou and Lampe (2015). This study notes that social media is increasingly being used by organizations to help them meet their public engagement goals. The study conducted by Hou and Lampe (2015) focuses on this adoption by a group of small nonprofit organizations in hopes of answering four central research questions: (1) what factors influence organizational decisions regarding social media adoption, (2) how do organizations use social media to achieve public engagement goals, (3) how do organizations assess the effectiveness of social media use for public engagement, and (4) what organizational challenges influence how social media use supports public engagement goals.

Although the current study is not exclusively examining small nonprofit organizations, the Hou and Lampe (2015) study will be utilized in the current study as it also examines the organizational use of digital media for achieving certain goals. Although the success of such efforts in engaging the public is beyond the scope of the current study (the Hou and Lampe study also noted that actual effectiveness was unclear), the coding scheme for attempted public engagement is relevant. The study has also been cited as a source in other studies (Zhao, Lampe,

& Ellison, 2016; Erte, Ryou, Smith, Fassett, & Duda, 2016; Huang, Wu, & Hou, 2017; Rao & Hemphill, 2017), encouraging the use of their measurement tool to draw initial coding categories.

Measurement Procedures

Constructivist Inquiry

With the properties of digital media and the possible digital media activities in which organizations may engage in mind, the coding scheme for the current study was developed to address: (1) the communication of a particular message between an organization and an individual user, (2) the delivery of a message between an organization and an individual user, and (3) the use of digital media by organizations as a tool for public engagement. Examining these key areas address the central research focus of whether there are variations in the digital messaging strategies of different organizations based on category. These variations will be determined by comparing the differences between the three primary organizational categories (liberal, conservative, and governmental) on their use of digital media in their messaging strategies.

The current study begins with variables in three main areas: functionality, delivery, and public engagement. The Gibson and Ward (2000) study (functionality and delivery) and the Hou and Lampe (2015) study (public engagement) will provide the initial variables to be measured. These measurement tools will then be supplemented by variables that the researcher deems salient through the data collection process. This acquaints the researcher with what is important, makes the analysis of the data more structured, and makes the constructions more robust and definitive (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This will be done in the current study through constant comparative analysis.

This study will employ constructivist inquiry, which is different than that of a conventional inquirer in that it is repetitive, interactive, intuitive, open and interpretive (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Constructivist inquirers often enter their research as learners, not claiming to know what is important and ought to be tested prior to beginning the study. There is constant interplay of data collection and analysis that occurs throughout the course of the study. As the data is collected, the researcher seeks to uncover further information that appears to be relevant to the study through constant comparative analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

This often requires a measurement instrument that is flexible, not one that is perfect, and one that is adaptable, allowing the researcher to focus on what is salient (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The current study begins with two different instruments drawn from the Gibson and Ward (2000) and Hou and Lampe (2015) studies in an effort to measure functionality, delivery, and public engagement. This will provide the preliminary data collection frame that will be used in the current study. As the data collection takes place, through a constant comparative method, new salient variables that assist in the measurement of those constructs will be added to the instrument. This should allow clarity into what variables were the most salient and will make for a much more robust understanding of differences between organizational categories in terms of functionality, delivery, and public engagement. This will also assist in guiding future data collection efforts (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Each concept that will be measured in the current study will be presented in APPENDIX C, which includes the variables included in the study, their definition, and how they were measured. The study will begin with a framework initially established by the Gibson and Ward

(2000) and Hou & Lampe (2015) studies. However, in dealing with a constructivist approach, some categories that are not considered relevant to the current study will be removed.

In addition to dropping certain measures that are not considered relevant to the current study (as they are not present on websites during the coding process), other measures may need to be transformed to better fit the needs of the study. This will entail using different measures to understand the same concepts measured in the initial studies. For example, “election results,” an original measure from the Gibson and Ward (2000) study was transformed into “voting/policy/legislative/representative information” in the current study (during the initial trial collection of the data) as the 2016 presidential election concludes during the course of this study. This makes the transformation of this measure necessary as none of the websites initially examined had election results, while voting/policy/legislative/representative information was present. All transformed variables will also be found in APPENDIX C. APPENDIX C will provide the label for the variable as it appeared in the original studies as well as how the variable is to be labeled in the current study.

Finally, additional variables not found in the frameworks of the initial studies may also be included as measures in the current study. These will be variables that are deemed important as data collection is being conducted, and they will then be added to the initial framework that will be constructed from the Gibson and Ward (2000) and Hou and Lampe (2015) studies. These additional measures will also be reported as such in APPENDIX C. This development of a data collection framework is consistent with a directed approach to content analysis. This approach will start with the initial framework drawn from previous literature (Gibson & War, 2000; Hou & Lampe, 2015), then additional categories and subcategories will be added as they become

apparent through constant comparative analysis and are deemed relevant (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This will create an axial coding scheme.

Methodological Procedures

Mixed Methods

The nature of the data and the hypotheses to be explored in the current study present some challenges in terms of analysis. While some aspects of the analyses to follow are qualitative, there are quantitative aspects to the analyses as well. While quantification assists in focusing attention, the greater message can often get lost in numerical calculations. Thus, qualitative analyses have the ability, in many cases, to provide “greater detail” and “seem to convey a greater richness of meaning than do quantified data” (Maxfield & Babbie, 2005, p. 24). As the current study seeks to analyze and understand the similarities and/or differences between the digital messaging of liberal, governmental, and conservative organizations, it does not lend itself to an exclusively quantitative or qualitative methodology. The findings that result from a mixed methods approach enhance beliefs that the results are valid, and a better and richer understanding of the data will be presented using a mixed methods approach (Bouchard, 1976). This approach will assist in the enhancement of the research design, the data collection, and the grounding and generalizability of the findings (Sieber, 1973).

Content Analysis

A content analysis, an approach to analyzing textual and visual data that may vary with the theoretical and substantive content of the issue being studied, will be conducted as it allows a researcher to comb through large amounts of data easily and in a systematic way (GAO, 1996). In the current study as the Gibson and Ward (2000) and Hou and Lampe (2015) studies will

provide the basis for the initial coding scheme used. As additional categories and subcategories become apparent through the analysis, they will be included when appropriate and relevant. Operational definitions will then be determined based on the theoretical framework. By comparing observations of the frequency of key variables (based on organizational category), it will be determined whether there is support for the study's hypotheses (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Data Collection

The messaging efforts of the sampled organizations will then be compared by measuring variables in three areas. The first of these is functionality, which will examine whether organizations were using their websites to perform certain functions that are expected by users (such as information provision) (Gibson & Ward, 2000). Functionality will include measuring for: downward information flows, upward information flows, lateral/horizontal information flows, and interactive information flows. In addition to functionality, the current study will also test for the delivery aspects of the organizational websites by measuring different features of presentation/appearance, accessibility, navigability, freshness, responsiveness, and visibility. Finally, public engagement will also be measured. The key aspects of public engagement that will be measured by the current study will include engaging with a diversity of stakeholders, increasing awareness of information, building a community, and mobilizing actions.

Data Analysis

All coded data will be stored and analyzed using the Microsoft Office 365 ProPlus program Excel. The full results (functionality, delivery, and public engagement) from the data collection and coding will be found in APPENDICES D-F, with comparisons of the organizational categories included in APPENDICES G-I. These comparisons will include the mean (an average

of all organizational values in each category for each measure), the median (an average of the middle values of the data set), and the standard deviation (which indicates how far the data set values are spread out from the average). These values will give a better indication of the organizational averages on each measure as well as how the values are distributed around that average. This will allow for a better comparison between organizational categories. These measures will be conducted using the IBM program SPSS Statistics.

In addition to the central measures of mean, median, and standard deviation, independent samples t-tests will also be conducted. This will be done to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the means of two organizational categories on a particular measure. This one-tailed test of significance will assist in distinguishing differences between population means in a positive or negative direction, but not both. As the previous literature allows for an inference as to which organizational category is likely to score higher on certain measures, one-tailed tests are appropriate in the current study as they are directional in nature (Spatz, 2011). Again, these tests will be conducted using the IBM program SPSS Statistics. The alpha (significance level), which is the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis, will be set at a 0.050 level. A higher p-value will be chosen for the current study as this study will be based on a small sample size, and a higher p-value will allow for the retention of statistically significant comparative differences that may be lost if using a smaller p-value. The complete results of these t-tests will be included in APPENDICES J-L. In addition, those differences that were found to be statistically significant will be included in Chapter 4: Findings as they apply.

Initial Variables Measured

In conducting the current study, data collection will begin with initial coding categories from the Gibson and Ward (2000) and Hou and Lampe (2015) studies. Functionality and delivery measures will be drawn from the Gibson and Ward (2000) study, while public engagement measures will be drawn from the Hou and Lampe (2015) study. The data collection will take place in February 2017. However, in determining which measures are most relevant to the current study, a preliminary trial was conducted in October 2016. This pilot run included the websites of two liberal organizations, one governmental organization, and two conservative organizations to ensure objectivity. These websites constituted about 25 percent of the overall sample and were considered representative. Measurement and coding were then conducted using only the variables included in the original Gibson and Ward (2000) and Hou and Lampe (2015) studies. Those measures that will be added to the current study through constant comparative analysis as they are found to be salient were not included in the preliminary trial. After completing the coding on this initial sample, several measures were dropped as they were not proven relevant to the present study. These measures, which all coded as “Absent-0” during preliminary coding, are listed in Table 1. In order for a measure to be included in the current study, at least one “Present-1” was needed from at least one organization (in any organizational category).

Table 3: Measures Dropped After Preliminary Sample

Functionality	Negative campaigning/ arguments (Downward Information Flows) Direct dialogue (Synchronous Interactive Information Flows) Chat room (Synchronous Interactive Information Flows) Online debates (Synchronous Interactive Information Flows)
Delivery	No frames option (Accessibility) Text only documents to download/print (Accessibility)
Public Engagement	None

Once these initial codes were drawn, relevant measures were identified. Data collection will now proceed through the use of constant comparative analysis. As additional measures are identified as salient, they will be added to the appropriate category (as measures of functionality, delivery, or public engagement). Measures will be considered prominent enough for inclusion in the current study when three or more total websites in two or more organizational categories (liberal, governmental, or conservative) contain the feature.

Ethics

The researcher will seek to ensure that the research is free from obvious error and bias. This will be done by concentrating on the central research question and hypotheses posited. In addition, the researcher will follow the previous research that has been conducted (as it relates to the central research question). The researcher will also seek to reduce bias by focusing on and following the content of the data that will be collected during the course of the study as guided by the research design and previous literature. Further, the choosing of the three organizational categories (liberal, governmental, and conservative) included in the current study seeks to ensure objectivity by having each side of the marijuana policy debate represented.

No human subjects will be used during this research study. Thus, the researcher sought institutional review board (IRB) exemption and included documentation of such exemption in APPENDIX A. Instead, public domain websites will be used for conducting this analysis. Since the information used in this analysis is on public domain websites, no consent for participation from the organizations included in the study is necessary nor will it be sought by the researcher. In addition, the public nature of the organizational websites included in the study means that organizational approval of the research is not necessary nor will it be sought. It is argued that the material examined is “fair use.” Under the Copyright Act, Section 107, this is considered material that “promotes freedom of expression by permitting the unlicensed use of copyright protected works in certain circumstances” (Copyright.gov, n.d.). As the material will be used in the promotion of education and scholarship, for nonprofit educational purposes, fair use applies to the organizational websites and messaging that will be analyzed in this study.

Adequate provisions to ensure the confidentiality of data will be made as well. The coding results will be the only location in which identifying organizational information is present. Access to this coding will be limited to the researcher. This will be accomplished by password protecting and locking in a secure location any storage devices containing files with identifying information as well as locking any printed files with identifying information in a secure file cabinet. All other reporting tools, including those in this paper, will replace identifying information with codes for each organization (e.g. “L1” for liberal organization 1, “G1” for governmental organization 1, or “C1” for conservative organization 1). This will ensure the anonymity of the organizations included in the study. In addition, the anonymity of individuals who may reply to email correspondence on behalf of the organizations (the response

measurement) will also be ensured. All identifying names of individual respondents will be removed in reporting the measurements for this paper. As these individuals will be responding on behalf of the organizations included in the study, organizational codes will replace any individual identifying information. A copy of the email response will be kept in a location only accessible to the researcher.

All data being collected for analysis in the current study will be maintained. This will be accomplished by saving the information at the time that it was accessed so that original data will be maintained in the likely event that the organization makes changes to the information that is available on their website during the course of this study. This data will be maintained for five years in a location that is only accessible to the researcher. During this time the data may be further used to build on the knowledge gained by the current study. After five years, cross-sectional data that analyzes digital media will be outdated and will be destroyed. Storage devices that contain files including identifying data will be destroyed and any printed information will be shredded.

With the evolution of new media messaging in mind, the current study will seek to determine whether organizations are using new media differently based on their marijuana policy position. This may then lead to future research that examines how different organizations are using distinct messaging efforts to potentially influence public support for different policy agendas. The study will utilize a directed content analysis approach to see if organizations present their marijuana policy agendas differently on their websites based on their policy position. The following chapter will present the findings of the current study, which will

examine the organizational use of digital media in terms of functionality, delivery, and public engagement.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The current study sought to establish whether there are categorical differences between the organizational use of websites to promote marijuana policies. It began with twenty-four organizations evenly divided into three categories: liberal, federal government, and conservative. These organizations were chosen through quota sampling after a Google search of the World Wide Web. Hypotheses were then tested in three main areas: functionality (four hypotheses tested), delivery (six hypotheses tested), and public engagement (four hypotheses tested). Two studies (Gibson & Ward, 2000 and Hou & Lampe, 2015) provided the initial coding and methodological framework used to test the hypotheses. Through constant comparative analysis, additional variables deemed salient were added to the measurement tool. Data was then coded, and independent samples t-tests were run to test hypotheses between organizational categories. This determined whether there was support for each of the hypotheses presented.

The results of these findings, and what they mean in terms of this study's central research focus is presented in this chapter. The analysis begins with models representing functionality, followed by delivery, and public engagement. As previously noted, each measure of functionality, delivery, and public engagement was tested. According to the rubric specified in Chapter 3, if less than 25 percent of the variables reached statistical significance, the hypotheses were not supported. If 25 to 49 percent of the variables tested reached statistical significance, limited support was found for the hypotheses. And if 50 percent or more of the variables tested reached statistical significance, the hypotheses are deemed supported.

Functionality

As previously noted, Gibson and Ward's (2000) proposed methodology for studying the purpose and efficiency of party and candidate websites was used to provide initial coding categories for the classification of the collected data. The first component of the current study looked at functionality, whether organizations are performing the activities we assume; and if so, how often are they performing those activities (Gibson & Ward, 2000). The current study used the initial coding categories presented by Gibson and Ward's (2000) study but employed the categories to measure attempts by organizations to communicate a marijuana policy message to their audience (website visitors). The different components of functionality were organized according to the direction of communication flow on these sites and included: downward, upward, lateral/horizontal, and interactive (synchronous and asynchronous) information flows. Functionality was measured to test the first four hypotheses posited, the results of which are summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Hypotheses for Functionality

Functionality Measure	Hypotheses	Observed Results
H ₁ : Downward Information Flows (11 measured variables)	Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include downward information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories	Not supported
H ₂ : Upward Information Flows (2 measured variables)	Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include upward information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories	Supported
H ₃ : Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows (4 measured variables)	Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include lateral/horizontal information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories	Supported
H ₄ : Interactive Information Flows (24 measured variables)	Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include interactive information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories	Not supported

Downward Information Flows

For the purposes of the current study, the first measure of functionality, downward information flows, were attempts at unidirectional communication with information coming from the organizations to the individual user (Gibson & Ward, 2000). A testing of downward information flows was meant to address the first hypothesis presented (H₁): that liberal organizations would make more attempts to include downward information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories. Eleven variables were used to measure downward information flows including: a mission statement; a section with information about the organization (“about us” or history sections, for example); a vision/values statement; a listing of the organization’s leadership (board of directors, president, CEO, for example); a staff listing; the organization’s policy position (prohibition, reform, decriminalization or legalization);

newsletters (or a place to sign up for newsletters); media releases; frequently asked questions; and pages that have been targeted to specific user populations.

The first hypothesis was not supported by the existing data as it found that there were statistically significant differences on only two of the eleven variables used to measure downward information flow: the supported policies and frequently asked questions. This indicates that there is little divergence among organizational types on this form of communication. Most organizations made attempts to pass information to individual users, regardless of organizational type. The summary of the statistically significant indicators can be found in Table 5. The model is provided in Table 76, located in APPENDIX J.

Table 5: Statistically Significant Differences Between Organizational Categories Based on t-test Measures of Downward Information Flows

	Liberal Organizations Mean	Governmental Organizations Mean	Conservative Organizations Mean	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Policies supported (Prohibition-0; Reform-1 Decriminalization-2; Legalization-3)	2.000	0.000	0.000	5.292 (G) 5.292 (C)	14	0.000 (G)* 0.000 (C)*
Frequently asked questions (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.375	0.875		2.256 (G)	14	0.040 (G)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

The statistically significant differences that were found on this measure regarding the types of information available on the organizational websites are likely due to the differences in organizational mission. Liberal organizations are seeking the decriminalization/legalization of marijuana, whereas governmental and conservative organizations are seeking to maintain current prohibitionist marijuana policies. This categorical variation in organizational missions likely

leads to the findings of a statistically significant difference between liberal organizations and governmental and conservative organizations.

However, it was also found that there was a statistically significant difference between liberal and governmental organizations regarding the presence of frequently asked questions on their websites. This may be due to the possibility that more people seek official information from governmental organizations that they expect to find on their websites. It may also be due to governmental websites having a standard template to follow when designing their websites that are not necessarily followed by organizations in the private sector. Nevertheless, this may be detrimental to their goals of creating policy change and may lead to users seeking alternative information sources.

Upward Information Flows

The second dimension of functionality included in the current study was upward information flows, which were defined as attempts at one-way, transactional communication where the information flows from the individual user up to the organization (Gibson & Ward, 2000). Upward information flows were measured to test the second hypothesis proposed (H₂): that liberal organizations would make more attempts to include upward information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories. Two variables were included to measure upward information flows including: donations and merchandising.

Overall, the data indicate some statistically significant differences on one measure: that of merchandising. This lends support to the second hypothesis as it was found that there was a statistically significant difference between liberal and governmental organizations on half (although only one out of two) of the variables used to measure upward information flows. The

complete results of the t-tests on upward information flows may be found in Table 77 in APPENDIX J and the results of those measures that showed statistically significant differences are included in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Statistically Significant Differences Between Organizational Categories Based on t-test Measures of Upward Information Flows

	Liberal Organizations Mean	Governmental Organizations Mean	Conservative Organizations Mean	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Merchandising (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.625	0.000		3.416 (G)	14	0.004 (G)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

The statistically significant differences found on this measure may be attributed to liberal organizations having grassroots origins. There may be a need for those organizations to have additional revenue streams to help ensure their survival. Liberal organizations in this study displayed more merchandise available than organizations in the other two categories. In contrast, governmental organizations receive federal funding and may not need or be officially able to engage in merchandising efforts.

Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows

The final unilateral form of communication that was considered by the current study was lateral (or horizontal) information flows, which was defined as unidirectional communications whereby information is provided by the organization to users (outward information provision) or individuals within the organization (inward information provision) (Gibson & Ward, 2000). The testing of lateral/horizontal information flows was meant to analyze the third hypothesis posited

(H₃): that liberal organizations would make more attempts to include lateral/horizontal information flows on their websites than organizations in the other categories. Four variables were used to measure lateral/horizontal information flows including: the number of advocacy links on the website’s homepage, the number of reference (external) links on the homepage, the number of suborganizational (internal) links on the homepage, and the number of local links provided.

