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David D. Perlmutter

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## Political Blogging and Campaign 2008: A Roundtable

*David D. Perlmutter*

### Participants

David D. Perlmutter, moderator, University of Kansas (DP)

Kate Phillips, online politics editor, *New York Times* (KP)

Joan McCarter, contributor editor, DailyKos (JM)

Mary Katharine Ham, managing editor, TownHall.com (MKH)

### Introduction: Polblogging and the IDS Revolution

The weblog, at least in name, entered its second decade<sup>1</sup> in 2008, and although many types of blogs exist, from medical blogs to entertainment blogs, the political blog or polblog has received the most media attention. In the 2004 election cycle, polblogs first rose to prominence, then temporary eclipse and ridicule with the campaign for president of Howard Dean. But in 2006 and beyond, blogs and other interactive and “social” media have become foci of press and political interest and even participation. In 2008, the question was no longer *whether* to employ so-called new media (which aren’t new to anyone in their 30s and under) but *how* to do so: Many political campaigns have experimented with variations of MySpace, YouTube, Facebook, Second Life, Flickr, text messaging, Twitter, podcasts and so on and the early outcomes, while unclear, offer some insights that will prove of great use to press observers, campaign practitioners, and political communication researchers.

Some information is plain. We already know a great deal about who politically blogs. Many surveys<sup>2</sup> have found that polbloggers are disproportionately male, higher income, and higher education than the average American and much more likely to get involved in politics in traditional ways, from giving money to voting, than other Americans. They are, to use the popular term, *influentials*, people who probably have some influence, positive or negative, on the decision-making of larger groups.<sup>3</sup> Traditionally, as described by Ed Keller

and John Berry, such people are “the strategically placed transmitters that amplify the signal, multiplying the number of people who hear it.”<sup>4</sup> Hence their great attraction to political candidates, who now court bloggers like old pols courted union chiefs or corporate CEOs. Bloggers are hired as consultants; politicians travel to blogging meetings (like the DailyKos convention, which will become the “Netroots” gathering in 2008). And, of course, candidates running for alderman or president are blogging and experimenting with all the other social media. In some ways, then, 2008 might be called the year of the attempted professionalization of polblogs.

But while we students of politics rightly examine the intricacies of political uses of old, new, newer, and newest media, we should avoid disembodiment of the political blog or political text message from a wider social cognitive revolution of which they are but one manifestation. We live in a period that I call the *IDS age*. IDS stands for *Internet, interactive, instant and digital and satellite*. Through their convergence, for the first time in history we can, for example, see war live as it happens while sitting in our living rooms half a world away. Furthermore, reports of the battle may come either from a traditional foreign correspondent or from a Marine milblogger. Likewise, the first views of many major news events are now typically captured not from news network camera teams but from “citizen journalists” with cell phones.<sup>5</sup> But IDS also refers to *social media* and *self-casting* of the *id*, the psychological inner self, that for most of human history was only mass communicable by powerful rulers. Now, with online access, almost anybody can set up a webpage—such as a weblog—and talk to the planet, if the planet is willing to log in. All the social-interactive media, from YouTube to Facebook to podcasts to Twitter, are used by hundreds of millions of people to speak up, sometimes just to themselves, sometimes to millions. These people are not categorizable as either producers or receivers but are something else, something new: *interactors*.<sup>6</sup> Our entire way of life, not just our politics, will have to adapt to these exciting developments.

*DP:* Who do you think is (or now that the race has thinned, was) most effective in using blogs or reaching out to bloggers or employing blogs somehow in their campaign?

*JM:* On the Democratic side of the campaign the best candidate for using the blogs is out of the race, unfortunately, and that was Chris Dodd, who hired a really crack Internet team, Tim Tagaris and Matthew Browner, two of the best. They came up through the Internet, were active early on political blogs, and really understand how it works. I think probably Edwards has the most active Internet director in Tracy Russo. Peter Daou on the Clinton campaign is also very effective. The candidates themselves have not done a great deal of outreach to the blogging community outside of Dodd. I think Edwards, probably, of the three now frontrunners, would be running the best Internet campaign, then

Clinton, then Obama in terms of the political blogs. In terms of using social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook, Obama has taken the lead.

