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Online Political Mobilization from the Advocacy Group's Perspective: Looking Beyond Clicktivism

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Abstract

Academic observers and public intellectuals frequently criticize mass email action alerts as “slacktivism” or “clicktivism,” arguing that the lowered transaction costs of the medium produce a novel form of activism that carries with it hidden costs and dangers for the public sphere. This article challenges those claims, relying on a combination of personal observation within the advocacy community and on a new quantitative dataset of advocacy group email activity to articulate three points. First, that mass emails are functionally equivalent to the photocopied and faxed petitions and postcards of “offline” activism, and represent a difference-of-degree rather than a difference-in-kind. Second, that such low-quality, high-volume actions are a single tactic in the strategic repertoire of advocacy groups, thus reducing cause for concern about their limited effect in isolation. Third, that the empirical reality of email activation practices has little in common with the dire predictions offered by common critiques. The article responds to a previous *Policy & Internet* article: “The Case Against Mass E-mails.” 1 (1).

Keywords: e-petitions, email, interest groups, U.S. politics, public participation

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Introduction

Among academic observers and public intellectuals, there is a pervasive concern that the digital media environment has made clickstream activism (also called “slacktivism” or “clicktivism”) too easy. The fear is that the resulting waves of minimal-effort engagement hold long-term costs for the public sphere, either by further dispiriting the issue publics who find their online petitions and e-comments ignored, or by crowding out more substantive participatory efforts. Digital activism, from this perspective, is a novel phenomenon, and it carries a set of hidden costs that ought to be considered in the public discourse and in revisions to public policy.

This article presents an alternate perspective, rooted in a combination of personal observation within the political advocacy community and in the analysis of a new dataset—the Membership Communications Project (MCP)—consisting of six months of email activity from 70 prominent advocacy groups. Based on these two sources, I argue that there are three central flaws with the “clicktivism” critique. Firstly, *email action alerts represent an incremental modification of the form letters, postcards, and petitions that have dominated citizen issue campaigning for decades*. Though the lowered costs of the new medium modify a few critical organizational processes, they represent a difference-of-degree rather than a difference-in-kind. Secondly, *there is no such thing as a mass email campaign*. Mass email is a single tactic, one component of an overall campaign strategy meant to influence public decision makers. When mass email is placed in the broader campaign context, many of the clicktivism concerns are rendered moot. Third and finally, concerns that the low cost of mass emails would produce an endless spiral of e-comments, flooding the public sphere and crowding out deeper forms of engagement *do not match the empirical reality of how advocacy groups use the tactic in practice*.

The article begins by examining the “clicktivist” critique, paying particular attention to Stuart Shulman’s influential 2009 article on the subject (Shulman 2009). Shulman’s work is particularly noteworthy because of the tremendous amount of data he brings to bear on a subject that usually is confined to the realm of anecdote. I note, however, that what Shulman provides is a very particular *type* of data, and this biases his analysis towards a normative critique of digital activist campaigns while ignoring the placement of email action alerts in the campaign repertoire. I then offer a case example from a massive 1999 federal rulemaking campaign that relied on non-digital activist tools. I served as National Campaign Director for the Sierra Student Coalition (the student-run arm of the Sierra Club) at that time, giving me a firsthand view of how major advocacy groups develop and

implement such campaign actions. Drawing upon this experience, I suggest two substantive points about how advocacy organizations treat low-quality, high-volume actions, regardless of digital or non-digital format. Having sketched a theoretical perspective on the basis of those firsthand observations, I will then introduce the MCP dataset, and use that dataset to reveal trends in email usage trends among advocacy groups. This data strongly suggests a re-evaluation of Shulman's normative critique: fears that advocacy groups would flood federal agencies with a permanent barrage of e-comments simply are not borne out in the data on their practical usage (circa 2010).

“The Case against Mass E-mails”—Perverse Incentives and Continuous E-mobilization

Stuart Shulman offers the most clearly articulated version of the clicktivism critique in a 2009 *Policy and Internet* article, “The Case Against Mass E-mails.” Based on a review of hundreds of thousands of nearly identical e-rulemaking comments submitted by MoveOn.org, Shulman presents a “theory of perverse incentives in the context of interest-group initiated mass e-mail campaigns about U.S. regulatory policy.” Noting the “overwhelming evidence of low-quality, redundant, and generally insubstantial commenting by the public,” in federal rulemaking efforts around environmental issues, Shulman warns of “signs of large-scale, continuous e-mobilizations able to generate uninterrupted streams of e-mail messages directed at diverse agency personnel” (Shulman 2009, 25–26). He goes on to argue that the organizational incentives leading groups to send out widespread clickstream petitions do little to influence agency personnel while crowding out substantive citizen comments, weakening the rulemaking process as a whole. This culminates in a warning that this “emergent” form of activism has negative consequences for citizen engagement.

As indicated by its title, Shulman's piece is meant to speak to two separate questions. On the one hand, there is the (relatively) narrow field of citizen participation in federal agency rulemaking processes. On the other, there is the broader rubric of “mass email campaigns.” Regarding federal rulemaking, Shulman makes the valuable point that longstanding requirements under the Administrative Procedure Act of 1946, as well as the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970, demand that all citizen input be catalogued and responded to by federal agencies (Golden 1988; Yackee 2005). He cites administrative law expert Jeffrey Lubbers, asking “Should it

be the agency's responsibility to sift through everything that is 'sent over the transom'?" (Lubbers 2006, 230). If Shulman's article had been titled "The Case for Modified Internal Rulemaking Procedures," then I would heartily endorse his policy proposals. Internet communication has made citizen input far simpler, and federal agencies should be given tools to manage the deluge of comments, sorting the detailed from the unmodified.