Overall, the data indicate that governmental organizations had greater linking to outside organizations and sources, and that liberal organizations had greater internal linking to information. After an analysis of this measure, the third hypothesis was supported as it was found that there was a statistically significant difference on half (two out of four) of the variables used to measure lateral/horizontal information flows. These two measures were the number of advocacy links and the number of reference links on the websites’ homepages. The complete results of the t-tests conducted on this measure may be found in Table 78 in APPENDIX J and the results of those measures that showed statistically significant differences are included in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Statistically Significant Differences Between Organizational Categories Based on t-test Measures of Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows

	Liberal Organizations Mean	Governmental Organizations Mean	Conservative Organizations Mean	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Advocacy links on homepage (+n supportive groups)	0.500	3.625		2.524 (G)	14	0.024 (G)*
Reference (external) links on homepage (+n sites)	0.625	3.000	7.375	1.896 (G) 2.233 (C)	14	0.079 (G)* 0.042 (C)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

The t-tests revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between liberal organizations and governmental organizations on the number of advocacy links present on the organizational websites' homepages. This could be due to the presidential memorandum that encourages governmental organizations to collaborate, which could include webpage linkages on websites (Sunstein, 2010). Liberal organizations may be lacking the recognition of such advocates as their grassroots efforts may not align with those of other organizations and they are not officially encouraged to collaborate (even though this may be to the detriment of their cause). Differences were also noted on the measure of the number of reference links on the organizational websites' homepages. This may be due to governmental organizations providing more linking to outside sources of information while liberal organizations may have websites that focus specifically on marijuana policy. As liberal organizations seek to change current prohibitionist marijuana policies, they may make more efforts to provide information that will keep users on their website, with less focus on the source of that information.

Interactive Information Flows

There was also one form of multidirectional communication that was considered. Asynchronous flows were defined as multidirectional substantive contacts between organizations and individuals in which a response follows a user's initial communication after a certain time interval (Gibson & Ward, 2000). Interactive information flows were measured to test the fourth hypothesis (H₄): that liberal organizations would make more attempts to include interactive information flows on their websites than organizations in the other two types of organizations. Twenty four variables were included to measure interactive information flows including: the ability to contact the organization, the presence of blogs, the ability to contact the organization

via email, the opportunity to join an email list, the opportunity for users to provide feedback, the presence of certain social media platforms (including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+, etc.), the presence of apps, the presence of podcasts, and the total number of social media platforms available.

With regard to the fourth hypothesis and interactive communication flow, it was found that categorical differences do exist, with the government being the most well socially connected (these organizations had the highest average value when measuring for the number of social media channels available through their websites). However, it should be noted that two governmental organizations had very high values on this measure which likely skewed the data since the sample was relatively small for each category. However, since this analysis is exploratory, it was decided to continue and run the same types of tests that were run with the other models. However, the results should be viewed cautiously, specifically any analysis that involves governmental organizations.

When examining just the measures that achieved statistical significance, it is apparent just how much effect the two outliers (within the governmental category) may have had on the models with four of the five predictors belonging in this category. These predictors include Google+, Apps, LinkedIn, and the number of social media channels. And one measure belonging to the conservative groups was different than that of liberal groups and that was the number of mentions of Reddit services.

For this dimension of functionality, since only five of the twenty-four (20.8 percent) of the measures of interactive information flows was found to be significant, no support was found for this hypothesis. This indicates that having the ability to interact with their audience is

similarly important to organizations regardless of category. The complete results of the t-tests on this measure have been reported in Table 79 in APPENDIX J and the differences found to be statistically significant may be found in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Statistically Significant Differences Between Organizational Categories Based on t-test Measures of Interactive Information Flows

	Liberal Organizations Mean	Governmental Organizations Mean	Conservative Organizations Mean	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Reddit (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.625		0.000	3.412 (C)	14	0.004 (C)*
Google+ (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.250	0.750		2.160 (G)	14	0.049 (G)*
Apps (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.000	0.625		3.416 (G)	14	0.004 (G)*
LinkedIn (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0.750		3.035 (G)	14	0.009 (G)*
Number of social media communication channels (+n)	6.500	79.750		2.078 (G)	14	0.057 (G)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

All of the noted statistically significant differences on this measure were related to the organizations' social media platforms that were connected to the organizational websites. As the government seeks to be engaged with the public, being able to connect with individual users through social media platforms allows them a path for such engagement. This may be why there was a statistically significant difference on these measures as governmental organizations included more digital media connections than the organizations in the liberal category. There were also statistically significant differences between liberal and conservative organizations when measuring for the presence of Reddit. As liberal organizations seek to create policy

change, they may feel the need to have more social media connections to assist in those efforts, which may lead to the statistically significant difference revealed here.

Delivery

The second dimension of Gibson and Ward's (2000) study included measures to analyze message delivery. The current study assumed that certain website design elements assist in delivering the organizations' marijuana policy messages. Gibson and Ward's (2000) proposed methodology for studying the purpose and efficiency of party and candidate websites was used to provide initial coding categories, which included the elements of presentation/appearance, accessibility, navigability, freshness, responsiveness, and visibility. Measuring and analyzing these delivery components addressed hypotheses five through ten, which are summarized in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Hypotheses for Delivery

Delivery Measure	Hypotheses	Observed Results
H ₅ : Presentation/Appearance (4 measured variables)	Liberal organizations will make more attempts to include presentation/appearance elements on their websites than organizations in the other categories	Not supported
H ₆ : Accessibility (6 measured variables)	Governmental organizations will make more attempts to include elements on their websites that will make them accessible than organizations in the other categories	Supported
H ₇ : Navigability (5 measured variables)	Governmental organizations will include elements on their websites that will make them more navigable than organizations in the other categories	Not supported
H ₈ : Freshness (2 measured variables)	Liberal organizations will have fresher websites than organizations in the other categories	Supported
H ₉ : Responsiveness (3 measured variables)	Liberal organizations will be more responsive than organizations in the other categories	Not supported
H ₁₀ : Visibility (2 measured variables)	Liberal organizations will be more visible than organizational websites in the other categories	Not supported

Presentation/Appearance

The first measure of delivery was the presentation/appearance of the organizational websites. This is the glitz factor of the website and includes flashiness (graphics) and dynamism (multimedia components) (Gibson & Ward, 2000). The presentation/appearance of organizational websites was included in the current study to test the fifth hypothesis (H₅): that liberal organizations would make more attempts to include presentation/appearance elements on their websites than organizations in the other categories. Four variables were used to measure the organizational websites' presentation/appearance. These variables included the total number of images, pictures, or imaged hyperlinks on homepage; homepage content (such as moving icons, slide shows, audio, video, and live streaming); the length of the homepage (whether

scrolling was required); and the amount of information on the homepage (word count and number of topics).

There were differences in presentation/appearance based on organizational category, with liberal organizations providing the most elements of presentation/appearance on their websites. However, based on the findings, the fifth hypothesis was not supported as there was only a noted statistically significant difference between organizational categories on one of the four measured variables, that of the presence of video or live streaming on the websites' homepages. The complete results of the t-tests conducted may be found in Tables 80 in APPENDIX K, while the measure showing statistically significant differences have been reported in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Statistically Significant Differences Between Organizational Categories Based on t-test Measures of Presentation/Appearance

	Liberal Organizations Mean	Governmental Organizations Mean	Conservative Organizations Mean	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Homepage: Video or Live Streaming	0.000	1.500	2.000	2.049 (G) 2.646 (C)	14	0.060 (G)* 0.019 (C)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

The results of the one-tailed t-tests indicated that there was a statistically significant differences between organizational categories regarding the presence of video or live streaming on the homepage of the websites. Liberal organizations may not have videos or live streaming on their webpages because it could increase the loading time for the website or it could negatively impact their SEO (Sales & Marketing Technologies, 2015). However, as this study was not designed to test the elements that impact website loading times or their SEOs, the

statistically significant difference seen on this measure is difficult to determine and may just be an anomaly.

Accessibility

Another key feature of the dimension delivery that was considered is that of accessibility, which looked for proactive features of websites that show an organizational commitment to user friendliness (Gibson & Ward, 2000). An analysis of a website's accessibility was included to test the sixth hypothesis presented (H₆): that governmental organizations would make more attempts to include accessibility elements on their websites than organizations in the other categories. Six variables were used to measure a website's accessibility. These included: the presence of foreign language translations, the presence of a statement of alternative access to electronic and information technology, the size of the homepage (in kilobytes), the time it takes to initially access the homepage of the organizational websites, whether the website was operational at the time of data collection, and the presence of plug-ins.

Overall, support was found for the sixth hypothesis (H₆) as the independent samples t-tests revealed statistically significant differences between organizational categories on three of the six variables measured. These included the presence of a statement of alternative access to electronic and information technology, size of the homepage, and the presence of plug-ins. The models indicate governmental organizations made the most attempts to assure that their websites were accessible to individual users. The complete results of those t-tests may be found in Tables 81 in APPENDIX K, and differences found to be statistically significant are summarized in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Statistically Significant Differences Between Organizational Categories Based on t-test Measures of Accessibility

	Liberal Organizations Mean	Governmental Organizations Mean	Conservative Organizations Mean	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Statement of alternative access to electronic and information technology (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.000	0.875	0.000	7.000 (L) 7.000 (C)	14	0.000 (L)* 0.000 (C)*
Size of the homepage (in Kb)		94.125	124.625	1.107 (C)	14	0.287 (C)*
Plug-ins (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.000	0.875	0.000	7.000 (L) 7.000 (C)	14	0.000 (L)* 0.000 (C)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(L) = Comparison of Governmental Organizations to Liberal Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Governmental Organizations to Conservative Organizations

There was a significant difference noted on the measures of the presence of a statement of alternative access to electronic and information technology, the size of the homepage, and the presence of plug-ins. That more governmental organizations have a statement of alternative access to electronic and information technology and plug-ins is due to the need for governmental organizations to meet Section 508 accessibility standards (United States Access Board, 2000). As liberal and conservative organizations are not legally mandated to meet these standards, they are more likely to lack some of the accessibility features measured by the current study. There was also a statistically significant difference between the size of the homepage when comparing governmental organizations to conservative organizations which may imply more content, features, and alternative forms of accessibility.

Navigability

The current study also looked at navigability, which was defined as how easily users could move around a website and locate information (Gibson & Ward, 2000). A search for features that assist users in navigating the organizational websites was included in the current

study to test the seventh hypothesis (H₇): that governmental organizations would include elements on their websites that would make them more navigable than organizations in the other categories. Five variables were included in the current study to measure the organizational websites' navigability, including the presence of navigation tips, a site search, a homepage icon on each page of the website, major site area links or menus bars on each page of the website, and a site map or index.

The overall results of the model for this dimension do not support the seventh hypothesis as it was found that there was a statistically significant difference on only one of the five variables used to measure navigability, that of the presence of a site map/index. Although there were some differences noted between organizational categories, in general, it was found that all organizations included in the study were navigable in the ways measured by the current study. The complete results of the independent samples t-tests are included in Table 82 in APPENDIX K and those differences found to be statistically significant are presented in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Statistically Significant Differences Between Organizational Categories Based on t-test Measures of Navigability

	Liberal Organizations Mean	Governmental Organizations Mean	Conservative Organizations Mean	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Site map/index (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.500	1.000	0.500	2.646 (L) 2.646 (C)	14	0.019 (L)* 0.019 (C)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(L) = Comparison of Governmental Organizations to Liberal Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Governmental Organizations to Conservative Organizations

The site map/index was a feature lacked by half of liberal and half of conservative organizations. Although it is important for users to be able to navigate the organizational

websites to find information, that all governmental organizations included all elements of navigability is due to the need for governmental organizations to meet Section 508 accessibility standards (United States Access Board, 2000). This standard for governmental websites is likely what drives the statistically significant differences noted on this measure of navigability.

Freshness

It is also important that the information users are accessing is current, especially when dealing with such a dynamic social and legal issue, like marijuana policy. Gibson and Ward (2000) state that freshness is “considered the key to effective delivery of site content” (p. 308). For the purposes of the current study, freshness (defined as websites being up to date) was measured to test the eighth hypothesis (H₈): that liberal organizations would have fresher websites than organizations in the other categories. One variable was used to measure the freshness of the organizational websites. This variable was the publication dates of the available research on the websites.

The data analyzed found support for the freshness hypothesis as statistically significant differences were noted on the sole variable used to measure freshness (publication dates). Hence, the freshest websites in terms of their publication dates of resources was found in governmental organizations. The complete results of the t-tests conducted can be found in Table 83 in APPENDIX K, while those differences found to be statistically significant have been listed in Table 13 below.

Table 13: Statistically Significant Differences Between Organizational Categories Based on t-test Measures of Freshness

	Liberal Organizations Mean	Governmental Organizations Mean	Conservative Organizations Mean	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Publication dates (Absent-0; More than 1 year-1; Within the last year-2; Within the last month-3; Within the last week-4)	3.250	4.000		2.049 (G)	14	0.060 (G)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

The difference in the publication dates of information presented on the websites of liberal organizations were statistically significant when compared to governmental organizations. As previously stated, governmental organizations were found to have the more current information on their websites according to the publication dates. This may be detrimental to liberal organizations that have outdated information as users who are seeking the most current policy information may choose other sources of information that may be more relevant given the evolving nature of marijuana policies.

Responsiveness

Since not all information that is being sought by users of the website will be found, it is important for organizations to be responsive to user inquiries, so users get or find the information that they seek. Responsiveness, the next measure of delivery, referred to the capacity of the organizations to respond to simple information requests submitted to their websites, and was broken down into two components: the speed and the quality of the response (Gibson & Ward, 2000). Responsiveness was measured in the current study to test the ninth hypothesis (H₉): that liberal organizations would be more responsive than organizations in the other two categories.

Three variables were used to measure the responsiveness of the sampled organizations. These included: the speed of email response, the speed of social media response, and the quality of the response.

Following the data run, the ninth hypothesis was not supported as there were no measured variables that reached statistical significance. Divergences based on organizational category were found, with conservative organizations being the most responsive. However, few organizations in the sample responded to email or social media information requests, and none of the noted categorical differences reached statistical significance. However, the full results of the independent samples t-tests can be found in Table 84 in APPENDIX K.

It should be noted that the inquiries sent to the organizations by the researcher questioned what could be done to be more engaged in advocacy efforts for marijuana policy. Governmental organizations may be less responsive to such inquiries as their focus and mission is not to advocate for any specific marijuana policy. In contrast, liberal and conservative organizations are advocating for marijuana policy positions and being responsive is what will assist in delivering their message to users. As liberal organizations seek policy change, providing users specific information as to how to become more involved in advocating for certain policies may assist in their efforts.

Visibility

Although the other elements of delivery are important to the online messaging efforts of organizations, they mean little if users are unable to locate the organizational website on the World Wide Web. The ease of locating the organizational websites is the next measure of delivery, visibility. Visibility was measured by the current study as a test of the tenth hypothesis

(H₁₀): that liberal organizations would be more visible than organizational websites in the other categories. Two variables were used in the current study to measure visibility, including: the search engine optimization (SEO) and a website description keyword search.

The tenth hypothesis was not supported as none of the measured variables revealed statistically significant categorical differences when measuring for visibility. However, divergences based on organizational category were noted. Overall, government websites seemed to be designed/coded in such a way that they are more visible when searches are conducted. This was followed by liberal organizations, with conservative organizations being the least visible. However, it should be noted that liberal organizations are also visible when conducting a search for conservative organizations. The complete results of the independent samples t-tests that were conducted have been included in Table 85 in APPENDIX K.

Public Engagement

How well organizations attempt to engage with individual users was also a prime consideration in the current study; so public engagement was also measured. Hou and Lampe's (2015) study of social media effectiveness for public engagement using a sample of small nonprofit organizations was the basis for the initial measures included in the data. Hou and Lampe's (2015) framework included attempts to connect with a diversity of stakeholders, increase awareness of information, build community, and mobilize actions. The measurement of public engagement allowed for the testing of hypotheses eleven through fourteen. A summary of these hypotheses has been included in Table 14 below.

Table 14: Hypotheses for Public Engagement

Public Engagement Measure	Hypotheses	Observed Results
H ₁₁ : Diversity of Stakeholders (9 measured variables)	Liberal organizations will make more attempts to connect with a diversity of stakeholders than organizations in the other categories	Supported
H ₁₂ : Awareness of Information (3 measured variables)	Liberal organizations will make more efforts to increase awareness of information than organizations in the other categories	Supported
H ₁₃ : Community Building (2 measured variables)	Liberal organizations will make more efforts to build their community than organizations in the other categories	Supported
H ₁₄ : Mobilizing Action (5 measured variables)	Liberal organizations will make more efforts to mobilize actions than organizations in the other categories	Supported

Diversity of Stakeholders

The first measure of public engagement looked at attempts made by organizations to connect with a diversity of stakeholders. This entailed efforts by the organizations to use their websites to interact with different groups of people (Hou & Lampe, 2015). Engagement with a diversity of stakeholders was the basis of the eleventh hypothesis (H₁₁): that liberal organizations would make more attempts to connect with a diversity of stakeholders than organizations in the other categories. Nine variables were used to measure diversity of stakeholders, including: the presence of membership opportunities, volunteer opportunities, appeals from the organization for information/input, networking opportunities, sponsors/funders, job opportunities, internship opportunities, connections to other organizations, and grant availability.

The model for this hypothesis suggests that there is a statistically significant difference on five of the nine variables used to measure diversity of stakeholders on organizational category. Governmental organizations made more attempts to engage with a diversity of stakeholders than the other two organizational categories (liberal and conservative). This potentially gave them a

greater opportunity to reach different groups of people and spread their message. After conducting independent samples t-tests, some statistically significant differences were noted on the measures of membership, networking opportunities, sponsorships/funding, job opportunities, and internship opportunities. A complete reporting of the results of t-tests have been included in Table 86 in APPENDIX L, and those differences noted to be statistically significant are reported in Table 15 below.

Table 15: Statistically Significant Differences Between Organizational Categories Based on t-test Measures of Diversity of Stakeholders

	Liberal Organizations Mean	Governmental Organizations Mean	Conservative Organizations Mean	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Membership: Membership Org.-1	0.875	0.000	0.125	7.000 (G) 4.243 (C)	14	0.000 (G)* 0.001 (C)*
Positional Org.-2	0.000	0.750		2.049 (G)	14	0.060 (G)*
Networking opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000		0.625	2.049 (C)	14	0.060 (C)*
Sponsorships/ Funders: Individual	1.000	0.125		7.000 (G)	14	0.000 (G)*
Corporate	1.250	0.000		3.416 (G)	14	0.004 (G)*
Government	0.000		2.500	3.412 (C)	14	0.004 (C)*
Job opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.375	1.000		3.412 (G)	14	0.004 (G)*
Internship opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.375	1.000		3.412 (G)	14	0.004 (G)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

The first statistically significant difference that was noted was whether the organizations indicated on their websites that they were membership organizations (meaning that it was possible for any individual user who wished to be a member of the organization to join by paying

a fee). Governmental agencies and organizations may want the support of individual users, and some may be open to allowing those with the right credentials to join their organizations, but they are not open to all who would like to join just by paying a membership fee. Conservative organizations do receive some federal funding and may not need to engage in as much coalition building, but they are still more open to membership than governmental organizations. However, as they are attempting to build a coalition of support in their efforts to create policy change, liberal organizations are more open about who they allow to be members of their organizations.

This is also likely what accounts for the statistically significant differences on the measure of whether an organization indicated on their website that they were a positional organization. This designation meant that individuals are able to join the organization at a certain position, which means they must be credentialed in a specific area or they may join a certain branch of the organization. Governmental organizations are more likely to be positional organizations, while liberal organizations may be less likely to regulate where their support is coming from.