*MKH:* On the Republican side, everyone's got some sort of plan for reaching out in this election, which is the huge difference between 2004 and 2008. Everyone's got a team for it, somebody at least thinking about it, which is nice to see. They've learned that they need to reach out, that it's a constituency that they need to speak to. I would say that the Mitt Romney folks have been good at using the Web, they're generally very quick about putting things up, video highlights from debates, opposition research, out to blogs quickly and reliably. Some of the other campaigns are a little more "hit and miss" about getting things updated. I would say that Fred Thompson's campaign, before it was even a campaign, when he did a Web video picking on Michael Moore about universal health care, seemed to us on the Right side of the blogosphere a sign that Fred got the spirit of the blogosphere and was going to know how to harness it. The same with his blogging at RedState, which was fairly aggressive and even took some other bloggers to task when they would question his record and he was sort of a fun guy in the blogosphere at that point. There was a lot of hope that he would know how to use the blogosphere in new and interesting ways. When it actually turned out to be a candidacy, it turned out to be kind of an old-school candidacy instead of what a lot of people had hoped for and I think maybe what Fred had hoped for. That didn't work out, but I think that he sort of got the spirit of it. And I've been disappointed to see that Rudy Giuliani, who I think is somebody that would do well with that sort of short-form Web video kind of thing, did not jump into it a bit more, especially since he was not competing in Iowa and New Hampshire; he might as well get something out there. Also, John McCain has been fairly brave about doing regular blogger conference calls, which is commendable considering the blogosphere has never been exactly his fan base.

*KP:* Candidates and campaigns have used the blogosphere not only to communicate to bloggers and their audiences, but also to get their own message across and their opposition messages across, that is, against another candidate. So there are two different ways to talk about campaign blogging. I would agree with Joan that Chris Dodd had a *really* interactive Web site, far more than the others. John Edwards certainly has Joe Trippi on his side from the Dean era and they have done a lot of different things including Webisodes and other types of outreach to touch to their following and their supporters, and they keep it pretty up to date. The sites don't get stale the way that some others have gotten stale. On the Republican side, I thought that Fred Thompson was going to do a lot more than he's done, only because he started out with some Web videos, and had involved some bloggers on the Right side of the sphere and getting questions through their audiences to him, but he never sort of kept up

with the flow of questions, and so that was rather a disappointment to see that kind of back and forth not take place, if you will, on the Web.

*DP:* This is the election cycle where the press and the political professionals are asking the “effects” question, and I know many traditional political consultants are trying to figure out, “How do we use, or employ, blogs or blog outreach to get more money for the campaign, to get more people to show up at the rally, and to get more people to vote for us?” Something very interesting happened, starting in Iowa. The entrance poll numbers indicate that there were a record 239,000 Democratic voters, and also a record 22 percent under thirty years old. In Iowa you can vote at age seventeen if you are going to turn eighteen by November. Obama won 57 percent of the youth votes; Edwards 14 percent, and Clinton 11 percent. That’s a pretty substantial generational divide. I was talking to somebody who said that they had not seen that in exit or entrance polls in the history of entrance or exit polls. Would you like to connect the dots for us between that phenomenon and social networking, new media, blogs?

*JM:* I think Obama’s Iowa success does have something to do with his MySpace and Facebook outreach efforts; he really did mobilize young voters. We’d heard this was going to happen, but you always hear this is going to happen and then it rarely pans out. Look at the Dean effort in 2004, where you had a high level of activity from people new to politics, but it fell apart because they really weren’t organized enough. Obama’s success in Iowa was very impressive, but whether it can be repeated is going to be the big question. It wasn’t in New Hampshire.

*KP:* The Obama campaign clearly had a deep organizational structure embedded in Iowa in part I think because it was so easy for his campaign to bring people from his home state of Illinois, very early in the process. If you think about last summer they were very deeply embedded in college campuses; that made a big difference. I don’t know yet, and I don’t think any of us know yet, whether all of his efforts, which are big on MySpace and Facebook and other sites, actually helped get the message out. We know that a lot of people were energized and, in fact, it was a worry among many people since it was break time for many college students that he would not see that kind of turnout. Joan is right, he didn’t see it in New Hampshire, though he did capture the youth vote there. It just wasn’t as high and it wasn’t as well organized. We’ll have to see in the early stage or later on if he survives the primary season if this organizational structure is replicated from campus to campus.