Yet Shulman's focus on mass email campaigns and the "perverse incentives" leading membership associations to engage in them speaks to a broader set of claims about digital activism. In writing "stated bluntly, the logic of collective action many scholars my age and older grew up with is dead. The Internet killed it" (p. 25), Shulman is bridging between a longstanding literature on collective action (Olson 1965; Lupia and Sin 2003) and an ongoing public discussion about the downside of digital activism. Lupia and Sin have argued that Olson's classical formulation of the collective action problem is "built from historically uncontroversial assumptions about interpersonal communication. Today, evolving technologies are changing communication dynamics in ways that invalidate some of these once uncontroversial assumptions" (p. 315). Shulman is, in essence, arguing that permanent advocacy group email campaigns are one perverse result of these changing communication dynamics. Micah White, of *Adbusters* magazine, raises related concerns in an article for *The Guardian Online* (and in a forthcoming book on the same topic) titled, "Clicktivism is ruining leftist activism." Taking aim at MoveOn.org, White suggests that the new model of activism "uncritically embraces the ideology of marketing," cheapening political engagement in the process. "As the novelty of online activism wears off, millions of formerly socially engaged individuals who trusted digital organizations are coming away believing in the impotence of all forms of activism" (White 2010). Evgeny Morozov offers a similar critique, referring to the phenomenon as "slacktivism ... the ideal type of activism for a lazy generation" (Morozov 2009). Likewise, Malcolm Gladwell authored a widely read article for *The New Yorker*, arguing that "the revolution will not be tweeted" and dismissing digital media tools for not supporting the type of strong social ties found within the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s (Gladwell 2010).

To the extent that Shulman's article is meant to address all "mass email campaigns," rather than just the ones directed at agency rulemaking procedures, we must be careful in making too much of a deep-but-narrow dataset. Does the presence of hundreds of thousands of identical citizen comments signal that the logic of collective action is dead? Is clicktivism really all that different from the interest group campaigning that came before it? Why do advocacy groups believe that these actions make a difference,

anyway? Shulman's analysis is based largely from the rulemaking agency's point of view, while White, Mozorov, and Gladwell provide little more than anecdotes and speculation. Given that Shulman is particularly critical of environmental organizations ("the critter lobby"), in particular the Sierra Club, on whose Board of Directors I served for six years, I offer the interest group leader's perspective in the following section, based on over a decade of personal observations.¹

Why Do Groups Flood Government Agencies with Low-Quality Comments?

Simply put, advocacy groups flood rulemaking agencies with identical comments because they believe it to be an effective means of converting the resources they possess (an attentive/motivated issue public) into power to affect the outcome of the rulemaking procedure. Shulman writes that "The administrative rulemaking process, at least on paper, has nothing to do with majority rule. In rulemaking, statutes guide agency experts and administrative law traditions making it clear that the simple accumulation of mass sentiment via postcards and petitions or emails should not be a factor in making a decision ... In short, it is the merit of the comment itself and its unique qualities, rather than its frequency of pros or cons, that is valued by regulators, administrative law scholars, and the courts" (p. 12). While "on paper," Shulman is no doubt correct, the political advocacy community has learned to put little faith in the power of persuasive argument to overcome a well-heeled opposition. Being "right" is rarely good enough, because agency decisions consist of value- and priority-judgments, and those are fundamentally political in nature. Advocacy organizations mobilize their membership not to target the agency officials tasked with the immediate work of sorting through and responding to the resulting pile of comments, but rather to signal broad public outrage among segments of the American public to political appointees and administration officials. They select their tactical repertoires in response to the targets they intend to influence and the opponents they face (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Walker, Martin, and McCarthy 2008). Combined with expert testimony, public education, and media strategies, the mass of low-quality comments is viewed as one basic component of an effective issue campaign. Importantly, this is not an

¹ Needless to say, this perspective is my own, and does not represent official policy of the organization or its allies.

Internet-driven phenomenon; it is rooted in a much deeper tradition. Consider the following example:

In October 1999, President Bill Clinton proposed a new “Roadless Rule” for the United States Forest Service (USFS). The Roadless Rule was a major, election year proposal, aimed at supporting environmental interests while bypassing a hostile Congress. At stake were logging and road-building policies affecting over 60 million acres of National Forest lands; the single largest protection of public lands in nearly 20 years. As a federal rulemaking process, Clinton’s new policy had to go through a lengthy Environmental Impact Statement review process, governed by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970, which includes two periods of public input. The details of the roadless policy would be set over the course of the following year, as environmental activists, scientists, resource economists, and logging companies sought to influence critical policy details that would “strengthen” or “weaken” the rule itself. (Would off-road vehicles be permitted? How many acres would an area have to be to qualify as “roadless?” What about helicopter-based logging?) Many of these questions are fundamentally values-based issues, occurring against a backdrop of an almost century-long debate about federal public lands (Scott 2004; Pralle 2007; Kaufman 1960; Frome 1974; Sellars 1997). Powerful interests on every side of the issue sought to influence policy decisions, both through well-reasoned argumentation and through the exercise of power and influence, in whatever form was available to them.

At the time the Roadless Rule was proposed, I was serving as National Director of the Sierra Student Coalition. Recognizing the rulemaking process as the single biggest wilderness policy decision of any of our lifetimes, my colleagues in that student-run organization and I quickly developed a National Roadless Campaign. Over the course of the following year, we coordinated activity at over 100 high schools and colleges around the issue. This included a 20-school speaking tour, dozens more video showings, student attendance at USFS hearings across the country, participation in a national “Public Lands Action Summit” in Washington DC, and the gathering and submission of 25,000 public comments calling for the strongest possible Roadless Rule. This was part of a broader nationwide effort by the environmental community—in total, over 1.6 million public comments were submitted, making it the largest public rulemaking period in U.S. history at that time.² The public comment drive was a single tactic in a broader campaign aimed at influencing agency officials. Other tactics included marshalling detailed comments from scientific experts, turning out

² <http://www.earthjustice.org/features/timeline-of-the-roadless-rule>.

citizens to public hearings, media events, and high-level agency lobbying. In the process, we also built a stronger organization—two current members of the Sierra Club Board of Directors were recruited and trained as high-school-aged participants in the Roadless campaign. Both began by signing their own comment cards, and then went on to gather comments, plan media events, and testify at public hearings. In the common parlance of advocacy organizations, we were moving them up the “ladder of engagement,” imparting participatory democratic skills while building their organizational involvement and inviting them to take on increasingly complicated tasks.

