INTRODUCTION

The Internet has played a large role in the 2008 presidential campaigns and elections. As for the Democratic candidate Barack Obama, contributions flowing into his campaign through the Internet have been credited with his fundraising success. Based on the figures the Obama campaign made public, by July, 2008, the Senator from Illinois has raised $400 million in his campaign for the White House (New York Times, 2008). Moreover, new technology has more people in various demographics engaged in this interactive platform to exchange their perspectives. In the survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Internet & American Life Project (2008a) on campaign news and political communication, nearly 39% of American Internet users (29% of all adults) say they regularly learn something about the campaign from the Internet, almost tripled the percentage from a comparable point in the 2004 campaign (13%). Given the increasing popularity of the Internet for political campaigns, there is little doubt that the 2008 presidential contenders with great prudence have capitalized on social media, extending their footprints beyond the televised mass media.

Candidates and their aides have used MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, and blogs to proactively outreach, locate, organize, and persuade people. People, on the other end, use the Internet to gain political information and to participate in political discussions. Through the conversations, virtual communities are built by meanings shared among like-minded people. A shared meaning is the core concept of social media such as blogs via constant interactivity. In the ongoing election, blogs in particular have

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grown rapidly. In August 2008, to solve the case between the blog supporters of two Democratic Presidential candidates, Senator Hillary Clinton and Senator Barack Obama, the Federal Election Commission passed a new ruling that exempts political bloggers from being punished by rules governing political organizations (Wall Street Journal, 2008). This ruling ensures bloggers have the same right of freedom of speech as the media have.

Campaign blogs, managed by the campaign to persuade, fund-raise, and recruit volunteers, are the most interactive places on candidates' websites (Blood, 2002). They have been used to send messages to the public without being filtered by the mass media, to facilitate communication between the campaigns and blog visitors, and to demonstrate the candidates' willingness to listen to the grassroots and stand for democracy. Moreover, a blog for the purpose of political campaigning is no less than a public conduit of collective interaction. The campaign blogs should (and need to) meet the protocol of Internet two-way communication such as authenticity and responsiveness.

The problem is that, on the one hand, the popularity of a campaign blog indicates the grassroots enthusiasm of online citizens whom the candidate wants to influence. In daily political practices, campaign managers should find out how to control positive affect in a campaign blog so as to produce a positive interaction between the campaigns and citizens. On the other hand, there is no research that convincingly shows how much Internet users' positive affection can be translated to favorable votes. In other words, there is necessity for a campaign to use blogs, yet there is a difficulty to measure how effective its blog is in terms of contributing to votes.

There has been no particular formula to ensure the success of interactivity in blogs. However, few studies have discussed this practical question in part because it is only the second time that Internet strategists have had a chance to use blogs in the presidential races since 2004. Therefore, the campaign blog of Barack Obama, the 2008 Democratic nominee, gives the researcher a chance to investigate how interaction takes place. His dramatic rise in the political arena, his innovative and successful use of new technology, and his powerful campaign messages make his official blog an obvious spot to study.

Senator Barack Obama is known as an orator in the 2008 presidential election. His rhetoric has inspired many Americans' hope and enthusiasm which, in turn, has made his improbable journey probable. His historical achievements were accumulated by the momentum built by his supporters' immense passion for embracing a new Washington, a promise Obama pledged in his speeches. "Change" is his core message by which Obama has successfully identified with his target audiences and contrasted with his opponents. His messages resonate Americans' tiredness of Bush's administration and the war in Iraq. They were always well-crafted and well-delivered to help shape his image as an agent of change.

Senator Obama officially claimed his candidacy for President on February 10th, 2007, the same day his official campaign blog turned live. Starting with a slogan "fired up and ready to go" in this most prolonged primary season, he consistently used his messages about "change" and "unity". His messages reflected the values of many citizens and were reportedly influential (New York Times, 2008; Newsweek, 2008), partially because Obama's team reached out state by state relentlessly and used

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the Internet to organize the campaign. In his St. Paul, Minnesota victory speech in

early June, 2008, Barack Obama especially thanked his campaign manager, David

Plouffe, who "built the best political organization in the country" (CNN, 2008) for

helping him clinch the Democratic nomination. He took credit for bringing a

generational change, according to the Pew Research Center (Keeter, Horowitz &

Tyson, 2008; Keeter, 2008), in that his electorates included those who had not been

politically active in the past elections.

Some citizens, especially the younger generation, were drawn to Obama's

campaign website. The traffic to his official website, www.barackobama.com, grew

fivefold to 2.2 million in January, 2008, leaving Hillary Clinton, his major rival in the

Democratic primaries, trailing by a much wider margin in attracting visitors online

(Walsh, 2008). Moreover, two surveys reported that political blog readers were more

likely to be young, male, well-educated, well off financially, and long-time internet

veterans who usually had been online for six or more years (Rainie, 2005; Lenhart &

Fox, 2006). Similarly, Obama's supporters, compared with other candidates, were

made up of younger, male (slightly over 50% whites and majority of blacks), higher-

educated, and higher income individuals which overlap with the preponderance of

Internet bloggers (Pew Research Center, 2008b). This overlap gives Obama's

Internet campaign the strategic advantage of using his blog to reach out to more

potential blog visitors.

In previous research about presidential campaign blogs, it was obvious that the

ferment was among blog visitors who, by and large, supported the candidates (Kerbel

& Bloom, 2005; Warnick, 2008; Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2006; Hull, 2006). As a

campaigning tool, Obama's campaign blog was fueled with passion which speaks to the heart of politics of presidential races. This kind of passion moves online, spreads swiftly through digital technology, and becomes visible in texts, pictures, and videos to bloggers who feel connected to the candidate.

Political excitement in a candidate's blog can be stirred by the values and issues the candidate stands for, by the rhetoric with which the candidate articulates his/her ideas, and by blogging strategies per se. Although there is no necessary hard line to separate these three stimuli, the excitement discussed in this paper is a type of psychological reaction of blog users to the campaign's blogging operation. In the stimuli-reaction research of psychology, the intermediating factors influencing stimuli and reactions are perception, recognition, reasoning, and feeling (Hennessy, 1970). In this case, campaign's blogging activities are the stimuli and citizen blog visitors' responses to the campaign blog are the reactions. The frequency of campaign-user interactivity in Obama's blog infers the effectiveness of the campaign's blog strategy to invite interaction.

The purpose of this research is to explore the blogging strategies by which Obama's blog staffers exerted influences on the blog visitors' perception of interactivity. The researcher will examine 1) the ways in which interactivity was solicited by the Obama campaign's blogging activities, particularly, what features/mechanisms and rhetoric were used; and 2) how blog visitors reacted to the strategies. However, since this research is exploratory, the researcher will collect any information related to the two research questions. For example, to answer the second question, the researcher will look specifically at whether joy or disappointment

appears due to the blogging activity of the Obama campaign. The two research

questions are related to the literature review focusing on empirical studies about the

blogs in the 2004 presidential election and, from a broader viewpoint, on the

controversy over interactivity of political conversations online.

Following the literature review, this paper depicts the methodology and research

procedure—the use of content analysis. Next, the results will include the general

description of Obama's blog layout, a list of categories of the blogging strategies, and

the positive/negative affect shown in the blog because of the campaign-user

interactivity. The final section evaluates Obama's blog and suggests to future

campaigns a call-to-action strategy in blogs so as to further utilize positive affect of

blog users.

RATIONALE

This research will explore the blogging strategies by which Obama's blog staffers exerted influences on blog users' perception of interactivity. This year, in the Obama campaign blog a small but fundamental advance took place—running two sets of sub-blogs under the parachute of Obama's general blog tab: the Obamablog (or Obama HQ blog) and the Community Blog. The Community Blog allows ordinary citizens to post and manage their membership blogs on Obama's official website. Moreover, considering Obama's popularity among young people and on the Internet, this study is interested in the ways in which blogs influence campaign communication. It is important to know what the Obama campaign did on the HQ blog to solicit and sustain interactivity, and what the blog users' perception of the actual interactivity was. However, research like this is rare.

Interactivity in presidential campaign blogs has improved. Ten years ago, campaign managers said that they avoided fully interactive user-to-user forms because of limited staff resources, concern about losing control over campaign discourse, and the loss of "strategic ambiguity" that might mean losing some voters' support (Stromer-Galley, 2000). Then, Dean's *Blog for America* (2004), the first presidential campaign blog, demonstrated how welcomed the candidate could become when he joined in the blogosphere. The landmark of Dean's blog was only created four years ago.

Now in the 2008 presidential election all the candidates incorporated blogs as a must-have tool in their strategic plans. In particular, Obama's Internet team was

conversant in expanding the candidate's influence online. TechPresient.com, a website that tracks the Internet campaigns of presidential candidates, reported that the largest social network in terms of Facebook supporters, MySpace friends and Meet up members has been built by Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois in the democratic field (Watson, 2008).

Since a political campaign is about messages and information control, Howard Dean's innovative use of a blog in his presidential campaign website has raised scholars' interest of investigating the extent to which the campaign somehow surrenders the control of information (Janack, 2006). From a politician's point of view, blogs are good for campaigns as far as they are under information control. Rarely is this a shared opinion with the citizen bloggers who support freedom of speech and are willing to talk to politicians by typing their comments on the blogs. Therefore, in campaign websites, blogs are the most diversified, interactive, opinionated, and personalized forum both for the campaigns and citizen visitors (Trammell et al, 2004; Blood, 2002; Janack, 2006). The campaigns have to take a risk of mismanagement of campaign discourse to get potential benefits from directly contacting citizens and avoiding media agenda and filtering. After all, this intimacy with the grassroots was by no means possible in pre-blog days (Benoit & Benoit, 2005).

However, Dean's use of the blog has been questioned. A few critics stated that Dean's blog did not turn the table to his blog users because the latter were not allowed to write, publish, or manage posts as they wanted (Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2006).

From this point of view, merely allowing users to comment on the campaign's posts was not revolutionary enough, even though Dean's blog was creative and historical.

Moreover, there are six types of strategies used by the Dean campaign to produce an appearance of interactivity that, in turn, gave rise to a façade of joy among the blog visitors (Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2006). The six categories are: 1) reposted a blog user's comment; 2) told the users, "we are listening"; 3) posted comments directly in the blog comments section; 4) invited the blog readers to answer a question or test a new technological feature and post reactions in the comment section; 5) the principals of the campaign posted directly to the blogs; and 6) used language that it was "their (supporters) campaign," pronouns such as "us" and "we" that drew the supporters into an impression of insiders of the campaign. The last two strategies were used more frequently than the other four when the campaign went into the primary season to invoke a parasocial relationship between the campaign and supporters.

In Stromer-Galley and Baker's (2006) research, although they doubted the sincerity of the Dean campaign to create a genuine interaction with its blog users, they did not conclude that there was a causal relation between these conceptual categories and the campaign's failure. But they did assert that the sorrow of the blog users, as a result of the deception of this purported interactivity, finally exploded when the campaign failed. To the two researchers, it was neither the list of strategies nor the sorrow which brought the campaign to a dead end. That the promise of interactivity conveyed by those strategies fell apart gave the blog users a state of disbelief.

