BUZZ, BLOGS, AND BEYOND:
The Internet and the National Discourse in the Fall of 2004

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BuzzMetrics and Dr. Michael Cornfield, a senior research consultant to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, studied the impact of political blogs on the national agenda during the last two months of the 2004 presidential campaign. (By political blogs, we mean only those few dozen blogs which are devoted to filtering public affairs news and which garner traffic in the tens of thousands.)   Highlights:

- The scandal known as "Rathergate" and other moments in the 2004 campaign enhanced the reputation of political blogs, bloggers, and the blogosphere –but **blogger power**, the capacity of blog operators to make buzz and influence decision-makers, **is circumstantial: dependent on the sorts of information available, and contingent on the behavior of other public voices**.

- In our research, we charted the popularity of certain topics which attracted buzz (a lot of simultaneous talk) during the fall campaign across four channels of communication: blogs, citizen chat rooms, the mainstream media, and the national campaigns. The blog and citizen chat room channels were subdivided into conservative, general, and liberal groupings. No recurrent pattern indicative of unilateral blogger influence was detected. **Political bloggers were buzz followers as much as buzz makers.**

- We also coded topics of discussion to see whether preferences in one channel or subdivision corresponded with those in the others. Strong correspondences existed throughout the discourse. However, the analysis also suggests that **bloggers may have been positioned in the fall of 2004 as a guide for the mainstream media to the rest of the internet.**

- In a case study, we reviewed blog posts and the cross-channel popularity concerning the much-remarked-upon episode involving the memos CBS relied upon in its controversial story about George W. Bush's service in the National Guard, and found that a combination of factors –some –net and –blog related, some not-- created the buzz which spurred CBS to retract its claim that the memos were authentic and commission an independent review of its journalistic performance. **The key contribution by the bloggers in the "Rathergate" scandal consisted of providing forums accessible to all internet users in which facsimiles of the memos could be examined and discussed.**

I. POLITICAL BLOGGERS AND THE POWER OF BUZZ

Blogs are hot. Two Pew surveys conducted in early 2005 show that 16% of U.S. adults (32 million) are blog readers. After a 58% jump in readership in 2004, this number marks a leveling off within the survey's margin of error. But the blogger audience now commands respect: it stands at 20% of the newspaper audience and 40% of the talk radio audience. Meanwhile, 6% of the entire U.S. adult population has created a blog. That's 11 million people, or one out of every 17 American citizens.[1] Technorati recorded the ten millionth blog in its worldwide tracking system this month.

There is a current sense among communications elites that it is important to have a blog. A *Business Week* cover warns, "Blogs Will Change Your Business." Syndicated columnist and former California gubernatorial candidate Arianna Huffington has unveiled a blog with celebrity contributors. Issue Dynamics, which in 1993 was the first K Street firm to set up a lobbying web site, has begun offering a new service to its clients in "Blogger Relations." Recommendation #4 in *The New York Times*'s internal review of how to regain reader trust reads: "Consider creating a Times blog that promotes interaction with readers."

To understand why blogs are hot, it helps to consider the concept of buzz. Buzz is the sound heard in public when a lot of people are talking about the same thing at the same time. Some buzz forms around trivial topics, as the Yahoo! "Buzz Index" illustrates in abundance.[2] But buzz can alter social behavior and perceptions. It can embolden or embarrass its subjects. It can affect sales, donations, and campaign coffers. It can move issues up, down, and across institutional agendas (across being issue re-conceptualization or re-framing). When these changes occur, buzz can shift the balance of forces arrayed in a political struggle, and so affect its outcome.

Today, bloggers have buzz partly because a few dozen of them, known as the "A-list" or "political blogs," have been hailed as a new force in national politics.[3] (For the remainder of this report, the terms "bloggers" and "political bloggers" will be used interchangeably.) Their role in the 2004 presidential election has been likened to the English yeomen who used longbows and other hand weapons to defeat French mounted cavalry at the battle of Agincourt –in both instances, an historic triumph of an underdog

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[1] Lee Rainie, "The State of Blogging," Pew Internet & American Life Project Data Memo, January 2, 2005, and "New Data on Blogs and Blogging," Commentary May 2, 2005, www.pewinternet.org .

[2] The Yahoo! Buzz Index is calculated based on the percentage of Yahoo! users who search for a subject on a given day. (The presumption built into this metric is that people look for more information about topics they have just heard about and want to talk about knowledgeably.) The Index may be found at buzz.yahoo.com .

[3] A political blog is a species of the "filter blog," in which the blogger supplies interesting content found elsewhere online to readers (and viewers and listeners, since the content may be multimedia in form). Filter blogs contrast with "personal journals" (public diaries) and "k-logs" (knowledge compilations oriented to well-defined business and educational research communities). See Susan C. Herring, Lois Ann Scheidt, Sabrina Bonus, and Elijah Wright, "Bridging the Gap: A Genre Analysis of Weblogs," (2004), accessible at www.blogninja.com/index.php . The "A-list" consists of those political filters with the greatest traffic.

who relied on guts, creativity, and decentralized technology to prevail.[4] The blog set up by the Howard Dean campaign was instrumental to its candidate's rise from obscurity to front-runner for the Democratic nomination in 2003. Bloggers were the new kids on the block during the 2004 national conventions, as both parties accommodated them with credentials, arena space, and interviews. Bloggers have been credited with sustaining the public life of anti-Kerry accusations made by Swift Boat Veterans for Truth until the issue exploded in late summer 2004.[5]   Most notably, bloggers sparked a public outcry against the authenticity of memos cited in a CBS News report about George W. Bush's service in the National Guard, a buzz which culminated in an apology from the media giant and the early retirement of its most prominent figure, Dan Rather.

Positing A Blog-Buzz Connection

There are several reasons to think that the force wielded by the political blogs has a lot to do with buzzmaking. First, the internet is a great place to roam for buzzworthy topics. All sorts of social and political communication occur online, from commercial advertising to educational symposia, concerted rabble-rousing to casual chewing the fat, technical databases to home-made cartoons. Since it is online, moreover, this communication can be sought, monitored, tabulated, tagged, indexed, reconstructed, and redistributed at an individual's discretion. (Good news for individuals who want to gab, not so good for organizations that want to control what is said in and about their names.)

Second, the blog as a net form is conducive to buzz. A blog is basically a web site consisting of a collection of entries in reverse chronological order. It is more personal and informal than institutional web sites, more accessible to web roamers and searchers than email, more spontaneous than advertisements, and more open to discussion than video, audio, textual, and statistical files. At the same time, a blog can be linked to all these other internet forms. So whatever is buzzworthy anywhere can be brought to the attention of a blog readership.

Then conversation may commence. Often, a blog contains features interlacing it with other blogs, whence the concept of a network of blogs, or blogosphere, existing within the internet. These connective features include a "blogroll" of favorite blogs, a "permalink" identifying a blog entry, or post, for ready reference elsewhere, a "track back" capacity whereby outsiders who link to the entry are listed and given a reciprocal link, and "RSS feed" capability to deliver an entry automatically to those who have requested its type. These features assure that whatever one blog buzzes about, adjacent blogs are readily able to amplify.

Third, adjacency develops out of shared interests, as do audience followings. Internet users do not go to blogs out of obligation, as, say, students head to syllabus readings, and middle management to the in-box. Nor do internet users see blog content

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[4] Peggy Noonan, "So Much to Savor," *Wall Street Journal*, November 4, 2004. Ms. Noonan also credited "yeomen" in AM radio and elsewhere on the internet.
[5] Intelliseek's BlogPulse, "Campaign Radar 2004 Summary," politics.blogpulse.com/04_11_04/politics.html .

as a consequence of someone else's financial arrangement to have that content placed before them, as with advertising. Blogs are perused voluntarily, and returned to automatically or habitually, because readers are disposed to want information on the same topics as fascinate the blogger. People who share interests are wont to talk about them –and the blog form provides both stimulating information (the latest, first) and the means to converse about it.

Fourth, the A-list bloggers occupy key positions in the mediascape. Journalists, activists, and political decision-makers have learned to consult political blogs as a guide to what is going on in the rest of the internet.[6] The bloggers are fast to spot items of interest; they link to sources so that items may be verified and inspected at length; and they embroider items with witty captions and frequently passionate commentaries. Accordingly, when bloggers buzz, the big mouthpieces of society notice.

Finally, it is hard to see what other than buzzmaking that blogger power could spring from. The political blogs don't have big promotion budgets, statutory or propriety authority over information, large staffs, mass audiences[7], social respectability, or armored divisions. They do have access to a lot of information, the appeal of the individual voice, a devotion to the subject of politics, and tools to share what they see, hear, and say with others possessing similar devotion.

Research Framework and Techniques

In this report we examine the political power of buzz as manifest in blogs, and on the internet as a whole, during the last two months of the 2004 presidential campaign season. Instead of looking solely at blogs, we developed a comparative four-channel framework, such that on any day topics mentioned in blogs could be compared with those in mainstream media, the presidential and national party campaign organs, and online citizen chat forums. We tracked the frequency of posts by keywords on a variety of buzz topics in the time period 9/1/2004-11/3/2004. We coded message topics for comparative analysis in the time period 9/27/2004-10/31/2004. The four channels are:

Channel 1: Blogs

Our blog data set consists of 16 conservative sites, 16 liberal sites, and 8 general sites, for a total of 40 blogs. For the timeframe of 9/27/2004-10/31/2004 there were a total of 7,151 unique posts in our data set of liberal blogs, 6,716 unique posts in our data set of conservative blogs, and 4,251 unique posts in our data set of general blogs.