In 1999, our public comments came in the form of pre-printed postcards. Students would generally set up a table on their campus, inform passersby about the issue, and then ask them to sign a public comment card (name and address) if they agreed with our cause. The postcards alone were not expected to sway the forest service. Like petitions and form letters, they serve as a basic means of demonstrating volume of interest, and of giving people a simple first step to participation. While we preferred handwritten, personalized comments, we didn’t put much effort into teaching people to personalize or “write effective comments.” In the context of the broader campaign, the purpose of this tactic was to demonstrate volume of citizen interest. Depth of interest would be demonstrated through media events and public hearings—events that would draw upon the people who had taken this first action.

By 2004, this postcard-based tactic had migrated to electronic format. Email-based mobilization is marginally easier than postcard-based mobilization (no postage required, and no need to block out an afternoon sitting at a table on campus!), but the contours of this tactic remain relatively unchanged:

- (1) Educate your issue public about the latest opportunity for citizen input.
- (2) Make it easy for them to take action. Encourage them to bring others along.
- (3) Use the resulting high-volume, low-quality comments in lobbying efforts with high-level officials, and follow up with the people who took this first-tier action, asking them to take on more significant tasks.

Consider in this light Shulman’s description of mass email campaigns as an “emergent form of grassroots, democratic, fire alarm activism” (p. 26). The explicit suggestion here is that the transition to an online environment fundamentally changes the comment drive, leading to nearly limitless replication of the tactic that pollutes the rulemaking process

and lessens the impact of citizen input. From the advocacy group's perspective, there are three core objections to this assessment.

First, the shift from postcards to email represents a *difference-in-degree rather than a difference-in-kind*. There are some noteworthy differences between Internet-mediated organizations like MoveOn and legacy organizations such as the Sierra Club, but the reliance on clickstream techniques is not where these differences can be found. For groups like the Sierra Club, the logic of collective action remains very much intact, despite protestations that "the Internet killed it." The Internet has not moved us from a public sphere where all comments were detailed and substantive to one featuring a deluge of carbon copies. The carbon copies were already there, and are a decades-old feature of federal rulemaking procedures. What has increased is merely the size of the comment deluge. Organizations like MoveOn have utilized the Internet to build large, multi-issue member lists without the burden of large staffing and overhead costs faced by legacy organizations (Karpf 2009), but those changes in the political economy of new political associations have no relation to the standard "clicktivism" critique.

Second, even if digital communication makes mass, low-quality commenting a more common occurrence, "the case against mass e-mail campaigns" still misses a critical theoretical point: *There is no such thing as a "mass e-mail campaign."* Campaign planning follows well-established organizational routines and organizing principles, articulated by legendary social justice advocates like Saul Alinsky (1971) and passed on through a rich oral and written tradition in trainings and organizer's handbooks (Sierra Club 1999; Bobo, Kendall, and Max 1991). Low-quality, high-volume comment drives are a *tactic*; an individual element of a broader campaign to convert organizational resources into political power in an effort to affect elite decision makers. Membership associations count their large member-lists as a crucial resource, and thus they traditionally include some petition, phone call, or form letter in their tactical repertoire. They also engage in marshalling expertise, lobbying public officials, and attracting media attention. Well-designed campaigns combine several such tactics to "educate the public, establish accountability, and take delivery" from decision-makers, building a more vibrant membership association along the way (Sierra Club 1999).

Email has moderately changed advocacy group campaigning, increasing the value of large member lists, decreasing the costs of running a campaign, and fundamentally altering the amount of data available on membership interests and participation (through services such as Google Analytics). But email itself remains a single tactic, generally used as the first

rung in a “ladder-of-engagement.” White, Morozov, Gladwell, and Shulman all mischaracterize mass email and other digital tactics when treating them as a “campaign,” and in so doing they underestimate the role that such simple first-step tasks can play in the broader mobilization of partisan bias. Email has replaced the postcard and the facsimile in advocacy groups’ tactical repertoire. The criticisms of clickstream activism could just as easily be made of “armchair activists” who have formed the basis of public interest campaign efforts for decades. Indeed, scholars such as Skocpol (2003) have raised just this concern, suggesting that the rise of armchair activism and the professional advocacy sector came at the cost of cross-class membership federations that mediated American political involvement and fostered social ties for centuries (see also Putnam 2000). Yet critics of digital tactical repertoires ignore the intervening four decades of armchair activism, instead harkening back to a “golden era” of social movement activism and criticizing the new techniques with no reference to the techniques they are replacing.

Organizations face practical limitations on the number of mass emails they can send. Too many emails lead members to ignore messages, or to remove themselves from the list. The industry standard (based on the MCP dataset, described below) appears to be a maximum of one email per day (excluding weekends), and many groups prefer to send one or two emails per week. This presents a practical ceiling for the spread of “mass email campaigns,” as described by Shulman. Organizations must choose which issues are of the greatest interest to their membership, and/or are the most likely to have an impact on agency decision makers. They cannot activate their membership around all issues at once. Furthermore, any mass membership email they send regarding an e-rulemaking process is a conscious choice *not* to mobilize their membership around a legislative or corporate campaign. Facing these limitations, the capacity to generate an “uninterrupted stream of e-mail messages directed at diverse agency personnel” appears far less threatening than Shulman suggests. It also represents an empirically testable proposition: Shulman’s “Case Against Mass E-mail” is based on leftwing e-mobilization practices circa 2004. In the next section, based on 2010 data, I explore the relative frequency of e-rulemaking campaign action alerts versus other forms of action alert.

The Membership Communications Project

One of the great benefits of Shulman's study is that it turns an empirical lens on advocacy group email usage. In doing so, his work stands essentially alone in the research literature. Despite the centrality of email communication to advocacy group activation strategies, there has to-date been little systematic analysis of *how* they use the medium. The research community has instead displayed a technocentric bias, focusing on emerging communications technologies like blogs (Perlmutter 2008; Farrell and Drezner 2008; Pole 2009; Lawrence, Sides, and Farrell 2010), YouTube (Gulati and Williams 2010; Wallsten 2010; Klotz 2010), social networking sites (Williams and Gulati 2008; Baumgartner and Morris 2010), and Twitter (Boynton 2010). While advocacy professionals have cultivated a set of best practices in the areas of list-building, email fundraising, and online-to-offline engagement, academic researchers have gotten distracted by the latest technological wave and missed the increasingly sophisticated use of these "mundane mobilization tools" (Nielsen 2010). I developed the MCP dataset as an open data resource for the research community, in an effort to remedy this perceived gap in the literature. It is also meant to address the one clear limitation of Shulman's study—rather than focusing on a single issue-campaign and treating citizen-submitted comments as datapoints, the MCP focuses on the advocacy groups themselves, treating each email communication to the membership as a separate data point. This allows us to explore whether the Mercury rulemaking case explored by Shulman is exceptional or common practice.