*MKH:* We always talk about the youth vote, and everybody always says, “Oh, it’s going to make all the difference this year,” but it never pans out. But when I saw what Obama was doing on Facebook and MySpace and that he was getting involved so early, and his huge numbers, I thought that we had something big. He is a younger candidate and has this sort of hip demeanor about him, and

he appeals to the sort of “above the fray” young voters who are generally apathetic. They are apathetic for a reason, because they feel like getting involved in politics is not inspiring, it is not something that they want to get their hands dirty with. I think Obama has always given young people the feeling that this is something that can be interesting and inspiring, and not just something that is just dirty politics. That’s sort of his message. Whether I think that pans out in real life is a whole other issue. But I think that combined with some really aggressive Facebook messaging and campaigning and MySpace as well, all those social networking sites, that’s how young people communicate, that’s just the bottom line. Facebook, even for someone my age who is a little older than the demographic Facebook started with, is where I get messages from friends. I think we learned during 2004 that the approach of having friends convert friends to vote for someone as George Bush’s campaign did, as opposed to the Democratic strategy of getting a bunch of ACORN [Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now] folks to go out and register voters, it is the way to move people. The Internet is great for connecting those people and getting them together maybe more intimately later at house parties.

*DP:* When a journalist covers blogs in campaigns, or a political blogger covering campaigns is trying to listen to voices on the Internet, how do they determine who is saying something important and that should be paid attention to? What about the authenticity and transparency issue? Who is being paid or subsidized for their opinion on blogs?

*KP:* On the liberal ideologically inclined blogs, you see a good parsing of somebody’s message or efforts at policy, but you will also see on certain other sites where an opposing campaign has tried to shop around something negative. So I watch some to see just how unfiltered that “oppo” message will get through without any questioning and without any fact checking.

*MKH:* On the Right, there were several instances of that and folks that didn’t tell who they were working for. It is generally considered bad form not to disclose that. That’s like an actually working relationship where you’re being paid, and obviously that should be disclosed. Also, blogger teams on the Left and the Right are sending out e-mails constantly. I don’t think it is the general rule that you have to cite that you got an e-mail or tip from whatever campaign whenever you get it, because sometimes it is just an interesting link to a news story. So if you’re not getting spun, if you’re just getting an e-mail link, it’s up to you what you want to disclose or not. I don’t think its necessary most of the time. Most of the interaction we get is just e-mail strings from all the campaigns—opposition stories about other people or all the newspaper endorsements that they have gotten.

Though it’s not necessary, I find a lot of right-wing bloggers highlight when oppo research comes from a particular campaign. It is a sort of behind-the-scenes look at the campaign’s machinations, and it makes things fun and

transparent for readers. As far as backing a particular candidate, there's a point of diminishing returns if a blogger is spinning for a candidate too much. If you support one over others, fine. You've likely communicated that to your readers explicitly, and they can read your blogging with that in mind. If they feel your support for a candidate is making you intellectually dishonest, they'll call you on it or leave the blog.

*JM:* We do have a handful of rational partisan supporters who are influential. Unfortunately at this point a vast majority of them have reached a level where it's a turnoff to the larger part of the readership, I think. And they are going to make their decisions outside of what anybody on the blog is saying. Then, as a moderator on a community site, it helps to stand back from it. We have greater leverage on the site in interfering in these wars when we have to if we're seen as relatively unbiased observers. It helps our authority in trying to tamp down the worst part of this. If I had, again, at this point, a preference, I would be transparent about that.

*DP:* Kate, it's not fair to ask a journalist, "Who are the people that manipulate you the best?" but if you were going to give advice to somebody who was trying to use blogging as a medium of, let's say, "press outreach and relations," what advice would you give?

*KP:* I don't know that we have made this qualification, but we have a sort of news blog, and it's different than an ideological blog. It is more reporters on the trail contributing reports, not opinion. We have done a lot at looking at the way that campaigns are using the Internet, and the way that they reach out to bloggers on the Left, Right, center. And one of the things that I mentioned at the very beginning, and this is not to give advice to any campaign, but I think in general, would be to involve the people that are the audience for a lot of the major, and less than major, blogs; have them post their questions; get on line with them; talk with them, and on their own venue. Do it with video, do it with audio. Make it a conversation that is ongoing.