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[6] On the emergent role of A-list bloggers as gatekeepers for the gatekeepers, so to speak, see Lada Adamic and Natalie Clance, "The Political Blogosphere and the 2004 U.S. Election: Divided They Blog," **blog**pulse.com/papers/2005/AdamicGlanceBlogWWW.pdf ; Daniel W. Drezner and Henry Farrell, "Web of Influence," *Foreign Policy*, November/December 2004; Dan Gillmor, *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, For the People* (Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Publishing, 2004).

[7] Only five political blogs average more than 100,000 visitors per day, according to SiteMeter. See www.truthlaidbear.com for traffic rankings.

Liberal:
1. America Blog
2. Daily Kos
3. Dem Watch
4. Demagogue
5. Eschaton
6. Matthew Gross
7. Moderate Left
8. Mr. Left
9. My DD
10. Oliver Willis
11. Tacitus
12. Talk Left
13. The Blogging of the President
14. The Left Coaster
15. The Pragmatic Progressive
16. Unconventional Wisdom

Conservative:
1. A Small Victory
2. Blogicus
3. Blogs for Bush
4. Command Post
5. INDC Journal
6. Instapundit
7. Little Green Footballs
8. Michelle Malkin
9. Poli Pundit
10. Powerline
11. Red State
12. Right Voices
13. Slant Point
14. The Conservative News Nik
15. The Templar Pundit
16. WizBang

General:

1. Andrew Sullivan
2. BuzzMachine
3. Press Think
4. Scrapple Face
5. The Moderate Voice
6. Vodkapundit
7. Wonkette
8. CalPundit/Washington Monthly

Channel 2: Citizen Chatter

The citizen chatter channel consists of politically-focused message boards and forums. As with blogs, we classified each site into one of 3 ideological subgroups: liberal, conservative and general. For the timeframe of 9/27/2004 – 10/31/2004 there were a total of 947,503 messages in liberal citizen chatter, 984,549 messages in conservative citizen chatter and 98,963 in general citizen chatter.

Liberal:
1. Usenet: alt.politics.democrats
2. Usenet: alt.politics.kerry
3. Democratic Underground Forums
4. MSN Groups: Free Speech America
5. Kerry-Edwards Site Forum

General:
1. Usenet: talk.politics.misc
2. America's Debate Forums
3. Politics.com/discussion
4. Capitol Hill Blue Forums

Conservative:
1. Usenet: alt.politics.bush
2. Usenet: alt.politics.republicans
3. Usenet: alt.politics.gw-bush
4. Usenet: alt.fan.rush-limbaugh.tv-show
5. Eagleforum.org
6. Free Republic

Channel 3: Campaign Releases

Campaign releases include key online forms of output for the Bush and Kerry campaigns and the Democratic and Republican National Committees (DNC and RNC). For our timeframe of 9/27/2004 – 10/31/2004 the Bush campaign/RNC generated a total of 955 messages in blogs and online press materials and the Kerry campaign/DNC generated a total of 835 messages.

Kerry Campaign:
1. Official Kerry Blog
2. Official Kerry Newsroom
3. Official DNC Newsroom

Bush Campaign:
1. Official Bush Blog
2. Official Bush Newsroom

3. Official RNC Newsroom

Channel 4: Media Coverage

BuzzMetrics sampled 16 media outlets for this channel:

1. *USA TODAY*: Front page print edition.
2. *New York Times*: Front page print edition.
3. *Washington Post*: Front page print edition.
4. (South Florida) *Sun-Sentinel*.com: Home page stories with headline and lead.
5. *Columbus Dispatch*.com: Home page stories with headline and lead.
6. *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.com: Home page stories with headline and lead.
7. NPR's "All Things Considered": Stories in the top three segments
8. CNN.com's transcript of "NewsNight with Aaron Brown": Stories included in the opening feature "The Whip."
9. ABCNews.com's "World News Tonight": Stories about preview section with leads and photos.
10. CBSNews.com's "Evening News": Top stories with leads and photos.
11. NBCNews.com's "Nightly News": Top stories with leads.
12. FOXNews.com: Top stories.
13. PBS.org's "News Hour w/Jim Lehrer": Home page stories.
14. MSNBC.com: Top story and top politics story.
15. NATIONALREVIEWONLINE.com: Top stories with photos and captions.
16. WASHINGTONMONTHLY.com: Top stories with photos.

Thanks to keyword search capabilities, we were not limited in our topic coding to catch-all categories ("the economy," "moral values"), as is commonplace in survey research about agenda-setting. However, we cannot make claims about the representativeness of our data collection with the same degree of accuracy as survey data, especially regarding the citizen chatter channel, which is a proxy for online chat and not chat throughout society.

## Tracking Buzz Across the Mediascape

During the last two months of the 2004 presidential campaign, numerous topics attracted buzz. Iraq, of course, was a consistently popular subject.

**Chart 1: Percentage of messages mentioning Iraq.**
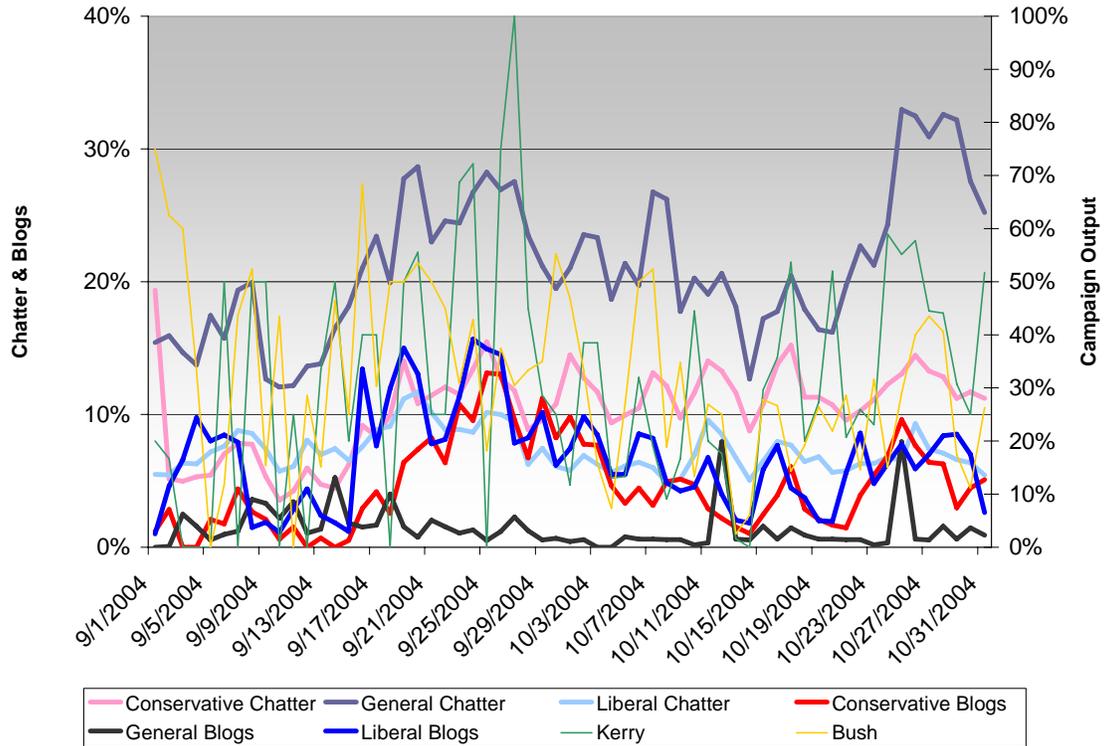
The release of the videotape with a pre-election statement from Osama Bin Laden garnered a great deal of attention from the media, but relatively little from the blogs and chatterers.

**Chart 2: Percentage of messages mentioning Osama Bin Laden tape.**
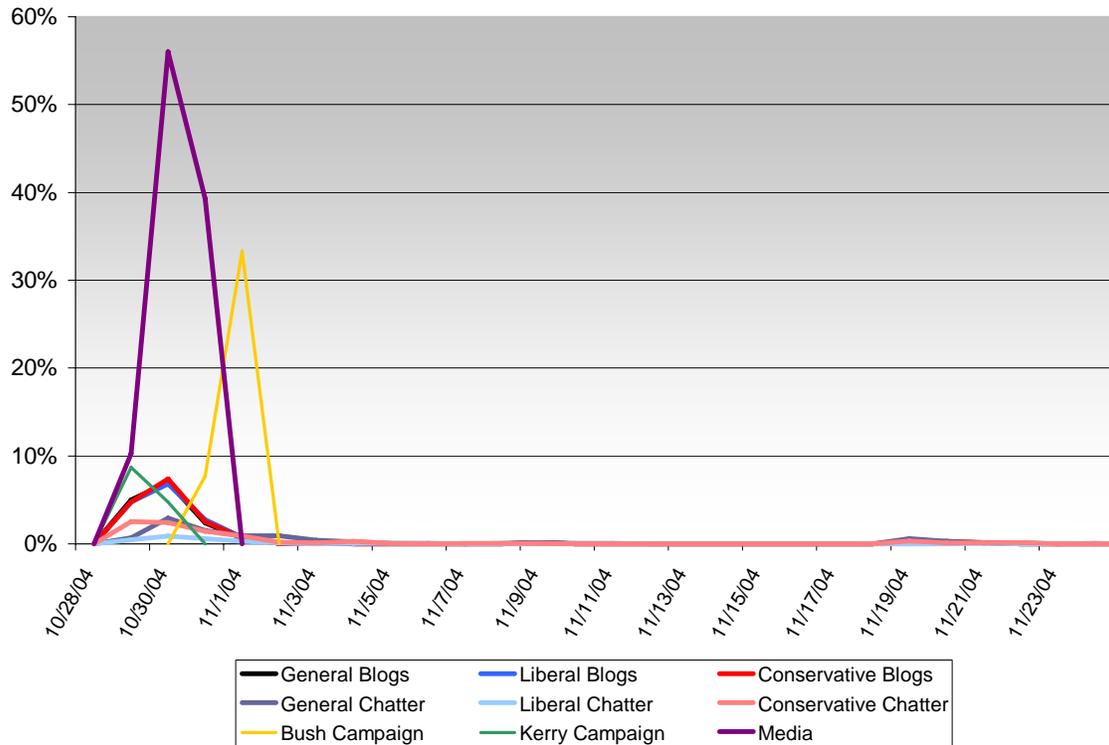
Another late October "surprise," the disclosure about missing explosives in Iraq, stirred more buzz among the blogs, although probably not as much as the Kerry campaign would have liked.