The MCP dataset relies on a relatively simple, intuitive design, accessing publicly accessible membership communications from a large cluster of progressive advocacy organizations. On January 21, 2010, I created a dummy email account via gmail. I identified a network of 70 prominent leftwing advocacy organizations, visited their websites, and signed up for any email lists or outreach efforts provided on through those sites. This was meant to provide a "members-eye" view of mobilization efforts—what do groups actually ask their online supporters *to do*? For the first two weeks of data collection, I used a broad descriptive classification scheme, then refined it to a set of seven categories based on observed patterns and commonalities between emails (described below). The purpose here is to do the basic descriptive work of categorizing what organizations contact their members about, at what frequency, and with what requests. This data can then be synthesized for a variety of purposes, including matched comparative analysis, fuzzy set analysis (FsQCA) or augmented case-based research on specific issue areas.

I encountered three primary hurdles in designing the dataset:

- (1) identification of an appropriate sample of political associations,
- (2) deciding what to do about conservative groups, and
- (3) accounting for limitations created by proprietary data.

Identifying Organizations

As Jack Walker famously demonstrated (1991), population definition is an eternally troubling issue for students of American interest groups. In practical terms, it was virtually impossible even in the 1980s to define the full universe of organizations. The population definition problem is even more complicated in the current study for two reasons. First, I am interested in public interest advocacy groups—organizations that seek to mobilize some form of public pressure to affect public policy decisions out of concern for the public good. These “post-materialist” political associations (Berry 1999) are the most visible segment of the DC interest group community. They are the organizations that most concern public intellectuals and that animate broader debates about civic engagement. Yet the large majority of lobbying organizations and Political Action Committees (PACs) represent business or other private interests. Sampling from directories of Washington lobbying organizations or PAC spending reports thus does not present a solution. Unlike other recent work that focuses on documenting the lobbying community as a whole (Baumgartner et al. 2009), I am interested solely in the advocacy sector—those groups that seek to galvanize an issue public to take action around their shared values. It is within this sector that both academics and public intellectuals have focused their criticisms. Though this focus displays an America-centric bias, there is good reason to expect that the findings can be generalized to transnational advocacy organizations as well. Groups like Human Rights First and Amnesty International are included in the study, and are well known for their work in the international arena.

Second, the Internet has facilitated novel structures for “netroots” political associations. Given the prominence of groups like MoveOn in the clicktivist critique, it would be imprudent to assume that novel organization forms will appear in Washington directories. MoveOn has 5 million members, 38 staff people and zero office space. Interest group studies have traditionally been equated with studies of “the DC lobbying community.” Though MoveOn has *some* presence in the nation’s capital, their decision to eschew the substantial overhead costs associated with a large staff of policy experts and lobbyists may be indicative of a broader change in the field of Internet-mediated political associations. If Shulman is correct that “the

Internet killed” the traditional logic of collective action, then it is possible that traditional methods would underestimate this impact. What’s more, there is evidence that U.S.-based groups like MoveOn are being mimicked by new groups in the international arena. Avaaz.org is one such prominent organization, adopting an organizational structure and tactical repertoire based on the perceived successes of MoveOn.org (Drohan 2010).

To provide a workaround of sorts, I chose to rely on some high-profile moments in recent history to create a relevant convenience sample. In the aftermath of the America Coming Together 527 effort³ in the 2004 Presidential election, a large network of progressive/liberal major donors was unhappy with the results of their donations. Rob Stein, Erica Payne, and a few other high-profile individuals connected to the community began presenting a slideshow on “The Conservative Message Machine Money Matrix.” Their central argument was that conservative donors had built a set of institutions that helped them achieve greater successes in elections and governance than the single-issue groups prevalent in the American left (Bai 2007). This led to the founding of the Democracy Alliance in 2005 as an umbrella organization for the major donor community. Altogether, Democracy Alliance donors have provided over \$100 million in funding to the organizations that they have jointly identified as representing important pieces of progressive infrastructure (Brookes 2008).

The list of groups eventually funded by the Democracy Alliance thus constitutes a reasonable cut-point in its own right. Funding from the Alliance not only represents a substantial investment of resources (creating a practical floor for the advocacy groups represented in the study), but also indicates that the groups fit together in an overarching attempt at building a set of progressive institutions. Though support from the Democracy Alliance is not a necessary and sufficient condition for including an organization in the list of “public interest political associations,” it is a useful demarcation provided through expert knowledge—all leftwing advocacy groups can reasonably be expected to pursue such a substantial revenue stream, and the major donors and their advisors send a signal with their funding decisions of which organizations should be treated as “prominent.”

Furthermore, though this direct donor list is not public information, the former Director of the Democracy Alliance published a helpful guide to the groups she/they felt were part of the new progressive infrastructure in her 2008 book *The Practical Progressive*. Technically, we do not know if the

³ “527” refers to a line in the tax code 527 groups are organizations that engage in Independent Expenditure Campaigns during election cycles, under guidance established by the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002.

groups listed in this book represent the full population of supported organizations, but we *do* know that the list was assembled by a panel of 24 progressive “experts” with links to Payne and the Democracy Alliance. From the perspective of prominent public interest group leaders, this list provides a starting point for populating a study of the political left. Payne’s book lists a total of 81 organizations, though 32 of those organizations represented elements of progressive infrastructure that do not engage in direct mobilization (*The Nation* magazine and blogs like the *Huffington Post* and *DailyKos*, for instance). In all, 49 of the 81 groups had some form of email list to which a member or supporter could subscribe.