If genuine interaction online between a campaign and citizens could be realized by the campaign's actual responses to the public, rather than by only making the promise of interaction, then campaign blogs are the first and foremost place to investigate. What has the Obama campaign done with its blog? Particularly, why was the Community Blog separated from the Obamablog? How did the Obamablog evolve from *Blog for America*, compared with the six categories of strategies? Did the Obama campaign's staffers respond to the blog users upon their requests? If so, how often? How did the Community Blog function, especially between campaign and users? Last but not least, what was the users' perception of the interactivity with the campaign in Obama's blog?

These questions are very important for two reasons. Firstly, since the use of blogs in the 2004 presidential campaigns, professionals have raised a practical question that needs more research to empirically observe the 2008 campaign strategy of blogs. As Michael Cornfield argued in his commentary to the 2004 presidential campaign blogs, a task for the campaigners of the next generation was to figure out how to balance the flow of positive emotions with the precise management of decentralized decision-making (Cornfield, 2004, p.1). By decentralized decision-making, Cornfield meant the distributed cooperation represented by blogging. If Cornfield's conclusion is right, it is necessary to observe how Obama's blog staffers managed the positive affect to keep it from fading or exaggerating beyond control.

In the 2008 election, the Obama campaign made this change by operating two sets of sub-blogs in his official blog. The Community Blog was created by the Obama campaign as a self-organized social network in his official website. In the

Community Blog, individual citizen blog visitors can become a member of the group of bloggers by registering and then managing his/her own blog in the candidate's campaign blog domain. The ways in which the Obama campaign administrated the Community Blog would help this study understand the managerial development of presidential campaign blogs.

This research assesses the rhetorical strategy on Obama's blog to solicit interaction. The effect of a campaign's rhetoric can surely be tested by scrutinizing the campaign-user interactivity such as citizen visitors' comments to campaign's messages and campaign's feedbacks. Currently, qualitative research about the campaign-to-user interactivity is inadequate. Obama's rhetorical skill and his Internet popularity provide an opportunity for this research to examine the message strategy applied to the candidate's blog.

The second reason is that the result of this research could provide the conceptual data and framework for subsequent research, especially a survey or experiment. Researchers have argued about the effectiveness of online interactivities in terms of facilitating individual/group decision-making, citizen deliberation, and democracy. Some scholars have seen such direct interaction between citizens and politicians as a most promising route to deliberative democracy (Selnow, 1998; Hacker, 1996; Kernel, 2006). Some have insisted that the communication in campaign blogs can be manipulated by the campaigns, if politicians are hesitant to operate blogs democratically (Bimber & Davis, 2003; Kamark, 1999; Margolis & Resnick, 2000; Stromer-Galley, 2000). And others said that the role of the Internet in promoting active and informed citizenship is modest at best (Nisbet & Scheufele, 2004).

The results of this study can help future research understand the correlated relations between the campaign messages on the official campaign blog and the visitors' perception of the candidate or vote preference. Future studies could use the conceptual data of this research to instrumentalize questions such as whether the interaction on the blogs can help voters decide whom they would vote for/against, or whether to get out the vote. If not, what are the reasons? If so, in which ways and to what extent does the blog play a role?

The infancy of campaign blogs calls for more research in the fields of communication and political science, as today's political campaigners use computer mediated communication to expand the campaign's influences. Obviously, the campaign blog is a place full of controversies, especially at its early stage of development. The inventive Community Blog distinguishes Obama's blog from the rest of the blogs of this kind and makes it an obvious place to observe: 1) what is the evolution of features and rhetoric that the Obama campaign used to solicit interactivity? 2) How did his citizen blog users perceive the interaction with the campaign? In other words, what is the affect of the interactivity on his blog?

This year's new media campaign strategists are busily raising the bar, zipping between mass media and the Internet, mimicking YouTube, Facebook and MySpace to have their blogs catch up with other popular Internet communities. Meanwhile, campaign blogging has to abide by the principles of the Internet such as accessibility 33and openness to create and maintain positive affect in the blogs. Failure to respond to the public could give rise to people's distrust. For the candidates, there is so much on the line, and less margin for error (Knowledge at Wharton, 2008).

The Obama campaign's innovative use of blogs, increasing blog consumption, novice management of presidential campaign blogs and a shortage of research, justify the goal of this current study. For the purpose of this study, Obama's campaign blog in his official website will be examined to ascertain his blog message strategies and the amount of interactivity fostered by his campaign. In the next chapter, I will discuss what has been studied in terms of interactivity on presidential campaign blogs that productively stimulated public hope and joy by the carefully framed and strategically delivered online messages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the author will lay out the articles that lead to the research inquiry. The literature review focuses on studies about the presidential blogs in the 2004 presidential election and online interactivity. This section begins with a brief review of the first presidential campaign blog in 2004, then discusses the common element in research—the interactivity between the Dean campaign and his blog visitors. Particularly, Stromer-Galley and Baker (2006) found the façade of joy stirred by campaign messages to solicit interactivity. From their point of view, feedback from the campaign to the blog users is the critical criteria to measure genuine interaction. Then, this literature review will emphasize positive affect and message strategies which could influence the guests' perception of the interactivity.

Presidential campaign blogs

Blogs seemed to have come to campaigns at the right time (Trammell, Williams, Postelnicu & Landreville, 2006). The first presidential campaign blog helped make the historical rise of a political star—Howard Dean. In 2003, Dean's campaign manager Joe Trippi produced the *Blog for America* to promote Dean's bid for the President. Trippi hereby creatively combined political practice and new media. He branded Howard Dean as the candidate who revived democracy by empowering Dean's citizen-supporters to comment on the candidate's blog. As a result, Dean was an early front-runner in 2003 for the Democratic presidential nomination. The candidate spread information through blogs, used his site to finance the campaign,

and rallied supporters before quickly fading—the result of several speaking gaffes and an inappropriate speech. Nevertheless, the *Blog for America* was outstanding and successful in engaging grassroots voices (Janack, 2006; Kerbel & Bloom, 2005). Bloggers still received press credentials at the 2004 presidential conventions. By the end of 2004, blogs had established themselves as a key part of online culture (Rainie, 2005).

In 2007, the candidates in the current presidential race all followed suit, set up official blogs, and demonstrated their openness to ordinary Americans. Whatever politicians say, it is important to ask how a presidential campaigning blog, a novelty of modern campaign strategy, was actually operated. The answer will help understand how such blogs should be managed in a democratic way, rather than in the name of democracy. The following summarizes some studies about the 2004 presidential campaign blogs.

Studies of Presidential Campaign Blogs

While campaign websites have been studied for years, inquiries of campaign blogs are long overdue (Kaye, 2007). Researchers began with quantitative or qualitative content analysis to find what themes emerged in Dean's blog and how important the themes seemed to the blog users (Kerbel & Bloom, 2005; Trammell et al, 2006). Some researchers highly appreciated that in *Blog for America* there was a group of dynamics in play that speaks to the ability of the Internet community to pull ordinary people to political action. Kerbel (2005), for example, argued that *Blog for America* had done something that "mainstream journalism could never accomplish" (p.21). To

some degree, these studies focused on the citizen supporters of the candidate's blog to study user-to-user group communication. Therefore, the researchers found the significance of public passion for democracy and self-efficacy in political involvement.

A few researchers started with asking why Dean's excellence in blogging did not help his campaign survive the Democratic Party's primaries. This critical inquiry examined the insufficient amount of Internet consumption in 2004 (Cornfield, 2004), the blunders of Dean's speeches (Kerbel & Bloom, 2005), the competitive blogs of other candidates (Hull, 2006), or the flaws in the details of Dean's campaign blog such as hierarchical management and a lack of authenticity, responsiveness and accessibility (Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2006). Stromer-Galley and Baker (2006) found the paradox of Dean's campaign—a call for grassroots democracy, but then falling short on keeping the promise. They indicated that the limited access to real ownership of the campaign and scant interaction with the campaign thwarted citizens' illusion of empowerment and the campaign's bid.

To illustrate the rare feedback from the campaign to the blog users, Stromer-Galley and Baker pointed out the "echo chamber" (2006, p.122). Although the joy was phenomenal, they argued that the joy was then replaced by citizens' grumbles and sorrow when the citizen blog users hardly received responses from the campaign staffers and celebrities. "T[t]he campaign was interacting *at* citizens rather than interacting *with* citizens" (Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2006, p.129). They claimed that they did not condemn the revolutionary quality of the Dean campaign, but tried to remind the optimists that "it is important to separate the hype from the reality and

recognize how the campaign managed to achieve a kind of parasocial relationship"
(p.117). The research questions of my study are developed from the basic ideas in
their research such as message strategy and joy, the façade of interactivity and
parasocial interaction.

The façade of interactivity is opposed to genuine interaction that occurs between
citizens, and between citizens and campaign staff, channeled though the technologies
of the Internet (Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2006). The genuine interaction is human-to-
human interaction, or what is normally understood as computer-mediated
communication (Rafaeli, 1988; Stromer-Galley, 2000). However, the campaign
would primarily create a facade of interaction, using several devices to cast an
appearance of genuine interactivity (Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2006). In Stromer-
Galley's (2006) investigation, these devices included parasocial interaction, which is
when people develop a sense that they know the celebrities or entertainers presented
to them through mass media (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

Choreographed interactivity in campaign blogs

In campaign blogs, interaction is fundamental of all activities. The level and
quality of interactions between campaigns and blog visitors can influence the blog
visitors' perception of the candidates and of themselves. The interactivity in blogs
changes the conduit of communication and perceived political efficacy (Cornfield,
2004; Kerbel & Bloom, 2005; Stromer-Galley & Foot, 2002). The level of
interactivity can influence voters' perception of candidates (Sundar, Kalyanaraman &
Brown, 2003). In Dean's blog, the campaign used a series of blogging strategies. As

a result, passion erupted out of the citizen supporters who were as convinced of their own efficacy as to give the campaign overwhelming feedback.

In the current study, in order to learn the techniques and features that the Obama blog staffers used to invite interaction, I will focus on text-based interactivity which has been also understudied in empirical research (Warnick, 2008). The category of user-to-user communication is over-generalized, because the concept of user, as opposed to digital document and system, is too broad to differentiate degrees and kinds of interactivity on the Internet (Warnick, 2002; Rafaeli, 1988; McMillan, 2002). Especially in campaign blogs, there are two groups of users: the campaign staffers and the blog users (Warnick, Xenos, Endres & Gastil, 2005). To solve this confusion, Warnick and her colleagues (2005) examined campaign-to-user interactivity and text-based interactivity. Campaign-to-user interactivity refers to "site features that enable campaigns and users to communicate with each other" (Warnick, Xenos, Endres & Gastil, 2005, p.2) such as Email sign-ups, volunteer sign-ups, and online polls. Text-based interactivity consists of rhetorical techniques and features of the website text itself that "communicate a sense of engaging presence to site visitors" (Warnick, Xenos, Endres & Gastil, 2005, p.2; also see Endres & Warnick, 2004; Farkas & Farkas, 2002).

Among the studies of political communication on the Internet, rhetoric online is a fairly new subject and few scholars recognize its importance. Barbara Warnick, who has a healthy skepticism as to the Internet's potential to remedy a corrupted public sphere, urged the project of studying online public discourse. Warnick argues that

interactive features can be used as rhetorical tools to amplify existing messages (Endres & Warnick, 2004; Warnick, Xenos, Endres & Gastil, 2005; Warnick, 2008).