Differences in organizational structure and mission likely account for the statistically significant differences seen on the measure of sponsorship/funders as well. For example, governmental organizations are less likely to have individual funders (aside from taxpayers) while liberal organizations need to appeal to individual funders to ensure their survival. Additionally, governmental agencies and organizations may face issues of conflicts of interest if they have foundational or corporate sponsorship. In contrast, liberal organizations may need such sponsorships to bring in support, revenue, and credibility. Finally, all governmental organizations receive government funding, as would be expected, and some conservative

organizations receive federal funding as well. However, no liberal organizations received such funding as the marijuana policies for which they are advocating operate counter to the federal laws that governmental organizations are tasked with supporting and enforcing.

Other statistically significant differences existed when looking for networking opportunities on the organizational websites. Liberal organizations need grassroots support, so it is important for them to have opportunities for like-minded people to be able to connect and advocate for their supported marijuana policies. This may be less important for conservative organizations which support current existing policies.

Statistically significant differences were noted when measuring for the presence of opportunities to both find jobs or internships on the organizational websites. Differences likely existed on both measures because governmental organizations have human resource departments that are able to field online applications for both jobs and internships. In addition, these listings are expected on governmental websites. Liberal organizations that do not have such departments may not have the resources to conduct job and internship searches online and some may not internships available at all.

Awareness of Information

Organizations may also use digital media to increase users' awareness of information. Increasing information awareness was defined in the current study as the dissemination of information by organizations through their websites to inform users of the organization, their mission, and their policy position (Hou & Lampe, 2015). Measuring the organizations' efforts to increase awareness of information was included to test the twelfth hypothesis (H_{12}): that liberal organizations would make more efforts to increase awareness of information than organizations

in the other categories. Three variables were included to measure for awareness of information. These variables included: the presence of educational resources and tools, the source from which posted information originates, and the prominence of the organizational policy position.

The analysis showed that all organizations, regardless of their category, regarded having information available on their websites as an important feature. However, there were variations on the types of information available and the location of such information. Thus, the findings supported the twelfth hypothesis as there was a statistically significant difference noted on two of the three measured variables, the information sources and the prominence of the organizational advocacy position. The complete results of the t-tests have been reported in Table 87, and differences found to be statistically significant have been presented in Table 16 below.

Table 16: Statistically Significant Differences Between Organizational Categories Based on t-test Measures of Awareness of Information

	Liberal Organizations Mean	Governmental Organizations Mean	Conservative Organizations Mean	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Information source: Government	1.250	5.000		4.583 (G)	14	0.000 (G)*
“Scholarly” sources	1.500		4.500	2.160 (C)	14	0.049 (C)*
Advocacy position prominence (More than three steps-0; One to three steps-1; On homepage-2)	1.750	0.875		4.249 (G)	14	0.001(G)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

The data indicate that there is a statistically significant difference when measuring for different sources of information on the organizational websites. This is likely due to the variation in organizational mission and the types of information that are available to advocate for

those missions. Governmental websites contain information that comes from the organizations themselves or from other governmental entities that they may have collaborated with. As governmental organizations do not naturally support marijuana policy change, it is less likely that liberal organizations will have information from these same governmental sources. This may be why liberal organizations are more likely to have information coming from their own organizations or from other organizations and individuals that have a similar focus and mission. Although conservative organizations share a similar policy perspective to governmental organizations, they are the most likely organizational category to have information coming from a balanced variety of sources including “scholarly” sources, such as academic journals.

It was also found that there was a statistically significant difference when measuring for advocacy position prominence. Governmental organizations likely pay less attention to the prominence of their marijuana policy stance as most are not solely dealing with marijuana policy. This makes it more difficult to locate their stance on current policy because it is not their only focus. As liberal organizations largely exist to promote competing marijuana policy positions, their policy stance is much more prominent on their organizational websites.

Community Building

Another organizational use for websites is building a community. This entails digital media practices by organizations to build stronger ties with existing stakeholders and local groups in efforts to build a cadre of like-minded people (Hou & Lampe, 2015). Organizational community building efforts were included in the current study to test the thirteenth hypothesis (H₁₃): that liberal organizations would make more efforts to build their community than organizations in the other categories. Two variables were used to measure these community

building efforts. These included instances where the organization has given thanks to those who had donated to/sponsored the organization and organizational connections to the community (affiliation, association, or chapter).

Overall, the thirteenth hypothesis (H₁₃) was supported as it was found that statistically significant differences existed between organizational categories on both measures of community building (thanks given by the organizations for support and community connections). The full results of the independent samples t-tests conducted can be found in Table 88 in APPENDIX L. Differences that were found to be statistically significant have been presented in Table 17 below.

Table 17: Statistically Significant Differences Between Organizational Categories Based on t-test Measures of Community Building

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Instances where the organization has given recognition or thanks to donors/sponsors (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.500	0.000		2.646 (G)	14	0.019 (G)*
Community Connection: Association-2	0.000		0.750	2.049 (C)	14	0.060 (C)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

A statistically significant difference was found when looking for instances in which the organizations had given recognition or thanks to donor/sponsors on their websites. This may be attributable to the ways in which the different organizational categories are able to fiscally ensure their survival. For liberal organizations, none of which receive government funding, donations and sponsorships may be one of the ways in which these organizations are able to ensure their

survival. Giving thanks or recognition to those who have helped financially sustain them may be a way for these organizations to show that they have the support of other individuals and/or groups as well to encourage others to similarly fiscally support them. Governmental organizations may not officially be able to ask for or collect such financial support as it may lead to a conflict of interest.

There was also variation seen between categories on the measures of community connections. This may be centered around the missions and goals of the organizations based on their categories. Conservative organizations make the most attempts to connect with their community. This may be detrimental to liberal organizations that may need such community connections in order to build their support for marijuana policy change.

Mobilizing Action

While the other elements of engagement are all important, the ultimate goal of the organizational use of websites is to mobilize action. This was defined in the current study as attempts made by organizations to use digital media to provide stakeholders with enough information and sense of community to motivate potential action (Hou & Lampe, 2015). This was done to test the fourteenth hypothesis (H₁₄): that liberal organizations would make more efforts to mobilize actions than organizations in the other categories. Five variables were included to measure mobilizing action, including: event/activity information, advocacy, advertising, direct calls for action to be taken by users, and calls for social media engagement between users and the organizations.

The data indicate that the final hypothesis was supported as it was revealed that there were statistically significant differences on three of the five variables tested, including

event/activity information, advertising, and direct calls for action to be taken by users. Further, the models illustrate that liberal organizations made the most attempts to mobilize individual user actions. Liberal organizations also provided the most information about opportunities for engagement and mobilization. The results of the t-tests run on this measure have been included in Table 89 in APPENDIX L. Differences between organizational categories that were found to be statistically significant have been presented in Table 18 below.

Table 18: Statistically Significant Differences Between Organizational Categories Based on t-test Measures of Mobilizing Action

	Liberal Organizations Mean	Governmental Organizations Mean	Conservative Organizations Mean	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Event/Activity information (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000		0.625	2.049 (C)	14	0.060 (C)*
Advertising (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.500	0.000	0.000	2.646 (G) 2.646 (C)	14	0.019 (G)* 0.019 (C)*
Direct calls for action to be taken (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000		0.625	2.049 (C)	14	0.060 (C)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

The results of the t-tests showed statistically significant differences on the measure of posted event/activity information. It is likely that liberal organizations are more likely to host and post such events as they seek policy change. In seeking such change, gathering grassroots support for their efforts is important. Having events that raise awareness about their organizations and their policy positions allows for engagement with the public that may assist in augmenting and fortifying their public support. However, as conservative organizations are the least likely to post event/activity information, their efforts to reinforce current prohibitionist marijuana policy may be hindered.

It was also observed that there was a statistically significant difference on the measure of the advertising on the organizational websites. While half (4 out of 8) of the liberal organizations had advertising on their websites, no governmental and no conservative organizational websites contained this element. For liberal organizations, allowing advertising on their websites is another way for them to financially ensure their survival.

Finally, it was also noted that there was a statistically significant difference between organizations on the measure of organizational calls for direct action to be taken. Much as with posting event/activity information, as liberal organizations are seeking marijuana policy changes, they are more likely to make direct calls for action to be taken by individual users. This enhances their grassroots support, which will be necessary if they hope to motivate policy change. As conservative organizations are seeking the maintenance of current prohibitionist policies, they do not have to make as much of an effort when it comes to getting individual involvement in their efforts as reinforcement of current policies is less difficult to achieve than changing policies.

Chapter Summary

The current study looked at measures in three main areas (functionality, delivery, and public engagement), to determine if there was support for fourteen hypotheses. The first of these areas was functionality, which examined downward information flows, upward information flows, lateral/horizontal information flows, and interactive information flows. After analysis it was found that there was support for two of the four hypotheses presented. Those measures were upward information flows and lateral/horizontal information flows. The second area was delivery. Delivery included the measures of presentation/appearance, accessibility, navigability,

freshness, responsiveness, and visibility. After the analysis was conducted, it was found that two of the six delivery hypotheses presented were supported by the data. These included accessibility and freshness. The final domain examined was public engagement. Public engagement included measuring for a diversity of stakeholders, increasing awareness of information, building a community, and mobilizing action. Following analysis, it was found that all four public engagement hypotheses were supported. Further discussion of these findings and their potential implications follow in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

In today's world, the media are pervasive, and they are not impartial social agents providing news or entertainment. This means that citizens are unable to avoid the media and their construction of reality. Concerns about illicit drug use throughout America's history have become apparent once again through the current debate about the legality of marijuana. This discourse has been impacted by the media's construction of the marijuana problem and how that issue is being framed in the media. In this process of media persuasion, various organizations (categorized as liberal, federal government, or conservative for the purposes of the current study) attempt to convey various marijuana policies through efforts that utilize digital media. The current study focused on how websites were used differentially in the digital media messaging of organizations based on categories (liberal, governmental, and conservative). It looked for various website elements that were thought to aid in the functionality, delivery, and public engagement strategies of the organizational websites examined and noted any differences that existed. Those differences may potentially lead to gaps in the effectiveness of organizational messaging (which will be the focus of future research). The following chapter will include a discussion of the findings of the current study, the possible implications those findings, and how this study has laid the foundation for future research.

Discussion of Findings

Overall, the findings indicated that governmental organizations made the most efforts to communicate with individual users through their various information flows. Since seeking information is one of the main reasons that individuals visit websites, this could give

governmental organizations a louder voice in the marijuana policy debate. In addition, governmental organizations made more attempts to include elements on their websites that may allow for more effective delivery of their marijuana policy messages. This may lead to a maintaining of current marijuana policies as governmental organizations are able to define the marijuana policy debate through their message delivery. This then has the potential to influence and shape public opinion. However, both liberal and conservative organizations made more attempts to engage with the public than governmental organizations. This means that these public sector organizations are engaging in a battle to gain audience members. Organizations that seek social change should have stronger ties to the community as they attempt to build coalitions of support. Table 19 provides a summary of the major study findings by measure, which is followed by a deeper discussion of the current study’s findings.

Table 19: Summary of Major Study Findings by Measure

Measure	Highest Scoring Organizational Category
<i>Functionality</i>	
Downward Information Flows	None (isomorphism)
Upward Information Flows	Liberal
Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows	Governmental
Interactive Information Flows	None (isomorphism)
<i>Delivery</i>	
Presentation/Appearance	None (isomorphism)
Accessibility	Governmental
Navigability	None (isomorphism)
Freshness	Governmental
Responsiveness	None (isomorphism)
Visibility	None (isomorphism)
<i>Public Engagement</i>	
Diversity of Stakeholders	Governmental
Awareness of Information	Governmental
Community Building	Liberal/Conservative
Mobilizing Actions	Liberal

Functionality

The first component of the current study looked at functionality, whether organizations are performing the activities we assume; and if so, how effectively are they performing those activities (Gibson & Ward, 2000). The different components of functionality were organized according to the direction of communication flow on a website and included: downward information flows, upward information flows, lateral/horizontal information flows, and interactive information flows (asynchronous). It was noted that some measures, such as downward information flows, were important, regardless of organizational type likely due to pressures from users who expect to visit websites and find the information that they seek (Masters, 2016).

Overall, there was more divergence than isomorphism among organizational types regarding functionality. These divergences were likely due to the need of organizations to follow a behavioral model that best fits their organizational mission and needs. Those behaviors seem to be based on how much there is need within a category for organizations to raise awareness, gain legitimacy, and meet certain professional standards. This may then lead to variation in the effectiveness of organizational messaging efforts as well. The websites of liberal organizations, for example, attempt to provide large amounts of information in possible efforts to establish legitimacy and create policy change. However, most of what we see regarding liberal organizations takes place within an echo chamber (Surette, 2015), with most of the sources being internal and possibly containing inherent bias or inaccuracies. But it should be noted that all organizations, regardless of category, have the potential to spread misinformation through their

websites. Further, all organizational websites with internal sources have the potential, much like those of liberal organizations, to have bias or inaccuracies in their dissemination of information.

It was also found that governmental organizations scored higher when measuring for social connectedness as they were found to score higher when measuring for communicative efforts through their various information flows. These attempts by governmental organizations may be partially due to a 2009 directive by then-President Barak Obama for the establishment of “a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration” by executive agencies and departments (Sunstein, 2010). Thus, it is more likely that those who make the rules that govern website design are those that are more likely to follow such rules. This is a likely reason that governmental websites score higher on measures of functionality than organizations in the other two categories.

As information seeking is one of the main reasons that individuals visit websites, this could give governmental organizations a louder voice in the marijuana policy debate which may influence and shape public opinion. At a time when many individuals are receiving their information from digital media, engaging with digital media users allows these organizations to increase attention for their construction of marijuana policy issues. This may lead to a maintaining of current marijuana policies.

Delivery

In addition to functionality, the current study also included measures to analyze the delivery of marijuana policy messages via Internet websites. The current study assumed that certain website design elements assist in delivering the organizations’ marijuana policy

messages. These elements included: presentation/appearance, accessibility, navigability, freshness, responsiveness, and visibility.

In measuring the different elements of delivery, it was found that there was some similarity seen between organizational categories when measuring for navigability. Following testing, it was found that all organizations, regardless of their category, seem to place an emphasis on ensuring the ease of navigation on their websites according to the standards measured. This may be the result of organizations attempting to meet the design standards that users have come to expect or an attempt to emulate the website design of governmental organizations that must adhere to certain standards (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; U.S. Web Design Standards, n.d.).

However, divergences were found when measuring for most elements of delivery in the current study. It was found that liberal organizations had a greater number of images, pictures, or imaged hyperlinks on their homepage than governmental or conservative organizations. This could be the result of the organizations attempting to reach an audience that is more attracted to a website's appearance. It was also noted that liberal organizations provided individual users with the freshest websites. If these delivery components are important to individual users, this may then lead to greater support for their policy position and possibly changes in current prohibitionist policies.

It was also found that governmental organizations exhibited the highest scores when measuring for attempts to assure that their websites were accessible to individual users. This is probably due to the need to meet Section 508 accessibility standards (United States Access Board, 2000). Governmental websites were also found to be the most visible when Internet

searches were conducted. However, it should also be noted that liberal organizations were also visible when conducting a search for conservative organizations, which potentially increases the reach of these organizations and their marijuana policy position. So, although it most likely that the governmental organizations' policy stance is the one that is most visible, liberal organizations may be more visible than revealed by the scores on this measure.

Further, the findings indicated that conservative organizations were the most responsive organizational category. This may allow those organizations a greater opportunity to respond to specific user inquiries about their marijuana policy stances and to frame the discourse in the minds of the individual user. It may also prevent those users from seeking other sources of information. However, few organizations in the sample (regardless of category) were responsive in the ways measured by the current study.

Overall, organizational missions and goals likely shape the delivery of organizational marijuana policy messages as they determine what best fits their needs. As organizational websites attempt to meet the expectations of individual users, they tend to do so in ways that attempt to maximize messaging efforts. Divergences between categories may be detrimental to the delivery efforts of some organizations as differences between categories may lead to gaps in effectiveness. The current study found that governmental organizations exhibited higher scores on the delivery variables measured than liberal or conservative organizations, which may again be the result of those who make the rules being those organizations most likely to follow the rules for designing effective websites. This may mean that governmental organizations are able to frame the marijuana policy debate through their message delivery. This then has the potential to affect and shape public opinion, which may lead to a maintaining of current marijuana

policies. However, in light of the current changes in marijuana policy that are occurring at the state and local levels, it should again be noted that this study is exploratory and having certain delivery elements on the organizational websites does not guarantee that the policy messages disseminated will have the desired impact. Additionally, although changes in policy are happening at the state and local levels, federal marijuana laws are still prohibitive. The effectiveness of these delivery elements on policy, at the federal, state, and local levels, will be the source of future research.

Public Engagement

How well organizations are attempting to engage with individual users was also a prime consideration in the current study; so public engagement was also be measured. This framework included connecting with a diversity of stakeholders, increasing awareness of information, building community, and mobilizing actions. The current study assumed that using digital media to engage with an audience is important for many reasons including reaching an audience that is not met through more traditional media outlets, being able to compete with other organizations that are using digital media, and being able to draw in additional audience members from other digital media platforms (Hou & Lampe, 2015).

It was found that governmental organizations scored higher on measures of engagement with a diversity of stakeholders than the other two organizational categories (liberal and conservative). The focus of governmental organizations on connecting with a diversity of stakeholders could be due to their need to stay connected to the public they serve while also maintaining some level of transparency as dictated by presidential memorandum (Sunstein, 2010). However, this was the only measure of public engagement that governmental

organizations ranked highest on. On the remaining measures of public engagement, those organizations from the public sector (liberal and conservative) scored higher.

Liberal and conservative organizations made greater efforts to increase information awareness than organizations in the governmental category. However, it should also be noted that while organizations in all categories placed importance on the features of information awareness, the amount of information, types of information, and sources of information varied. This may then potentially impact the political opinions and/or policy decisions of those who visit the organizational websites.

It was also found that conservative organizations were making the most attempts to build their community. This is important for those organizations as they will potentially have a stronger coalition of support. Public sector organizations need to have stronger grassroots support as they attempt to advocate for their marijuana policy perspective.

While the other elements of public engagement are important, the ultimate goal of the organizational use of new media by organizations is to mobilize action. It was noted that liberal organizations made the most attempts to motivate individual users and provide them with information about advocacy involvement. This is important as they are seeking departure from the status quo (prohibitionist marijuana policies) and more effort may be needed on their part to create policy change. If they are able to persuade individual users that marijuana decriminalization and legalization are better policies to pursue, this may mobilize individuals who want to become involved in creating change. This then has the potential to impact on current marijuana policies.

Generally, public engagement was likely guided by normative pressures as divergences were seen regarding the key concepts measured based on organizational category. There was competition between liberal and conservative organizations, overall, as both scored highly when measuring digital media use by organizations for public engagement. This is likely because organizations in both categories are in the public sector and must combat the messaging strategies of the other category as they have contrasting policy messages.

Summarizing Thoughts

Overall, the behaviors of organizations as they relate to their websites seem to be driven not only by normative pressures, but also by what best fits the needs and missions of the organizations themselves. Normative pressures seem to lead to the similarities between organizational categories that are seen on certain measures (such as downward information flows or navigability). This may be due to the public sector organizations attempting to meet the same design standards that are established and followed by governmental organizations. It may also be due to user expectations of what they will find on the organizational websites. Divergences between categories is likely due to organizational behaviors that best fit the mission and needs of the organizations. Governmental organizations are compelled to follow the rules that have been established governing website design. Thus, it should be expected that governmental organizations will score higher than liberal and conservative organizations on measures of functionality and delivery. However, when it comes to public engagement, the public nature of liberal and conservative organizations, along with their primary mission of advocating for marijuana policy, means that these organizations score higher on these measures than do

governmental organizations. Again, these behaviors are driven by the mission and needs of those organizations.