The other thing that is really slow with campaigns is their ability to react quickly enough, to things that sort of catch like wildfire on the Internet, their inability to kind of go to the receptive audiences that they have and talk openly. And maybe that means that they'll have to hurdle over the traditional communications directors—which raises the issue of what it means to be an authentic candidate in this year, 2008. But I don't think that they get a reputation for being authentic or sincere if they're not out there engaging.

*JM:* That makes me think of another aspect in terms of outreach to more prominent bloggers. I think about the e-mail I get from the campaigns. One campaign sends me all of the traditional fund-raising e-mails and that's about it. One campaign sends press releases and outreach and links to various traditional media articles about once a day. And one I hear from maybe twice a week,

but again it's with actual press information. I appreciate getting the substantive press information a great deal more than getting the fund-raising.

*DP:* Bloggers have certainly become part of the golden Rolodex of people that journalists call all the time. We see somebody commenting on Obama's speech or the New Hampshire elections and the byline is no longer just George Washington University or University of Kansas or the Hoover Institution or the Brookings Institution but something like Kennysblabblogbuzz.tv. How does a blogger enter the Rolodex of people that journalists consult on politics? Is there a breakthrough moment? Is it something that you see cited and you say, "Well, they said something very interesting?" How do you get on the A-list of journalistic sources as a political blogger?

*KP:* I think a lot of us do pay attention to commentary and are looking for thoughtful analysis. Some people, of course, are very popular and are the biggest bloggers on the Left or the Right and they would be natural to go to. I also think it depends on the topic matter. At times when national security is in the news we might be seeking somebody that's writing more on a blog that has to do with that very specific type of expertise. I think that often what we look for are voices, opinions, and commentators that know what they're talking about . . . that day-in and day-out keep themselves well schooled in developments as far as the campaigns are concerned. I don't know that I have any advice on how to be the most quoted or the most Googled, but I think that we look for people who are offering really solid, thoughtful analysis for the day and knowledge of particular subjects, if you will. Some bloggers are really adept at pulling apart polls. Not so much us, because we have our own polling operations, but we might go to them to talk about ways that they were looking at exit polls or looking at the vast spectrum of polls. So that would be one level of expertise where you might look at a blogger who may not be in the top fifty most heavily trafficked.

*MKH:* The blogosphere and journalists don't have to be at each other's necks all the time. That's playing out a bit in 2008. We may have problems with media coverage and the media may have problems with blog coverage, but we're all at the root political junkies and nerds. That's the commonality. And to a greater extent every year more journalists who are bloggers do the more short-form conversational stuff. Blogging is like the conversations folks would have in the newsroom, talking things out, talking strategy, dropping ideas to see how people responded to them. Now you see those conversations on the Web not only from private citizens that write up their private water-cooler conversations about politics, but also from journalists who write up their newsroom conversations about politics. On the journalism side, it's a little more vulnerable and is a look at how the sausage is made, but I don't think it is necessarily bad. I enjoy reading the *New York Times* blogs as much as the next person, although

I will take issue with them when they are wrong. Since the blogosphere partially grew up as a media criticism tool, the Right blogosphere has also called the media out when it does something wrong. So there has been a high premium placed on the Right on doing some of its own reporting. During “Rathergate,” especially, people, analysts, were getting forensic documents and doing the hard work of looking up all these different typesettings to figure out if Dan Rather had really messed up, and it turns out that he did.

*DP:* Kate, can I ask you about bloggers as sources? I’m sure you’ve seen there has been a lot of discussion in press journals about that, especially when there’s the issue of anonymity or pseudonymity on blogs. What are your rules of order in deciding to use a blogger as a source for information in a story and your verification techniques? Are they simply the same as for any source or is anything different that you do for bloggers? How do you know who’s who online?

*KP:* The paper is a little different than online, but we tend to keep the same standards for many things. It’s very unusual for a reporter to quote in the paper someone who has commented on one of our blogs, on the Web, whatever the blog may be if it is not a real name or if we can’t reach that person through the e-mail address that they’ve filed, because we need that level of verification. In addition, when it comes to looking at sources that they cite, we have this whole level of headachy moderation that we do without our putting our eyes on the comments themselves. We have not gone to the type of system, at least on the blogs at this point, where we require a registration. Basically we just have a heavy responsibility to look at people who are using monikers, people who are using aliases, and allowing it as long as it is in a certain boundary. I have written to people who use more than one alias on a certain thread because I think that is unfair to other people who engage in the conversation, and think they are talking to three or four people.