Text-based interactivity, including words and images, is a user-to-program communication, while campaign-to-user interactivity is the computer-mediated communication between human beings (Warnick, 2002). By separating text-based interactivity from actual interactivity, they argued that "the text-based interactivity is a rhetorical construct that engages users through emulation of dialogue between Web users and members of the campaign" (Warnick, 2004, p.326). This opinion is not solitary; in later studies scholars found that campaigns' rhetorical messages (text-based interactivity) were used as a surrogate for the direct user-to-user forms (Trammell et al, 2004; Kerbel & Bloom, 2005; Hardy & Scheufele, 2002). But what is really problematic in text-based interactivity is that it is designed to simulate face-to-face communication but is not concerned with actual two-way communication (Endres & Warnick, 2004; Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2005).

According to Cicero's maxim, "the effect is in the affect." In this research, the citizens commenting to the campaign blog posts is "the affect"—blog visitors' reaction to campaign messages—and the influence of the campaign blog on the blog visitors' comments is "the effect". This study will examine the posts and comments [affect] in Obama's blog to learn the effect of interactivities. Depending on the campaign's blogging practice, the best result of the campaign blogs can only come out in the positive interaction of three factors: responsive campaign blogging, blog visitor's positive feedbacks, and a positive result of interactivity which, in turn, starts another cycle with a new blog posting. The first question, therefore, is:

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RQ1: What interactive features were used as rhetorical tools to produce the perception of interactivity in Obama's blog?

Passion as positive affect in campaign blogs

"At the heart of every political philosophy is an appraisal of human nature" (Oreskes, 2000). Hannah Arendt, a prominent Existentialist philosopher in the 20th century, wrote of politics as something that speaks to the very heart of the human condition; one which values action shared with others. She argued that politics is about the production of a particular set of desires and intense feelings based upon the commitment to a cause. To speak "in the name of" something suspends one's own egocentric desires but, simultaneously, leads one to cast aside one's own moral bearing for the pursuit of a greater good.

Arendt's observation of politics examines collective feelings from a psychological perspective that can also explain campaign politics in America. According to Dye (1998), America is recognized as a democratic nation largely because its elections apply "widespread participation in decision making" (p.24). In political science, politics is deciding who gets what, when, and how (Dye, 1998). When several presidential candidates are competing for the one office and asking for popular votes, it seems that the people have the power to decide who will be elected. The people in the condition of the widespread participation in decision-making then become passionate, aggressive, and committed to one side. Supporters of one candidate become united for a common cause and against the contenders. American presidential elections are therefore the part of passion politics that describes those

moments when "people were drawn to a cause that took on, for them, a great moral importance, over-riding all other considerations" (Arendt, 1956, p.9). In Obama's case, his campaign including his blog asked people to suspend their personal interests for the sake of "change" and "unity" that seemingly reflected the needs of some, if not most, of America and galvanized his electorate base (Keeley, 2007) in the 2008 primary season.

As far as the competing mood is concerned, presidential campaign politics is geared by the passion for winning general elections. In addition to Obama's oral rhetoric for which he is known, passion online has exploded through blogging interactivity. Blogs enable like-minded people to articulate and exchange ideas and feelings syntactically and asynchronously. In doing so, a virtual network known as an online community could be established through sharing semantics within the group. Campaign blogs could carry on the positive affect such as passion to a new level by tapping into the blog features or mechanisms used to enable or facilitate communication between blog users and the campaign (Warnick, Xenos, Endres & Gastil, 2005).

It is the campaign blogs that institutionalize passion for participation and communication with candidates, celebrities, or other supporters whom ordinary Americans otherwise have no access to in the televised field (Sundar, Kalyanaraman & Brown, 2003). The *Blog for America*, for example, "used sharp, one-sided rhetoric in the pursuit of political agendas" (Kerbel & Bloom, 2005, p.24) and, became "the engine behind Howard Dean's improbable run for the presidency" (Kerbel & Bloom, 2005, p.3). Kerbel and Bloom stated that the "self-confidence" turned normal

political efficacy into a community fantasy. These self-confirming themes, in their observation, could not have happened had Dean's blog not been an agitative, advocacy forum.

Therefore, a cause about which people feel strongly, passion, partisanship, division, and a turbulent environment are all what a horse-race blog needs (Kerbel & Bloom, 2000). The supporters in the virtual community seek a common goal, share and react to the rhetoric that makes sense to them. Blogging could speak to the need to believe in one's ultimate victory when facing a difficult and uncertain task. Or, it could be a product of being deeply invested in an exhilarating experience. Recognizing a sense of sharing and support, the grassroots believe that together they can help Obama become the next President of America.

Therefore, for bloggers positive affect is the passion stirred not only by the ultimate goal, but also by the means to achieve the end. Additional findings confirmed the public's desire for interactivity, citing interactive Web sites as providing enhanced engagement and offering a sense of control of the campaign dialogue (Stromer-Galley & Foot, 2002). However, cross-sectional research suggests that candidates routinely avoid most forms of interactivity (Foot et al, 2003). Furthermore, political campaign websites rarely use forms of synchronous user-to-user interactivity such as discussion boards or chat. Although Stromer-Galley (2000) speculates that the interactive features we do see on candidate sites are those perceived to be effective (and efficient) by candidates, little is known about how these features actually affect the end-users of campaign websites. For this matter, it is

important to know how the blog users perceived the Obama blog's interactive

function and performance. Therefore, this study asks:

RQ2: Was positive affect stirred by the Obama blog's interaction strategy?

Kerbel (2005) realized that Dean's blog was too cultish to avoid the implication of

"a throwback to the partisan press of the nineteenth century" (p.22). In order to boost

interest in the campaign and to mobilize voters to go to the polls (Kaplan, 2002;

Pasley, 2001), *Blog for America* used sharp, one-sided rhetoric in the pursuit of

political agendas (Kerbel, 2005). Under this circumstance, the merit of this partisan

blog is how it engages and inspires readers.

But citizens' expectations stirred by rhetorical strategies to interact with the

campaign were too high to be satisfied by campaign blog staffers' inadequate

response. Thus, negative feelings increased when the campaign fell short. Although

such negative feeling among blog users is not the sufficient reason for the campaign's

failure, the absence of genuine interaction on the campaign blog may be a crucial

factor to influence people's perception of the candidate, the campaign, and even

people's psychology and voting motivation and preference. It is important to study

negative affect such as sorrow and disappointment of the campaign's supporters due

to the campaign's blogging practice. Therefore, this study asks:

RQ3: Was negative affect produced by the Obama blog's interaction strategy?

Blogging has grown rapidly and become an important part of the modern political campaign, while this particular study about the campaign blog is relatively new. Based on previous studies about interactivity and the first presidential campaign blog, campaigns' rhetorical messages on blogs can influence people's perception of interactivity with the campaigns. This kind of intimacy and connection is stirred by campaigns' messages. To study the development of this innovative campaign tool, the first research question is: what interactive features were used as rhetorical tools to produce the perception of interactivity in Obama's blog? As traditional media, the blog community is energized by a strong sense of mission—helping their candidate win. Unlike traditional media, campaign blogs enable citizens to interact with the campaigns directly. Therefore, campaign's response to blog visitors is critical to affect the direction of feelings. The second and third research questions ask whether positive affect or negative feeling appeared because of the Obama campaign's interaction strategies. To answer the three research questions, this study uses content analysis from which the answers emerge. This method is qualitative and grounded.

METHOD

This study of Barack Obama's presidential campaign blog is based upon Stromer-Galley and Baker's (2006) investigation that explains the relationship between the appearance of genuine interactivity and the public perception of the produced interactivity. Based on the need to understand a phenomenon from the point of view of the participants and its particular social and institutional context, as Kaplan and Maxwell (1994) argued, this research will use qualitative methodology—grounded theory method.

Grounded method is the systematic generation of theory from a rigorous set of procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories. The goal of grounded theory is to expand upon an explanation of a phenomenon by identifying the key elements of that phenomenon, and then categorizing the relationships of those elements to the context and process of the experiment (Davidson, 2002; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). This method is extremely useful in developing context-based, process-oriented descriptions and explanations of the phenomenon. Since the literature review has unfolded the initial theoretical framework of genuine interaction in blogs, this methodology should be used to select empirical materials to extend this framework. Also because of the innovation of campaign blogs and the uniqueness of Stromer-Galley and Baker's (2006) investigation, choosing Obama's blog within the overall scope of inquiry could fill theoretical categories set by the two former researchers who used the same method (Yin, 1989; Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2006).

According to grounded theory, research questions must be open and general rather than formed as specific hypotheses. In this particular study, I contend that the six categories of strategies used to facilitate interaction will not necessarily lead to citizen bloggers' negative feelings. However, a lack of genuine interaction from campaign to blog users can do so. Therefore, the grounded research method will be useful to this inquiry to determine, for example, whether (and if so, how): 1) Obama's blog used the six strategies listed by Stromer-Galley and Baker (2006); 2) Obama's blog used new strategies to solicit interactivity; and, 3) positive/negative affects appeared as a result of interacting with the Obama campaign.

According to Martin and Turner (1986), grounded theory is "an inductive, theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data" (p.144). In this particular case, grounded theory will help to answer the open-ended research questions by identifying the list of strategies and any innovative use of blogging for increasing interaction. Through reading the empirical materials—posts and comments—the concepts/categories about interactivity will emerge from the text. In this research, I define text as both verbal and visual content.

In terms of document examination, the empirical materials will be collected from Obama's blog. The materials include both the features and mechanisms of blogging and the unique posts and comments on the Obamablog and on the Community Blog. To discover the positive affect and the way in which Obama's campaign facilitated the perception of interactivities, this research will examine the rhetorical and

technological features in Obama's two types of blogs to examine the interactivity. Compared with Stromer-Galley and Baker's research (2006), the results of this current study will describe how blogging in Obama's blog evolved from Dean's in terms of technical and rhetorical strategies.

This method follows Stromer-Galley and Baker's (2006) research. However, unlike their study which used all the posts and comments in Dean's blog, this research will only select particular blog posts and comments in Obama' blog. All the posts and comments during three specific days in the early primary season will be chosen as empirical materials. These days consist of the Iowa Caucus (January 3rd, 2008), the New Hampshire Primary (January 8th, 2008), and Super Tuesday (February 5th, 2008).

The reasons to choose these three days are as follows. Firstly, campaign blogs in the 2008 presidential election have become more adept and technically updated than those in the 2004 race. According to the Pew Institute (2005), as the number of blogs has increased, so has the number of blog readers. Since the campaign blogs invite people's input, as a result, the contribution has made the volume of the comments (and/or blog posts) grow rapidly. The quantity of Obama's sub-blogs is too numerous to read in its entirety. From midnight of February 10th, 2007 (the day Obama announced his presidential candidacy) to October 28th, 2008 (a week before the general election day), Obamablog had 498 WebPages, each of which had about ten posts, and the Community Blog had 18,972 WebPages and the number of posts on each page is 20. Since the race will not have a result until November 4th, 2008, the completed data could not be collected at the point of time of this research.