Governmental organizations scored highest overall on the most measures in the current study, especially those related to functionality and delivery. According to the assumptions made regarding the current study's measures, this likely means that most users who go online are receiving messages as they relate to a governmental perspective on marijuana policy. This would lead to messaging that supports current prohibitionist marijuana policies. If this organizational use of digital media to inform the public of policy positions is an effective way to influence policy, then it is more likely that current marijuana policies are reinforced rather than modified. However, it should be noted that the findings may not only relate to organizations and marijuana policy but may applied to any entities that wish to share digital media messages as they relate to any chosen topic or public policy.

Study Limitations

The current study was exploratory in nature. This means that it focused on gaining insights for future research rather than seeking to answer final and conclusive questions (such as those about effectiveness). There are a number of limitations of the current study that must be acknowledged. These are characteristics of the study's methodological design that may have influenced the findings.

One such limitation of the current study was the lack of prior literature on the topic. While the hope is that this lack of research makes the current study more relevant, not having a foundation of prior studies does have the potential to be detrimental to the scope of the literature review and the understanding of the problem being studied. This lack of prior research is likely

due to the timeliness of the research question posited. Studying the use of digital media by organizations is something that has been explored little, and there is even less research attempting to determine the impact that this potentially has on public policy. There have been studies conducted that look at the impacts of social media on the state-level campaigns on marijuana reform. However, these studies focus on the almost unregulated state of cannabis advertising on social media platforms, such as Facebook, (Carroll, 2018; Bourque, 2019) or the use of social media platforms by political candidates and lawmakers to post advertisements for the legalization of marijuana (Jaeger, 2018). While this gap in the literature has potentially impacted the scope of the literature review, it has provided an opportunity to fill this void. By conducting this exploratory study, it has provided an opportunity to develop new knowledge and to establish future research goals.

Another limitation is that historical events may have occurred during the course of the study that had the potential to confound the results (Gliner, Morgan, & Leech, 2009). For example, if major marijuana policy changes had occurred before all sampled organizational websites were analyzed, the results may have been different as content may have been altered in response to the policy changes. The transition of power between presidential administrations during the course of this study was one such historical event that may have altered the results of the current study. In the current study, the data was collected within a week-long timeframe in hopes of mitigating any such historical threats that may have led to changes to the organizational websites during data collection that threatened to muddle the results.

Access was another consideration in the current study. This study was reliant on organizational websites on the Internet. As just stated in the previous paragraph, it spanned a

time when there was a presidential transition of power between the outgoing Obama administration and the incoming Trump administration. As such, some of the websites were not as accessible as may have been the case prior to or sometime after the transition. For example, some of the content was temporarily unavailable as the websites were being updated to reflect the views of the incoming administration. This limited access may have impacted some of the findings of the current study. Replication of the study at a later time may produce differing results on some measures when full access to all website components and information are available. All other access was permitted as the organizational websites analyzed in the current study are public domain and available to individual users via the Internet (on the World Wide Web).

Instrumentation is another possible limitation that must also be considered. In other words, there may have been issues with the conceptualization and/or operationalization of measurements (Gliner et al., 2009). As there are different measures that could have been utilized to address the study's hypotheses, whether the measures chosen for inclusion in the current study were the best measures to provide answers to that question must be considered. In addition, there may have been issues regarding whether the operationalizations included in the study were correct. There may also be an issue with instrumentation had the procedures for data collection had changed slightly over the course of the study. In some cases, the measures that are used to collect data inhibit the ability to conduct a thorough analysis. For example, a study that uses a measurement tool that is incomplete or does not measure what it is intended to measure may present a threat to the validity of the findings. The current study sought to control for this threat to internal validity by building the included measures from the prior research (Gibson & Ward,

2000; Hou & Lampe, 2015). These measures were the built upon through grounded theory methodology. Although this framework may still be in need of further expansion, these steps sought to ensure a robust and relevant measure was used to collect the data in the current study.

The measurement used to collect the data may have been another potential limitation of the current study. This limitation generally occurs when the data collection methods may have hindered the ability to perform a thorough data analysis (Martinez, 2017). In the current study, the search engine optimization was used as to measure the visibility of the organizational websites after a keyword search was conducted online. However, there is the possibility that some organizations are better able to leverage their SEOs than others. This may lead to those organizations being more visible. Some organizations may not have the financial resources or the technological knowledge to improve their SEO, which could be detrimental to the messaging of those organizations. The current study used the search engine Google to find the organizational websites sampled. Google is the dominant search engine utilized by most online users (with a 64.4 percent share), and Google optimizes websites' SEOs by looking at, among other things, how users engage with the websites, user friendliness, and the amount of unique content (Wordstream, n.d.). In addition, SEO is meant to return high a quantity of quality results in an organic way. Thus, although SEO may have its problems, the current study included SEO because, as previously stated, it is still the best way to measure a website's visibility on the World Wide Web (Wordstream, n.d.).

Another potential limitation is selection bias, which arises as the result of how participants are assigned to certain groups. Usually this occurs when random assignment does not take place, as was the case in the current study (Gliner et al., 2009). This may lead to concerns that the

sampling method led to skimming the best results from the top. The current study used quota sampling to choose the top eight organizational Internet results for each category (liberal, governmental, and conservative) through the organizational websites' SEOs. In addition, organizations were assigned to their categories based on their marijuana policy positions. As this was a comparative study that sought to note differences between organizational categories, by characterization there will be inherent bias in group assignments (Gliner et al., 2009).

A final limitation that must be considered is the small sample size that is being examined in the current study. If a sample size is too small, it may not be representative of the population being studied. Having low power due to a small sample may also make it difficult to note significant relationships from the collected data as well as making it more difficult to generalize the results back to the larger population with a degree of confidence. However, as this is a mixed-methods study, having a small sample size allows for a more in-depth study of the sampled organizations and their activities that would not have been possible with a larger sample. Additionally, the sample size for this study included 24 organizations (and their websites) placed into three categories (liberal, governmental and conservative). These organizations were considered representative of their category, thus making generalizability possible. Since the current study is looking at organizations and their websites and not individuals, this sample size is appropriate for an exploratory study such as this one.

Implications

Theoretical

Although there is existing theoretical knowledge that a relationship exists between the media and criminal justice policy, and there has been much discussion and debate about the

forms such a relationship may take, the study of the influences of digital media forms (such as websites) is relatively modern (Gerbner et al., 1979; Graber, 1979; Surette and Otto, 2001; Surette, 2015). Since little, if any, research has been done on organizational use of digital media to influence public opinion, the goal of this study as well as future research, was to add to the current theoretical base by providing a digital media perspective to organizational behavior. This study was also meant to fill a gap that exists in the literature on how organizational use of digital media has the potential to impact public policy. Further, this work is meant to influence criminal justice theory and media theory by looking at how organizations are using digital media to promote ideas and policies within the political environment.

Institutional Theory

One way of looking at organizational involvement in the political environment is through the lens of institutionalism, which states that organizations are part of political life and should be studied for their role in political discourses and activities (Peters, 1999). Institutional actors and their interests are constructed through institutional frameworks that shape the means and the ends through which interests are defined and pursued (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Scott, 1991).

According to institutionalism, different organizational procedures and practices are defined by cultural terms (Hall & Taylor, 1996). One of the main reasons that people visit websites is to seek information (Masters, 2016). The current study found that addressing information requests (in forms such as downward information flows, freshness of information, and increasing information awareness) is important to all organizations regardless of their category. This may be explained through institutionalism. Organizations recognize the importance of having different forms of information on their websites, a practice that may be dictated by the expectations of users within the digital media environment. Organizations are

then able to use the information on their websites to create marijuana policy meaning for individual users.

If more information can be presented to individual users efficiently through websites, it may mean that the organizations presenting the information have more influence on individuals and the sociopolitical environment. However, misinformation that may be presented on websites (whether intentional or accidental) has just as much potential to influence individual decision making and behavior as factual information, especially when consumers of the information do not know the difference. Institutionalism asserts that organizations existing in the socio-political environment may have more influence on individual decision making and behavior than interactions with other individuals or groups (Howlett, Ramesh, & Perl, 2009). Since we know that more people are getting their crime and justice information from digital media (about two-thirds according to a Pew Research Study) (Matsa & Shearer, 2018), this study may add to institutional theory by examining the role that digital media may play in the organizational influence of individual attitudes and behaviors within the political environment.

Finally, institutionalism must also be considered as organizations use digital media (their websites) as a platform for the exchange of ideas. Policy discourses have communicative functions, and through these discussions, norms, values, and cultures are developed and refined (Hay, 2006; Dodds, 2013). This is important in the current study as “agreement” seems to lead to similarities between organizations of a similar type and divergence between organizations of differing categories.

The current study seeks to further refine the concepts of institutionalism. As policy discourses have communicative functions, the current study seeks to provide insight into where

these discourses may occur in an age of digital media through an examination of websites. As people now seek information from digital media outlets (such as websites or social media platforms), the role that these outlets play in the process becomes important. Additionally, these discourses assist in determining which norms, values, and cultures should prevail. Again, in the current study this has the potential to lead to similarities or divergences between organizational categories. Whether divergences lead to differences in effectiveness, as well as how these discourses impact individual users' attitudes and behaviors, will be examined in future research.

Practical

Future research will seek to examine which organizational category has more effective marijuana policy messaging as this will have important implications. Based on the knowledge that most of the general population receives their messages regarding criminal justice policies from the media (with more individuals now turning to new media information sources), organizations that are more effective in utilizing digital media outlets, such as websites, may be more effective in spreading their message to the public.

This then has repercussions for marijuana policy, which is being voted on by the very audience that is receiving these messages. Although marijuana is still prohibited by the federal government, a Quinnipiac University (2017) poll found that 60 percent of voters approved of the legalization of the recreational use of marijuana federally, while 94 percent of voters approved the medicinal use of marijuana by adults (Quinnipiac University Poll, 2017). This may mean that further changes to current prohibitionist marijuana policies may occur in the near future.

However, according to the major findings of the current study, it appears likely that there is potential for a maintenance/reinforcement of current prohibitionist policies regarding

marijuana use in America. Overall, when looking at an organization's functionality and delivery, it was governmental organizations that made the most attempts to communicate information and deliver their marijuana policy messages. As these organizations are more likely to promote a message of maintaining the status quo (marijuana prohibition), our existing drug policies would remain largely unchanged. However, there have been changes at the state and local levels that have decriminalized or legalized medicinal and/or recreational use of marijuana. Future research may assist in determining what role digital media may have played in these policy changes. While there have been changes in marijuana policy at the state and local levels, prohibitive policies are still in place at the federal level. Future research may aid in determining the role that digital media may play in impacting policy changes at the federal level as well, especially if further marijuana policy changes are forthcoming.

It should also be noted that the current study only used the example of marijuana policy along with the categories of liberal, federal government, and conservative organizations for the purposes of measuring the use of digital media (in the form of websites). The methodology and the findings of the current study could be applied to the use of websites by other entities for the purposes of promoting a wide range of messaging. Future research could provide additional evidence that social marketing strategies that include digital media are not only successful in creating social change, but in aiding the fortification of current norms.

Future Research Goals

Future research may provide the basis for a new theory to emerge about the potential relationship between the use of digital media by various entities (such as organizations), public opinion about crime and justice, and policy (with marijuana policy serving as an example). The

results observed in this study set the groundwork for, and call for, answering questions about this relationship. These include at least the following principal questions: (1) Do digital media messages impact public policy? (2) How (by what mechanism) do digital media messages impact public policy?

Additional future research questions may include: (3) How effective are digital media messages at changing individual users' attitudes and beliefs? (4) Do changes in attitudes and beliefs lead to actual individual behaviors (such as voting) that may impact public policy? This study has provided a foundation for future research into the impacts that digital media marijuana policy messages have on the beliefs and behaviors of individual users. As stated in Chapter 2, it is well known that the public's image of criminality is influenced by what they see and hear in the media. This makes the media an important factor in how criminal behavior is defined and what policies are developed to respond to such behaviors (Gerbner et al., 1979; Graber, 1979; Surette and Otto, 2001). Based on this assertion that most of the general population receives their messages regarding criminal justice policies from the media, and that there is a greater shift to the utilization of digital media for information seeking, organizations that are more effective in utilizing digital media outlets (such as websites and social media) should be more effective in spreading their message to the public. This then has the potential to impact the beliefs and potential behaviors of individual users.

Future research questions may also include: (5) Is traditional media utilization different than digital media utilization by organizations? (6) Is digital media consumption by individual users different than consumption of traditional media? (7) Do differences between traditional media and digital media, in terms of utilization and consumption, make digital media a more

effective tool for the dissemination of policy messages? There is an assertion that there is a shift from the consumption of traditional media (such as newspapers) to a greater reliance on digital media sources of information (such as websites). With the properties of digital media (such as interactivity and democratization) differing from those of traditional media, it is likely the ways in which consumers interact with and consume digital media will also differ from that of traditional media. Individuals and organizations now have more influence over the kinds of information available to media consumers, which allows them to frame criminal justice policies in ways once reserved for the government and the established mass media. The current study examined different technical aspects of digital media (in the form of organizational websites). However, the data analyzed only allow for conclusions regarding differences between those technical aspects based on category. Future research will seek to examine what those differences mean to individual users.

Further, future research questions may address: (8) Whether people seek information in digital media environments with a desire to research both sides of a debate or are they simply seeking information that confirms existing beliefs. (9) Why people choose digital media platforms? Are they seeking to engage with others with different perspectives? Are they seeking to engage with others who are like-minded and will confirm their beliefs? Are they simply seeking information (either confirmatory or contradictory)? Are they looking for opportunities for participation? The ways in which people seek information in an era of digital media has also changed. People no longer wait for mass traditional media outlets (such as newspapers) to report the news. Now, digital media consumers are also part of the reporting process. Further, digital media consumers expect their information to be current. Digital media consumers are able to

have a relationship with the media that was not possible before, thanks in part to the properties of digital media such as interactivity. However, this new relationship between the media and the public leads to future research questions that could not be answered by the current study due to its focus on the more technical aspects of websites.

Additional future research questions may include: (10) Which organizational category is most effective at promoting policy messages? (11) What categorical divergences led to differences in messaging effectiveness? Such research will further seek to examine which organizational category is more effective at promoting their marijuana policy agenda through their messaging strategies. If it is found that one organizational category is more effective at promoting their message, future research would also include examinations into divergences between categories that may have led to gaps in effectiveness. The findings did show that there are divergences between organizational categories on most measures that were included in the current study. Future research will examine what impact those differences have on the effectiveness of organizational marijuana policy messaging.

Further, future research questions may include: (12) Are organizations increasing their use of digital media in their messaging strategies? (13) Do users consider some digital media platforms outdated? (14) Are organizations changing the digital media platforms that they use to disseminate messages in efforts to adapt to technological advances? These future research questions will seek to address the possible implications of Moore's Law. Moore's Law observes that the capacity and speed of computer transistors on a microchip doubles every two years, while the cost of such technology is reduced by half (Tardi, 2019). The changes that we have seen over the last fifty years have been the result of an increase in technology that is more

advanced (Hilbert & Lopez, 2011). However, even Moore admitted that similar growth could not be expected to continue indefinitely (Tardi, 2019). Technological change has slowed in the last decade, which indicates that the rate of change varies longitudinally (Hilbert & Lopez, 2011; Devandra, 1985). However, the periods of rapid technological change that have been noted may lead to problems of “obsolescence,” where improvements may quickly render previous technology useless (Sandborn, 2008). If technological platforms change as quickly as Moore’s Law implies, this may have possible implications for those who use digital media to disseminate specific messages. As technology changes, organizations (and other entities) must also adapt their usage of digital media if they hope to effectively deliver their messages to their audience. Although necessary, this may be time consuming and costly. How organizations are able to adapt to rapid technological changes to improve effectiveness will be an important part of future research.

In addition, future research will address the following questions: (15) Is there variation in the ways in which organizations use their websites for messaging when compared to their use of social media? (16) Do differences in the ways that organizations use their websites and their social media platforms lead to differences in the effectiveness of their messaging? (17) Which is a more effective platform for organizations to use in their messaging efforts? In today’s culture, social media has become the main communication platform between organizations and their audience. This may lead some organizations to question whether there is a need for them to continue having a website as part of their online presence, or if social media is enough to promote the organization and their advocacy efforts. Although there has been a shift to a greater reliance on social media by the consuming public, having a website is still important to the

digital messaging efforts of organizations. As stated by Primepixels (2019), websites “should be the heart of your online presence and social media should be your marketing tool. The two go hand in hand, and both are crucial to online success in the modern era.” As both are important to the online messaging efforts of organizations (and other entities), future research will seek to examine the differential use of both websites and social media by organizations, and whether those differences lead to gaps in effectiveness.

Finally, future research questions may include: (18) How is digital media use impacting criminal justice policies? (19) How many promoters of policy messages are now only utilizing social media platforms to reach individual users? (20) Why have promoters of policy messages who have chosen only social media platforms to reach individual users chosen to do so? The use of social media is growing among individual users of digital media. While future research will look at what potential impact digital media are having on criminal justice policy, it will also look into the potential of more organizations seeking to reach and engage individual users through only social media platforms (circumventing websites altogether).

Final Thoughts

It is assumed that organizations play a role in the digital media messages that the public receives. Thus, the medium (websites for the purposes of the current study) that organizations are using to convey their messages also plays an important role in shaping public opinion. Consequently, it becomes important to understand the digital media utilization efforts of these organizations so that future research may examine the role that these efforts have on influencing public opinion and, ultimately, voting behaviors and public policy.

It is well known that the public's image of criminality is influenced by what they see and hear in the media. This makes the media an important factor in how criminal behavior is defined and what policies are developed to respond to such behaviors (Gerbner et al., 1979; Graber, 1979; Surette and Otto, 2001). Based on this assertion that most of the general population receives their messages regarding criminal justice policies from the media, and that there is a greater shift to the utilization of digital media for information seeking, organizations that are more effective in utilizing digital media outlets (such as websites and social media) should be more effective in spreading their message to the public. This then has the potential to impact the beliefs and potential behaviors of individual users. The current study was important because it found that organizations do differentially utilize digital media according to organizational category. This also likely means differences in the effectiveness of their policy messaging through digital media. These findings establish a basis for future research that will examine what those differences mean in terms of effectiveness in altering attitudes (particularly as they relate to policy).

This study is also important for those who choose to utilize digital media as part of their messaging strategies in attempts to change attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Although the current study only indicates what website components may be most important to users who are visiting the websites, it also lays the foundation for future research into how those different website elements may impact the effectiveness of the messaging. This may then have impacts on the design of websites that are meant to impact opinions and policies.

Finally, this study provided evidence that reinforces existing theories of institutionalism by providing examples of how these theories and paradigms may operate in a digital media

environment. Although the current study looked for differences in technical aspects of websites, this study also provides the basis for new knowledge as future research may examine what categorical divergences on various measures means theoretically. It is likely that future research into the effectiveness of digital media messaging strategies will provide refinement of existing theories, and there may be the addition of some new knowledge as to how organizations are using digital media to promote ideas.

APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD EXEMPTION



Institutional Review Board
FWA00000351
IRB00001138
Office of Research
12201 Research Parkway
Orlando, FL 32826-3246

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

NOT HUMAN RESEARCH DETERMINATION

May 8, 2019

Dear [Kimberly Kampe](#):

On 5/8/2019, the IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	The Distinctive Marijuana Policy Messaging of Liberal, Conservative, and Governmental Organizations: An Analysis of the New Media Landscape
Investigator:	Kimberly Kampe
IRB ID:	STUDY00000499
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Request for NHR Determination, Category: IRB Protocol;

The IRB determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by DHHS and FDA regulations.

IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities are research involving human in which the organization is engaged, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination. You can create a modification by clicking **Create Modification / CR** within the study.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or irb@ucf.edu. Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.



Institutional Review Board

FWA00000351

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Office of Research

12201 Research Parkway Orlando, FL 32826-3246

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Racine Jacques", written in a cursive style.

Racine Jacques, Ph.D.
Designated Reviewer

APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY

Accessibility: Proactive features of websites that show organizations have a commitment to user-friendliness.

Advocacy: Public support for a particular policy.

Asynchronous interactive information and communication flows: Multidirectional substantive contacts between organizations and individuals in which a response follows a user's initial communication (which cannot be altered) after a particular time interval.

Axial coding: A qualitative research technique that relates data in an effort to reveal codes and categories which allows researchers to create linkages between the information.

Campaigning: Overt efforts made by organizations to draw users to their website.

Claim: A demand that one party makes upon another.

Claims-makers: The promoters, activists, professional experts, and spokespersons involved in forwarding specific claims about a phenomenon.

Claims-making: A form of interaction in which one party makes a demand (claim) that something be done about a defined social problem with the expectation that they will be heard by those with the power to do something about it.

Coercive isomorphism: Similarity between organizations that results from formal and informal organizational pressures exerted by other organizations within the environment and by cultural expectations.

Community building: Organizational social media practices that attempt to build stronger ties with existing stakeholders and local communities.

Conceptual density: Richness in the development of ideas and relationships.

Conservative organization: An organized group of people who share the conviction that current prohibitionist marijuana policies should be continued.

Construction: A theory or idea that is considered to be largely subjective, rather than grounded in empirical evidence.

Constructivist inquiry: A research methodology that is based on the notion that knowledge is gained by constructing reality through experiences.

Content analysis: Any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages. A flexible qualitative approach to analyzing textual and visual data that may vary with the theoretical and substantive content of the issue being studied.

Cross-sectional approach: A research approach that is exploratory and descriptive in nature and designed to examine a phenomenon at one point in time more carefully.

Decriminalization: The reduction of criminal penalties associated with certain illicit behaviors.

Delivery: Certain website design elements that assist in disseminating the organizations' marijuana policy messages.

Democratization: The undertaking of making something available to everyone.

Digital: Electronic technology that generates, processes, manipulates, transmits, and stores data.

Digital media: Digitized content (such as text, graphics, video, and audio) transmitted by computer networks or via the Internet.

Directed/Grounded approach: A method that increases validity and reliability by comparing concepts and theories that emerge during the study to the existing research, providing a chance to interpret one's own results and to compare those results with existing theory and literature. A preferred method when there is existing literature and theory about a phenomenon that is thought to be incomplete or in need of further explanation.

Direction: Two-way and interactive communication enhancement through new media due to the space available for and speed of information, and the enhancement of horizontal or lateral communication between individuals or groups due to the immediacy of hypertext linkage.

Diversity of stakeholders: Efforts on the part of organizations to utilize their website to interact with different groups of people (members, volunteers, funders, other organizations, reporters, individual users, etc.).

Downward information and communication flows (downward information flows): Unidirectional communications with information coming from the organizations down to the individual user.

Echo chamber: A metaphor describing a situation in which views are augmented or reinforced through communication and reiteration in a closed system.

Fair use: Material that promotes freedom of expression by permitting the unlicensed use of copyright-protected works under certain circumstances, such as for educational purposes.

Format: In-depth, dynamic, and visually stimulating contacts sent in audio, video, and text allowing for the combination of print and electronic communication using new media forms.

Framing: The structuring and presenting of a social problem or issue by describing the problem in a context that is going to gain the most support from the public (usually by reflecting their beliefs and attitudes).

Freshness: How recent the organizational websites' content is and the key to effective delivery of site content.

Functionality: Whether organizations are performing the activities we assume; and if they are, how effectively are they doing so.

Governmental organization (federal): An agency of the state that is in charge of the management and administration of specific functions (some of which may include the enforcement of marijuana policies). An organization that is neutral in their position on marijuana policy but supports current prohibitionist policies as they are often charged with enforcement of those policies.

Grassroots support: Ordinary individuals that come together to form the basis of a political movement using a variety of strategies to encourage the participation of others and to create reform.

Grounded theory: a general methodology for theory development that emerges from data that has been systematically gathered and analyzed through a process of constant comparative analysis.

Information awareness: The dissemination of information by organizations through social media outlets in an attempt to increase awareness of the organization, their mission, and their advocacy.

Information provision: Efforts by organizations to disseminate information to the general population about their identity and strategies.

Institutionalism: An approach to the study of politics that focuses on the formal institutions of government and the state was seen as an entity which embodies the law and institutions of government, yet somehow also transcends those entities.

Interactive information and communication flows (interactive communication flows):

Communications in which an initial communication from one side is made with the expectation of receiving a response from the other side.

Internet: A global system of interconnected computer networks that use the Internet Protocol Suite (TCP/IP).

Isomorphism: The similarity of one organization to another in terms of their processes or structure.

Lateral/Horizontal information and communication flows (lateral/horizontal communication flows): Unidirectional communications whereby information is provided by the organization to outside individuals (outward information provision) or individuals within the organizations (inward information provision).

Legalization: The task of making an action that was previous illegal permissible under the law.

Liberal organization: An organized group of people who share the conviction that current prohibitionist marijuana policies should be reformed in favor of decriminalization or legalization of marijuana.

Marijuana: A psychoactive drug that derives from the cannabis plant and which may be used medicinally or recreationally.

Mass media: A collection of media technologies that can reach a large audience through mass communications.

Media persuasion: Efforts to change people's attitudes about certain political candidates, products, practices, causes, etc. in an attempt to influence the behavior of those in the audience.

Mimetic isomorphism: Changes which are the result of uncertainty in the environment. This uncertainty leads organizations to imitate one another due to the belief that the structure of one organization is beneficial.

Mixed methods approach: An approach to knowledge that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions, and standpoints (including the standpoints of qualitative and quantitative research).

Mobilizing action: The use of websites and social media by organizations to provide stakeholders with enough information, and to provide a strong enough sense of community, to motivate potential activity. The ultimate goal of the organizational use of websites and social media by organizations.

Moral panic: The development of social concern over a problem that is seen as a threat to societal values and interests creating a feeling of fear among large groups of people.

Multidirectional communication: Connections that allow for the imparting of ideas or knowledge that involves or moves in several different ways.

Navigability: How easily users can move around a website and locate information.

New (Digital) media: Digital information that may be shared among different audiences quickly and easily allowing for on-demand access to content at any time, from any location, on any digital device as well as the capability of the real-time generation of new content that has no regulations.

Normative pressures: The forces of others outside of the organizations themselves that lead to conformity.

Organization: A structured group of individuals that forms around a particular purpose, such as business or ideology.

Operational definitions: A specific way that a variable will be analyzed during the course of a study.

Presentation/Appearance: The “glitz” factor or the showiness of the website. It includes flashiness (graphics) and dynamism (multimedia components).

Prohibition: The action of completely forbidding something by law.

Promoting participation: Attempts made to increase the engagement of citizens in the political process by making the information gathering process easier and by increasing the chances for interaction.

Public domain: The position of being available to or belonging to the community and not subject to copyright.

Public engagement: How well organizations are attempting to interact with individual users.

Quota sampling: A nonprobability stratified sampling technique where representative participants are chosen from a specific subgroup.

Resource generation: The generation of financial support and recruitment of new members

Responsiveness: The capacity of the organization to respond to simple information requests submitted to their websites.

Search engine: A program that finds and recognizes database items that match keywords or characters entered by the individual user on the World Wide Web.

Search engine optimization (SEO): The technical and creative elements necessary for increasing a website's natural/organic rankings (and visibility) on Internet search engines.

Social construction of reality: People who interact with one another in a social system create a society and a pattern of behaviors that become habituated then institutionalized. Knowledge and belief about what constitute reality become embedded in society. Reality is then considered to be constructed by society.

Social marketing: a downstream approach that provides a wide variety of tools, approaches, and concepts that may be used to influence a wide range of behaviors and may be used as an agent's only platform to bring about change.

Social media: A subset of new media that uses web-based and mobile technologies to turn communications into interactive dialogues between organizations, individuals, and communities. A group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

Social problem: Negotiated fashioned products of a process of collective definition which exist separately from objective social conditions. They are not the result of innate dysfunction within a society but are the product of a condition being chosen and defined as problematic.

Socio-political environment: Features relating to the social and political forces at work on the community.

Speed: Decreases in the amount of time it takes to send a message using new media communication methods.

Stakeholders: People or groups with an interest in an issue as they will be impacted by the outcome.

Synchronous interactive information and communication flows: Multidirectional substantive contacts between organizations and individuals in which communication is free flowing (initial communication and response are subject to constant modification), occurs through real-time exchanges, and in which initial communication and response are subject to constant modification.

Tacit knowledge: All of what is known minus all that can be said.

Traditional media: Media that are older (prior to the Information Age of the 1990s) and do not provide consumers with the ability to interact with content (they only have the ability to be passive receivers and not active contributors). Examples include newspapers, radio, and television.

Transactional communications: An exchange or interaction related to the conducting of business during which money changes hands (such as merchandising by the organization or users donating to the organization).

Unidirectional communications: Allowing for interactions in only one way at a time.

Upward information and communication flows (upward information flows): One-way, usually transactional, communications where the information flows from the individual user to the organization.

Visibility: The ease of locating the organizational websites on the Internet.

Websites: A collection of interlinked web pages that are accessible to the public and share a common domain name.

World Wide Web: An Internet information system that allows the connecting of documents and other resources by hyperlinks in a network.

APPENDIX C: KEY CONCEPTS DATA DICTIONARY

Name of Variable	Operational Definition	Variable Type	Measurement/ Value	Primary Study Measurement
Functionality				
<i>Downward Information Flows:</i> Unidirectional communications with information coming from the organization down to the individual user	Organizational history	Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Mission statement (Absent-0; Present1; +n) 1	“Manifesto”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Information sections/”About Us”/History (Absent-0; Present1; +n) 2	“Documents”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Board of directors (Absent-0; Present1) 3	“Structure” and “Who’s who”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Staff (Absent-0; Present-1) 4	“Structure” and “Who’s who”*
		Categorical (Nominal) / Continuous (Interval)	Policies supported (Prohibition-0; Decriminalization-1; Legalization-2; +n) 5	“Policies”* “Values/ ideologies”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Newsletters (Absent0; Present-1; +n) 6	“Newsletters”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Media releases (speeches, news reports) (Absent-0; Present-1; +n) 7	“Media releases”*

		Categorical (Dichotomous) / Continuous (Interval)	Voting/Ballot information (Absent-0; Present-1; +n) 8	“Election information”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Frequently asked questions (Absent-0; Present-1) 9	“Frequently asked questions”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous) / Continuous (Interval)	Negative campaigning/arguments (Absent-0; A	“Negative campaigning”*
		Continuous (Interval)	Targeted information pages (+n groups targeted) 10 Howed-1; +n)	“Targeted pages”*
<i>Upward Information Flows:</i> One-way communications with the information flowing from the individual user to the organization	Transactional communication	Categorical (Dichotomous)	Donation (Absent-0; Governmental organization-1; Present-2) 1	“Donation”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Merchandising (Absent-0; Present-1; +n) 2	“Merchandising”*
<i>Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows:</i> Multidirectional substantive contacts between organizations and individuals	Inward information provision Outward information provision	Continuous (Interval)	Advocacy links on homepage (+n supportive groups; +n contrary groups) 1	“Partisan links”*

		Continuous (Interval)	Reference (external) links on homepage (+n sites) 2	“Reference links”*
		Continuous (Interval)	Suborganizational (internal) links on homepage (+n sites) 3	“Internal links”*
<i>Interactive Information Flows (Asynchronous):</i> Multidirectional substantive contacts between organizations and individuals in which a response follows a user’s initial communication after a particular time interval and cannot be modified	Sequential interaction	Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Ability to contact organization (Absent-0; Present1; +n ways to make contact) 1	“E-mail contact”*
	Social media interaction	Categorical (Dichotomous)	Blogs (Absent-0; Present-1) 2	Additional measure for current study
		Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Email contact (Absent-0; Present1; +n addresses offered) 3	“E-mail contact”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Message boards (Absent-0; Present1) 4	“Bulletin boards”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Site search (Absent0; Present 1)	Site search”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Opportunity to join email list (Absent-0; Present-1) 5	“Join email list”*

		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Feedback opportunities (Absent-0; Present1) 6	“E-mail feedback”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Facebook (Absent-0; Present-1) 7	Additional measure for current study
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	YouTube (Absent-0; Present-1) 8	Additional measure for current study
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Instagram (Absent0; Present-1) 9	Additional measure for current study
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Reddit (Absent-0; Present-1) 10	Additional measure for current study
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Tumblr (Absent-0; Present-1) 11	Additional measure for current study
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Twitter (Absent-0; Present-1) 12	Additional measure for current study
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Flickr (Absent-0; Present-1) 13	Additional measure for current study
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Pinterest (Absent-0; Present-1) 14	Additional measure for current study
		Continuous (Interval)	Number of social media communication channels (+n) 15	Additional measure for current study

<i>Interactive Information Flows (Synchronous):</i> Multidirectional substantive contacts between organizations and individuals in which communication is free flowing in that initial communication and response are subject to constant modification	Real-time exchanges	Categorical (Dichotomous)	Chat room (Absent0; Present-1) 1	“Chat room”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Online debates (Absent-0; Present1) 2	“Online debate”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Direct dialogue (Absent 0; Present1) 3	Additional measure for current study
Delivery				
<i>Presentation/ Appearance:</i> The “glitz” factor; includes flashiness and dynamism	Graphics (flashiness) Multimedia (dynamism)	Continuous (Interval)	Total number of images or pictures on homepage (+n) 1	“total number of images of pictures”*
		Categorical (Nominal)	Absent-0; Moving icons-1; Audio-2; Video-3; Live streaming-4 2	“moving icons (1), audio (2), video (3), live streaming (4)”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Length of page (Scrolling required0; On one screen-1) 3	Additional measure for current study
		Continuous (Interval)	Amount of information on homepage (+n word count; +n topics covered) 4	Additional measure for current study

<i>Accessibility:</i> Proactive features that indicate an organizations' commitment to user friendliness	Foreign language translations	Categorical (Dichotomous)	No frames option (Absent-0; Present1) 1	"no frames option (+1)"*
	Programs for impaired	Categorical (Dichotomous)	Text-only documents to download/print (Absent-0; Present1) 2	"text-only option (whole site) (+1)", "text-only documents to download/print"*
	Size of organization's homepage			
	Text alternatives (perceivable)	Categorical (Dichotomous)	Foreign language translation (Absent0; Present-1; +n) 3	"foreign language translation"*
	All functionality available from keyboard (operable)	Continuous (Interval)	Blind/visually impaired software (Absent-0; Present1) 4	"blind/visually impaired software"*
	Users ability to correct mistakes (understandable)	Categorical (Dichotomous)	Size of the homepage (in Kb) 5	"size of the home page in Kb"*
	Compatibility with user tools (robust)	Continuous (Interval)	Time for initial access of website (1 minute or more -0; 30 seconds to 1 minute-1; Less than 30 seconds -2	Additional measure for current study
	Speed	Continuous (Interval)	download time) 6	
		Continuous (Interval)	Site operational (Inaccessible-0; Site working-1) 7	"site working (1), inaccessible (0)"*

<i>Navigability</i> : The ability to move around a site and locate information easily	Site maps (ease of moving around site)	Categorical (Dichotomous)	Navigation tips (Absent-0; Present1) 1	“navigation tips (+1)”*
	Search engines (locating information)	Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Site search (Absent0; Present-1) 2	“number of search engines (+1)”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Homepage icon on each page (Absent0; Present-1) 3	“home page icon on each page (+1)”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Major site area links/menu bar on each page (Absent0; Present-1) 4	“major site area links/menu bar on each page (+1)”*
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Site map/index (Absent-0; Present1) 5	“site map/index (+1)”*

<p><i>Freshness:</i> Refers to the regular updating of sites</p>	Updating of website	Categorical (Nominal)	Website updates (Absent-0; More than 6 months-1; one to six months-2; Monthly-3; Last two weeks-4; Three to seven days-5; One to two days-5; Daily-6) 1	“update daily (6), 1 to 2 days (5), 3 to 7 days (4), every 2 weeks (3), monthly (2), 1 to 6 months (1), more than 6 months (0)”*
	Contemporaneusness of information	Categorical (Nominal)	Copyrights (Absent-0; Within the last year-1; Within the last month-2; Within the last week-3) 2	Additional measure for current study
		Categorical (Nominal)	Publication dates (Absent-0; Within the last year-1; Within the last month-2; Within the last week-3) 3	Additional measure for current study

<p><i>Responsiveness:</i> The capacity of the site to respond to simple requests for information and is broken down into the speed and quality of the response</p>	Speed of response	Categorical (Ordinal)	Speed of email response (More than 1 month-0; Up to 1 month-1; Up to 2 weeks-2; Up to 1 week-3; 1 to 2 days-4; Same day-5) 1	“same day (5), 1 to 2 days (4), up to 1 week (3), up to 2 weeks (2), up to 1 month (1), more than 1 month (0)”*
	Quality of response	Categorical (Ordinal)	Speed of social media response (More than 1 month-0; Up to 1 month-1; Up to 2 weeks-2; Up to 1 week-3; 1 to 2 days-4; Same day-5) 2	Additional measure for current study
		Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Quality of response (Key word search; No response-0; Irrelevant response-0) 3	“number of words, (0) if irrelevant to query”
<p><i>Visibility:</i> The ease of locating the site on the World Wide Web</p>	Website existence	Continuous (Interval)	SEO (count number of links after advertisements (+n)) 1	“number of links in”*
	Search engine optimization			
	Website introduction/ description	Continuous (Interval)	Website description (Key word search) 2	Additional measure for current study

Public Engagement				
<p><i>Diversity of Stakeholders:</i> Social media efforts by organizations to interact with different stakeholders (members, volunteers, funders, other organizations, reporters) in an effort to achieve various ends</p>	<p>Accessing new people</p>	<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)</p>	<p>Membership sign-up page (Absent-0; Present-1; Government-0) 1</p>	<p>“Membership”* (Interactive information flows: Asynchronous)</p>
		<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)</p>	<p>Places to sign-up for volunteer opportunities (Absent-0; Present1; +n) 2</p>	<p>Additional measure for current study</p>
		<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)</p>	<p>Places where reporters work has been posted (Absent-0; Present1; +n)</p>	<p>“Media releases”* (Downward information flows)</p>
		<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)</p>	<p>Appeals from organization for information/ideas/in put from users (Absent-0; Present1; +n) 3</p>	<p>Additional measure for current study</p>
		<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)</p>	<p>Fundraising opportunities (Absent-0; Present1; +n)</p>	<p>“Call for action”*** (Mobilizing actions)</p>
		<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)</p>	<p>Networking opportunities (Absent-0; Present1) 4</p>	<p>Additional measure for current study</p>
		<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)</p>	<p>Sponsorships, Funders (Absent-0; Individual-1; Coporate-2; +n) 5</p>	<p>Additional measure for current study</p>