In addition to this list of 49 groups, I included 21 organizations that were either well-known members of the political left (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Organization for Women, Amnesty International, American Civil Liberties Union) or prominent “netroots” groups that had been founded since the book had been published (Organizing for America, Change Congress, Progressive Change Campaign Committee, Courage Campaign). This augmented list also included several environmental organizations (Greenpeace, Alliance for Climate Protection, 1Sky, 350.org, National Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, Defenders of Wildlife) in response to Shulman’s targeted focus on what he terms the “critter lobby.” The appendix to this article lists all of the groups included from the Democracy Alliance list, along with the 21 groups I augmented the list with.

The Left–Right Divide in Organizational Communications

Absent from this study is any advocacy group representation from the political right. Particularly during a time period when conservative grassroots mobilization appears to be on the rise through the “tea party” movement, this design choice requires explanation. I leave conservative advocacy organizations out of the study for two reasons: network structure and historical patterns.

Regarding network structure, political associations demonstrably learn from one another through four forms of networked communication. First, staff of like-minded political associations move from one group to another over the course of their careers, bringing skills and learned organizational habits with them. Given that the nonprofit community is a relatively low-paying sector, structured around the rewards of “doing good, rather than doing well,” this staff mobility remains concentrated within ideological sectors. It is common for a staffer from the Sierra Club to move to the National Resources Defense Council. Moving from the National

Organization for Women to the National Rifle Association would be far more surprising. Likewise, professionals within the political left have learned best practices for email communication at a series of conferences and trainings—events like the New Organizing Institute’s “Rootscamp,” Camp Wellstone trainings, and the annual Netroots Nation conference—where conservative nonprofit professionals are absent. There are a few industry-wide conferences—events like the Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet’s Politics Online Conference and the annual Personal Democracy Forum conference, but conservatives are in the minority at these events as well. Most progressive organizations use the same consultants to manage their email programs—primarily Democracy in Action, Blue State Digital, and Convio. These consultancies cater to the ideological left, and presumably help to educate organizations on email best practices. Finally, organizations learn best practices through coalition work, sustained working relationships between Executive Directors and confidential data-sharing agreements with organizations such as Catalist. All of these linkages display a heavy ideological bias. I thus would hypothesize greater overlaps among progressive organizations than among political associations as a whole. The groups in this study compete for donors and volunteers, working towards similar, often overlapping goals. They learn from each other through conferences, partnerships, and staff transitions. Little if any of that connectivity is present across the ideological spectrum, suggesting that conservative political associations (particularly the new wave of tea party-related groups) ought to be treated separately.

Not only are various forms of network tie more prevalent within ideological communities than across the partisan divide, there are strong reasons to expect the American right to adopt new media in different ways. Matthew Kerbel has argued that conservative “netroots” institutions are more vertically integrated, while the progressive netroots are more horizontally integrated, due to the previous existence of major media institutions on each side (2009). Similar trends are likely present in the area of organizational communications, with longstanding conservative groups inheriting the legacy of direct mail pioneer Richard Viguerie (whom Jeffrey Berry once described as a “one man tragedy of the commons”) and organizations like Americans for Prosperity and Americans for Tax Reform run by longtime conservative leaders Dick Armey and Grover Norquist. Between those major groups, the prevalence of Fox News, and conservative discussion sites like FreeRepublic.com, we should not expect the email usage patterns of the political left to mimic those of the political right. In keeping with Shulman, Berry (1999), Gladwell, and others, I adopt the common shorthand of referring to my findings as pertaining to “advocacy

groups” and the “advocacy sector” rather than “*progressive* advocacy groups” and the “leftwing advocacy sector.” Differences and similarities between the political left and political right (or between American groups and groups in other countries) are well worth pursuing, but the MCP is designed to gather data on the cluster of “post-materialist” (Berry 1999) advocacy groups that most commonly attract scholarly and public commentary.

Proprietary Data: Limits of the Dataset

It bears noting that a dataset like this *cannot* offer an exhaustive list of all email communication occurring between these organizations and their membership. As one staff person of an Internet-mediated group noted to me, “the only way to see every message we send out to the membership is to be on staff.” Organizations segment their lists in a variety of ways, with the newer groups like MoveOn engaging in much more sophisticated data segmentation than their more longstanding counterparts. The data collected for this analysis thus presents a “member’s-eye view” of membership communications. It is the first dataset of its type, and there is good reason to believe that the email is representative of what an average email supporter would receive. Small variance from state-to-state and member-to-member is likely, and the reliance on public data means we cannot analyze the rich clickstream and segmented data possessed by organizations themselves. Nonetheless, the MCP offers an empirical benchmark of progressive advocacy group activity, one that has previously been lacking from the public discourse.

In practice, I clicked through and took the first online action offered me by every organization. This was meant to bypass coarse data segmentation—if organizations segment their lists, sending more frequent emails to those activists who have responded at least once, then their emails are captured in the dataset. More sophisticated data segmentation is unknowable and untraceable based on publicly collectable data, and thus the MCP dataset cannot speak to nuanced questions of how organizations manage the upper rungs of their “ladders-of-engagement.”

Data Collection: Content Analysis Scheme and Distributional Findings

After an initial two weeks of sifting through emails and developing categories, I settled on a nine-variable coding scheme: [date], [organization], [topic], [digest/commentary/e-newsletter], [action ask], [fundraising ask], [request for member input], and [media agenda link]. The full coding

scheme is detailed in an independent report (Karpf 2010b). Figures 1 and 2 provide a broad, descriptive overview of the dataset. Of the 70 progressive organizations, 18 organizations sent fewer than one message per month, including six that did not send any emails in the six-month time period. The mean organization sent 30.9 emails, and five organizations sent substantially more than that: Campaign for America's Future (288 messages), Sierra Club (145 messages), Faith in Public Life (127 messages), Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (110 messages), and MoveOn (99 messages). Notably, Campaign for America's Future, Faith in Public Life, and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities were all primarily sending informational emails, coded as digest/commentary/e-newsletter. Of the 2,162 emails, 837 were coded as an [action ask], meaning they featured some request for further action, directed at a target of an advocacy campaign. Rather than a binary category, this field recorded the type of action requested (sign petition/write letter/attend rally/call Senator) and the target of the action (administration/congress/corporation), recording all non-action emails with a zero. A total of 836 messages included some form of action alert (38.7 percent), 710 of which were not contained in an e-newsletter. Eight organizations never sent an action alert, including Faith in Public Life and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. The following section will explore the distribution of these action alert emails to evaluate Shulman's warning of "uninterrupted streams of e-mail messages directed at diverse agency personnel."