*DP:* Joan, at DailyKos is this ever an issue? Something you worry about?

*JM:* Yes. It’s hard. We don’t do moderating of comments. There are far too many, there is no way we could keep up.

*KP:* It’s a free-for-all over there!

*JM:* It is. But we do have community moderation. You don’t see the worst of what is posted, Kate. Because our community is able to hide the worst of the comments. We will manually ban the worst of the people posting them, and we have a system that allows the community to moderate the troublemakers and kick them off the island. We’ve got some relatively sophisticated ways of tracing where people are posting from. We do have what Kate was talking about, the same poster using different names—that’s called “sock-puppeting”—and we have regular instances of that, and that’s a ban-able offense, we will kick people off of the site, even if they aren’t being disruptive, because they are doing this. Unless they have a reason for doing so, for example posting in both

a professional capacity for a campaign or something, and maintaining a personal account, they have to contact us and tell us that they are going to. And we make sure there is a firewall between those two user names in that user's activity.

*DP:* You just don't want multiple identities?

*JM:* Well, there's not a lot we can control in terms of them claiming who they are. If we find out that it's an actual paid staffer for a campaign who's coming on and not disclosing that they're getting paid, this I think has happened maybe once in the time that I have been at DailyKos. We'll notify the campaign and we'll ban. It doesn't happen as much as I think outside observers think it happens, that people are going on purposely to try to fool us.

*MKH:* On blogger personalities. . . . I think the first group of bloggers, or political bloggers, that we saw were the group that was more likely to be involved, policy wonks or interested in talking about these issues. They also tended to be more "tech-savvy" because blogging seemed like a more scary and intimidating thing back then. Just another reason why those Left and Right tend to be white, male, and affluent since it was kind of "techy." They were more likely to be involved in politics and were bringing online conversations they were having offline. Since 2001, blogging and all these other forms of Internet communication have become run of the mill, everyone does them, everyone knows how to use them if you're under a certain age, and a lot of people over that age also know how to use them. It has become less intimidating. I think more people are self-interested and see a chance to flatten the playing field and get on the same level as other pundits that they have always enjoyed reading, their political operatives that they've admired in the past. There's a road to success through this medium now, which naturally brings in more people, and not just people who are ambitious and have a career in this, but people who really want to make a difference. I think it has become easy enough to allow new people in.

*DP:* Can we use the word public opinion and blogging in the same sentence? When a candidate is in trouble on the blogs does that mean something when people come out to vote? Several of you used the example of Chris Dodd. Again a traditional political consultant here would say, "Well, blogs really worked for him, didn't they? Hah-hah!" What is the relationship with blogger opinion, if there is one, and public opinion?

*JM:* I think bloggers can be very influential in their own circles. I think that we're not yet at the point where we're extensively shaping a larger media narrative. There have been a few instances when we've injected something into the national media narrative. In terms of the presidential race, not much. Congressional races, much more so, I think. And more on issues than on elections. We're opinion makers in our own "meat" communities—where we live in real life. In our actual local communities where we're out talking to real

people. And I think that is a harder thing to track, and I think that's where we are making a difference in opinion.

*KP:* I don't think that they're equivalent at this point. I do think, to use this term kind of loosely, there is quite the echo chamber. There are certain things that the blogging world gets very upset about. I would use the war as an example. Where consistent drumming, consistent posting on particular issues has no doubt applied pressure on elected officials on the Hill in various races. And while some people would dismiss this as just that loud-mouth left-wing crowd, I don't think that works anymore because what happens is that there is enough influence among certain facets that it has affected policy—I won't say reversed policy, but it has affected policy. One of the things that you see when you see the Democrats who now lead both houses of Congress, when they say, "We came here with a mandate," well, they're reminded of that mandate quite a bit by the online world. That is part of a more high-profile public opinion than, say, a poll that comes out every other month.