		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Job opportunities (Absent-0; Present1) 6	Additional measure for current study
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Internship opportunities (Absent-0; Present1) 7	Additional measure for current study
		Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Connection to other organizations (Absent-0; Present1; +n) 8	“Other organizations”*** (Building community)
<i>Information Awareness:</i> The dissemination of information by organizations through social media outlets in an attempt to increase awareness of the organization and their mission	Highlight organization’s advocacy position	Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	News stories and updates (Absent-0; Present 1; +n)	“News and updates”***
		Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Educational resources and tools (Absent-0; Present1; +n) 1	“Education, tools”***
		Categorical (Nominal)	Information source (Individuals-0; Organization itself-1; Other organizations-2; News sources-3; Government-4; “Scholarly” sources-5) 2	“Media”***
		Categorical (Nominal)	Advocacy position prominence (More than three steps-0; One to three steps-1; On homepage-2) 3	Additional measure for current study

<i>Community Building</i> : Social media practices by organizations to build stronger ties with existing stakeholders and local communities	Strengthening existing relationships	Categorical (Dichotomous)	Instances where the organization has given recognition or thanks to donors/sponsors (Absent-0; Present1) 1	“Giving recognition and thanks”**
		Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Conversations with members of the public (Absent 0; Present 1; +n)	“Conversation”**
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Live postings (Absent 0; Present 1)	“Live posting”**
		Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)	Volunteer opportunities (Absent 0; Present1; +n)	Additional measure for current study
		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Chapter information (Absent-0; Present1) 2	Additional measure for current study

<p><i>Mobilizing Actions:</i> The use of social media by organizations to provide stakeholders with enough information and to provide a strong enough sense of community to motivate potential action (the ultimate goal of social media use by organizations)</p>	<p>Providing information to incite action</p>	<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)</p>	<p>Event/Activity information (Absent0; Present-1; +n) 1</p>	<p>“Event”***</p>
		<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)</p>	<p>Advocacy (Absent0; Present-1; +n words) 2</p>	<p>Additional measure for current study</p>
		<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)</p>	<p>Fundraising (Absent 0; Present1; +n)</p>	<p>Additional measure for current study</p>
		<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)</p>	<p>Advertising (Absent0; Present-1; +n) 3</p>	<p>Additional measure for current study</p>
		<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)</p>	<p>Social media campaigns (Absent0; Present 1)</p>	<p>Additional measure for current study</p>
		<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)</p>	<p>Direct calls for action to be taken (Absent-0; Present1; +n) 4</p>	<p>Call for action***</p>
		<p>Categorical (Dichotomous)/ Continuous (Interval)</p>	<p>Requests for social media engagement (Absent-0; Present1; +n) 5</p>	<p>Additional measure for current study</p>

		Categorical (Dichotomous)	Opinion polls (Absent 0; Present 1)	Additional measure for current study
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+“Measurement/Value” column numbers correspond those given to the measures in the coding

*Gibson & Ward (2000)

**Hou & Lampe (2015)

APPENDIX D: FUNCTIONALITY FINDINGS TABLES

Table 20: Findings of Downward Information Flows for Liberal Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
Mission statement (Absent-0; Present-1; +n)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Information sections/"About Us"/History (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Vision/Values statement (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Board of directors/President/CEO (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Staff (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Policies supported (Prohibition-0; Reform-1 Decriminalization-2; Legalization-3)	3	3	1	1	1	1	3	3
Newsletters/Sign up for newsletters (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Media releases (speeches, news reports) (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Legislative/Representative/ Policy/Voting information (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
Frequently asked questions (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Targeted information pages (+n groups targeted)	2	0	5	0	0	2	5	1

Table 21: Findings of Downward Information Flows for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov. 2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
Mission statement (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Information sections/"About Us"/History (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Vision/Values statement (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Board of directors/ President/CEO (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Staff (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
Policies supported (Prohibition-0; Reform-1 Decriminalization-2; Legalization-3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newsletters/Sign up for newsletters (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1*	0	0
Media releases (speeches, news reports) (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Legislative/ Representative/ Policy/Voting information (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
Frequently asked questions (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Targeted information pages (+n groups targeted)	20	2	5	3	6	2	0	1

Table 22: Findings of Downward Information Flows for Conservative Organizations

	Consrv. 1	Consrv. 2	Consrv. 3	Consrv. 4	Consrv. 5	Consrv. 6	Consrv. 7	Consrv. 8
Mission statement (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Information sections/"About Us"/History (Absent0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Vision/Values statement (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Board of directors/ President/CEO (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Staff (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Policies supported (Prohibition-0; Reform-1 Decriminalization-2; Legalization-3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newsletters/Sign up for newsletters (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Media releases (speeches, news reports) (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Legislative/ Representative/ Policy/Voting information (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
Frequently asked questions (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
Targeted information pages (+n groups targeted)	0	5	3	0	2	1	4	0

Table 23: Findings of Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows for Conservative Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
Donation (Absent-0; Governmental organization-1; Present-2)	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1
Merchandising (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0

Table 24: Findings of Upward Information Flows for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov.2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
Donation (Absent-0; Governmental organization-1; Present-2)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Merchandising (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 25: Findings of Upward Information Flows for Conservative Organizations

	Consrv. 1	Consrv. 2	Consrv. 3	Consrv. 4	Consrv. 5	Consrv. 6	Consrv. 7	Consrv. 8
Donation (Absent-0; Governmental organization-1; Present-2)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Merchandising (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0

Table 26: Findings of Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows for Liberal Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
Advocacy links on homepage (+n supportive groups)	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Reference (external) links on homepage (+n sites)	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0
Suborganizational (internal) links on homepage (+n sites)	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Local links on homepage (+n sites)	38	319	52	12	11	34	30	35

Table 27: Findings of Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov. 2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
Advocacy links on homepage (+n supportive groups)	11	1	4	0	3	5	1	4
Reference (external) links on homepage (+n sites)	9	3	0	1	3	7	1	0
Suborganizational (internal) links on homepage (+n sites)	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Local links on homepage (+n sites)	50	86	16	58	68	67	58	40

Table 28: Findings of Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows for Conservative Organizations

	Consrv. 1	Consrv. 2	Consrv. 3	Consrv. 4	Consrv. 5	Consrv. 6	Consrv. 7	Consrv. 8
Advocacy links on homepage (+n supportive groups)	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	6
Reference (external) links on homepage (+n sites)	0	1	27	7	9	5	4	6
Suborganizational (internal) links on homepage (+n sites)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Local links on homepage (+n sites)	26	47	110	20	49	12	34	20

Table 29: Findings of Asynchronous Interactive Information Flows for Liberal Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
Ability to contact organization (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Blogs (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Email contact (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Opportunity to join email list (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Feedback opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
Facebook (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
YouTube (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
Instagram (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reddit (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Tumblr (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Twitter (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Flickr (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Pinterest (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
RSS (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Google+ (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Apps (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LinkedIn (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
StumbleUpon (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Pocket (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Delicious (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Digg (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

MySpace (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Podcasts (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
Number of social media communication channels (+n)	10	5	6	10	5	2	4	10

Table 30: Findings of Asynchronous Interactive Information Flows for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov. 2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
Ability to contact organization (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Blogs (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
Email contact (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Opportunity to join email list (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Feedback opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
Facebook (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
YouTube (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Instagram (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Reddit (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Tumblr (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Twitter (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Flickr (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
Pinterest (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
RSS (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Google+ (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
Apps (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
LinkedIn (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
StumbleUpon (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Pocket (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Delicious (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Digg (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1

MySpace (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Podcasts (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Number of social media communication channels (+n)	198	1	10	12	8	202	7	200

Table 31: Findings of Asynchronous Interactive Information Flows for Conservative Organizations

	Consrv. 1	Consrv. 2	Consrv. 3	Consrv. 4	Consrv. 5	Consrv. 6	Consrv. 7	Consrv. 8
Ability to contact organization (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
Blogs (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Email contact (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Opportunity to join email list (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
Feedback opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Facebook (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
YouTube (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Instagram (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reddit (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tumblr (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Twitter (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Flickr (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Pinterest (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
RSS (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Google+ (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Apps (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
LinkedIn (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
StumbleUpon (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pocket (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delicious (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Digg (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

MySpace (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
Podcasts (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
Number of social media communication channels (+n)	5	3	8	4	5	2	7	5

APPENDIX E: DELIVERY FINDINGS TABLES

Table 32: Findings of Presentation/Appearance for Liberal Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
Total number of images, pictures, or imaged hyperlinks on homepage (+n)	11	63	13	6	6	5	9	6
Homepage:								
Moving icons-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Slide show-2	2	0	0	2	2	2	0	0
Audio-3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Video-4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Live streaming-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Length of homepage (Scrolling required-0; On one screen-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Amount of information on homepage:								
Word count (+n)	976	3235	831	375	494	327	356	922
Topics covered (+n)	27	87	13	8	3	9	12	24

Table 33: Findings of Presentation/Appearance for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov. 2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
Total number of images, pictures, or imaged hyperlinks on homepage (+n)	12	4	5	8	12	18	2	6
Homepage:								
Moving icons-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Slide show-2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2
Audio-3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Video-4	0	0	0	0	4	4	4	0
Live streaming-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Length of homepage (Scrolling required-0; On one screen-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Amount of information on homepage:								
Word count (+n)	362	426	189	422	432	722	322	215
Topics covered (+n)	23	32	15	24	31	10	7	7

Table 34: Findings of Presentation/Appearance for Conservative Organizations

	Consrv. 1	Consrv. 2	Consrv. 3	Consrv. 4	Consrv. 5	Consrv. 6	Consrv. 7	Consrv. 8
Total number of images, pictures, or imaged hyperlinks on homepage (+n)	14	34	24	12	15	6	9	2
Homepage:								
Moving icons-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Slide show-2	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	2
Audio-3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Video-4	0	4	4	4	0	0	4	0
Live streaming-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Length of homepage (Scrolling required-0; On one screen-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Amount of information on homepage:								
Word count (+n)	573	836	1998	142	476	439	561	563
Topics covered (+n)	13	23	25	13	7	6	27	12

Table 35: Findings of Accessibility for Liberal Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
Foreign language translation (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Statement of alternative access to electronic and information technology (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Size of the homepage (in Kb)	74.5	103	54	79	35	94	136	30
Time for initial access of website (30 seconds to 1 minute-0; 30-15 seconds -1; Less than 15 seconds-2 download time)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Site operational (Inaccessible-0; Site working-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Plug-ins (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 36: Findings of Accessibility for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov. 2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
Foreign language translation (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
Statement of alternative access to electronic and information technology (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Size of the homepage (in Kb)	125	43	125	61	188	65	81	65
Time for initial access of website (30 seconds to 1 minute-0; 30-15 seconds -1; Less than 15 seconds-2 download time)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Site operational (Inaccessible-0; Site working-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Plug-ins (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1

Table 37: Findings of Accessibility for Conservative Organizations

	Consrv. 1	Consrv. 2	Consrv. 3	Consrv. 4	Consrv. 5	Consrv. 6	Consrv. 7	Consrv. 8
Foreign language translation (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Statement of alternative access to electronic and information technology (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Size of the homepage (in Kb)	95	94	158	14	129	126	225	156
Time for initial access of website (30 seconds to 1 minute-0; 30-15 seconds -1; Less than 15 seconds-2 download time)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Site operational (Inaccessible-0; Site working-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Plug-ins (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 38: Findings of Navigability for Liberal Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
Navigation tips (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
Site search (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Homepage icon on each page (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Major site area links/menu bar on each page (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Site map/index (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1

Table 39: Findings of Navigability for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov. 2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
Navigation tips (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Site search (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Homepage icon on each page (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Major site area links/menu bar on each page (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Site map/index (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table 40: Findings of Navigability for Conservative Organizations

	Consrv. 1	Consrv. 2	Consrv. 3	Consrv. 4	Consrv. 5	Consrv. 6	Consrv. 7	Consrv. 8
Navigation tips (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Site search (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Homepage icon on each page (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Major site area links/menu bar on each page (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Site map/index (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Table 41: Findings of Freshness for Liberal Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
Publication dates (Absent-0; More than 1 year; Within the last year-2; Within the last month-3; Within the last week-4)	4	4	3	3	1	3	4	4

Table 42: Findings of Freshness for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov. 2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
Publication dates (Absent-0; More than 1 year; Within the last year-2; Within the last month-3; Within the last week-4)	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

Table 43: Findings of Freshness for Conservative Organizations

	Consrv. 1	Consrv. 2	Consrv. 3	Consrv. 4	Consrv. 5	Consrv. 6	Consrv. 7	Consrv. 8
Publication dates (Absent-0; More than 1 year; Within the last year-2; Within the last month-3; Within the last week-4)	3	4	4	2	4	4	3	4

Table 44: Findings of Responsiveness for Liberal Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
Speed of email response (More than 1 month-0; Up to 1 month-1; Up to 2 weeks-2; Up to 1 week-3; 1 to 2 days-4; Same day-5)	0	3	5	0	0	3	0	0
Speed of social media response (More than 1 month-0; Up to 1 month-1; Up to 2 weeks-2; Up to 1 week-3; 1 to 2 days-4; Same day-5)	0	0	0	0	4	5	0	5
Quality of response (Key word search; No response-0; Irrelevant response-0)	0	104	75	0	0	194	0	0

Table 45: Findings of Responsiveness for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov. 2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
Speed of email response (More than 1 month-0; Up to 1 month-1; Up to 2 weeks-2; Up to 1 week-3; 1 to 2 days-4; Same day-5)	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	0
Speed of social media response (More than 1 month-0; Up to 1 month-1; Up to 2 weeks-2; Up to 1 week-3; 1 to 2 days-4; Same day-5)	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Quality of response (Key word search; No response-0; Irrelevant response-0)	0	0	65	0	76	0	0	0

Table 46: Findings of Responsiveness for Conservative Organizations

	Consrv. 1	Consrv. 2	Consrv. 3	Consrv. 4	Consrv. 5	Consrv. 6	Consrv. 7	Consrv. 8
Speed of email response (More than 1 month-0; Up to 1 month-1; Up to 2 weeks-2; Up to 1 week-3; 1 to 2 days-4; Same day-5)	2	5	0	0	0	0	5	0
Speed of social media response (More than 1 month-0; Up to 1 month-1; Up to 2 weeks-2; Up to 1 week-3; 1 to 2 days-4; Same day-5)	4	0	5	5	0	5	4	0
Quality of response (Key word search; No response-0; Irrelevant response-0)	59	0	0	0	0	0	277	0

Table 47: Findings of Visibility for Liberal Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
SEO (count number of links after advertisements (+n; 201not found during search))	1	11	3	8	20	201	6	109
Website description (Key word search)	2	10	1	3	3	0	5	5

Table 48: Findings of Visibility for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov. 2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
SEO (count number of links after advertisements (+n; 201not found during search))	37	2	14	2	1	17	57	62
Website description (Key word search)	2	5	5	4	4	6	6	4

Table 49: Findings of Visibility for Conservative Organizations

	Consrv. 1	Consrv. 2	Consrv. 3	Consrv. 4	Consrv. 5	Consrv. 6	Consrv. 7	Consrv. 8
SEO (count number of links after advertisements (+n; 201not found during search))	201	6	103	67	59	4	201	10
Website description (Key word search)	0	2	5	4	3	5	0	4

APPENDIX F: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS TABLES

Table 50: Findings of Connecting with a Diversity of Stakeholders for Liberal Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
Membership: Membership organization-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Positional organization-2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Places to sign-up for volunteer opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
Appeals from organization for information/ideas/input from users (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Networking opportunities (Absent- 0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sponsorships, Funders: Individual-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Coporate-2	2	2	2	2	0	0	2	0
Foundation-3	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Government-4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Job opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
Internship opportunities (Absent- 0; Present-1)	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
Connection to other organizations (Absent- 0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Grants (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0

Table 51: Findings of Connecting with a Diversity of Stakeholders for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov. 2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
Membership:								
Membership organization-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Positional organization-2	0	0	2	2	0	2	0	0
Places to sign-up for volunteer opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1
Appeals from organization for information/ideas/input from users (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
Networking opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sponsorships, Funders:								
Individual-1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Coporate-2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Foundation-3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Government-4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Job opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Internship opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Connection to other organizations (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Grants (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1

Table 52: Findings of Connecting with a Diversity of Stakeholders for Conservative Organizations

	Consrv. 1	Consrv. 2	Consrv. 3	Consrv. 4	Consrv. 5	Consrv. 6	Consrv. 7	Consrv. 8
Membership: Membership organization-1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Positional organization-2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Places to sign-up for volunteer opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
Appeals from organization for information/ideas/input from users (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
Networking opportunities (Absent- 0; Present-1)	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
Sponsorships, Funders:								
Individual-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Coporate-2	2	2	0	0	2	0	2	0
Foundation-3	3	3	0	0	3	0	3	0
Government-4	4	4	0	4	4	0	4	0
Job opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Internship opportunities (Absent- 0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Connection to other organizations (Absent- 0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Grants (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 53: Findings of Information Awareness for Liberal Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
Educational resources and tools (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Information source:								
Individuals-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Organization itself-2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Other organizations-3	3	3	3	3	3	0	0	3
News sources-4	0	4	0	4	4	4	0	4
Government-5	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
“Scholarly” sources-6	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	6
Advocacy position prominence (More than three steps-0; One to three steps-1; On homepage-2)	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2

Table 54: Findings of Information Awareness for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov. 2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
Educational resources and tools (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Information source:								
Individuals-1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0
Organization itself-2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Other organizations-3	3	0	0	3	3	0	0	3
News sources-4	4	0	0	0	4	0	4	0
Government-5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
“Scholarly” sources-6	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0
Advocacy position prominence (More than three steps-0; One to three steps-1; On homepage-2)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0

Table 55: Findings of Information Awareness for Conservative Organizations

	Consv. 1	Consv. 2	Consv. 3	Consv. 4	Consv. 5	Consv. 6	Consv. 7	Consv. 8
Educational resources and tools (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Information source:								
Individuals-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Organization itself-2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Other organizations-3	0	0	3	3	3	3	0	3
News sources-4	0	4	4	0	0	4	4	0
Government-5	0	5	5	0	5	0	0	0
“Scholarly” sources-6	6	0	6	6	0	6	6	6
Advocacy position prominence (More than three steps-0; One to three steps-1; On homepage-2)	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2

Table 56: Findings of Community Building for Liberal Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
Instances where the organization has given recognition or thanks to donors/sponsors (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
Community Connection:								
Affiliation-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Association-2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chapter-3	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0

Table 57: Findings of Community Building for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov. 2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
Instances where the organization has given recognition or thanks to donors/sponsors (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Connection:								
Affiliation-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Association-2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chapter-3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 58: Findings of Community Building for Conservative Organizations

	Consrv. 1	Consrv. 2	Consrv. 3	Consrv. 4	Consrv. 5	Consrv. 6	Consrv. 7	Consrv. 8
Instances where the organization has given recognition or thanks to donors/sponsors (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
Community Connection:								
Affiliation-1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Association-2	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	0
Chapter-3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3

Table 59: Findings of Mobilizing Action for Liberal Organizations

	Liberal 1	Liberal 2	Liberal 3	Liberal 4	Liberal 5	Liberal 6	Liberal 7	Liberal 8
<i>Event/Activity information (Absent-0; Present-1)</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Advocacy (Absent-0; Present-1)</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Advertising (Absent-0; Present-1)</i>	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Direct calls for action to be taken (Absent-0; Present-1)</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Requests for social media engagement (Absent-0; Present-1)</i>	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1

Table 60: Findings of Mobilizing Action for Government Organizations

	Gov. 1	Gov. 2	Gov. 3	Gov. 4	Gov. 5	Gov. 6	Gov. 7	Gov. 8
Event/Activity information (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Advocacy (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Advertising (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Direct calls for action to be taken (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Requests for social media engagement (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table 61: Findings of Mobilizing Action for Conservative Organizations

