



SOCIAL MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY RESEARCH GROUP

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“THE BLOG PUBLIC: BLOGGERS, READERS AND THE COMMUNITIES THEY BUILD”

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AEJMC '08 - BLOGGING POLITICS

The survey

- Sampled from top 150 political bloggers and their readers in Dec. 2006
 - 66 bloggers from 58 blogs participated
- 3,909 readers from 40 blogs responded
 - 74% Male, 26% Female
 - 43% Dem., 31% Rep., 14% Libertarian, 2% Green
 - Mean age = 46; Median income & education = \$60-80K & Some grad school
 - Mean time spent reading blogs = 3.7 years; 2.1 hours/day

Survey: Key research areas

- Impact of blog readership on political engagement
 - Motivations of top bloggers and the impact on reader participation
 - Links among mainstream media alienation, homogeneity of blog diet and participation

Blogger motivations

- Change in motivations over blogspan
 - Over time, bloggers find blogging “empowering”
 - Starts as personal expression...
 - Shifts to focus on influence: providing alternative perspective to MSM, helping society, and influencing public opinion
 - (Ekdale, Namkoong, & Fung, 2007)

Effects of bloggers' motivations

- Some motivations (critique of MSM and activism) predict greater political interest among readers
- While others (journalism and personal expression) linked to lower levels of political interest
- (Veenstra, 2007)

Online versus offline participation

- Internet provides new paths to participation
 - For offline participation, traditional media use and efficacy important
 - For “online expressive” participation, online news users and less efficacious participate
- (Gil de Zuniga, Veenstra, Vraga, & Shah, 2007)

Impact of Blogger Participation

- Bloggers’ actions and intentions have varying effects on reader participation
 - Multi-level model
 - Blogger participation predicts readers’ online activities, but not offline
 - Blogs and bloggers seem to have little impact on offline activities, for which this sample acts like general population
- (Veenstra, Bode, Wang, & Shah, 2007)

Hostile media perception

- HMP linked to
 - decreased mainstream media use
 - Increased use of supportive blogs
- Use of blogs for supportive information positively associated with expressive participation
- (Hwang, Thorson, & Borah, 2007)

Blog diet: homogeneity

- Content coding of respondents’ top 5 blogs
 - As liberal or conservative, combined as a measure of homogeneity
- Like-minded blog diet linked to
 - greater participation
 - less exposure to traditional news media
- (Veenstra, Sayre, & Thorson, 2008)