Secondly, each of these three days has its own special meaning to the Obama campaign in the context of the early Democratic Primary. Obama surprisingly won the first battle in the Iowa caucus on January 3rd. Then Hillary Clinton's revival at the Primary in New Hampshire on January 8th and Barack Obama's defeat by three percent made a tie between the two candidates. Additionally, this relentless competition continued on Super Tuesday, February 5th. By collecting data from the three days, the sample includes the times when Obama won and lost. The ups and downs of the campaign trail epitomize the dramatic Democratic Primary season.

Last, Stromer-Galley and Baker (2006) used qualitative content analysis and found that "as the (Dean's) campaign moved into the primaries, citizens realize that genuine interaction with the campaign was lacking" (p.129). Similarly, this study of Obama's campaign blog investigates the message strategies and compares the result with Stromer-Galley and Baker's (2006) in order to discover what Obama supporters' perceptions of interactivity were. Thus collecting posts and comments in three days in the early primary is focused and effective.

These three days together can roughly represent the dramatic ups and downs during the prolonged Democratic primary season. In the primaries, Obama and Clinton competed neck to neck which raised a lot of controversies and speculations. To restore the overall situation of the presidential primary season as much as possible, the three days can be used to capture how his supporters interacted on his blog when Obama won and lost, although this is by no means an exact way to measure the entirety of Obama's blogging community.

Content analysis will guide the assessment of blog posts and comments.

Krippendorf (1980) defines content analysis as "a research technique for making

replicable and valid references from data to their contexts" (p.4). Clearly, in content

analysis the unit of analysis is a structural tool, typically used to search for patterns

and structures in the empirical materials at the word or phrase level (Truex, 1996).

The researcher looks for structures and patterned regularities in the text and makes

inferences on the basis of these regularities. By this definition, the author will search

for meanings that are discoverable in the frequency with which words, phrases,

idioms or ideas occur in a text.

The list of examples identified by Stromer-Galley and Baker's (2006) research is

meant to serve as a guide. The six categories are not exhaustive, considering how

much Obamablog evolved from any previous presidential campaign blog. Coders

will be instructed to primarily code for these six themes but will also make note of

any other related frames that might emerge in relation to this topic. Intercoder

reliability can be established by randomly selecting 10% of the posts of this study's

sample for each coder to analyze. Interrater reliability will be ensured by using two

coders with at least 70 percent concord assessed by using Kassarjian's (1977)

percentage of agreement.

The process of analysis involved in grounded theory for this particular research is

axial coding and open coding. Axial coding is most often used when categories are in

an advanced stage of development. Most likely, it will be used to identify in Obama's

blog the evidences that fall into the six strategies concluded by Stromer-Galley and

Baker (2006). Open coding is based on the concept of data being "cracked open" as a

means of identifying relevant categories. Concepts are the basic units of analysis since it is from conceptualization of data. Categories are higher in level and more abstract than the concepts they represent. This will be used to learn any new strategies adopted by the Obama campaign but not identified before. In particular, the method should analyze the frames used to shape the story in the blog posts and comments. According to Gamson and Lasch (1996), a frame suggests a "central organizing idea for understanding events related to the issue in question" (p.398).

Data collection and analysis are consciously combined, and initial data analysis is used to shape continuing data collection. This will provide the researcher with opportunities to increase the "density" and "saturation" of recurring categories, as well as to assist in providing follow-up procedures in regards to unanticipated results. At the same time, the method supports the actions of initial data collection and preliminary analysis before attempting to incorporate previous research literature. This will guarantee that the analysis is based on the data and that pre-existing constructs do not influence the analysis and/or the subsequent formation of the theory. If existing theoretical constructs are utilized, they must be justified in the data.

Open coding refers to that part of analysis that deals with the labeling and categorizing of phenomena as indicated by the data. The production of labeling and categorizing are concepts—the basic building blocks in grounded theory construction. Open coding requires application of what is referred to as "the comparative method," that is, the asking of questions and the making of comparisons. Data will be initially broken down by asking:

1. What features or mechanisms did Obama's campaign use in the blog to facilitate interactivity?

2. What specific content did his campaign staffers apply to facilitate interactivity?

3. Did any positive affect emerge among the blog visitors from the reading? What are the positive affects in addition to passion? Are there any negative feelings?

4. What did Obama's campaign staffers say to the blog visitors to solicit the passion?

5. How did the blog users feel about the interaction as represented in their posts/comments?

Generally speaking, the questions above relate to the means of creating the façade of interaction, the campaign's actual interactivity with the blog users, and the blog users' perceptions. It is this researcher's hope that description of these findings is a categorized and chronicled replay of Obama's blogging steps in the early 2008 primary season. Any other pertinent information will be documented as well.

Following the axial and open coding, thematic analysis will take place. Data will be compared and similar incidents grouped together and given the same conceptual label. This categorizing process will help discover any emerging themes in regards to campaign staffers' blog interaction. The codes will be examined to see if they fit into the six categories outlined previously and if new categories surface.

Meanwhile, code memos will be constructed. Code memos relate to open coding and thus focus on conceptual labeling. For example, this study speculates that the Obama campaign primarily used the blog to facilitate parasocial interaction. An indicator of a parasocial interaction, based on Rafaeli's (1990) conclusion of Horton

and Wohl's research, would be "(an) unhealthy, one-sided, nonreciprocated, and controlled relationship" (p.136).

Based on frequency, the content analysis will help to determine which strategies were most commonly used, if any. This will help to understand what type of strategy was most important to Obama's blog strategy in the early primary season. Comparing the result of the content analysis with previous studies will help to study the trend of presidential candidates' blogs in this year's dramatic campaigning. It will also help to understand if citizens' perceptions of the candidate's blog were different from what the campaign was actually facilitating. Second, the citizens' comments and posts will help to gain further understanding of the perception of the interactivity in question. Frequency and other frames that emerge will be helpful in making those comparisons.

All of the information will be combined to provide an interpretation of the blog strategies used on Obama's campaign website. Each kind of interaction between citizens and between the campaign and the citizens, in both the Obamablog and the Community Blog, provide a critical piece in understanding the evolution of presidential campaign blogs in terms of interactivity and citizens' perception of the interactivity. Specifically, the findings in the Community Blog will help to determine the level of interactivity in Obama's blog where the citizen supporters had a chance to turn the table by generating their own blogs on the candidate's official campaign website.

FINDINGS

Reading the posts and comments in Obama's blog helped the researcher revisit

three days of the Obama campaign on the Internet. Blogging in this case, as Coleman

noted, is "the online manifestation of the reality TV phenomenon" (2005, p.211). In

the first research question, what interactive features were used as rhetorical tools to

produce the perception of interactivity in the Obama blog? The selected posts and

comments were examined to identify the Obama campaign's strategies, and compared

with the strategies used in the Dean campaign. This study sought especially for

feedbacks from the Obama campaign to users to see if any change occurred toward a

genuine interaction on the campaign's side.

While coding, positive affects, such as passion, enthusiasm, and energy, emerged

much more often than analytical and critical thinking on Obama's two sub-blogs.

Even though this observation answers the second question about positive affects, it is

not precisely known how much blog interactivity contributed to positive affects,

because Obama's campaign messages stirred considerably positive feelings when

people were blogging. Minimum negative feeling exists with nearly zero feedback by

the Obama campaign staffers or celebrities.

This study identifies disparities between the Obamablog (also called Obama HQ

blog) and the Community Blog in interactivity and the evolution of rhetorical features

of the Obamablog. In terms of rhetoric, the campaign blog staffers did not

progressively use such language as "we are listening" to commit the campaign to

specific actions. Rather conservatively, they asked blog visitors to send their

comments and photos in particular. Secondly, the strategies that the Obama campaign used in the Obama HQ blog, Obamablog, are listed. Technically, these strategies are compared with Stromer-Galley and Baker's (2006) research sample, *Blog for America*. Thirdly, the features of the Community Blog are demonstrated, a supposedly turn-the-table-to-users blog instrument. Finally, the Obama blog alone is not sufficient to explain the campaign's triumph; nevertheless, the positive affects with much uplifting and few negative feelings suggest support for a recommendation in the following research discussion — the message strategy of translating passion to action in the campaign blogs.

Obama's campaign blog consists of multiple Web pages that are updated frequently with posts centered on a specific topic arranged in reverse chronological order. For three days, data were collected (Iowa Caucus, New Hampshire Primary, and Super Tuesday), from the 82 unique entries on the Obamablog which include a total of 21,382 comments following the entries, and from 1,753 posts in the Community Blog in total with only 659 comments; many posts were written by Obama's supporters. The 82 entries on the Obamablog posted by the campaign staff are also included in the Community Blog, but were not counted in the total number of the Community Blog.

Over the course of a day, the campaign staffers would post several times to the Obamablog. On January 3rd, they published 36 posts; on January 8th, there were 9, and on February 5th, there were 37. New posts to the blog from campaign staff were ordered chronologically from the most recent on top to the oldest on the bottom. Below each "post" would be a link to a "comments" section where people could read

and reply to comments. New posts to the comments were ordered chronologically from oldest at the top to the newest at the bottom.

An obvious disparity of the ratio of posts to comments exists in the two sub-blogs. In average, every post had about 261 comments in the Obamablog, while the Community Blog included only a few feedbacks from the so-called community to its citizen blog members (the comment that each post had at average is .3).

Technologically, a small difference occurred while opening the main page of each sub-blog. There is a "BLOG" tag on the Home page of Obama's official campaign website. By clicking the tab, visitors can visit the Obamablog (or Obama HQ blog). On this Webpage, the names of Obama staff bloggers are non-clickable, but the titles of blog posts are accessible. Click on a title, another Webpage on which the author's names also becomes clickable comes up front. This new Webpage turns out to be the Community Blog, a new feature created by the Obama campaign. In the Community Blog, citizens are allowed to post entries and give comments. The entries of the Obamablog can be found in the Community Blog, but that of the Community Blog were not included in the Obamablog. In this way, the campaign carefully programmed a blog that visitors need a few more clicks after the Home page to acquire. Therefore, although the design created an inconvenience for community bloggers, it also (for the purpose of campaigning) technically forced all Obama blog visitors to be aware of what the Obamablog wrote about in the first place.

Interactivity in Obama HQ blog

In the HQ blog Obamablog, the campaign staff posted messages written in a conversational tone. The Obamablog had a pattern when Obama won primaries and endorsements: the campaign staff would pile a long list of mainstream news edited by the campaign. Compared with *Blog for America*, the Obamablog in the three days particularly adapted its own way of blogging to produce interactivity as will be demonstrated in the ways that Obamablog dealt with 1) reposting citizens' comments; 2) writing to respond to citizens' comments; 3) telling citizens "we are listening to you"; 4) asking questions to open threads; 5) parasocial interaction; and, 6) using "we", "you", and so forth. This research agrees with Stromer-Galley and Baker's (2006) observation that as the campaigns came to the primary season, the less the first four strategies were used, the more the two strategies of rhetorical construction were adopted.