Chart 3: Percentage of messages mentioning missing explosives in Iraq.
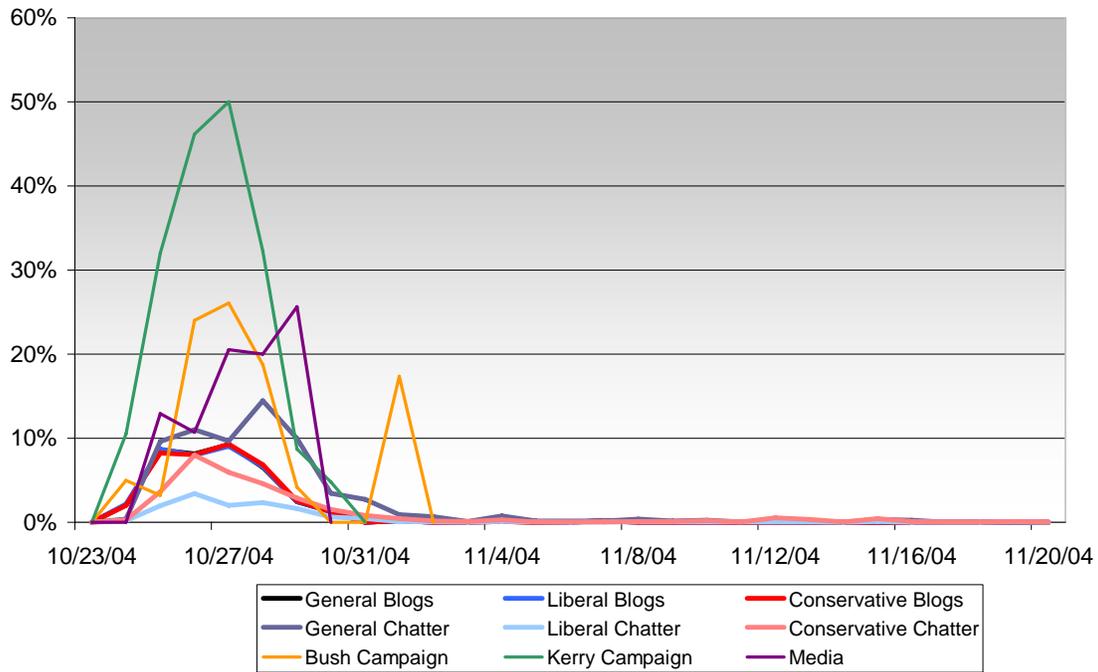
The Kerry campaign devoted a couple of days to pushing concerns about the draft into the limelight in mid-September, and there was low-level buzz on the topic well into November, with a media spike after it came up in a presidential debate, and push-back from the Bush campaign in late October.

Chart 4: Percentage of messages mentioning the military draft.
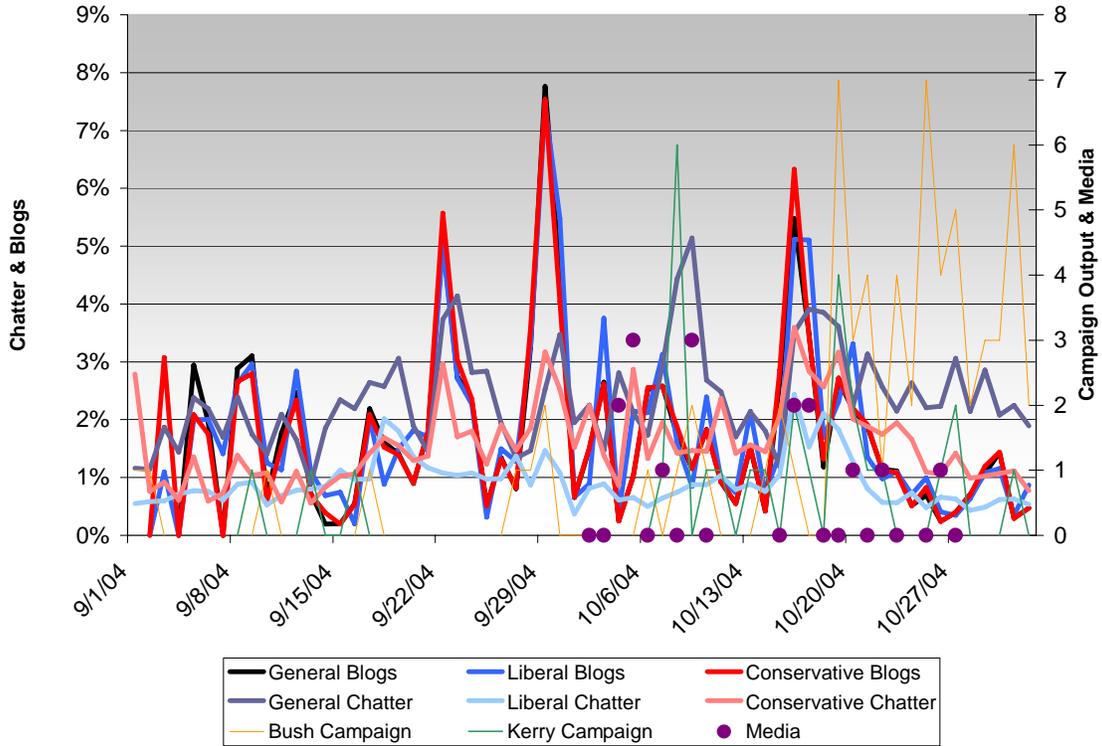
The next two charts are much lower on the buzz scale than the previous three. There was a week of buzz about Mary Cheney, the Vice-President's lesbian daughter, after the third presidential debate.

Chart 5: Percentage of messages mentioning Mary Cheney.
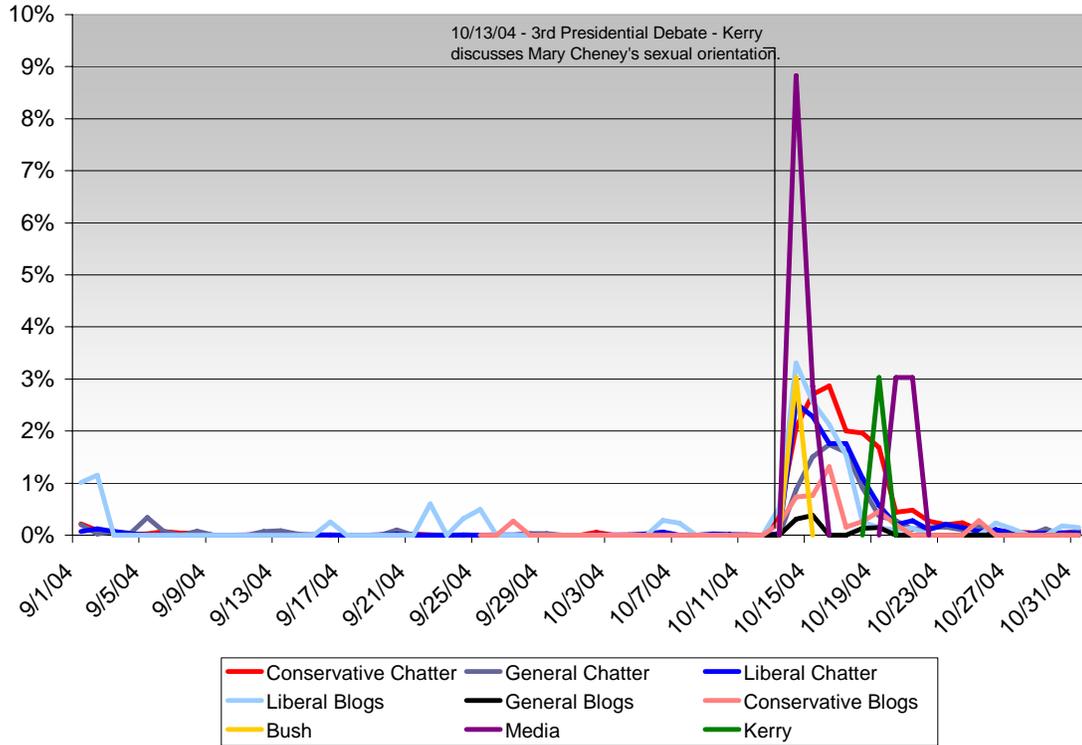
Liberals talked about the Sinclair Broadcast Group more than conservatives in October; the media corporation retreated from plans to broadcast a program critical of Kerry in the face of mounting plans for an advertising boycott.