	Consrv. 1	Consrv. 2	Consrv. 3	Consrv. 4	Consrv. 5	Consrv. 6	Consrv. 7	Consrv. 8
Event/Activity information (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
Advocacy (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Advertising (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Direct calls for action to be taken (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Requests for social media engagement (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1

APPENDIX G: FUNCTIONALITY COMPARISON TABLES

Table 62: Comparison of Downward Information Flows Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Organizations			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Mission statement (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	0.875	1	0.354	0.875	1	0.354
Information sections/“About Us”/History (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Vision/Values Statement (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.5	0.5	0.535	0.25	0	0.463	0.625	1	0.518
Board of directors/ President/CEO (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	1	1	0	0.75	1	0.463
Staff (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.75	1	0.463	0.75	1	0.463	0.75	1	0.463
Policies supported (Prohibition-0; Reform-1; Decriminalization-2; Legalization-3)	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newsletters/Sign up for newsletters (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	1	0.353	0.75	1	0.488	0.5	0.5	0.535
Media releases (speeches, news reports) (Absent0; Present-1)	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Legislative/Representative/ Policy/Voting information (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.750	1	0.463	0.625	1	0.518	0.75	1	0.463
Frequently asked questions (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.375	0	0.518	0.875	1	0.354	0.5	0.5	0.535
Targeted information pages (+n groups targeted)	0.938	1.5	2.1	4.875	2.5	6.424	1.875	1.5	1.959

Table 63: Comparison of Upward Information Flows Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Organizations			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Donation (Absent-0; Governmental organization-1; Present-2)	2	2	0	1	1	0	2	2	0
Merchandising (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.625	1	0.518	0	0	0	0.375	0	0.518

Table 64: Comparison of Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Agencies			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Advocacy links on homepage (+n supportive groups)	0.5	0.5	0.535	3.625	3.5	3.462	1.625	0	3.021
Reference (external) links on homepage (+n sites)	0.625	0	1.188	10.875	2	3.338	7.375	6.5	8.467
Suborganizational (internal) links on homepage (+n sites)	0.625	0	1.768	0.5	0	1.414	0	0	0
Local links on homepage (+n sites)	66.375	34.5	102.963	55.375	58	20.914	39.75	30	31.272

Table 65: Comparison of Interactive Information Flows Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Agencies			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Number of social media communication channels (+n)	6.5	5.5	3.117	79.75	11	99.632	4.875	5	1.959
Ability to contact organization (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	1	0.354	1	1	0	1	1	0
Blogs (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	1	0.354	0.75	1	0.463	0.5	0.5	0.535
Email contact (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	1	0.354	1	1	0	0.875	1	0.354
Opportunity to join email list (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	0.875	1	0.354	0.875	1	0.354
Feedback opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.625	1	0.518	0.625	1	0.518	0.75	1	0.463
Facebook (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	0.875	1	0.354	1	1	0
YouTube (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.625	1	0.518	0.875	1	0.354	0.75	1	0.463
Instagram (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0	0.354	0.5	0.5	0.535	0.125	0	0.354
Reddit (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.625	1	0.518	0.5	0.5	0.535	0	0	0
Tumblr (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0	0.354	0.375	0	0.518	0	0	0
Twitter (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	1	1	0	0.875	1	0.354
Flickr (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.25	0	0.463	0.375	0	0.518	0	0	0
Pinterest (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.25	0	0.463	0.375	0	0.518	0.125	0	0.354
RSS (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.625	1	0.518	0.875	1	0.354	0.25	0	0.463
Google+ (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.25	0	0.463	0.75	1	0.463	0.375	0	0.518
Apps (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0.625	1	0.518	0.125	0	0.354
LinkedIn (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0	0.354	0.75	1	0.463	0.25	0	0.463
StumbleUpon (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.25	0	0.463	0.5	0.5	0.535	0.125	0	0.354
Pocket (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0	0.354	0.375	0	0.518	0	0	0

Delicious (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0	0.354	0.375	0	0.518	0	0	0
Digg (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0	0.354	0.5	0.5	0.535	0	0	0
MySpace (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0	0.354	0.375	0	0.518	0	0	0
Podcasts (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.75	1	0.463	0.875	1	0.408	0.75	1	0.463

APPENDIX H: DELIVERY COMPARISON TABLES

Table 66: Comparison of Presentation/Appearance Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Agencies			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Total number of images, pictures, or imaged hyperlinks on homepage (+n)	14.875	7.5	19.65	8.375	7	5.29	14.5	13	10.254
Homepage:									
Moving icons	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Slide show	0.500	0.500	0.535	0.875	1	0.354	0.500	0.500	0.535
Audio	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Video	0	0	0	0.375	0	0.518	0.5	0.5	0.535
Live Streaming	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Length of homepage (Scrolling required-0; On one screen-1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Amount of information on homepage:									
Word count (+n)	939.5	662.5	964.772	386.25	342	165.024	698.5	562	558.974
Topics covered (+n)	22.875	12.5	27.137	18.625	19	10.267	15.75	13	8.155

Table 67: Comparison of Accessibility Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Agencies			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Foreign language translation (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.375	0	0.518	0.75	1	0.463	0.5	0.5	0.535
Statement of alternative access to electronic and information technology (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0.875	1	0.354	0	0	0
Size of the homepage (in Kb)	75.688	76.75	35.746	94.125	73	48.254	124.625	127.5	61.235
Time for initial access of website (30 seconds to 1 minute-0; 30-15 seconds -1; Less than 15 seconds2 download time)	2	2	0	2	2	0	1.875	2	0.354
Site operational (Inaccessible-0; Site working-1)	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Plug-ins (Absent-0; Present-1)	0	0	0	0.875	1	0.354	0	0	0

Table 68: Comparison of Navigability Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Agencies			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Navigation tips (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.75	1	0.463	1	1	0	0.875	1	0.354
Site search (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	1	0.354	1	1	0	0.875	1	0.354
Homepage icon on each page (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Major site area links/menu bar on each page (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Site map/index (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.5	0.5	0.535	1	1	0	0.5	0.5	0.535

Table 69: Comparison of Freshness Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Agencies			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Publication dates (Absent-0; More than 1 year-1; Within the last year-2; Within the last month-3; Within the last week-4)	3.25	3.5	1.035	4	4	0	3.5	4	0.756

Table 70: Comparison of Responsiveness Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Agencies			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Speed of email response (More than 1 month-0; Up to 1 month-1; Up to 2 weeks-2; Up to 1 week-3; 1 to 2 days-4; Same day-5)	1.375	0	2.07	1.25	0	2.434	1.5	0	2.268
Speed of social media response (More than 1 month-0; Up to 1 month-1; Up to 2 weeks-2; Up to 1 week-3; 1 to 2 days-4; Same day 5)	1.75	0	2.435	0.5	0	1.414	2.875	4	2.416
Quality of response (Key word search; No response/ Irrelevant response-0)	46.625	0	75.5	17.625	0	34.547	42	0	97.173

Table 71: Comparison of Visibility Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Agencies			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
SEO (count number of links after advertisements (+n; 201-not found during search)	44.875	9.5	72.509	22.75	15.5	24.923	81.375	63	81.554
Website description (Key word search)	3.625	3	3.114	4.5	4.5	1.309	2.875	3.5	2.031

APPENDIX I: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT COMPARISON TABLES

Table 72: Comparison of Connecting with a Diversity of Stakeholders Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Agencies			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Membership:									
Membership Org.-1	0.875	1	0.354	0	0	0	0.125	0	0.354
Positional Org.-2	0	0	0	0.375	0	0.518	0.125	0	0.354
Places to sign-up for volunteer opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.75	1	0.463	0.625	1	0.518	0.375	0	0.518
Appeals from organization for information/ ideas/input from users (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	1	0.354	0.75	1	0.463	0.625	1	0.518
Networking opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	0.75	1	0.463	0.625	1	0.518
Sponsorships/ Funders:									
Individual	1	1	0	0.125	0	0.354	1	1	0
Corporate	0.625	1	0.518	0	0	0	0.500	0.5	0.535
Foundation	0.25	0	0.463	0	0	0	0.500	0.5	0.535
Government	0	0	0	1	1	0	0.625	1	0.518
Job opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.375	0	0.518	1	1	0	0.375	0	0.518
Internship opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.375	0	0.518	1	1	0	0.25	0	0.354
Connection to other organizations (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	1	0.354	1	1	0	0.875	1	0.354
Grants (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.25	0	0.463	0.625	1	0.518	0.125	0	0.354

Table 73: Comparison of Information Awareness Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Agencies			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Educational resources and tools (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	1	0.354	1	1	0	1	1	0
Information source:									
Individuals	1	1	0	0.625	1	0.463	0.875	1	0.354
Organization itself	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Other organizations	0.750	1	0.463	0.500	0.500	0.535	0.625	1	0.518
News sources	0.625	1	0.518	0.375	0	0.518	0.500	0.500	0.535
Government	0.250	0	0.463	1	1	0	0.375	0	0.518
“Scholarly” sources	0.250	0	0.463	0.125	0	0.463	0.750	1	0.463
Advocacy position prominence (More than three steps-0; One to three steps-1; On homepage-2)	1.75	2	0.463	0.875	1	0.354	1.5	1.5	0.535

Table 74: Comparison of Community Building Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Agencies			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Instances where the organization has given recognition or thanks to donors/sponsors (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.5	0.5	0.535	0	0	0	0.5	0.5	0.535
Community Connection:									
Affiliation-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.125	0	0.354
Association-2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.375	0	0.518
Chapter-3	0.25	0	0.463	0	0	0	0.25	0	0.463

Table 75: Comparison of Mobilizing Action Between Organizational Groups

	Liberal Organizations			Governmental Agencies			Conservative Organizations		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Event/Activity information (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	0.875	1	0.354	0.625	1	0.518
Advocacy (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Advertising (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.5	0.5	0.535	0	0	0	0	0	0
Direct calls for action to be taken (Absent-0; Present-1)	1	1	0	0.875	1	0.354	0.625	1	0.518
Requests for social media engagement (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.75	1	0.463	1	1	0	0.75	1	0.463

APPENDIX J: FUNCTIONALITY T-TEST RESULT TABLES

Table 76: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Downward Information Flows

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
Mission statement (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000	0.875	0.875	1.000 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.334 (G) 0.334 (C)
Information sections/“About Us”/History (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000	1.000	1.000	--- (G) --- (C)	14	--- (G) --- (C)
Vision/Values Statement (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.500	0.250	0.625	1.000 (G) 0.475 (C)	14	0.334 (G) 0.642 (C)
Board of directors/President/CEO (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000	1.000	0.750	--- (G) 1.528 (C)	14	--- (G) 0.149 (C)
Staff (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.750	0.750	0.750	0.000 (G) 0.000 (C)	14	1.000 (G) 1.000 (C)
Policies supported (Prohibition-0; Reform-1 Decriminalization-2; Legalization-3)	2.000	0.000	0.000	5.292 (G) 5.292 (C)	14	0.000 (G)* 0.000 (C)*
Newsletters/Sign up for newsletters (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	0.750	0.500	0.607 (G) 1.655 (C)	14	0.120 (G) 0.554 (C)
Media releases (speeches, news reports) (Absent0; Present-1)	1.000	1.000	1.000	--- (G) --- (C)	14	--- (G) --- (C)
Legislative/Representative/ Policy/Voting information (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.750	0.625	0.750	0.509 (G) 0.000 (C)	14	0.619 (G) 1.000 (C)
Frequently asked questions (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.375	0.875	0.500	2.256 (G) 0.475 (C)	14	0.040 (G)* 0.642 (C)
Targeted information pages (+n groups targeted)	1.875	4.875	1.875	1.255 (G) 0.000 (C)	14	0.230 (G) 1.000 (C)

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

Table 77: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Upward Information Flows

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
Donation (Absent-0; Governmental organization-1; Present-2)	2.000	1.000	2.000	--- (G) --- (C)	14	--- (G) --- (C)
Merchandising (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.625	0.000	0.375	3.416 (G) 0.966 (C)	14	0.004 (G)* 0.350 (C)

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

Table 78: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
Advocacy links on homepage (+n supportive groups)	0.500	3.625	1.625	2.524 (G) 1.037 (C)	14	0.024 (G)* 0.317 (C)
Reference (external) links on homepage (+n sites)	0.625	3.000	7.375	1.896 (G) 2.233 (C)	14	0.079 (G)* 0.042 (C)*
Suborganizational (internal) links on homepage (+n sites)	0.625	0.500	0.000	0.156 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.878 (G) 0.334 (C)
Local links on homepage (+n sites)	66.375	55.375	39.750	0.296 (G) 0.700 (C)	14	0.771 (G) 0.495 (C)

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

Table 79: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Interactive Information Flows

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
Ability to contact organization (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	1.000	1.000	1.000 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.334 (G) 0.120 (C)
Blogs (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	0.750	0.500	0.607 (G) 1.655 (C)	14	0.554 (G) 0.120 (C)
Email contact (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	1.000	0.875	1.000 (G) 0.000 (C)	14	0.334 (G) 1.000 (C)
Opportunity to join email list (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000	0.875	0.875	1.000 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.334 (G) 0.334 (C)
Feedback opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.625	0.625	0.750	0.000 (G) 0.509 (C)	14	1.000 (G) 0.619 (C)
Facebook (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000	0.875	1.000	1.000 (G) --- (C)	14	0.334 (G) --- (C)
YouTube (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.625	0.875	0.750	1.128 (G) 0.509 (C)	14	0.278 (G) 0.619 (C)
Instagram (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0.500	0.125	1.655 (G) 0.000 (C)	14	0.120 (G) 1.000 (C)
Reddit (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.625	0.500	0.000	0.475 (G) 3.412 (C)	14	0.642 (G) 0.004 (C)*
Tumblr (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0.375	0.000	1.128 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.278 (G) 0.334 (C)
Twitter (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000	1.000	0.875	--- (G) 1.000 (C)	14	--- (G) 0.334 (C)
Flickr (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.250	0.375	0.000	0.509 (G) 1.528 (C)	14	0.619 (G) 0.149 (C)
Pinterest (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.250	0.375	0.125	0.509 (G) 0.607 (C)	14	0.619 (G) 0.554 (C)
RSS (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.625	0.875	0.250	1.128 (G) 1.528 (C)	14	0.278 (G) 0.149 (C)
Google+ (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.250	0.750	0.375	2.160 (G) 0.509 (C)	14	0.049 (G)* 0.619 (C)
Apps (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.000	0.625	0.125	3.416 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.004 (G)* 0.334 (C)
LinkedIn (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0.750	0.250	3.035 (G) 0.607 (C)	14	0.009 (G)* 0.554 (C)
StumbleUpon (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.250	0.500	0.125	1.000 (G) 0.607 (C)	14	0.334 (G) 0.554 (C)
Pocket (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0.375	0.000	1.128 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.278 (G) 0.334 (C)
Delicious (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0.375	0.000	1.128 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.278 (G) 0.334 (C)
Digg (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0.500	0.000	1.655 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.120 (G) 0.334 (C)

MySpace (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.125	0.375	0.000	1.128 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.278 (G) 0.334 (C)
Podcasts (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.750	0.875	0.750	0.607 (G) 0.000 (C)	14	0.554 (G) 1.000 (C)
Number of social media communication channels (+n)	6.500	79.750	4.875	2.078 (G) 1.248 (C)	14	0.057 (G)* 0.232 (C)

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

APPENDIX K: DELIVERY T-TEST RESULT TABLES

Table 80: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Presentation/Appearance

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
Total number of images, pictures, or imaged hyperlinks on homepage (+n)	14.875	14.500	8.375	0.903 (G) 0.048 (C)	14	0.382 (G) 0.963 (C)
Homepage: Moving icons	0.000	0.000	0.000	--- (G) --- (C)	14	--- (G) --- (C)
Slide show	1.000	1.000	1.750	1.655 (G) 0.000 (C)	14	0.120 (G) 1.000 (C)
Audio	0.000	0.000	0.000	--- (G) --- (C)	14	--- (G) --- (C)
Video or Live Streaming	0.000	1.500	2.000	2.049 (G) 2.646 (C)	14	0.060 (G)* 0.019 (C)*
Length of homepage (Scrolling required-0; On one screen-1)	0.000	0.000	0.000	--- (G) --- (C)	14	--- (G) --- (C)
Amount of information on homepage: Word count (+n)	939.500	386.250	698.500	1.599 (G) 0.611 (C)	14	0.132 (G) 0.551 (C)
Topics covered (+n)	22.875	18.625	15.750	0.414 (G) 0.711 (C)	14	0.685 (G) 0.489 (C)

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

Table 81: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Accessibility

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
Foreign language translation (Absent-0; Present1)	0.375	0.750	0.500	1.528 (L) 1.000 (C)	14	0.149 (L) 0.334 (C)
Statement of alternative access to electronic and information technology (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.000	0.875	0.000	7.000 (L) 7.000 (C)	14	0.000 (L)* 0.000 (C)*
Size of the homepage (in Kb)	75.688	94.125	124.625	0.868 (L) 1.107 (C)	14	0.400 (L) 0.287 (C)*
Time for initial access of website (30 seconds to 1 minute-0; 30-15 seconds -1; Less than 15 seconds-2 download time)	2.000	2.000	1.875	--- (L) 1.000 (C)	14	--- (L) 0.334 (C)
Site operational (Inaccessible-0; Site working-1)	1.000	1.000	1.000	--- (L) --- (C)	14	--- (L) --- (C)
Plug-ins (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.000	0.875	0.000	7.000 (L) 7.000 (C)	14	0.000 (L)* 0.000 (C)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(L) = Comparison of Governmental Organizations to Liberal Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Governmental Organizations to Conservative Organizations

Table 82: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Navigability

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
Navigation tips (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.750	1.000	0.875	1.528 (L) 1.000 (C)	14	0.149 (L) 0.334 (C)
Site search (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	1.000	0.875	1.000 (L) 1.000 (C)	14	0.334 (L) 0.334 (C)
Homepage icon on each page (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000	1.000	1.000	--- (L) --- (C)	14	--- (L) --- (C)
Major site area links/menu bar on each page (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000	1.000	1.000	--- (L) --- (C)	14	--- (L) --- (C)
Site map/index (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.500	1.000	0.500	2.646 (L) 2.646 (C)	14	0.019 (L)* 0.019 (C)*

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(L) = Comparison of Governmental Organizations to Liberal Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Governmental Organizations to Conservative Organizations

Table 83: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Freshness

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
Publication dates (Absent-0; More than 1 year-1; Within the last year-2; Within the last month-3; Within the last week-4)	3.250	4.000	3.500	2.049 (G) 0.552 (C)	14	0.060 (G)* 0.590 (C)

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

Table 84: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Responsiveness

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
Speed of email response (More than 1 month-0; Up to 1 month-1; Up to 2 weeks-2; Up to 1 week-3; 1 to 2 days-4; Same day-5)	1.375	1.500	1.250	0.116 (G) 0.117 (C)	14	0.910 (G) 0.908 (C)
Speed of social media response (More than 1 month-0; Up to 1 month-1; Up to 2 weeks-2; Up to 1 week-3; 1 to 2 days-4; Same day-5)	1.750	0.500	2.875	1.256 (G) 0.928 (C)	14	0.230 (G) 0.369 (C)
Quality of response (Key word search; No response/ Irrelevant response-0)	46.625	17.625	35.547	0.296 (G) 0.700 (C)	14	0.319 (G) 0.916 (C)

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

Table 85: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Visibility

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
SEO (count number of links after advertisements (+n; 201-not found during search))	44.875	24.000	81.375	0.770 (G) 0.946 (C)	14	0.454 (G) 0.360 (C)
Website description (Key word search)	3.625	4.500	2.875	0.733 (G) 0.571 (C)	14	0.476 (G) 0.577 (C)