This study found that, firstly, the Obama campaign neither reposted a comment from a prior blog post into a new post, nor posted comments directly in the blog comments section. Although this does not mean that the Obama campaign never used these strategies before or after the selected three days, it makes sense that during the hectic primaries and caucuses it is most unlikely that the campaign staffers (ten staffers shifted in the three days, two of them only post one or two posts) could read all of the comments pouring in or respond to a few lucky ones. Interesting enough, a few bloggers seemed to discuss and understand this difficulty. When a blog user of the Obamablog asked in the comment section whether Obama read the blog, another blogger responded as follows:

> Doubtful. He used to read comments on his You Tube channel at the start of the campaign, but mostly his staff has to take care of that for him. He is not only campaigning but also doing his Senate duties. New Bills and Resolutions that need reading and studying.[i]

This kind of understanding was also found in the focus group to investigate campaign websites (Stromer-Galley, 2000). In the example above, the response reveals that citizens were aware that Obama might not be able to sit in front of the computer to read his own blog, and that most likely the staffers were his subordinates to channel information from the grassroots to the top notch of the campaign, and visa versa. Due to this awareness, one of the pressures of the campaign's blog staffers was how truly, quickly, and effectively they as liaisons reacted.

Secondly, the Obama staffers did not tell blog readers that the campaign was reading their comments, but they indeed asked for input. For example, "Tell us about it in the comment," "Send us your GOTV pictures to blog," and "Let us know where you're hosting and where you're from." These phrases could give the staffers some wiggle room because the comments sound like invitations rather than commitments such as "we are listening to you" used in *Blog for America* (Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2006). The Obama staffers asked for cooperation without confining themselves to a responsive position since they only gave unequivocal instruction to blog users. Also, the Obama campaign preferred posting photos to writing verbal comment.

Thirdly, as Dean's staffers did, the Obama campaign also invited readers to the blog to answer a question or test a new technological feature and post reactions in the comment section. But the difference is that since there are two sub-blogs in Obama's blog domain, the staffers posed the question on the Community Blog and then posted

the responses from the citizen bloggers on the Obamablog (also called Obama HQ

blog). The staffers selected a few from 805 comments in the original entry posted on

the Community Blog, for example, to compose a new entry in the Obamablog. It

means that the campaign not only actually read citizen bloggers' posts if necessary,

but also managed the agenda and framing in the headquarter blog—the Obamablog.

As mentioned before, one of the rhetorical strategies is, quite frequently, that the

principals of the campaign posted directly to the blogs in order to invite a sense of

interaction with the celebrities (Barack Obama, Michelle Obama) for blog readers.

Sam Graham-Felsen is one of Obama's blog team and worked on posting email

messages on behalf of Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, and David Plouffe (the

campaign manager).

The other rhetorical strategy is almost ubiquitous. The campaign staffers used

language that it was "your (fellow supporters) campaign," "Barack thanks you,"

pronouns such as "us" and "we" that drew the supporters into an impression of

insiders of the campaign by rhetorical construction. Rhetorically, these two strategies

were used to invoke a parasocial relationship between the campaign and the

supporters. Moreover, thanks to YouTube that has grown dramatically since the end

of 2004, this year the Obama campaign has explored more multimedia tools to

increase the parasocial relationship than the Dean campaign did. Videos from

YouTube and pictures from Flickr were frequently used as powerful visual messages

by the campaign and citizen bloggers. According to Warnick (2008), on the Web

both visual and verbal messages are textual information. YouTube and Flickr enable

mass production and distribution of visual information that has a direct impact on

people's illusion of being present to celebrities. Through the online videos and pictures, Obama and his aids' images and messages clearly and directly conveyed the rhetoric that was reiterated by the blog staffers and supporters. The following comment of a citizen blog user illustrates the power of visual messages:

> I got onto Barack's website and played a few of the segments on "Barack TV." I came across this one of Michelle speaking to people on December 26th. Her message reaffirms to me WHY this woman and her husband need to be the next inhabitants of the White House.[ii]

Beside these strategies above, the Obama campaign has obviously developed their own way to show the sense of interaction during the early primary days. One strategy is story-telling, journalist-style writing to portray a volunteer in a post. The stories of those volunteers had been posted a month before the caucuses and primaries began, and then highlighted again on the primary or caucus days. The content of these stories was usually why the characters supported Obama and how on the primary or caucus day they did the final push for Obama. The campaign used language like "we first met her on the blog," "we spoke to her again," "we profiled Judy," and "we touched base with" to add a personal touch to every story and anecdote that the campaign narrated. This is a persuasive strategy to increase the authenticity of the stories by indicating that the campaign was using the blog to interact with the grassroots, to listen and reach out to supporters, and to follow up.

Another new strategy is the systematic use of a series of posts to redirect the solicited feedback to a designated place on the same website where particular staffers with specific knowledge would help interact with citizen bloggers. The Obama blog

staffers posted a series of *Where Obama Stands* to introduce the candidate's opinions on several issues. But the campaign added that, "We are also looking for your feedback and suggestions on the issues; if you want to share your ideas, please submit your thoughts through our MyPolicy page." Then people's concerns could be referred to another Webpage of Obama's campaign website. The blog in this way could shift a large amount of traffic to the other specific page. Meanwhile, it clearly tells people what to do, instead of only saying "we are looking for your feedback." The new functions like MyPolicy page in other places of the Obama website, such as Action Center and my.BarackObama.com, collaborate to shoulder the incoming comments, feedbacks, statements, questions, suggestions or any form of interaction. The blog team announced specific functions of different WebPages on the Obama website, respectively, to redirect citizens' inputs.

However, did or did not the Obama blog staffers actually respond to citizen bloggers after the campaign invited interaction by using the strategies listed above? The following example can illustrate this question—set the Fact Check button. After the New Hampshire primary night, one citizen blogger posted a comment to the campaign team's attention on the Obama HQ blog to request a Fact Check button. Twenty minutes later, another citizen blogger replied to that comment,

> "Come on Obama blog administrator! Wy aren't you listening? That's not right"

Then about two hours later, the first citizen blogger updated the community that the blog team had already put the Fact Check button on the front page upon the member's request. One of the members then responded,

> This is proof that Obama and his staff listen and respond to the people - another reason to vote for him![iii]

This instance shows that the Obama blog staffers actually read the comments in the Obamablog. Although they did not respond by replying to the comments in the comment section, they acted upon the request of creating the Fact Check button. The blog team first put the Fact Check under the "Learn" tab on the Home page. Then they moved it to the front page. Now it is back to the "Learn" tab and changed its name to *Know the Facts*. The original place on the front page was replaced by *Obama Mobile*. Moreover, the campaign added *Under the Rader: Expose the Attacks* and *Fight the Smear: Find the Truth* buttons later on.

The first proposal of adding the Fact Check button was posted on January 6th, 2008 on the Community Blog. Until a night after Obama's first defeat in New Hampshire, the blog staffers did not respond to the proposal in any way. Then this initiative was finally adopted on January 9th, 2008 after the shout on the Obamablog from another citizen blogger who accused the campaign of not listening. This example indicates that there might be some different levels of attention that the campaign blog staffers gave to the two sub-blogs. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the other sub-blog— the Community Blog.

The Community Blog

In the Community Blog, the content posted by citizens can be classified as follows: 1) accuse rivals; 2) support each other; 3) pass on media coverage or clips (Yes We Can song on YouTube) by adding hyperlinks; 4) demonstrate feelings in short essays or just one or a few words; 5) have online conversations but much like chats; 6) exchange information and share stories; 7) share feelings and emotions; 8) reach out to local media; 9) urge others to take actions, spread the information, make buzz by sending information on Obama's website to other Internet websites; 10) question the campaign strategies; 11) ask and answer questions; 12) provide strategies and actions;13) media surveillance; and, 14) in-depth analysis. It is no doubt that this is not a complete list of ways in which citizen supporters used the Community Blog. But it is remarkable that compared to the Obamablog, the form and content of the Community Blog was more diversified, emotional, self-expressive, scattered, and less hierarchical (see Appendix, Clarification of Content of the Community Blog).

The Community Blog is revolutionary in that it enables Obama's blog visitors to take over the campaign blog by creating, publishing and managing new posts on the candidate's official blog area. In fact, while the quantity of posts in the Community Blog looks more overwhelming than that in the Obamablog, the interactions among citizen bloggers, or between the campaign and citizen bloggers, are rarer than that in the Obamablog.

The Community Blog is integrated with my.BarackObama.com, a new technological tool by which one can make friends, host events, help fundraising, manage his/her own blog, and help campaign on Obama's website. To any individual,

the Community Blog also means "My Blog" when he/she registers and logs in as a member. The Obama campaign assigned a highly self-identified name "My Blog" to let supporters personalize their blogs by creating profiles, publishing messages, and posting images. The functions of "My Blog" include Write a Blog Post, Manage Blog, Blog settings, Search All Blogs, and View All Blogs. Click on View All Blogs, and then the Community Blog opens up.

Moreover, by mimicking YouTube, MySpace, or Digg, the campaign incorporated some marketing, promotion, and service strategies that have been successfully used in the business arena. The campaign forged a strong sense of community and self-promotion by using tags and points/ranks. Users can use tags to upgrade the possibility of being read by other members in the Community Blog. Individual members can get points to raise their personal rank in the whole community by blogging, volunteering, donating, and so forth. In the blog community, the campaign posted how to blog step-by-step. Users then could manage their own blogs on Obama's blog platform.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, a majority of the posts in the Community Blog have no comment on them. This is a contrast to the posts in the Obamablog, some of which have thousands of comments. Even those posts having at average eight comments in the Community Blog usually were followed by feedbacks from fellow supporters, not from the campaign. Indeed, the citizen bloggers asked Obama questions and wrote to him on the blog. However, the campaign did not reply to any of them.

No more debates necessary.....:
Barack,
We know your positions, we know Hillary's... We don't need anymore
debates. What we need is for you to continue to engage the people at
events...
Don't immediately take up Hillary on the debate.... It is a desperate
play on her part... (0comment)[iv]

Some blog users in the comments section of the Obamablog or in the Community

Blog (both posts and comments) suggested the campaign use some strategies, such as

promoting a music video, contacting local media and cable, organizing a petition or

canvassing, to support Obama's policy and issue points or to intensify the candidate's

media exposure. As a result, the campaign did not respond to any of these claims

made by citizen supporters, but neither frustration nor anger was found in the

Community Blog.

Did positive affect(s) emerge from the bloggers' posts and comments? The answer

is that, without a doubt, positive affect appeared tremendously on the Obama

campaign blog. Passion is dominant in the blog; Obama's supporters wrote that they

worked together for a successful purpose.

I have been so uplifted and inspired by the great enthusiam and
dedication usually demonstrated by all on this blog. Rarely could I
discern a blogger's ethnicity, religion, country of origin, etc. No. None of
those things mattered. I wish the entire U.S. could experience what I
have seen here....a group of Americans who wish the best for their
country and who believe in a man and his message and are giving it our
all to get that man into the WH so that we can change the country and
the world.

Obama Website is Incredibly Impressive
Not only does it have everything that you'd imagine as far as easily
listing the issues and giving little bits of information though flashy

graphics, but it also has this whole entire community and social backbone that keeps people involved in the electoral experience and the campaign.