Chart 6: Percentage of messages mentioning Sinclair Broadcast Group.
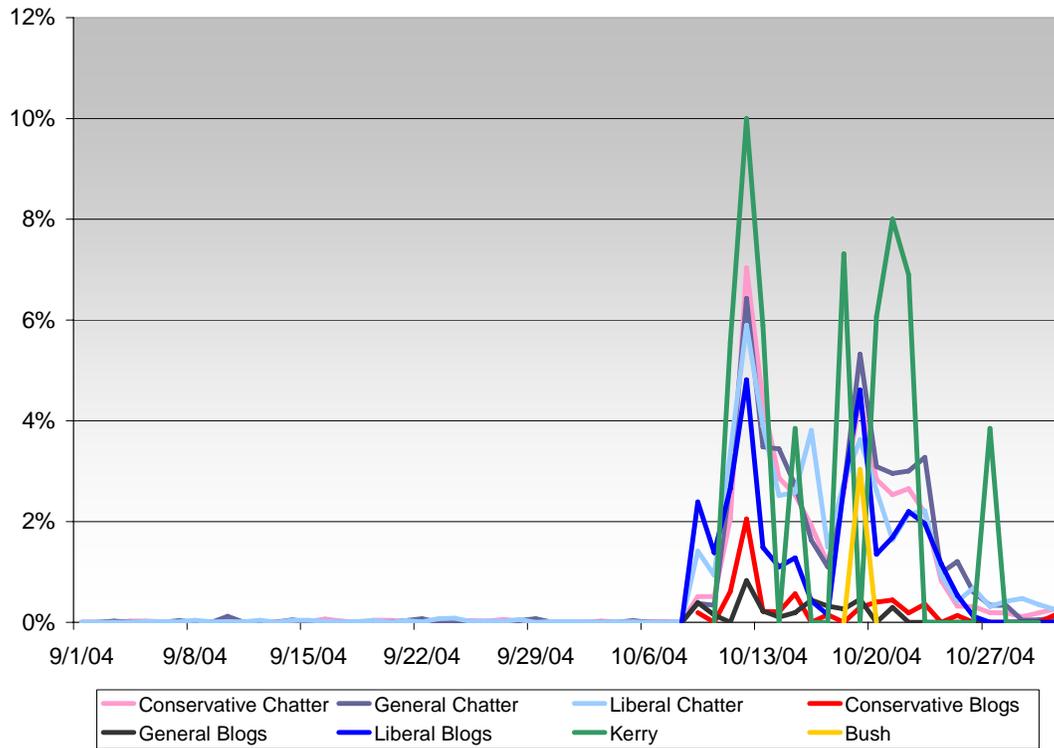
Finally, on a very low scale, there was a little buzz about the mysterious bulge detected in the back of Bush's jacket after the first debate, especially in general chatter.

Chart 7: Percentage of messages mentioning Bush's jacket bulge.
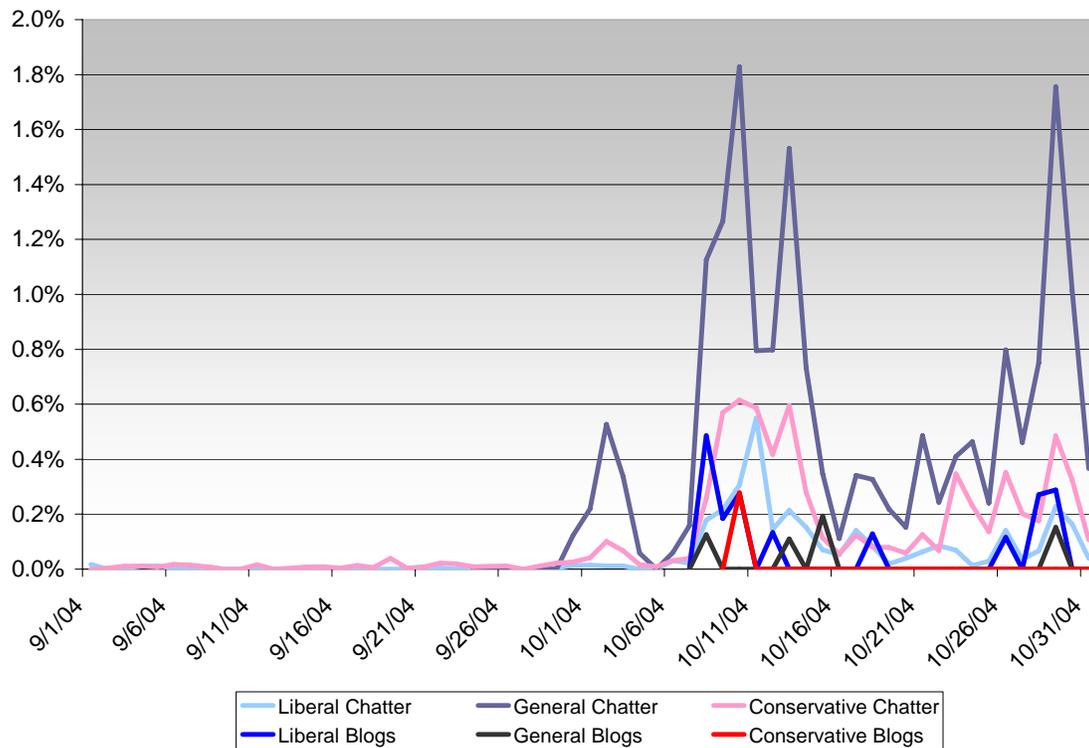
The buzz peaks, mountain ranges, valleys and other patterns on display in these mediascape charts are clues to what Jamieson and Campbell once called "the interplay of influence."[8] As can be seen from these examples, there are multiple pattern possibilities. We have not compiled enough cases or data to start cataloging buzz events, much less developing hypotheses about the dynamics of buzz. But it is clear that during the 2004 fall campaign buzz started (in the sense of a big spike followed by heavier activity in the other channels) in several channels, not just with bloggers. The same was true for sustaining buzz. If bloggers, or media, or presidential campaigns, were buzz makers plenipotentiary, that is, heavyweight agenda-setters and issue-framers, then there would be a recurring pattern in which one channel led and the others followed. This was not what we detected. Still, there must be something special about the relationship between bloggers and political buzz to account for all the attention paid to blogs in 2004 and 2005.

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[8] Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *The Interplay of Influence: News, Advertising, Politics, and the Mass Media, 5th Edition* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2000.)

II. DO BLOGS CONSTITUTE A "FIFTH ESTATE?"

One possibility is that bloggers have a distinct set of priorities and proclivities, that they have emerged as a sort of Fifth Estate. Recall from French history that the four estates consist of the political "nobility" (today, that would be government, parties, and top advocacy groups), the knowledge "clergy" (academia, think tanks, foundations, research institutes), the popular "citizenry," and the "press" (infotainment media). Our study does not include a knowledge channel. However, we did look closely at buzz-making relationships among the campaigns, the media, the bloggers, and the online citizens. Both internet channels were subdivided ideologically as well as considered as a whole, to explore the possibility that the way people online process information is somehow related to a trans-ideological unity of perspective on national discourse priorities during the general election phase of a presidential election. Such a perspective would make certain topics particularly interesting to bloggers, and/or chatters, and/or internet users, regardless of their ideological outlooks. (Lacking an offline chat component, we could not explore the opposite possibility, that being online reinforces ideological perspectives. Another Pew Internet & American Life study has examined this question.[9])

Topical Priorities and Buzz Influence: A Look at Correspondences

Our analysis of how closely preferred topics in one channel or subdivision corresponded with those in other channels, like our mediascape charts for particular topics, suggests that the bloggers did not have their own agenda.

BuzzMetrics examined the political issues most frequently discussed in the media, among bloggers, among users in citizen chatter sites, and from the Bush and Kerry campaigns, from September 27th- October 31st, 2004.

We developed a set of topical categories and measured how frequently they were mentioned by various channel constituents.[10] The resulting frequency count was then converted into a percentage of sample size. We then determined the top 20 issues in each channel, and correlated those top 20 issues to the corresponding percentages of those issues in the other channels. Again, our four channels of data were:

– Political Blogs: commentary from 40 top political pundit bloggers.
– Citizen Chatter: conversations from politically-engaged citizens.
– Campaign Releases: news distributions from Bush and Kerry campaign websites, newsletters, and blogs.
– Media Coverage: 16 key national media outlets.

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[9] John Horrigan, Kelly Garrett, and Paul Resnick, "The Internet and Democratic Debate," Pew Internet & American Life Project, October 27, 2004. www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/141/report_display.asp . This report found that wired Americans hear more points of view about candidates and key issues than other citizens. They are not using the internet to screen out ideas with which they disagree.

[10] BuzzMetrics defines message as a single message board post or a single blog posting, and a single article from campaign output or a single article from a given media outlet.

Chart 8: Flowchart of blog, citizen chatter, media and campaign correlations.

       Strong correlations among the various channels and subdivisions may be seen throughout the flow chart. The bloggers were agenda followers as leaders. No single, mono-directional path of influence is discernible.