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

APPENDIX L: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT T-TEST RESULT TABLES

Table 86: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Diversity of Stakeholders

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
Membership: Membership Org.-1	0.875	0.000	0.125	7.000 (G) 4.243 (C)	14	0.000 (G)* 0.001 (C)*
Positional Org.-2	0.000	0.750	0.625	2.049 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.060 (G)* 0.334 (C)
Places to sign-up for volunteer opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.750	0.625	0.375	0.509 (G) 1.528 (C)	14	0.619 (G) 0.149 (C)
Appeals from organization for information/ ideas/input from users (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	0.750	0.625	0.607 (G) 1.128 (C)	14	0.554 (G) 0.278 (C)
Networking opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000	0.750	0.625	1.528 (G) 2.049 (C)	14	0.149 (G) 0.060 (C)*
Sponsorships/ Funders: Individual	1.000	0.125	1.000	7.000 (G) --- (C)	14	0.000 (G)* --- (C)
Corporate	1.250	0.000	1.000	3.416 (G) 0.475 (C)	14	0.004 (G)* 0.642 (C)
Foundation	0.750	0.000	1.500	1.528 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.149 (G) 0.334 (C)
Government	0.000	4.000	2.500	--- (G) 3.412 (C)	14	--- (G) 0.004 (C)*
Job opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.375	1.000	0.375	3.412 (G) 0.000 (C)	14	0.004 (G)* 1.000 (C)
Internship opportunities (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.375	1.000	0.125	3.412 (G) 1.128 (C)	14	0.004 (G)* 0.278 (C)
Connection to other organizations (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	1.000	0.875	1.000 (G) 0.000 (C)	14	0.334 (G) 1.000 (C)
Grants (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.250	0.625	0.125	1.528 (G) 0.607 (C)	14	0.149 (G) 0.554 (C)

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

Table 87: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Awareness of Information

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
Educational resources and tools (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.875	1.000	1.000	1.000 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.334 (G) 0.334 (C)
Information source:						
Individuals	1.000	0.750	1.000	1.528 (G) --- (C)	14	0.149 (G) --- (C)
Organization itself	2.000	2.000	2.000	--- (G) --- (C)	14	--- (G) --- (C)
Other organizations	2.250	1.500	1.875	1.000 (G) 0.510 (C)	14	0.334 (G) 0.619 (C)
News sources	2.500	1.500	2.000	0.966 (G) 0.475 (C)	14	0.350 (G) 0.642 (C)
Government	1.250	5.000	1.875	4.583 (G) 0.509 (C)	14	0.000 (G)* 0.619 (C)
“Scholarly” sources	1.500	0.750	4.500	0.607 (G) 2.160 (C)	14	0.554 (G) 0.049 (C)*
Advocacy position prominence (More than three steps-0; One to three steps-1; On homepage-2)	1.750	0.875	1.500	4.249 (G) 1.000 (C)	14	0.001(G)* 0.334 (C)

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

Table 88: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Community Building

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
Instances where the organization has given recognition or thanks to donors/sponsors (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.500	0.000	0.500	2.646 (G) 0.000 (C)	14	0.019 (G)* 1.000 (C)
Community Connection: Affiliation-1	0.250	0.000	0.125	1.528 (G) 0.607 (C)	14	0.149 (G) 0.554 (C)
Association-2	0.000	0.000	0.750	--- (G) 2.049 (C)	14	--- (G) 0.060 (C)*
Chapter-3	0.000	0.000	0.750	--- (G) 1.528 (C)	14	--- (G) 0.149 (C)

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

Table 89: T-Test Results Determining the Significance of Mobilizing Action

	Liberal Organizations	Governmental Organizations	Conservative Organizations	T-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
	1	2	3			
Event/Activity information (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000	0.875	0.625	1.000 (G) 2.049 (C)	14	0.334 (G) 0.060 (C)*
Advocacy (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000	1.000	1.000	--- (G) --- (C)	14	--- (G) --- (C)
Advertising (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.500	0.000	0.000	2.646 (G) 2.646 (C)	14	0.019 (G)* 0.019 (C)*
Direct calls for action to be taken (Absent-0; Present-1)	1.000	0.875	0.625	1.000 (G) 2.049 (C)	14	0.334 (G) 0.060 (C)*
Requests for social media engagement (Absent-0; Present-1)	0.750	1.000	0.750	1.528 (G) 0.000 (C)	14	0.149 (G) 1.000 (C)

*Significant at the 0.050 level, one-tailed test

--- = No variation

(G) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Governmental Organizations

(C) = Comparison of Liberal Organizations to Conservative Organizations

APPENDIX M: CONCEPTUAL FIGURES

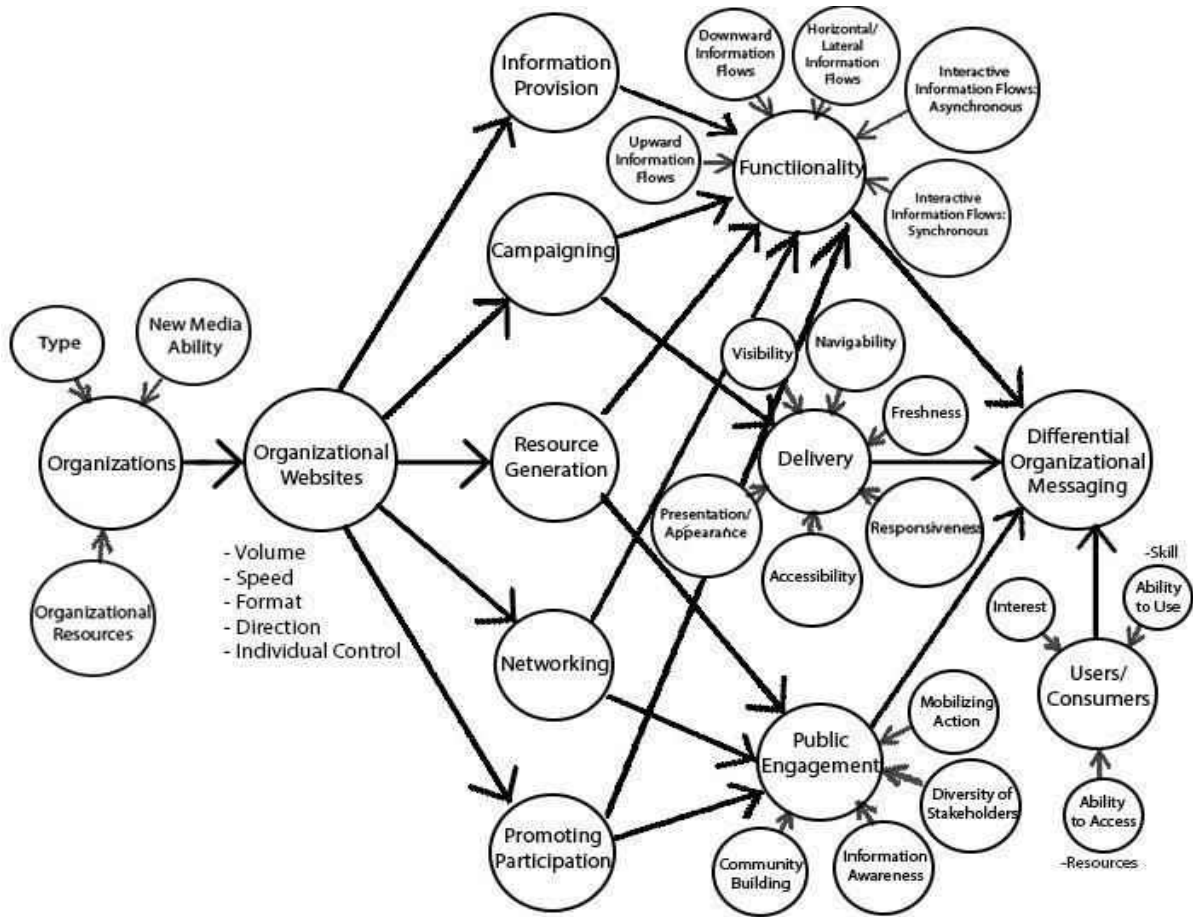


Figure 4: Conceptual Framework of Study Measures

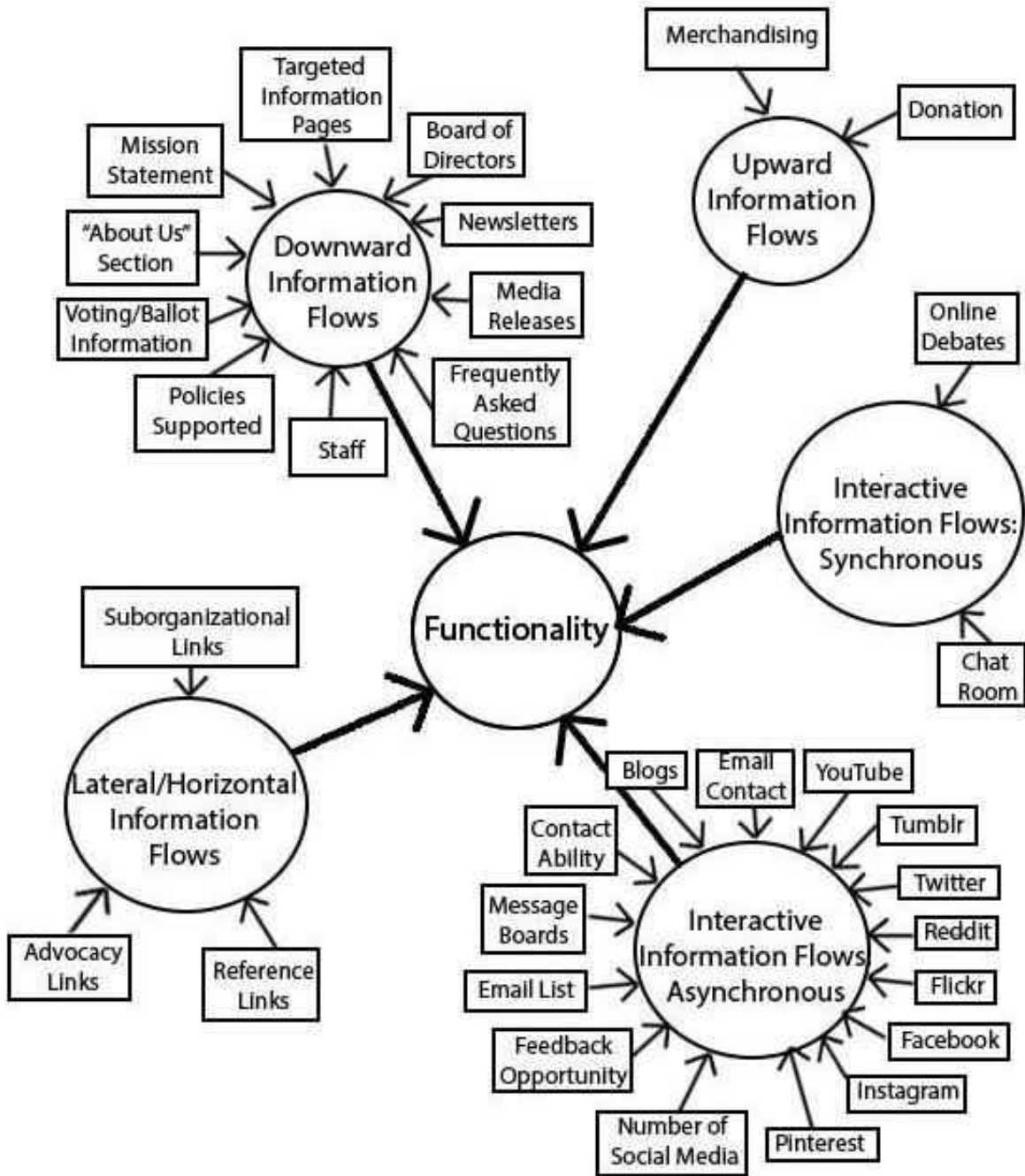


Figure 5: Functionality Conceptual Framework

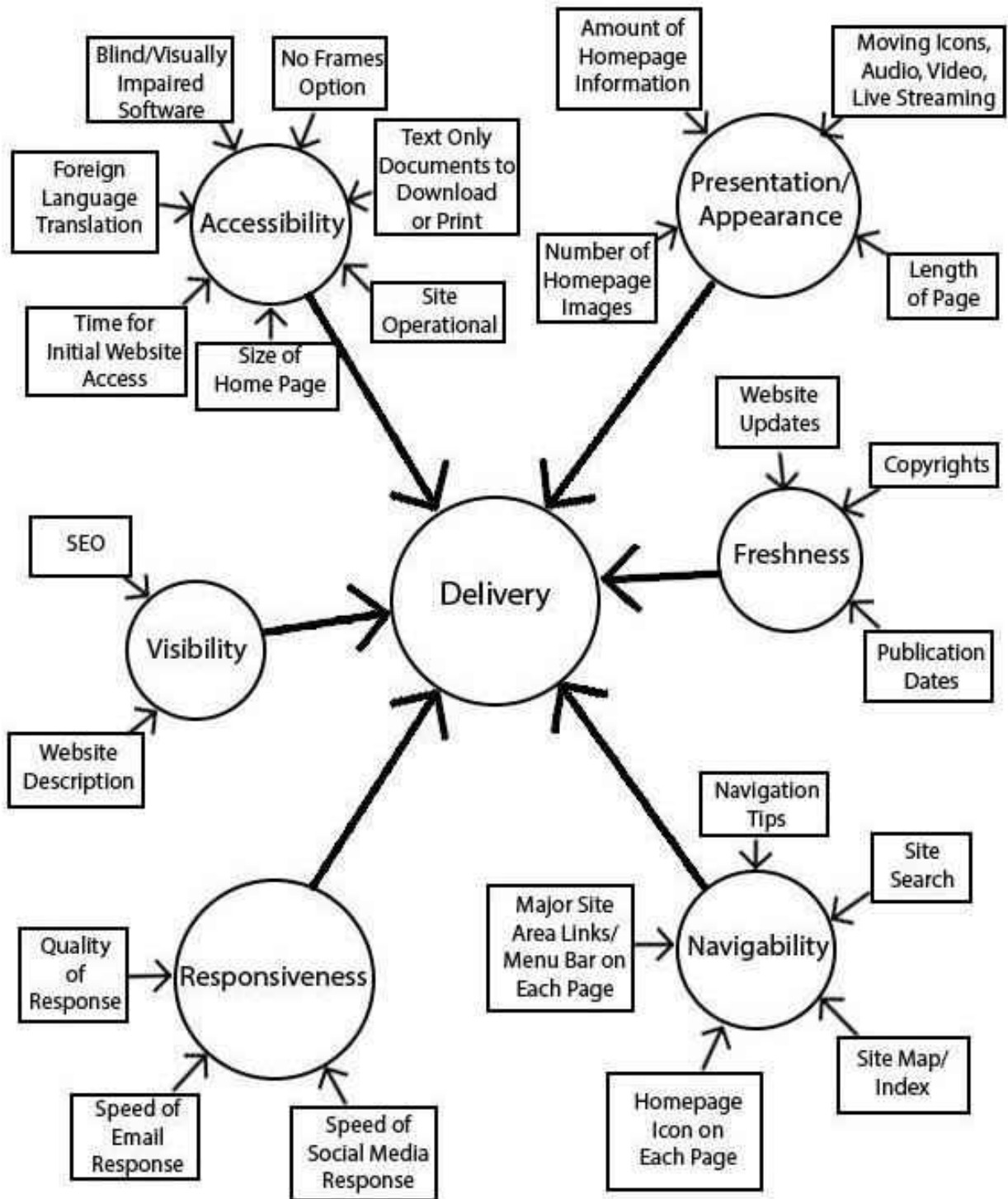


Figure 6: Delivery Conceptual Framework

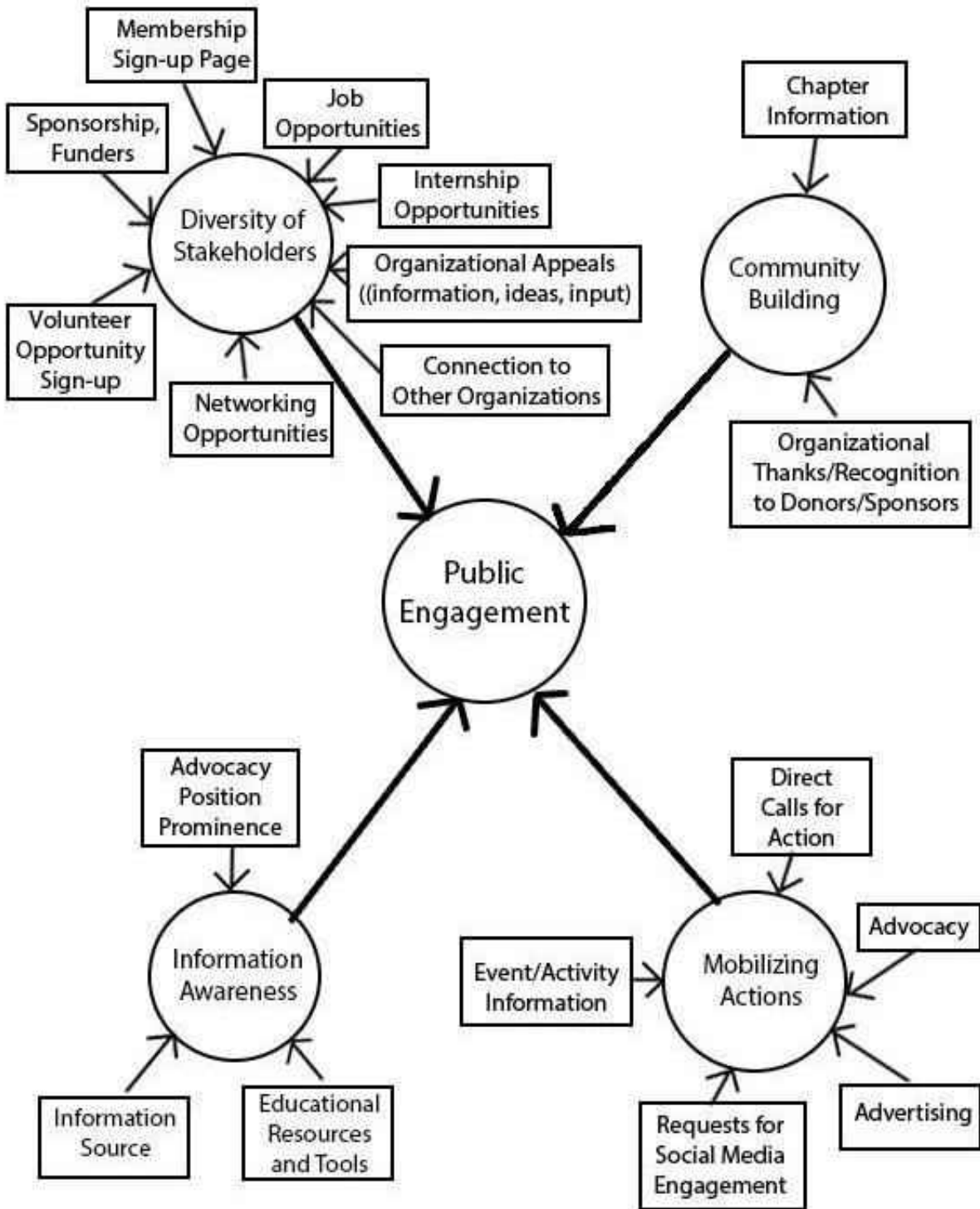


Figure 7: Functionality Conceptual Framework

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