Figure 1. Total Messages by Group

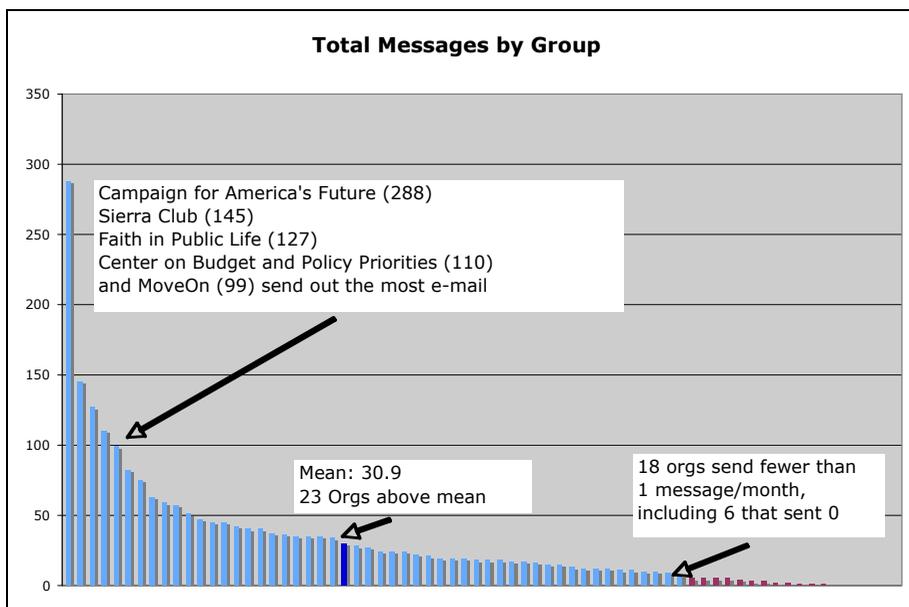
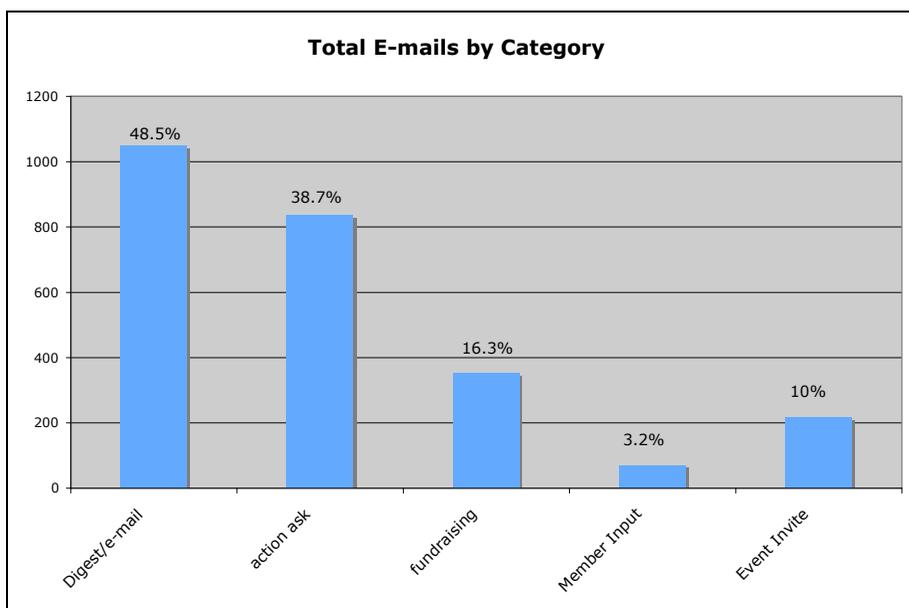


Figure 2. Total Emails by Category



The Empirical Landscape: What Do Advocacy Groups Ask Their Members to Do?

The 2004 Mercury rulemaking that Shulman examines is exceptional in many ways. The Sierra Club alone assigned dozens of community organizers to the issue, believing it to be a high-priority topic that would resonate with the broader American public. As Shulman demonstrates, several other organizations likewise made it a major focus for several months, mobilizing hundreds of thousands of identical e-comments in the process. That high-profile, contentious issues create headaches for federal bureaucrats is an unremarkable finding, however. The broader concern, Shulman suggests, is the set of “perverse incentives” that will lead to “large-scale, continuous e-mobilizations” from groups like MoveOn.org. If the ease of online membership communication, and the organizational incentives for rousing people to action, lead groups to replicate the Mercury e-mobilization around *every* issue, then there is a much bigger problem for the public sphere.

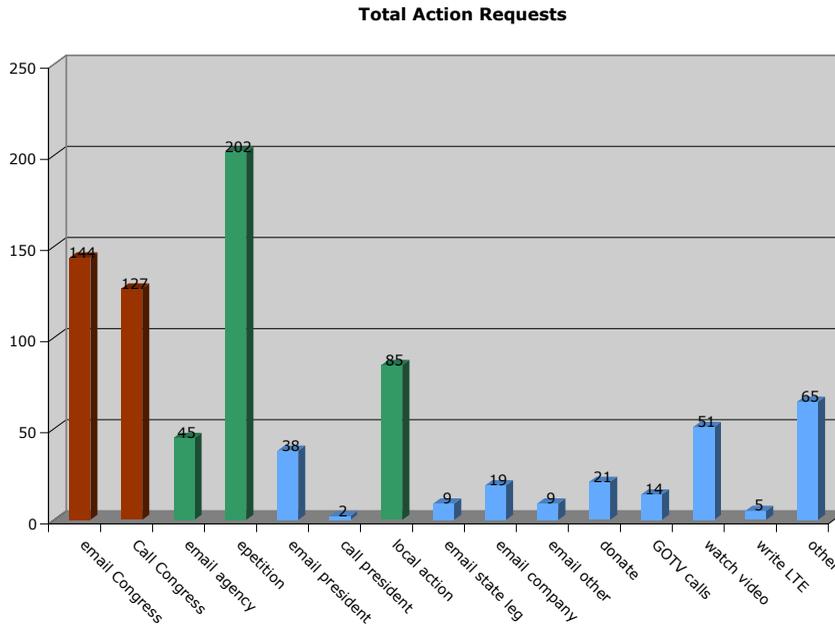
Shulman’s data is six years old at this point—a particularly long time in the developing field of Internet activism. In 2004, the blogosphere was still in the early adopter stage, measurable in the thousands rather than the millions. Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter had not yet been created, and scholars and activists alike were trying to figure out what to make of the Howard Dean presidential campaign. The time is now ripe for a reexamination of Shulman’s warnings. *Have* groups like MoveOn chosen to overwhelm the federal rulemaking process with low-quality comments? Or has the Mercury rulemaking, like the Roadless Rule before it, remained exceptional as one of the rare cases when a large coalition of progressive advocacy organizations turn their sights on the federal bureaucracy? The MCP dataset provides an ideal setting for answering this research question, because it collects all organizational emails (action alerts, fundraisers, event announcements, requests for member input, and informational e-newsletters) over a six-month time span. If advocacy groups are constantly targeting federal agencies, the evidence will be in the data. If they are instead targeting the Congress, the President, or corporations, that will show up as well.