       Looking at the 38 pairings in various combinations yields some interesting observations.[11] Table 1 in the Appendix presents a rank ordering of channel segment correlations, from strongest to weakest.

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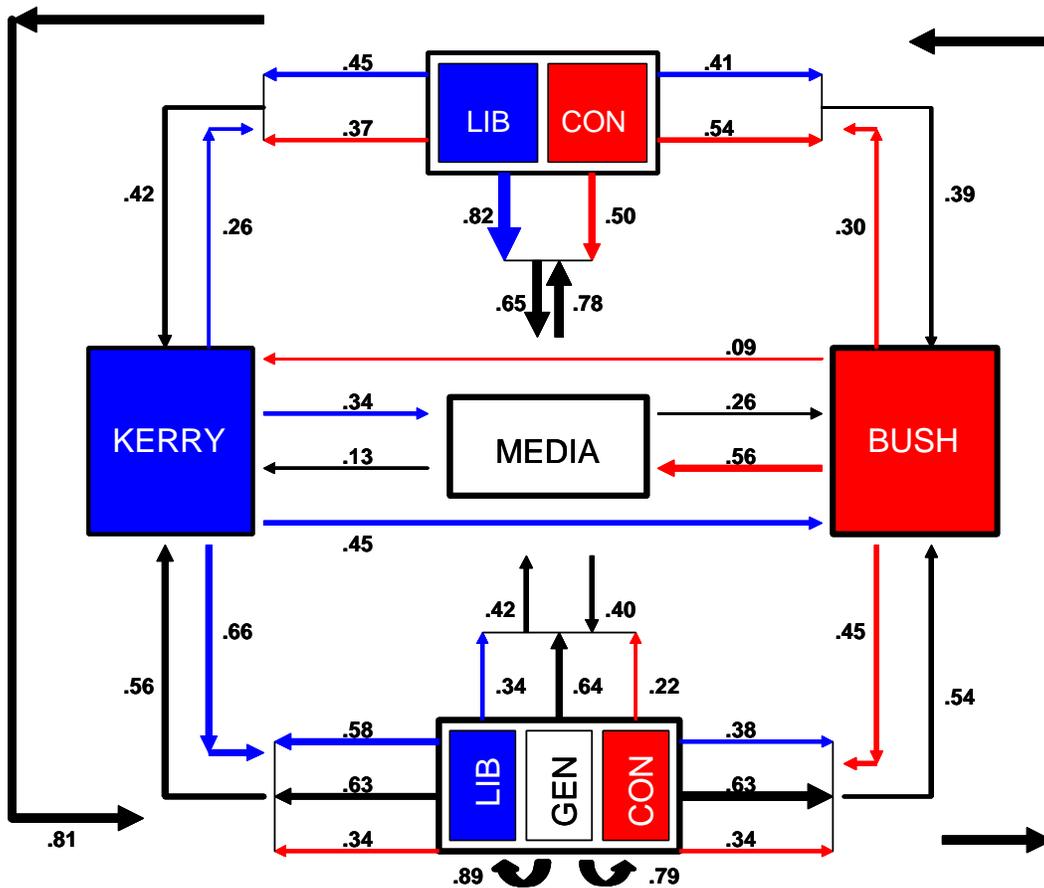
[11] We think it premature to draw any inferences about internal correlation patterns from just one data set.

The strongest two combinations existed between general citizen chat groups and the ideological chat groups: (.89) with conservatives, (.79) with liberals. The weakest two combinations both involved the Kerry campaign, which had small topic preference correspondences with the priorities of the media (.13) and the Bush campaign (.09). The Bush campaign did not follow media priorities strongly either (.26), but it did speak much more to the priorities of the Kerry campaign (.45) than vice versa (again, .09).

For both the Kerry and Bush campaigns, the most frequent topic of mention was the character of the opponent. The online chatter reflected similar priorities: character came in at the number one and two positions for general, conservative, and liberal. However, conservatives and liberals talked about the media almost as much as the candidates' characters, while the general chat groups talked more about Iraq and the debates than the media.[12]

The strength of the correspondences between the blogs and the media, on one hand, and the blogs and the online chat groups, on the other, lends credence to the contention that blogs are positioned between the two other channels as a sort of guide for the media to the rest of the internet.[13] Media to blogs (.78) was slightly stronger than blogs to media (.65), with the topic preferences of liberal blogs corresponding more with the media than conservative blogs, (.83) to (.54). Blogs to chatter correlated at (.81), and chatter to blogs was practically the same (.78). Media and chatter, in contrast, exhibited a weaker pair of correspondence coefficients, with media to chatter at (.40) and chatter to media at (.43). The correlation of conservative chat priorities to the media was weaker still, at (.22). These numbers encourage us to test the blog-positioning hypothesis for our database through rigorous correlation analysis, pending the completion of methodological refinements. We are also interested in assembling a second data base, to see how these relationships correspond without the supervening focal point of a presidential campaign (although the agenda of the president may also provide a common focus).

[NEW CHART NINE HERE]

The blogs and the media talked about aspects of the campaign horserace (polls, voters, strategy, campaign activities, and swing states) more than the online chat groups, with the exception of the debates, which was a commonly popular topic.

In terms of topical priorities, then, the political blogosphere seems less an entity unto itself than a well integrated part of the national discourse. The levels of its topical correspondences with the other channels do not cluster at the top of the rank orderings (which would point to a separate and strongly influential estate). Nor do they cluster at the bottom (which would suggest a world apart). Instead, blog correspondences are marbled throughout the rank order list. And while there are differences among liberal, conservative, and overall blog correlations with respect to the other voices in the

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[12] Data presenting the topical preferences of each channel and subchannel are available upon request.
[13] See note 5, *supra*.

discourse, again there does not seem to be a clustering pattern for any one of the ideological subdivisions.

So let us turn to another possibility: that the current high reputation of bloggers as buzz-makers of consequence rests on their proclivities. Perhaps it's not that they have a separate agenda, but that they have a distinct role to play on a topic of common interest. Different methods of processing information are, after all, a large part of what distinguishes the traditional four estates. To explore this idea, we considered the bloggers' performance in the buzz event known to some as "Rathergate" –or, with narrative irony, "Rathergate."[14]

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[14] The superscript alludes to a suspicious typographical feature in the memos which CBS presented as authentic.

III. BUZZ, BLOGS, AND "RATHERGATE": THE CASE OF THE INCRIMINATING MEME.

Chronology

The mediascape chart below depicts the national discourse in the wake of CBS News's controversial report, narrated by Dan Rather, about George W. Bush's stint in the National Guard.

Chart 9: Percentage of messages about Rathergate.
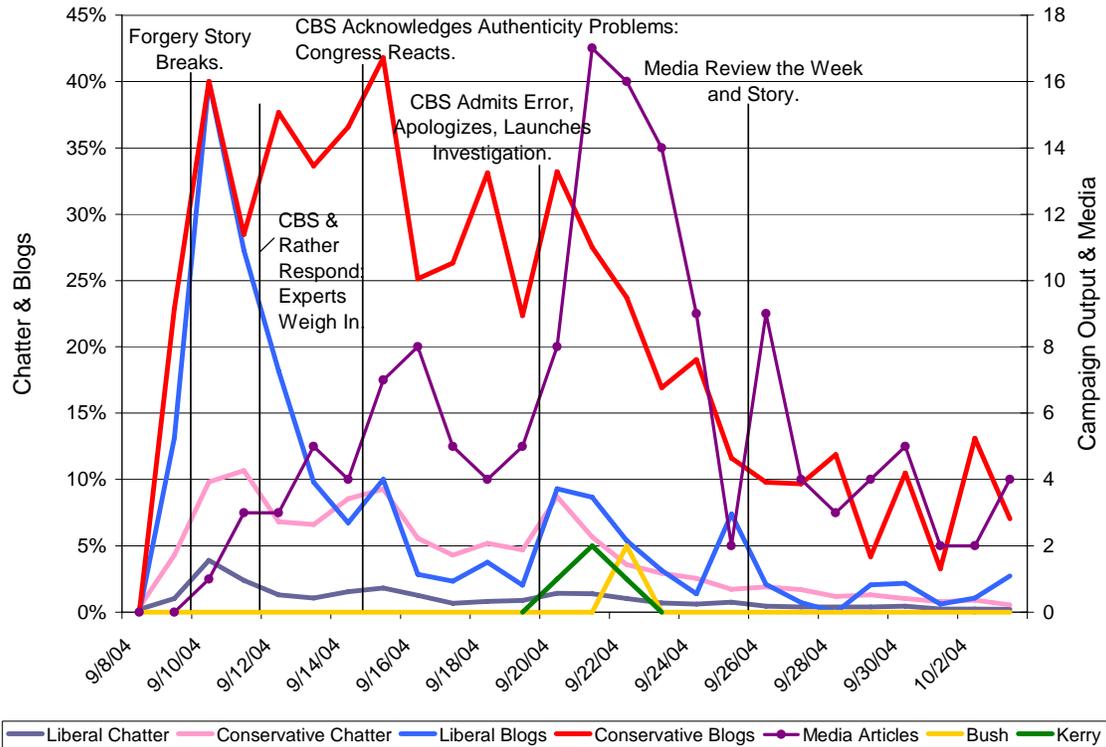
The report aired as a documentary segment on the program *60 Minutes II* on September 8, the first Wednesday after the conclusion of the Republican National Convention, that is, at the onset of the fall campaign. The news value of the segment was pegged to four memos purported to have been written by Bush's commander in the Texas Air National Guard, Lt. Colonel Jerry B. Killian, in 1972 and 1973. The memos suggested that the future president received preferential treatment, and disobeyed orders.