> Feeling Good (It's a new dawn)
> The Obama campaign has been run brilliantly, honestly, tirelessly, and fairly. The blogging family here has been amazing.[v]

The Obama campaign gave specific instruction and directions to guide people's

energy and attention to campaign on the ground. The rhetorical construction of the

text fostered interactivity and enhanced user engagement with the site.

> 327 Days and Much Hard Work
> We've done a lot in those 327 days to support Senator Obama's run, as have many other people in supporting their candidate. I've written over a hundred blogs on my.BarackObama.com about things like when Utah for Obama had it's first meeting, walked in a parade, Walked for Change, got organized, made front page news for bringing Obama to Utah, launched one of the nation's first chapters of Generation Obama, helped open the first 2008 Presidential campaign office in Utah, and so much more! (I haven't had a chance to blog about how we're making 500 to 1,000 calls a day or more)[vi]

Although little sorrow is found due to an absence of response from the Obama

campaign in the early primary season, there are still a few posts that questioned

Obama's website:

> Comments on why Obama is using a race bias site to campaign……I am concerned about him being bias on the race issue after seeing blackplanet.com listed on Obama's web site. ...I am disappointed that Obama would pick either side. I would like to understand this decision so I can understand who Obama is, and where he stands on this issue. ...I do not know if Obama will respond to this and I did not see a place on Obama's web site to send a message to him like this, but I would be pleased to see a response from him.[vii]

All in all, Obama staffers used, as the Dean campaign did, direct address, calling a candidate by first names, posts written (or apparently signed) by the candidate, to have citizen bloggers engaged in a sense of intimacy with the candidates and the campaign. But beyond these tactics, the Obama staffers developed their own strategies, such as using journalist reporting style to tell other supporters' stories, incorporating other popular social media such as YouTube and Flickr to present the campaign celebrities to viewers, redirecting inputs to a specific place on the Obama website by a hyperlink, and reiterating the ways in which "you (a supporter)" can help Barack out by following the user-friendly features designed by the campaign.

Moreover, the creation of the Community Blog gave citizens authority to blog on Obama's official blog, and more importantly, to know other bloggers and to share information and feelings. Although Obama blog staffers did not write comments or posts to answer citizen bloggers, they actually read the inputs and improved the website based on bloggers' suggestions. The Fact Check button was from ideas of the grassroots. The positive affect of passion politics was stirring, but was not out of control, nor did it become bitterness when the campaign did not respond. This observation provides evidence for a model of the Obama campaign's messages that theoretically helped the campaign turn passion into action, rather than bitterness.

DISCUSSION

The 2008 presidential election made history in many ways. Its closure actually opens new directions and transitions not only in the political arena, but also in social and communicational fields. In this ground-breaking race, Obama once said that: "I want to campaign the same way I govern, which is to respond directly and forcefully with the truth" (BarackObama.com, 2008). Did he or his campaign team do what he said? How did his official campaign blog respond to the massive blog visitors? Genuinely or shrewdly, how did his campaign staffers manage the enormity of passion through text-based interactivity?

This study examines the interactive features that were used as rhetorical tools to produce a perception of interactivity in Obama's innovative blog domain. As far as rhetoric is concerned, content analysis is used to investigate the message strategies grounded in the communication between the Obama campaign and blog users. Compared with Stromer-Galley and Baker's (2006) research, the result shows how Obama's blogging strategies evolved from the pioneering *Blog for America* in terms of text-based interactivity that consists of verbal and virtual messages to create a sense of engaging presence for blog visitors. Moreover, passion is everything that makes the sheer volume of posts and comments, makes Obama's supporters excited and mobilized, and makes his campaign self-organized and disciplined. All the positive feelings were unfailing and stirring that the campaign should use this strategy to precisely direct the passion to actions.

In the Obamablog (also called Obama HQ blog), the campaign relied on the same scheme as *Blog for America*; that is, the campaign posted and the blog visitors could only comment. In other words, citizen visitors could only follow the campaign's agenda on the headquarter blog. There was a highly noted degree of personalization of content—the illusion that the campaign was writing a note directly to the reader. The perceived conversation as an indicator of interactivity (Kiousis, 2002; Newhagen, Cordes & Levy, 1995; Endres & Warnick, 2004) only took place when the campaign used conversational tone in the post section of the Obamablog. Therefore, interactivity between the campaign and blog visitors relied on the online rhetorical strategies in forms of text-based communication from the campaign to users. In the comment section of the Obamablog, the communication only took place among the citizen visitors.

Internet techniques allow people to feel more connected to a candidate and more involved (Berger, 2008). During the voting days for which this research collected data, the number of the comments in the Obamablog and that of the posts in the Community Blog demonstrate the bloggers' desire to be identified with the community as members. By writing to the campaign's attention, they raised their voices with a hope that the campaign and the candidate would read their messages, even though the campaign did not respond to the comments or posts of visitors.

Furthermore, disparity in the number of comments in the two sub-blogs suggests that blog visitors anticipated more interaction with the Obama campaign and paid more attention to the information released by the Obama campaign than by their fellow citizen bloggers. There are several explanations: it happened because of the

indirect access to the Community Blog from the Home page; or because a great number of entries in the Community Blog made readers too overwhelmed to decide which ones to read; or because the campaign's rhetoric was more persuasive than that of ordinary visitors to attract comments.

The disparity also means that the campaign's authenticity mattered to blog visitors who wanted to interact with the campaign. In the absence of social cues, authenticity becomes very important. Joshua Levy of TechPresident says: "the Internet is all about authenticity" (Knowledge at Wharton, 2008). For presidential campaign websites, the pervasive problem of authentication concerns citizens' sense of not being recognized, respected or understood by the campaign and the candidate they support. The phenomenon of blogging can be seen as a direct response to this sense of being lost, ignored and outside the sphere of public communication. The growing number of political weblogs is, in this sense, a grass roots attempt to authenticate deeper and more expansive accounts and narratives than traditional political discourse permits.

Thanks to the greatest frequency of hyperlinks and feedback features, blogs are a cross between the blogger's personal thoughts and a guide to many of the items on the Internet that help shape those thoughts (Trammell et al, 2004; Blood, 2002). The Community Blog, like other public political blogs such as Daily Kos, is technically an intersection of personal discourse and a public forum. It allows a citizen to post personal opinions in his/her own name and to discuss with other members in the community. In the Community Blog, citizens' posts with zero comment could be seen as discourse rather than dialogue. The discourses pertaining to Obama are self-

confirming, self-indulging, and self-referential. However, the general quality of posts

in the Community Blog is better than that of comments in the Obamablog. Since

every member had a share of the Community Blog and wrote topics as he/she wanted,

rather than following the campaign's blog agenda, members of the Community Blog

could express their ideas in a more diversified and articulated fashion:

> This blog will be my outlet for all things political during the race for
> the presidency. Hopefully, I'll be following Barack Obama's campaign
> all the way to the White House. I'm keeping this short so that I can save
> my best rhetoric for future blogs.[viii]

Generally speaking, the comment section of the Obamablog could be seen as a

closed community among people who spend time exchanging virtual messages with

like-minded others. It could reflect the human tendency to exaggerate one's

importance and discount the words of detractors as motivated by favoritism or

partisanship. The conversations between citizens, in the process of online public

deliberation, are a form of "deliberative enclaves" where group positions and

practices are reinforced rather than criticized (Sunstein, 2001). Actually, the nature of

the campaign blog by and large determined its tone; it did not have to be balanced and

objective; the comments mostly sound emotional and fantastic. It, therefore, shows

an incredible amount of positive feelings—hope, excitement, passion, energy—which

shored up the morale of the campaign.

There are a few posts questioning the candidate's issue and policy, but not personal

or character attacks. There are also only a few negative feelings such as anxiety due

to a lack of response from the campaign when blog supporters felt ignored because

their requests to improve the candidate's website or to use strategies were not responded quickly. As soon as the campaign made the change based on the requests, the morale actually enhanced. To a certain extent, the campaign blog is indicative of a struggle to become meaningfully present in a world where private words often go unacknowledged.

Give the Joy a Direction—EPPM Model

Positive affect was predominant in Obama's blog, but well controlled. Technically, the success of controlling the enormity of public emotion depends on the entire organization of his campaign website and the ground campaign. Rhetorically, Obama campaign staffers used the interactive features more strategically and creatively than Dean's campaign. The creation of the Community Blog is risky from the traditional campaigning perspective, but it also shows the campaign's understanding of new media and the grassroots, which, in turn, surprisingly rewarded the campaign in the history of political communication.

In the Obamablog, the Obama blog staffers managed the Headquarter blog in an instructive way, and repeatedly urged the actions that an ordinary supporter was capable of doing in order to "help out Barack." For example, when they used journalist reporting style to profile a precinct caption or a local event, they would end the particular blog with options that contained hyperlinks and specific actions such as "sign up at Action Center (hyperlink), knock on doors, make calls, emails, wave banners, host parties, come together, face-to-face." In doing so, the pictures, videos, and texts published by the campaign were used to persuade undecided voters and to

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stir up the passion of supporters. Then the specific instructions could direct emotion

(sometimes even questions, when undecided voters had concerns) to action or

solutions. The Obama blog staffers extolled this process: "watch our unprecedented

grassroots movement in action…Barack Obama hasn't just run a presidential

campaign, he's built a genuine grassroots movement."[ix]

In an attempt to benefit from its blogging operation, a modern campaign should be

masterful at soliciting, and more importantly, sustaining positive affect of blog users.

As for Dean's blog, the campaign began with a series of blogging strategies to shake

up passion and stir overwhelming feedbacks from citizen supporters, but the

campaign hardly gave response and let joy turn to sorrow. However, in this year, the

Obama campaign adopted similar message strategies as Dean did to facilitate the

perception of interactivity. But how did the Obama blog team manage passion? This

study found that the Obama blog messages can be characterized as a model that

consists of two major parts—passion appeal and call-to-action—asking the passionate

people to do something that they felt capable of.

The messages and the whole Obama website represent a new way of constructing

online rhetoric. As passion becomes the prevailing feeling of the candidate's blog,

the passion appeal message model created a high level of perceived efficacy. This

kind of message consisting of two pieces—passion appeal and call-to-action—will

precisely manage the public emotion and decentralized cooperation. Therefore,

attaching passion to a call-to-action message will help the campaigns keep positive

emotion from going negative or fading.

As passion surged in a tremendous force in the network of community, the Obama blog staffers did not let go of that easily. They seemed to understand deeply that once they had people connected through a network; the campaign should do whatever possible to keep that energy flow from disconnecting. In the Obamablog, the campaign recounted stories in order to bring up requests to go caucus, go vote, call friends, host a watch party, and certainly, donate. In the Community Blog, the Obama campaign encouraged its members to find out the location of the nearest place to attend an event or host an event themselves. The Obama campaign offered details of how to host an event, use the campaign's telephone bank to make calls, and so forth. Following the campaign's instructions, people would sign up by locations all around the United States. The campaign therefore gathered supporters' information in forms of particular states and counties. Then the campaign could send e-mails to the geo-targeted communities to inform local events, to urge citizens to contact others in their congressional districts, and to help Obama campaign offline. This is far more effective than those campaigning traditions in the pre-blog days.