*MKH:* Campaigns are changing, but there's a constant back and forth between sort of the old guard that doesn't quite get the blogosphere and folks who are trying to talk candidates into reaching out a little more online. There's always tension there. They've hired some really great people but those people are always working within a framework where they are battling to get their views heard. Obviously, in getting a presidential candidate to do anything—there's a lot of decision making that goes into that; the Internet is one of the more risky things you can get involved with. You're going to run up against some problems, less so on the Democratic side because it has proven to be a huge fundraising tool first and foremost, which politicians love.

*DP:* Let me offer a personal conclusion. I am somebody who until recently taught mass media intro classes that consisted of about 400 eighteen-year-olds every semester, and I would recall to them the advice of both Mark Twain and Harry Truman: "Don't do anything that you wouldn't want on the front page of the newspaper." I update that by saying, "Don't put up anything on the Web about yourself that you wouldn't want to have somebody else put up on the Web about yourself!" I'm old enough to remember when a diary was not a public document that parents, future spouses, and future employers could read. That's going to be one of the very interesting evolutions of the future of politics, because all of our students and all of the young people in campaigns that I know are fully immersed in the technologies. It's not "new" media to them. They're born to it, it's like the wheel and fire. So there's a fascinating sociological and psychographic change going on in campaigns as the "kids" grow up and will one day be running all the campaigns and the world. Stay tuned, or rather logged in. . . .

This Roundtable was held in January 2008.

## Notes

1. Jorn Barger coined the term *weblog* on his site RobotWisdom.com in December 1997.
2. See Edelman Group, *A Corporate Guide to the Global Blogosphere* (New York: Edelman, 2007); "Political Influentials Online in the 2004 Presidential Campaign," Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet, <http://216.87.14.57/UploadedFiles/political%20influentials.pdf>; Convio, Inc., "Using the Internet to Raise Funds and Mobilize Supporters" (December, 2003), [http://www.convio.com/downloads/Dean\\_White\\_Paper\\_121703.pdf](http://www.convio.com/downloads/Dean_White_Paper_121703.pdf); Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "The Dean Activists: Their Profile and Prospects" (April 6, 2005), <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/240.pdf>; Lee Rainie, "The State of Blogging," Pew Internet & American Life Project (January 2, 2005), <http://www.pewinternet.org>; Lee Rainie, "New Data on Blogs and Blogging" (May 2, 2005), <http://www.pewinternet.org>; Michael Cornfield et al., "Buzz, Blogs, and Beyond" (May 16, 2005), [http://www.pewinternet.org/ppt/BUZZ\\_BLOGS\\_BEYOND\\_Fina105-16-05.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/ppt/BUZZ_BLOGS_BEYOND_Fina105-16-05.pdf); and Lee Rainie and John Horrigan, "Election 2006 Online," Pew/Internet (January 17, 2007), [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/199/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/199/report_display.asp).
3. Ed Keller and John Berry, *The Influentials* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 147–48; Daniel Terdiman, "Dems Hold the High Ground Online." *Wired*, <http://www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,63183,00.html>; Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet, "Political Influentials Online"; and Convio, Inc., "Using the Internet."
4. Keller and Berry, *The Influentials*.
5. See essays in David D. Perlmutter and John M. Hamilton, eds., *From Pigeons to News Portals: Foreign Reporting and the Challenge of New Technology* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), esp. chapter by Steven Livingston on "Nokia Journalism."
6. David D. Perlmutter, "The Internet: Big Pictures and Interactors," in *Image Ethics in the Digital Age*, 2nd ed., ed. Larry Gross, John Stuart Katz, and Jay Ruby, 1–26 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).
7. David D. Perlmutter, "How Will the Clintons Harness the Political Force of the Blog?" *USA Today*, October 2, 2006, p. 31A.

## Biographical Note

David D. Perlmutter is a professor and associate dean for graduate studies and research at the William Allen White School of Journalism & Mass Communications, University of Kansas. He is the author or editor of seven books on political communication and persuasion including *Blogwars* (Oxford University Press, 2008). He has also written several dozen research articles for academic journals as well as more than 150 essays for U.S. and international newspapers and magazines. He is editor of the blog of the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas (<http://www.doleinstituteblog.org/>).

Address: University of Kansas, School of Journalism & Mass Communications, 1435 Jayhawk Blvd., Lawrence, KS 66045; e-mail: [ddp@ku.edu](mailto:ddp@ku.edu)