The White House released the memos without confirming or disputing their authenticity, saying they received them from CBS. Commenters on the conservative online discussion forum Free Republic.com had begun questioning the memos the night of the broadcast, and the next day, as the chart shows, the blogosphere was abuzz. From there the charge of forgery went to the Drudge Report, which linked to Powerlineblog.com under the headline "'60 Minutes' Document on Bush Might Be

Fake." On September 10, the ABC News online political digest *The Note* observed that the document controversy "has certainly pushed questions about Bush's National Guard service to the background;" its account of the day's political news included a tick-tock narrative of who did the pushing, with the Free Republic posts, the blogs, and Drudge being followed in short order by mainstream media journalists, including CBS.

In its initial reaction, CBS News backed away slightly from vouching for the documents, but remained steadfastly behind its story's contents. By September 12, the topic had subsided on liberal blogs, but stayed robust on conservative blogs. As liberal blog interest continued to diminish over the next two days, general blog and media interest climbed. On September 15, one week after the broadcast, CBS acknowledged "contradictions" in the evidence, but continued to stand by the story, and remained silent about its sources and methods in the face of public pressure urging disclosure. House Majority Whip Roy Blunt and 39 other GOP Representatives signed a letter to CBS President Andrew Heyward calling for a retraction, and Congressman Christopher Cox called for an investigation.

The controversy reached its climax on September 20. After word spread that CBS would make a major statement, the news division reported that the man who supplied the documents, Bill Burkett, had admitted to misleading the report's producer, Mary Mapes, about their origins. The president of CBS News, Andrew Heyward, joined Rather in publicly apologizing. Two days later, CBS announced that it had established an independent panel to investigate its journalistic performance.

On September 26, the cover of the *New York Times Magazine* showed veteran political journalists R.W. Apple and Jack Germond hovering over blogger Ana Marie Cox (who issued two posts on Rathergate, both satirical), their faces illuminated by the glow emanating from Cox's computer. The tableaux humorously suggested a passing of the torch. Dan Rather's retirement as anchor of the *CBS Evening News* was announced on November 23 (well before the panel issued its report on January 10, 2005).

The course of events gave rise to the idea that bloggers had swarmed around CBS and generated such a buzz that the television giant had to capitulate. Closely related to that concept is the idea that the blogosphere fact-checked the story with considerable input from individuals around the internet.[15] Just what did bloggers say, call for, and do? The following analysis is based on a review of 396 blog posts in the BuzzMetrics data set and several other web site and blog posts as footnoted and described ahead.[16]

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[15] For example, see Stephen Humphries, "Blogs Look Burly After Kicking Sand on CBS," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 22, 2004, www.csmonitor.com/2004/0922/p01s03-stin.html .

[16] The 396 posts were obtained by searching the blog channel universe by the Boolean logical terms (+CBS +(memo* "national guard" forger* "forged doc*") for the time period 9/8/04 to 9/30/04, and eliminating duplicates by visual inspection.

The Rathergate Bloggers as Political Smart Mobs

As with the topics of the missing explosives, Sinclair Broadcast Group, and Bush's jacket bulge, there was ideological divergence within the blogosphere in the buzz about the CBS memos. Conservatives stayed on the subject longer and talked about it much more than liberals and general political bloggers. On September 10, both liberal and conservative blogs were at a 40% mention rate. But two days later, conservatives were at 38% and liberals at 17%; on the 15th, the day of the statement by CBS News president Andrew Heyward, it was 42-10; in the days just before CBS capitulated, it was 34-4 (the 18th) and 34-9 (the 20th). Setting aside the 26 general posts, within the remainder of 370 posts, compiled from an equal number of politically conservative and liberal blogs, the ratio of conservative to liberal posts was 17:3 . The most frequent poster within the case study subset was Charles Johnson, of Little Green Footballs (104, or 4.5 a day), followed by PowerLineBlog (37, 1.6/day) and INDC Journal (37, 1.6/day).

Two nights after he narrated the National Guard report, Dan Rather told viewers of his *Evening News* program that "Today on the internet and elsewhere, some people, including many who are partisan political operatives….allege that the documents are fake." On the 13th, he conceded on the same program that some questions come "from people who are not active political partisans." These comments suggest that Rather and CBS News saw themselves as targets of a partisan attack. However true that may have been, the bloggers did not appear to lead such a movement through their web sites.   Only 12 of the 396 blog posts in the data set, scarcely 4%, contained calls to, reports about, or online mechanisms to participate in political action. Of these, 11 were from the conservatives, 1 from liberals, and none from general political blogs.

"Smart mobs," Howard Rhinegold wrote in his book of that name, "emerge when communication and computing technologies amplify human talents for cooperation."[17] Rhinegold and others have observed smart mobs at work in political situations during the past decade, and some of the accounts of Rathergate bid us to ask whether bloggers behaved as one in attempting to take down CBS. There were no physical demonstrations or door-to-door canvassing operations during Rathergate, mooting the question of whether those in the streets relied on wireless internet equipment. Petitions and boycotts, as evident in the controversies over Sinclair Broadcasting and, later, Terry Schiavo, were minimal.

However, conservative bloggers interested in the purportedly forged memos did engage in cooperative behavior to advance shared political goals. The buzz they helped to create had political consequences. There is no telling whether petitions, boycotts, and demonstrations might have developed had CBS resisted further. A closer look at the political behavior of the bloggers is therefore in order. If they were not full-fledged smart mobs, they approached such cooperative coherence.

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[17] Howard Rhinegold, *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution* (Cambridge MA: Perseus Books, 2002), p. xii.

Strategic Ends and Means

The essence of political strategy puts conscious means into effect toward the achievement of conscious ends. For conservatives, the main goals were exposing the holes in the news story, shaming Rather and CBS, and removing the National Guard issue from the campaign scene. Powerline's John Hinderaker, a.k.a. "Hindrocket," claimed victory on goal one by September 11, but doubted the capacity of the bloggers to prevail on goals two and three:

> I'm not as optimistic as many bloggers that just because we won the argument [over the documents], we'll win the war. This story is one more thing that will damage President Bush unless the administration moves aggressively to counter it, and demonstrate to the majority of Americans –not just the news junkies—that CBS News has perpetrated a fraud of astonishing proportions in an effort to influence the election.

Michelle Malkin urged her readers to call on CBS to empanel an independent commission, and to start a boycott if the network did not cooperate. Several conservative blogs linked to her, and some cited a *National Review* article calling for pressure on CBS affiliates.

A few conservative bloggers, citing a column by William Safire in *The New York Times*, talked about a fourth goal: identifying the documents forger and helping to bring that criminal to justice. But this was a tangential consideration. Hindrocket again, from September 30:

> When Bill Burkett says the documents were handed to him by some guy he never saw before at a livestock show, and unfortunately he burned the originals, I don't think we need to spend a lot more time on the story. It's time to move on, as a certain 527 used to say.

Charles Johnson, on the other hand, urged his readers on that day to link to Scylla & Charybdis, which posted a template to email the Texas Rangers and urge a criminal investigation. (As of April 27, 2005, that had not been pursued by the government agency.)

Conservatives Mike Krempasky and Kevin Cramer launched what might be called a bumper-sticker blog: a blog whose very name states the position it means to advance in a current issue battle.[18] Rathergate.com (not in the data set) began on September 13, dedicating itself to stirring up public cries for Rather's resignation. On September 24, Krempasky announced that their petition to CBS had passed the 10,000 signature mark, and that the site had processed over 90,000 emails to the largest Class B shareholders of (parent company) Viacom stock. (Charts tracking Viacom's stock price became a

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[18] Another example: thereisnocrisis.com , a site created in opposition to President Bush's second-term campaign to change the Social Security Act.

periodic feature on Rathergate.com.) On September 25, Rathergate.com called for and facilitated action links for faxes and emails to CBS affiliates, coupled with a link and call for donations. On March 10, 2005 (the morning after Rather's last broadcast as anchor), the action blog reported 338,945 unique visitors and more than 6.4 million hits. It did not report a final count as to the number of faxes, petitions, and emails sent. While other conservative blogs linked to Rathergate.com, their primary focus was on filtering, not acting.

Liberals were more speculative than strategic. After a brief period of contesting the forgery conclusion, they put their minds to exploring who could have been behind this unfortunate turn of events. They mulled over CBS's spiraling sequence of mistakes, and aired suspicions that Karl Rove or Republican operative Roger Stone had fed the documents to the television network and lured them into a public relations trap. Liberal bloggers lamented that "the story was true." But although those four words became a veritable mantra, they did not talk up www.glcq.com, a web site where Paul Lukasiak presented damning findings from his recent inquiries into Bush's record of military service.

The sole example of a liberal call to action in the data set came from veteran cyber-activist John Aravosis, who praised Bob Fertig of democrats.com for starting a fund to pay anyone who could disprove the story. This may have been a response in kind to a prize offered by the anti-Kerry (but not necessarily pro-Bush, according to the blogger) site defeatjohnjohn.com to anyone who could recreate the memos using 1972 technology. The defeatjohnjohn prize grew to more than $50,000 thanks to contributions and pledges. No one has claimed either prize.