EPPM, known as expended parallel process model, is an additive model of fear appeal studies by Witte and Allen who answer "an unsolved problem"; that is, when and how fear appeals motivate attitude, intention, and behavior changes successfully or unsuccessfully. The authors argue that "threat motivates action while efficacy appraisal determines the direction of that action—either danger control or fear control" (Witte & Allen, 2000, p.604). In other words, to persuade the audience rather than just to scare them, it is essential to provide high-efficacy messages (to help audiences believe they can deal with danger). Otherwise, the audiences will turn to

defensive avoidance, reactance, or denial (to control their own fear if no action is suggested to overcome that danger). Threat message includes perceived severity and perceived susceptibility. A high-efficacy message also includes two dimensions: high self-efficacy and high response efficacy. When target audiences start the increasingly high levels of fear control response, it is usually due to low-efficacy messages provided. In short, "strong fear appeals work only when accompanied by equally strong efficacy message" (Witte & Allen, 2000, p.606).

This study suggests campaigners consider the principle of Fear Appraisal, particularly EPPM synthesized by Witte and Allen (2000), to establish a message model so as to manage positive affect through text-based interactivity in blogs. Witte and Allen suggested expanding the message principle of fear appraisal (EPPM) to other identified emotion appeals such as passion. As this study found in Obama's blog, it is important how the campaign directed the stirring emotion by rhetorical construction, rather than leaving the emotion uncommitted to the campaign. The positive emotion stirred by campaign rhetoric online could help grassroots organizations, if emotion messages are attached to call-to-action information.

The EPPM, in this case, can help solve the problem—how campaigns use the already stirred passion successfully through message strategy. Passion, like fear or anger, is the basic human response to stimuli, used by politicians in the era of mass media to gain and mobilize public opinions through public speeches. But in the new media, it is not enough that politicians try to influence public life only through rhetoric in the traditional way, not enough simply through a "donate" button, or not enough through positive affect if it is not given direction to the online populace. It

should take a step further to produce high-efficacy perceptions among citizen visitors of blogs.

In the Obama campaign blog, passionate messages were obviously profound, because citizens actively responded to Obama's messages, and more importantly, felt invited to be a part of the enthusiasm. The Obama campaign created perceived personal involvement in an uplifting situation within the blog. But it is not enough to only create an air of passion where the campaign would possibly lose the control of public emotion after gearing it up. This is why the Obama blog posts always ended with a call to action, or say, efficacy message to direct the emotion. Efficacy messages let the audience believe that they were able to perform a recommended political action, and this action is perceived as effective and convenient.

As a result, millions more made up the volunteer corps that organized his enormous rallies, registered millions of voters and held countless gatherings to plug the senator to friends and neighbors. On Election Day, they served as "the backbone of Obama's get-out-the-vote operation, reaching voters by phone and at the front door, serving coffee at polling stations and babysitting so parents could stand in the line at voting precincts" (Washington Post, 2008).

In sum, Obama's official blog is innovative in terms of the strategic use of interactive features that produced citizens' perception of interactivity. Rhetorically, the campaign asked citizen bloggers for specific actions after campaign staffers blogged stories of supporters, repeatedly posted campaign skills and information that would help Obama out with useful hyperlinks, announced the Fact Check button after "hearing" the petition of citizen bloggers. All these efforts can be characterized as a

model of message strategy—stir up passion and joy, and then usher direction of action on an effective and easy path. In doing so, the campaign seemed to answer the question which bothered Dean's campaign blog: how to deal with the positive energy flow and the precise management of distributed cooperation in campaign blogs. Efficacy message is an indispensible portion of a complete passion appeal message in order to lead the way of attitude, perception, and behavior of motivated supporters. The campaign blog used positive messages not only to solicit interactions between the campaign and citizens, but more significantly, redirect actions to the grassroots.

Politicians and their campaign consultants have a greater challenge than many other marketers because they are promoting a person, not a product. "You create this brand, and it can disappear so quickly for reasons that have nothing to do with the marketing," says Wharton marketing professor Americus Reed (Knowledge at Wharton, 2008). Many new factors of the Internet and blog that helped Obama win the General Election need further study. As the President-elect has prepared for his administration, his new website, www.change.gov, has featured a blog and a suggestion form, signaling the kind of direct and instantaneous interaction that the Obama administration will encourage. The change of political communication by which political activities take place urges more studies in the near future.

Future studies

Experts note that new web-based campaigning tools are likely to emerge in the next four years (Knowledge at Wharton, 2008). For example, instead of the constant polling that has helped presidential governance, an Obama White House can use the

Web to measure voter attitudes. This gives future campaigners even more challenges yet opportunities to study the use of the Internet and blogs as much as they did for the traditional mass media in the last fifty years. This study uses grounded theory to let the themes emerge. It is a good way to inductively analyze a new field like campaign blogs in which responsible interactivity (genuine interaction) is crucial for the campaigns' authenticity. Further investigation through focus groups and experiments will strengthen this claim and continue to ask if there is a causal relationship.

Since positive affect emerged with regard to the Obama campaign's solicitation, it would be interesting to expand the study to help understand how the Obama campaign managed the positive affect that was produced on Obama blog to work positively for the purposes of fund-raising, volunteering, persuading, and so forth. The new blogging strategies used in the Obama blog add new conceptual data to further work in quantitative or qualitative research. Particularly, the analysis of interactivity in Obama's blog can be a significant factor, controlling the relation between the candidate messages and voting behavior (Scheufele, 2004).

Also, this study identified new message strategies like journalist reporting style, passion-action message model, and the use of membership blogs in a setting of my.BarackObama.com. All these new features and techniques can help to explain interactivity in general; however, interactivity is too complicated to generalize to one pattern because in Obama's blog domain there are user-to-program, user-to-system, campaign-to-user, and text-based interactivity. All these kinds of interactions can be theoretically differentiated (Warnick, 2008), but in the real world of campaigning, it is hard, sometimes even unnecessary, for ordinary blog visitors to tell. This

phenomenon suggests many questions for researchers interested in interactivity effects: Where is the threshold for user stimulation caused by interactivity? To what extent does variation in the number of features, the forms of interactivity in the verbal and visual text, and the combination of multiple forms affect user recall and response? To some extent, these are usability questions, but they also relate to campaign strategy as campaign managers and site designers decide where to put their emphasis. This new field would be an unfolding project for scholars in political communication.

Limitations

In regard to limitations, the blog entries in this prolonged primary reason were so many that what the researcher has sampled in this study is isolated chunks of action rather than any large flow. Only choosing three days from the longest primary season in the history of Presidential elections is questionable, leading to an incomplete sampling. For example, the limited scope of this study may have overlooked cases of outrage of Obama's citizen bloggers due to a lack of or slow response of the campaign staffers. Any case like this would produce contrary results to either extend or modify the research conclusion (Yin, 1989).

Moreover, as Baxter and Babbie (2005) posit, "if all of your data on the development of a political movement are taken from the movement itself, then you may not gain a well-rounded view of it" (p.350). The limitation of this research that will definitely influence the analytical validity is my small sample from an ongoing event. However, this also provides encouragement for future research of campaign messages and political participation.

Future research techniques should include interviews, fieldwork, focus groups, or archival research. Written data sources can include news media coverage of Obama's blog performance, campaign reports, memos, letters, and so forth related to his blog efforts. Because of the limitation above, it is still uncertain of whether this technology makes or breaks a candidate.

Conclusion

According to Joe Trippi, "Obama is poised to transform the art of political communication once again" (Washington Post, 2008). The Obama team has built a user-friendly website that served as a platform for grassroots, activities and distributed statements, policy positions and footage of Obama events. The content of the WebPages of both of Obama's sub-blogs is an open field where citizen supporters can be as self-effacing and self-indulgent as possible.

The creation of the Community Blog as one of the sub-blogs in Obama's blog is a new web tool strategically turning blog user's psychology from being a guest or outsider to being a real insider of the campaign. This change could be a manifestation of trust and being trusted, and also a shift of users' consciousness from passively seeking feedback from the campaign to actively communicating in their candidate's blog community with other like-minded members, and externally on the Internet with any other Internet users. By running their own blog for Obama, blog visitors feel like an agent rather than a spectator or critic of the campaign. This is not only a psychological change, but also a physical attainability which gives ordinary people

leverage to shape the candidate's WebPages, and also demonstrates the spirit of the

Internet blogging—distributed cooperation.

The two-part structure of passion appeal messages for campaigning parallels that

of EPPM. The first part is the passion appeal and the second is call-to-action. Each

part contains two levels: passion appeal has to achieve a perceived personal

involvement after stimulating passion and the call-to-action message should produce

self-efficacy and response efficacy. The staff sent a positive message after the New

Hampshire defeat: "YOU are the reason we have been able to prove the cynics and

pundit wrong." It implied a combination of sympathy, encouragement, and

empowerment when the campaign lost. Personal stories and event reports highlighted

people and their ways of campaigning. The blog staff made self-organized campaigns

easy through blogging and Internet functions. The Obama campaign super-charged

traditional methods such as rallies and neighborhood canvassing by the outstanding

online strategies, and urged citizens to "use this area (the Obama blog) to empower

yourself and others with the information you need to be sure you know the rules for

your state on Election Day" (BarackObama.com). It is clear that the Obama

campaign leveraged a digital toolset that kept supporters constantly in touch with the

campaign superstructure. Also, the architecture of the messaging basically told

supporters that "function X is what we (the campaign) have got for you (supporters),

now show us what you can do with it."

In this way, the campaign has incorporated two principles to create and sustain

passion in the blog. One is lowering the barrier to entry and making it as easy as

possible to use and navigate. The other is raising the expectation of what it means to

be a supporter. According to Joe Rospars, Obama's new media director, "it's not enough to have a bumper sticker. We want you to give five dollars, make some calls, host an event. If you look at the messages we send to people over time, there's a presumption that they will organize" (Watson, 2008). All these messages that request for actions are efficacy messages making the Obama blog campaign successful.

The Obama campaign carefully controlled the overall messages and stories, but it also made the key decision to free up content by creating the Community Blog, unleash a self-organized social network, and encouraging third party new media. In the Obama campaign, it was an online movement that begot offline behavior, including producing youth voter turnout that may have supplied the margin of victory. Senator Barack Obama understood that he could use the blog to send out messages, to lower the cost of building a political brand, create a sense of connection and engagement, and dispense with the command and control method of governing to allow people to self-organize to do the work. There is a sense of ownership, a kind of possessive entitlement, on the part of the people who worked to elect him, traded their personal information for a ticket to a rally or an e-mail alert about the vice presidential choice, or opted in on Facebook or MyBarackObama.

Optimistically, it is possible that the Internet could change the way of political communication to better transparency and authenticity. Politicians may learn from the 2008 presidential campaign that we are in a new political ecology in which connecting like-minds and forming a movement is so much easier than any time before.

