Why blog about politics?
Results from a representative, case-control survey

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Motivation

Why blog ~ Why participate?

- Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980)
- Rosenstone and Hansen (1993)
- Verba, Schlozman, Brady (1995)
- Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001)
Agenda

- Case-control
- Content validation
- Motivations for new directions in
- Sampling, imputation, and instrumentation
Case-control design

**Blogger survey**
U.S. Political bloggers
Repr. sample (n=606)
Online, self-admin.
Same questions
Nov. 2010 - May 2011

**EGSS survey**
U.S. Adults
Repr. sample (n~1,100)
Online, self-admin.
Same questions
Feb. 2010 - Oct 2010
## Results 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Participation</th>
<th>Blog</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>-1.46 *</td>
<td>-7.42 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pol. interest</td>
<td>1.03 *</td>
<td>5.11 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pol. efficacy</td>
<td>0.35 *</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic skills</td>
<td>0.23 *</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.42 *</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.28 *</td>
<td>3.77 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.54 *</td>
<td>-1.09 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-1.05 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race: white</td>
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<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.11 *</td>
<td>-0.92 *</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1101</td>
<td>1564</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Results 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Blog</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Donate</th>
<th>Advertise</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Attend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>-7.42*</td>
<td>-3.70*</td>
<td>-7.49*</td>
<td>-5.67*</td>
<td>-5.57*</td>
<td>-5.53*</td>
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<td>Pol. interest</td>
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<td>1.92*</td>
<td>2.02*</td>
<td>1.91*</td>
<td>2.95*</td>
<td>3.90*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pol. efficacy</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>1.18*</td>
<td>1.12*</td>
<td>1.29*</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic skills</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.90*</td>
<td>0.39*</td>
<td>0.77*</td>
<td>0.59*</td>
<td>0.50*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
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<td>0.55</td>
<td>1.52*</td>
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<td>0.84*</td>
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<td>Working</td>
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<td>-0.21</td>
<td>-0.50*</td>
<td>-0.48†</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.43*</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>1.00†</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
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<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.49</td>
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<td>0.61†</td>
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<td>Married</td>
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<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-0.41†</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race: white</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.39†</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.92*</td>
<td>0.31†</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.41*</td>
<td>0.30†</td>
<td>0.24</td>
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<td>1564</td>
<td>1101</td>
<td>1101</td>
<td>1101</td>
<td>1101</td>
<td>1101</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions 1

1. Bloggers are activists.
2. Online paths to activism are different.
3. Bloggers’ motives find expression in content.
4. High-bandwidth participation matters for democracy.
Validated content design

Blogger survey
...

Blog content
HTML
Text
Links
Here are some reasons people give for blogging.

How important are they to you?

Proportion responding
'somewhat important' or 'very important'

I blog to...

- keep friends and family updated on my life
- make money or supplement my income
- promote my business, product, or resume
- meet and connect with like-minded people
- share my practical knowledge or skills with others
- share my experiences with others
- express myself creatively
- encourage social change on issues I care about
- speak my mind on areas of interest
- speak my mind on areas of interest
Comparing motivations and content: Analysis

1. Construct scales from survey results
   ▶ Party
   ▶ Revenue
   ▶ Idealism
   ▶ Particularized benefits
Comparing motivations and content: Analysis

1. Construct scales from survey results
   - Party
   - Revenue
   - Idealism
   - Particularized benefits

2. Download blog content

3. Vectorize blog content
Comparing motivations and content: Analysis

1. Construct scales from survey results
   - Party
   - Revenue
   - Idealism
   - Particularized benefits

2. Download blog content

3. Vectorize blog content

4. Bootstrap 50 times:
   4.1 Split into training and testing set
   4.2 Regress scales $\sim$ content in the training set
   4.3 Calculate correlation between actual and predicted scale values in the testing set
Comparing motivations and content: Results

![Boxplot diagram showing correlation between Party, Revenue, Idealism, and Part. Ben.]

- **Party**: Correlation values range from -0.2 to 0.2.
- **Revenue**: Correlation values range from -0.2 to 0.2.
- **Idealism**: Correlation values range from -0.2 to 0.4.
- **Part. Ben.**: Correlation values range from -0.2 to 0.6.

The boxplots indicate varying degrees of correlation across categories, with some categories showing higher variability than others.
Conclusions 2

1. Bloggers are activists.
2. Online paths to activism are different.
3. Bloggers’ motives find expression in content.
4. High-bandwidth participation matters for democracy.
High-bandwidth participation

“Capable of conveying a complex message.”

- Blogging
- Water cooler discussion
- Letters to the editor
- Contacts with officials
Participation: Elaborating the DV

- Engagement
- Recruitment
- Resources
Participation: Elaborating the DV

- Engagement
- Recruitment
- Resources
- Other...?

Participation:
- Level
- Mode
- Topics
- Civility
- Timing
- Links
A democratic bandwidth problem

Elections

Other inputs

Policymaking
Conclusions 3

1. Bloggers are activists.
2. Online paths to activism are different.
3. Bloggers’ motives find expression in content.
4. High-bandwidth participation matters for democracy.
Thank you!

Questions? Comments?

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