A great many posts, and a few blogs, were non-ideological in orientation. They preferred to refer, analyze, ruminate, and dish as individuals speaking their minds apart from strategic political considerations (i.e. how to proceed and get a goal accomplished given the state of play and the array of forces).   Jeff Jarvis's "BuzzMachine" featured posts on what CBS should have done, and how the investigatory commission could spur the reinvention of television news. Jay Rosen of PressThink wrote extensive real-time analyses, and called for Jarvis to be named to the review panel. These were not so much calls to action as recommendations addressed to the general public and the journalism/media community. Their effectiveness depended not so much on explicit politicking as rhetorical persuasiveness: that is, on powerful readers deciding that such recommendations were worth acting upon and began to act upon it.

Featured and Submerged Connections

Smart mobs, like other political entities, make a continuing and important set of choices about who they want to be seen in association with. On the one hand, coalition-building is a requisite to victory in most political battles. On the other hand, certain types of "coordination" are subject to government restrictions and public criticism.

Although they played up their cooperation with (and mentions in) the mainstream media, the conservative bloggers played down ties to the Republican Party, the Bush campaign, and other organizations active on the right. For example, Mike Krempasky and Kevin Cramer, the creators of Rathergate.com, bridled at having the site described as being part of the operations of longtime conservative direct mail impresario Richard Viguerie. In a post, they argued that Krempasky had registered the site to a Viguerie firm because that was the contact information he had at hand.

The conservative blogs were especially quick and emphatic about distancing themselves from Creative Response Concepts (CRC), a Beltway PR firm which counted Swift Boat Veterans for Truth among its clients, after a CRC executive claimed credit in a *PRWeek* story for alerting Drudge and otherwise getting the memo doubts amplified.[19] The bloggers adduced posts carried by Drudge time stamped before the time cited by the executive. They wanted to be seen as independent actors. They wanted to be seen, as well, as the first to the scandal story.

The conservatives relished being seen as smart and well-connected to the internet grassroots. PowerlineBlog called for a test of the paper in CBS's possession, and answered a reader question about legal admissibility standards. Tips and suggestions from readers regarding goals one (poking holes) and two (shaming CBS) were awarded prominent mentions in blogger posts.

There seems to have been cooperation among liberal voices to thematize the president's record in the National Guard during the week the story aired. *The Note* reeled off "an odd confluence of developments" in its dispatch on the air date, September 8, including a *Boston Globe* story, a column by Nicholas Kristof in the *New York Times,* a new commercial from the 527 Texans for Truth, and a conference call held by DNC Chair Terry McAuliffe. To which the conservative blogosphere would add two postings by Joshua Marshall evincing prior knowledge of the telecast's topic. The first preview, posted on TalkingPointsMemo September 7, opened with "Feel the Buzz."

Verbal Aggression and the Question of Mob Rule

Corey Pein, writing in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, contended that this episode was "less like a victory for democracy than a case of mob rule."[20] Pein and CJR would come in for considerable criticism when his piece was published in the first week of 2005. They thus joined others who had been subjected to aggressive language in the blogosphere.

Name-calling, chest-thumping, partisan outing (the hostile brandishing of another person's political connections and activities), and violent verbiage were commonplace in

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[19] Douglas Quenqua, "Two DC Firms ramp up efforts over latest presidential controversies," www.prweek.com/news/printer.cfm?ID=222586 (published September 17, 2004).
[20] Corey Pein, "Blog-Gate," *Columbia Journalism Review*, January-February 2005, www.cjr.org/issues/2005/1/pein-blog.asp .

the data set, especially in the reader comment sections to blog posts (which were less visible than the posts themselves in most cases). From the blogpile on Pein and CJR, as made public by the journalism magazine:

> You people obviously don't get it, but you will soon. This movement is bigger than the left's domination of the universities, the newspapers, and the film industry; it's bigger than anything that has occurred since you wormed into power in the 1960s….It's over, you clowns. Now, when you lie, we will report it, every time.

Much of the sharp-edged criticism came as part of intensive colloquies in which the primary purposes seemed to be refuting allegations and questioning interpretations. A good deal seemed more intent on eliciting reader laughter than inciting reader retaliation. Mobs in the pejorative and non high-tech sense of the word inflict harm beyond words, and there is no evidence of calls for that, let alone attempts to carry out the calls. Partisan outing is not sexual outing. The bloggers carried the day through the substance of what they shouted (and otherwise asserted), not by shouting others into submission (a technical impossibility on the internet.) The passion seems further justified by the campaign clock.

The closest thing to an innocent trampling victim surfaced at the end of September. David Hailey, a technical writing professor at Utah State University, was hounded with derogatory emails and mocked in blogs when he challenged the consensus by saying the memos could have been produced on a typewriter. "Prof Pursued by Mob of Bloggers," read the headline in *Wired News.*[21] The mob sent emails to university officials insisting that he lose his job. His analysis turned out to be, by his own admission, a work in progress. He kept his job, and received public apologies from at least one blogger (Kevin Aylward of Wizbang).

The Scandal Frame

Assessing the Rathergate blog posts in terms of political strategy, ideology, and partisanship yields some insights into the buzz phenomenon. There is another way to look at the bloggers and the buzz, and that is as part of the cultural ritual of scandal. Scandals are stories of corruption which people want to hear and talk about. As a scandal plays out in public, certain figures and institutions fall into familiar roles: suspected transgressor, apparent victims, investigators, and judges. The bloggers won renown in this case partly on the strength of the innovative, appealing, and crucial role they came to inhabit, as hosts of a quasi-forensic lab in which their readership could join them in the detection work.

Not all accusations of corruption trigger buzz, of course. Many a would-be "-gate" narrative falls flat. What's more, the story could have unfolded according to a

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[21] Staci D. Kramer, "Prof Pursued by Mob of Bloggers," *Wired News*, www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,65250,00.html (published October 7, 2004).

different ritual, such as that of a partisan debate headed toward compromise or confrontation. However, neither the Kerry nor the Bush campaigns commented on the topic throughout the controversy. The campaign channel output consisted of seven statements, four from the DNC and three from the RNC, all between September 20 and 22, and all tangential to the discussion and action.

Conditions were unusually hospitable to the forgery charge catching on as a scandal:

- *There was quick and broad agreement as to what kind of story this was.* Conservatives suspected the commission of a crime, in both the metaphoric sense against the campaign discourse, and the literal sense of an apparent forging of military documents. Liberals did not refute the charges of dirty politics and forgery; instead, they reframed them, contending that Bush's shirking of duty during his service in the Air National Guard was the real scandal. This clash of story frames ironically lent thematic unity to the discourse. Scandal searching made it easier to decide which details were salient, and what questions and actions were next. The blog posts hunted for clues, not swing votes.

- *The alleged perpetrators were famous, and had been under suspicion by some for a long time.* No one needed to Google "Dan Rather" or "CBS News." And those who did consult a search engine might well have found the web site Ratherbiased.com, online since 2000 "documenting America's most politicized journalist," or Bernard Goldberg's book *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News*.

- *The victim was in imminent danger.* This was not a distant or cold case. The election was weeks away, and the candidates' service records during the Vietnam War had been a major topic of discussion for months.

- *The evidence was online.* Or so it seemed, to a remarkable and unprecedented extent. The circumstance needs to be stated as exactly as possible: net experts, bloggers, and users were *not* able to consider real evidence. Instead, they were able to play with copies of the evidence in real time. That allowed their experiments, deliberations, cash-award contests, and expressed judgments to have a real impact on the dispute through the power of buzz.

The internet and the blogosphere transformed this scandal's version of the generic "smoking gun" into a meme, a piece of content which becomes a net-borne buzz object. Other memes surfaced during the 2004 campaign with similar incriminating potential, notably, photographs of the bulge beneath Bush's jacket, and a videotape/freeze frame of unbroken seals on explosive canisters in Iraq. These attracted detectives and experts, but they did not stir up as much buzz.[22] Neither of them was particularly conducive to a

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[22] For an argument that "Bulge-gate" should have attracted more serious consideration, see Dave Lindorff, "The Emperor's New Hump," www.fair.org/index.php?page=2012. As it happened, the buzz was minuscule (see Chart 7), and the episode was framed mostly as comedy.

computer terminal litmus test. Both arose so close to Election Day that they seemed like "October surprise" attempts to manipulate the voters.

The middle of September, by contrast, was a perfect time for a reality show worthy of the name "CSI: CBS."

Distributed Detective Work

The day after the broadcast, Charles Johnson, a software publisher, posted on his blog LittleGreenFootballs a comparison of his screen shot of the CBS memos with a reproduction he made through Microsoft Word. One day later, he had animated a layover demonstrating the congruency. Before a week had elapsed (September 14), he had recapped his experiments under the heading "The Smoking Memo," and reported that his web hosting company told him that his site, which had been mentioned on the Bill O'Reilly cable program the night before, was receiving 115 requests per second.

A Daily Kos contributor named Hunter disputed Johnson's experiment on the 10th, contending that MicroSoft had designed its Times Roman font to conform to the version used in typewriters since the 1930s, and that shrinking a font down in size made differences disappear. The two entered into a heated disputation, blog versus blog.