Appendix: Clarification of Content of the Community Blog

Types of the Content in the Community Blog	Examples
Accused rivals	The most important thing to remember is that OUR MESSAGE is winning and winning big. The best proof of all is the fact that the Clintons have adapted to our momentum by trying to mimic our campaign themes! The other day the great divider himself, Bill Clinton, was actually babbling about bringing the country together!! -(By Bob Johnson) Either Barack or Hillary wins is acceptable. I really don't think that Edwards is an honest man. Also, I don't think he has any solution to current problems.-(By Unknown user)
Supported each other	You're right. Let's stay focused and positive. Ghandi said we should be the change we want to see in the world. If we want positive, we need to be positive. Let's go change the world! Yes we can!
Shared media coverage or clips by hyperlinks	And today Facebook announced its official "Facebook Primary," in a joint project with MoveOn.org, the Hip Hop Caucus and the League of Young Voters:
Demonstrated feelings	I arrived at my destination but I couldn't get out of the car. I had to keep listening to him. The message was so compelling, so comprehensive, so unlike anything I had ever heard from another politician…..His vision and rhetoric are galvanizing and make you pause to say, "hmmm, he does have point. Is it possible that things don't always have to be this way?" the answer is YES and I never thought I would see the day. Dare to be captivated? (By Ever been captivated?)
Conversations	
Exchanged information and personal stories	Information: Presidential Candidate Barack Obama Final Iowa Push (hyperlinks of pictures, external websites, By EsquireUK) Personal story: This is Kim's fifth time to see Barack Obama. Kim is a true Obama-believer. She has also

	canvassed door-to-door and made phone calls on behalf of Sen. Obama. She has registered at My.BarackObama.com and is part of the Coe College group. Kim has stayed a loyal Obama supporter despite quite a bit of pressure. "Elizabeth Edwards called me!" she exclaims, still in disbelief. Kim has stayed a loyal Obama supporter despite quite a bit of pressure. "Elizabeth Edwards called me!" she exclaims, still in disbelief. (By Tony Loyd)
Shared feelings and emotions	Tonight's the night and I am so nervous I can't concentrate on anything but the Iowa Caucus. So I thought I'd write down my thoughts and post them to put some of the nervous energy to use. (By Mary Kay in St. Louis)
Reached out to local media	Each of us email the stories to our local media sources - T.V. especially at this late date. (By Linda Gehron)
Urged others to take actions	We have to make phone calls and get this to the local media. (By CA) please do something to post video of each event somewhere on the net much faster. i know you can do it , so please do it. (By Tom Water Gives Clean Hydrogen)
Spread words, made buzz	Clinton's people are push-polling in CA... get the word out. We've got to stop her insidious campaign! Link (By BrianChicago76) Part of the idea is that users will get a kick out of competing in their own networks, or discover that some long lost friend is backing the same candidate, which they'd never know otherwise. Offline, a local "Rock The Caucus" program has also been pushing youth turnout, as The Nation's Cora Currier explained. As Barack has said, this is a bottom-up campaign. The difference will be made by individuals talking to their friends, neighbors, associates, and strangers. The media and TV advertising will not make the real difference for us. We must do it ourselves. (By JD from Seal Beach, CA (Back from Colorado. WE DID IT!)
Questioned campaign strategies	Too true toughguy. When is Obama's team going to get the word out? (By Daniel from Bronx, NY)

Asked and answered questions	So not only do we have to surpass actual votes on Tuesday but early voting as well. Is that possible? I just want to help. What can I do here in Pennsylvania? (By Reece Today at 6:45 pm EST)
	Go to your state's section on this website. You can make phone calls from home, or volunteer to take part in get out the vote events! (By SoCalObamaSupporter Today at 6:59 pm EST)
Provided strategies and tactics	Changes in the economy and the campaign
	Obama's Iowa effort has aggressively courted "Generation Y" -- including high schoolers, since people can caucus at the tender age of 17. It's the only campaign to launch an official Facebook application to organize and gather data about potential caucus goers.
Media surveillances	How can we get the word to the state media? I haven't seen Maria's endorsement on any mainstream media.(By CA)
	Ami - is this significant news in CA? There isn't much on the cable networks, no 'Breaking News' banner on CNN or MSNBC..... (By Gail from Pickerington, OH)
	Channel 4 TV in Britain is reporting that the Senator is in the lead, whereas Clinton is trailing in third place. regards (By Matthew Finnegan)
In-depth analysis	Education: Give us Our Due and We will Return the Favor:
	There is a growing conundrum facing many students, returning students and others who want to take classes at public institutions. As soon as he got " elected ", Bush 2 tried to sow the long term seeds of capsizing K->12 higher edu by using the feds to introduce vouchers to would-be beneficiaries of private schools. from the moment that voucher became a disillusioned idea in some isolated, prominent right wing neoconservative's head. It was the height of anti-logistics for free education for all children in America living at home or with a parent.

[i] Does Obama Read Our Blogs on Occasion? (20108)
By EMK - Feb 1st, 2008 at 1:26 am EST
I'm just curious. I know he's busy with his campaign, but does he get a chance to read the community blogs?
By alyce rocco Feb 1st 2008 at 2:10 am EST
Doubtful. He used to read comments on his You Tube channel at the start of the campaign, but mostly his staff has to take care of that for him. He is not only campaigning but also doing his Senate duties. New Bills and Resolutions that need reading and studying. He is also writing new stuff to introduce, such as a counter Iran Resolution to slow down the rush into the country.
[ii] Theme: Passion
How does it feel?
I have never been this excited about a candidate before.

Michelle's Speech on 12/26
I got onto Barack's website and played a few of the segments on "Barack TV." I came across this one of Michelle speaking on December 26th. Her message reaffirms to me WHY this woman and her husband need to be the next inhabitants of the White House.

Ever been captivated?
I arrived at my destination but I couldn't get out of the car. I had to keep listening to him. The message was so compelling, so comprehensive, so unlike anything I had ever heard from another politician…..His vision and rhetoric are galvanizing and make you pause to say, "hmmm, he does have point. Is it possible that things don't always have to be this way?" the answer is YES and I never thought I would see the day. Dare to be captivated?

[iii] FOR A FACT-CHECK BUTTON ON THE FRONT PAGE!
(http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/beerforbarack/Cgxs)

By Eric from Cambodia - Jan 6th, 2008 at 5:02 pm EST

4 the one Jan 9th 2008 at 5:41 am EST
Come on Obama blog administrator! Wy aren't you listening? That's not right. For God sake put the fact-check button in the front page of this website and the community blog. That must not be to difficult to do and you are making it look like we are hiding something. That's wrong folks.
Eric from Cambodia Jan 9th 2008 at 7:25 am EST
UPDATE - WE GOT IT!
THANK YOU WEBSITE TEAM!!!
THANKS FOR THIS WONDERFUL WEBSITE!!!
AND THANK YOU FOR THIS 'FACT-CHECK' LINK!!!
Hey everyone!
If anyone you happen to come across people puzzled by one of the numerous unfair attacks and smear campaign intensifying, the most recent being on Barack's "pro-choice" records, you've got all ammunition to re-establish the TRUTH there: In the MAIN MENU, anywhere in the website, click on 'LEARN' then select 'FactCheck'

Thanks again to the website team!
YES WE CAN!!!!

Eric from Cambodia: Actually, Barack set the example. That's why we are a MOVEMENT, not an OPERATION ;-)
Lori in WI : This is proof that Obama and his staff listen and respond to the people - another reason to vote for him!

[iv] Bloggers talked to the Obama campaign positively, but NO response
No more debates necessary.....:
Barack,
We know your positions, we know Hillary's... We don't need anymore debates. What we need is for you to continue to engage the people at events...
Don't immediately take up Hillary on the debate.... It is a desperate play on her part...
(0comment)

[v] Bloggers felt the Obama blog was good:
Comment to Obamablog
By stroud00
I have been so uplifted and inspired by the great enthusiam and dedication usually demonstrated by all on this blog. Rarely could I discern a blogger's ethnicity, religion, country of origin, etc. No. None of those things mattered. I wish the entire U.S. could experience what I have seen here....a group of Americans who wish the best for their country and who believe in a man and his message and are giving it our all to get that man into the WH so that we can change the country and the world.

Obama Website is Incredibly Impressive
Not only does it have everything that you'd imagine as far as easily listing the issues and giving little bits of information though flashy graphics, but it also has this whole entire community and social backbone that keeps people involved in the electoral experience and the campaign.

Feeling Good (It's a new dawn)
The Obama campaign has been run brilliantly,honestly,tirelessly,and fairly. The blogging family here has been amazing.

[vi] Obama blog tutored and directed citizens to campaign- EPPM
Make Some Calls...
By sam graham-felson
Time to get active -- if you can spare some time, make some calls now and help out
Barack.Obama: The Organizer and the Movement
By sam graham-felson
Using My.BarackObama.com,created their own grassroots organizations and were mobilized into action…Barack Obama hasn't just run a presidential campaign, he's built a

genuine grassroots movement…They are empowered, active participants in the struggle for change and they are not tired

It's Iowa Caucus Day!
I am so excited and anxious today. I can't really say I've ever really paid that much attention to the Iowa Caucus. Until recently I've never really understood it: how it works or why it's so important to the political process

327 Days and Much Hard Work
We've done a lot in those 327 days to support Senator Obama's run, as have many other people in supporting their candidate. I've written over a hundred blogs on my.BarackObama.com about things like when Utah for Obama had it's first meeting, walked in a parade, Walked for Change, got organized, made front page news for bringing Obama to Utah, launched one of the nation's first chapters of Generation Obama, helped open the first 2008 Presidential campaign office in Utah, and so much more! (I haven't had a chance to blog about how we're making 500 to 1,000 calls a day or more)

[vii] Bloggers talked to the Obama campaign negatively, but NO response
whyblackplanet
Comments on why Obama is using a race bias site to campaign. I like Obama and am planning on voting on him. I like a lot of his views. but I am concerned about him being bias on the race issue after seeing blackplanet.com listed on Obama's web site. ...I am disappointed that Obama would pick either side. I would like to understand this decision so I can understand who Obama is, and where he stands on this issue. ...I do not know if Obama will respond to this and I did not see a place on Obama's web site to send a message to him like this, but I would be pleased to see a response from him.
Krugman on the Obama health plan:
this sobering warning about the Obama health plan shortcomings, and they worry me to no end. Come on Barack, take a hint, fix your mess. (2 comments)
[viii] Higher quality of posts in the Community Blog
Introductory post
Since this is my first blog post, allow me to introduce myself. I'm a 40 year old single man currently residing in Florida. I have two sons ages 12 and 13 who have yet to fully embrace the importance of political activism. Then again, I suppose I'm still figuring that out as well. This blog will be my outlet for all things political during the race for the presidency. Hopefully, I'll be following Barack Obama's campaign all the way to the White House.
I'm keeping this short so that I can save my best rhetoric for future blogs. While others here will obviously share many of my beliefs and opinions, I also hope to spark discussion, debate and perhaps action. Please feel free to comment on anything I've written or to contact me. I welcome the input. Thank you.

[ix] Requests for actions from the Obama campaign in the Obamablog
By, sam graham-felson

Using My.BarackObama.com, created their own grassroots organizations and were mobilized into action. Barack Obama hasn't just run a presidential campaign, he's built a genuine grassroots movement,knock doors, make call, email, wave banners,…let us know where are you hosting and where you're from

Use this area to empower yourself and others with the information you need to be sure you know the rules for your state on Election Day.Experience a problem? See a problem? Stand up and speak up.

Are you a lawyer? Help the campaign protect the rights of others.

On election day across the country over the coming months, we will need lawyers willing to help us stand up for everyone's right to be heard.