To answer this question, I categorized the 836 action alerts in the dataset according to: (1) the type of action requested and (2) the target of that action. Recall that this offers an audience-eye view of *all* political action requests by 70 prominent progressive organizations over a six-month time span. Searching through the descriptive labels in the dataset yielded 15 action-type/action-target categories. Two focused on the legislative branch

(email Congress, call Congress), two focused on the executive himself (email President, call President), one focused on the federal bureaucracy (email agency), and one was a broad category for e-petitions. The remaining nine categories included “local action,” “email state legislature,” “email company,” “email other,” “donate,” “make Get Out the Vote calls,” “watch video,” “write a Letter-to-the-Editor,” and “other.”

The broad, target-neutral category for e-petitions was chosen because a large proportion of e-petitions lacked any target whatsoever. These included “pledges” to support an issue (frequently used by Organizing for America), an e-postcard to Michelle Obama on her birthday, and an open letter condemning Tea Party racism (from Color of Change and the NAACP). Given that many critics of “clicktivism” single out the overuse of e-petitions, I chose to group all e-petitions in the same category, rather than combining Congressional e-petitions with Congressional emails. Untargeted e-petitions offer two indirect benefits: providing an initial filter for organizations to make higher-level “asks” in the future and allowing organizations to reference the petition-signers in media events and lobbying appointments. They nonetheless have no direct benefit, and thus are a welcome target for critics of digital activism.

Figure 3. Total Action Requests by Type and Target



As demonstrated in Figure 3, federal agencies are an infrequent target of advocacy group mobilization (45 messages/5.4 percent). These 45 messages covered several issues, including oil drilling regulations (in response to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico), wildlife protection, and Net Neutrality legislation. Many of the agency-focused action requests were embedded in sidebars of e-newsletters, framed as a take-action opportunity rather than as the central call-to-action in the text. Congress, by contrast, was the target of 271 requests to either call or email your member of the House or Senate (32.4 percent). Advocacy groups were almost twice as likely to ask their online supporters to attend a local rally or host a house party (85 messages/10.2 percent) than they were to ask their supporters to submit a public comment to a rulemaking agency. E-petitions (broadly defined to include congressional petitions) meanwhile represent less than a quarter of the total action alerts (202 messages/24.1 percent). The commonly held concern that advocacy groups send a constant barrage of meaningless e-petitions simply does not hold up to empirical observation.

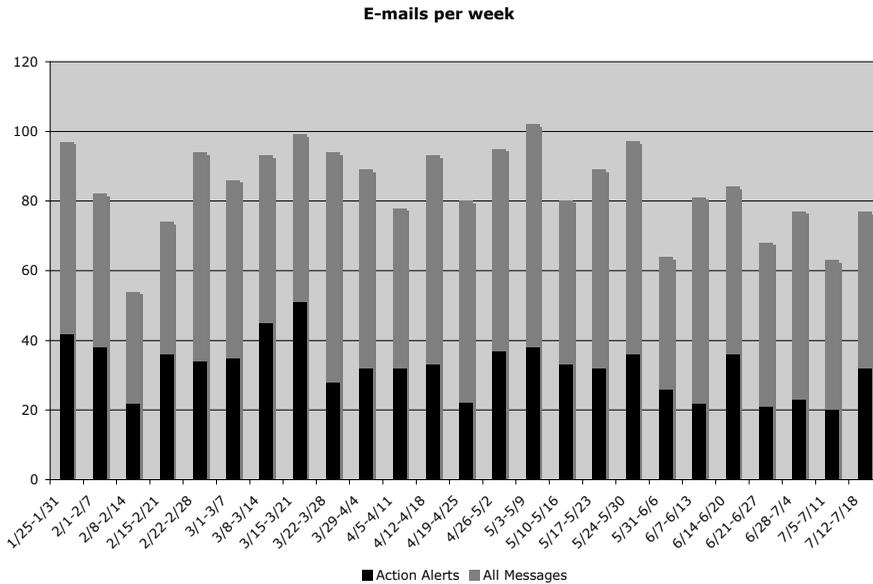
The Congressional focus of these action alerts should be placed in historical context. From January through March 2010, many advocacy

groups were intensely focused on federal Health Care Reform legislation, and this focus is reflected in the targeting of their action alerts. Health Care Reform was followed by Wall Street Reform and a jobs bill, while climate change, immigration policy, and gay rights policy (“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” in the military) all were attached to legislative proposals that never received full consideration in the Senate, despite intense interest group mobilization on their behalf. The BP gulf oil spill in April 2010 then took over the news cycle, and prompted much of the “critter lobby” to focus intensely on that topic.