On the 11th, a computer scientist with the uncannily appropriate name of Joseph Newcomer entered the fray. He posted a long and vivid argument to the effect that the circumstantial path by which CBS obtained genuine documents was much less plausible than for it to have obtained forgeries. The blogosphere linked to Newcomer's web site, www.flounder.com, in a rush. He fit the role of the disinterested expert and good citizen who could arbitrate an evidentiary dispute sufficiently to move the story forward:

> First off, before I start getting a lot of the wrong kind of mail: I am not a fan of George Bush. But I am even less a fan of attempts to commit fraud, and particularly by a complete and utter failure of those we entrust to ensure that if the news is at least accurate. I know it is asking far too much to expect the news to be unbiased. But the people involved should not actually lie to us, or promulgate lies created by hoaxers, through their own incompetence.

> There has been a lot of activity on the Internet recently concerning the forged CBS documents. I do not even dignify this statement with the traditional weasel-word "alleged", because it takes approximately 30 seconds for anyone who is knowledgeable in the history of electronic document production to recognize this whole collection is certainly a forgery, and approximately five minutes to prove to anyone technically competent that the documents are a forgery.

Newcomer went on to illustrate and describe his method, concluding:

> [W]e have the following two hypotheses contending for describing the memos

- Attempts to recreate the memos using Microsoft Word and Times New Roman produce images so close that even taking into account the fact that the image we were able to download from the CBS site has been copied, scanned, downloaded, and reprinted, the errors between the "authentic" document and a file created by anyone using Microsoft word are virtually indistinguishable.
- The font existed in 1972; there were technologies in 1972 that could, with elaborate effort, reproduce these memos, and these technologies and the skills to use them were used by someone who, by testimony of his own family, never typed anything, in an office that for all its other documents appears to have used ordinary monospaced typewriters, and therefore this unlikely juxtaposition of technologies and location coincided just long enough to produce these four memos on 04-May-1972, 18-May-1972, 01-August-1972, and 18-August-1973.

In eleven subsequent posts over the next five months, Newcomer debated critics (including David Hailey of Utah State and Corey Pein of CJR), and offered his personal reflections.

Press Involvement

Political blog entries often consist of a clever headline, an excerpt from and link to a news report with a fresh detail, and a captioning phrase of approbation or contempt. As the detectives pursued CBS, this format tingled with extra excitement. The thrill of the chase was all the more gratifying because the bloggers were swiftly joined by members of the mainstream media, whom they had long distrusted and resented.

Reporters at ABC News, the *Dallas Morning News*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Washington Post* tracked down CBS's sources for the memo story; the interview material was gobbled up in the blogosphere. Bill Ardolino of INDCJournal followed up on the disclosure in a Michael Dobbs *Post* piece tracing the documents to a Kinko's in Abilene Texas by assuring his blog readers that he had called the branch and asked it to save its surveillance videotapes.

To complete the symbiotic circle, the press wrote about the bloggers. The flattering headline of an *L.A. Times* article on September 12: "No Disputing It: Blogs Are Major Players," did not stop some bloggers from criticizing the piece and its reporter, Peter Wallsten.

CBS: A Study in Crisis Mis-Management

The buzz about Rathergate was stoked further by the behavior of the suspected transgressor. As the scandal broke upon them, Dan Rather, CBS News, and parent conglomerate Viacom had at their disposal an army of seasoned journalists to gather and verify information, and as extensive a distribution system for its version of events as

exists in the world. But they did not have an online grassroots network, a fan base that could be mobilized in support and consulted to see how the network's performance was going over in public. CBSNews.com was, and apparently is to this day, a one-way web site.

CBS waited one week to acknowledge problems with the documents and to provide names of the experts it consulted. It waited twelve days before admitting it could "no longer vouch for their authenticity," issuing apologies, and launching an independent investigation. Months would go by before the report was published, and personnel were held responsible. By comparison, CNN took one month (June 7 – July 2, 1998) to retract its scandalized story that the U. S. military used nerve gas in the Vietnam War to kill defectors from its ranks. Jayson Blair resigned from *The New York Times* within one week of one of his reports being discovered to be fraudulent, and the paper published a long report on how his work had passed through its editorial filters within two weeks. Neither of those journalistic scandals bore on a close and contested presidential election in its final campaign stage.

CBS compounded the tension building at its expense by issuing mis-statements, e.g. referring to "individuals who had seen the documents at the time they were written." It also denigrated the detectives on its trail. Dan Rather, who attributed the public outcry to "partisan political operatives" on the nightly news, was also quoted by *Washington Post* media columnist Howard Kurtz on September 11 saying, "I don't see any reason to carry on a conversation with the professional rumor mill." A dismissive reference by former CBS executive Jonathan Klein to "bloggers in pajamas" became a badge-of-honor meme.

CBS remains an object of obloquy and frustration within the blogosphere. It did not pass unnoticed in early 2005 that, when the review board's report was issued in early 2005, CBS posted it and then altered the computer code so that the report could not be cut and pasted by internet readers.

IV. BLOGS, BLOGGERS, BLOGOSPHERE.

Conclusions

We have brought a variety of techniques to bear on the subject of the political influence of blogs. Our quantitative techniques should be considered exploratory at this time, and our qualitative analysis is subjective. Yet while we cannot assert anything with social scientific (or television pundit) confidence, we believe we have arrived at a workable framework and set of hypotheses for rigorous research.

We also have some substantive conclusions. A blog is a remarkably suitable place for buzz to form. A blogger can spark conversation with choice comments on documents drawn from the internet, and the conversation can build through the tools which make the blogosphere possible. But for a conversation to acquire the intense

simultaneity of buzz, and for buzz to register with force in public affairs, requires a number of other factors to be present, few of which are likely to be at the disposal of a single blogger, or even a blogging collective, ready to activate at will.

We are not ready to delineate those buzz and forceful buzz factors. We think that they have something to do with location within the mediascape (the general idea behind our blog-positioning hypothesis), and something to do with narrative fit as perceived by voices in all four channels, and as enacted by the players cast in the crucial roles (the general idea behind the notion of the incriminating meme in Rathergate). We need to conduct more case studies, refine our units of analysis, and hone the techniques against the stone of well-formed hypotheses.

Speculations

Will the blogosphere become a Fifth Estate? That is one possible development. It would be a good thing if it meant institutionalizing the ethos of the current blogosphere. The national discourse could benefit from a sector favoring transparency over opacity, conversation over presentation, small pieces over big works, flexibility over anchorage, incompleteness over conclusiveness, documentation over description and, paradoxically, individuality over institutionalization. Not all bloggers and especially not all commenters on blogs adhere to these values, to be sure. But enough do at the present time to assure their dominance.

Alternately, the blogosphere might divide into blog components of each of the four traditional estates. The emergence of successful business models and the dynamics of small versus large businesses will figure heavily in the capacity of the current crop of political bloggers to maintain their niche as the elite's guide to the internet. And the possibility of a new technology and net-related form emerging to eclipse the blog must always be borne in mind; as blogs eclipsed the e-newsletter/web diary, so they may give way or make room for the next new thing. There is no reason to think we have reached a slowdown phase in the technological evolution of the medium.

The bigger phenomenon, meanwhile, remains that of buzz, which is nothing new, but now more visible and comprehendible than ever thanks to digital communication. It's instructive to track buzz for duration, intensity, breadth, and focus across the public discourse, not just across the blogosphere. We can generate case histories and use them as a basis to learn more about what happened in battles and competitions for influence, and to inform communication strategy, not just in presidential politics but other campaigns and image-management efforts.

APPENDIX

Table 1: Descending order of correlation values between channels.

Segments of Comparison	Correlation
General Citizen Chatter Top 20 & Liberal Chatter	.89
Liberal Blogs Top 20 & Media	.83
All Blogs Top 20 & Citizen Chatter	.81
General Citizen Chatter Top 20 & Conservative Chatter	.80
Media Top 20 & All Blogs	.78
All Citizen Chatter Top 20 & Blogs	.78
General Chatter Top 20 & Blogs	.74
Kerry Campaign Top 20 & All Citizen Chatter	.66
All Blogs Top 20 & Media	.65
General Chatter Top 20 & Media	.64
General Chatter Top 20 & Kerry	.63
General Chatter Top 20 & Bush	.63
Liberal Citizen Chatter Top 20 & Kerry Campaign	.58
Bush Campaign Top 20 & Media	.56
All Citizen Chatter Top 20 & Kerry Campaign	.56
All Citizen Chatter Top 20 & Bush Campaign	.54
Conservative Blogs Top 20 & Bush	.54
Conservative Blogs Top 20 & Media	.50
Bush Campaign Top 20 & All Citizen Chatter	.45
Liberal Blogs Top 20 & Kerry Campaign	.45
Kerry Campaign Top 20 & Bush	.45
All Citizen Chatter Top 20 & Media	.43
All Blogs Top 20 & Kerry Campaign	.42
Liberal Blogs Top 20 & Bush Campaign	.41
Media Top 20 & All Citizen Chatter	.40
All Blogs Top 20 & Bush Campaign	.39
Liberal Chatter Top 20 & Bush Campaign	.38
Conservative Blogs Top 20 & Kerry Campaign	.37
Conservative Citizen Chatter Top 20 & Bush	.34
Liberal Chatter Top 20 & Media	.34
Conservative Citizen Chatter Top 20 & Kerry	.34
Kerry Campaign Top 20 & Media	.34
Bush Top 20 & Blogs	.30
Media Top 20 & Bush Campaign	.26
Kerry Campaign Top 20 & Blogs	.26
Conservative Citizen Chatter Top 20 & Media	.22
Media Top 20 & Kerry Campaign	.13
Bush Campaign Top 20 & Kerry Campaign	.09

Figure 1: Correlations among media, citizen chatter and blogs.