One could even argue that the entire 111th Congress (2008–2010) is itself something of an outlier, given that the presence of Democratic majorities in the House and Senate, along with a Democrat in the White House, provides a rare venue for enacting progressive policy proposals. Under such circumstances, advocacy groups sensibly seek to leverage their policy priorities into congressional action, whereas under less-forgiving circumstances, they shift to other venues. Indeed, this is in keeping with strategic conversations within the environmental community throughout the Bush era. Recognizing a hostile legislative environment and a President who was likely to veto any of our proposals, the Sierra Club chose to turn its attention to the state and local level on climate change issues.

Figure 4 provides an overall timeline of these action alerts, in comparison to the total volume of messages sent by this cluster of high-profile progressive advocacy groups. The mean number of action alerts/week was 32.24, while the mean week saw 83.6 total messages sent to a typical supporter email address. Since there appears to be substantial variation in the proportion of action alerts/week, I converted these weekly totals to percentages and calculated the mean and standard deviation. In an average week, 38.4 percent of the messages featured an action alert, with a standard deviation of 6.6 percent. The week-to-week variance does not reach a statistically significant level, though the week of March 15–March 21, 2010 comes close, with 51.5 percent of all messages containing an action alert. This was the week leading up to final passage of the Health Reform Bill in the Senate, so this is an unsurprising result and suggests that the overall flow of advocacy group alerts is reactive to political circumstances but displays an overall stability.

Figure 4. Total Emails per Week



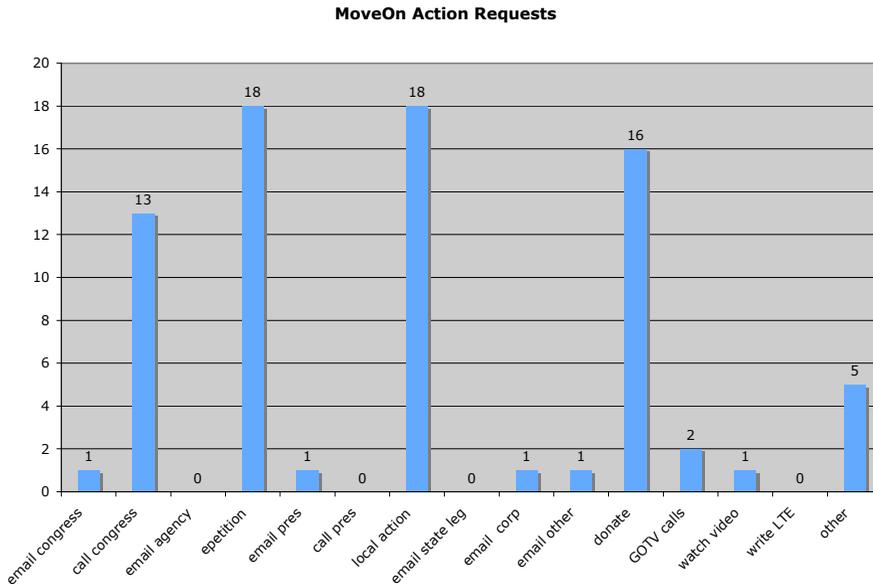
It is for this very reason that I take issue with Shulman’s characterization of “perverse incentives” in the e-rulemaking arena. In focusing on “mass email campaigns,” he overlooks the strategic context in which advocacy groups were making their decisions. Advocacy groups mobilized around the Mercury rulemaking process because it was a major issue in which they felt the government proposal was at odds with the general public. They sought to mobilize dissent through an array of tactics—one of which involved flooding the EPA with public comments, regardless of the level of detail or personalization contained in those comments. Rather than a precursor to an era of permanent e-comment campaigning, it instead should be understood as a relatively standard campaign within the framework of reformist environmental politics. Massive e-comment drives are a rarity, just as massive postcard comment drives were a rarity, because they only occur when federal agency decision making is identified as the best opportunity for a large issue public to further its goals.

A closer look at MoveOn’s activity during the six months of the MCP further underlines the variety of tactics used by Internet-mediated organizations. MoveOn is the largest of the new, Internet-mediated organizations, frequently observed by organizations on the Left and Right (Karpf 2009), and as such it becomes the central interest of scholars and

public intellectuals alike. Consider Figure 5, which categorizes the 77 action alerts sent by MoveOn in that time span. E-petitions and local action requests were tied for the most-frequent “ask,” with 18 messages apiece (23.4 percent). An additional 16 messages (20.8 percent) were devoted to pass-through fundraising that goes directly to endorsed congressional candidates in contested Democratic Primaries. Only one message targeted President Obama, while none targeted federal agencies. Two messages, meanwhile, asked MoveOn members to participate in a distributed Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) calling system to help Arkansas Lieutenant Governor Bill Halter defeat Senator Blanche Lincoln in the Arkansas Democratic Primary. In fact, fully 18 messages (23.4 percent) were devoted to the Halter/Lincoln primary. Those messages included two e-petitions, one of which was aimed at convincing Halter to enter the race (February 22, 2010), the other aimed at condemning Lincoln for standing against the Democratic majority on Health Care Reform (March 8, 2010). They also included 14 requests to donate to Halter and the two GOTV requests. Though Halter eventually lost his primary challenge, this campaign against the most conservative Senate Democrat was meant to influence the national debate and signal that there were costs associated with abandoning the Democratic base. Given the closeness of the election and the extensive media coverage that the primary received, it has to be considered at least a partial success on those grounds.

The picture that emerges from the MCP thus has little in common either with Shulman’s warnings or with White and Morozov’s anecdotes. Far from a constant stream of low-quality participation and e-petitions, MoveOn is using its membership email communications to make a wide variety of action requests, ranging from the simple (sign here) and cheap (watch this video and forward it to friends) to the costly (donate to a candidate) and complex (download a script and a phone list, help call primary voters in Arkansas and remind them of their polling place). Not all progressive organizations demonstrate such a range of email action requests—some use email solely for fundraising, while others use it solely for e-newsletters. But Shulman et al. choose MoveOn to criticize specifically because, as the industry leader in the field of email advocacy, it strikes them as a harbinger of hidden costs and perverse incentives for the public sphere. That criticism does not hold up under scrutiny of MoveOn’s *actual* email practices. The Mercury e-rulemaking was part of a major campaign, focused on a federal agency. It thus resulted in a high volume of low-quality comments. This makes it an exception, rather than the harbinger of the “new normal.”

Figure 5. MoveOn Action Requests by Type and Target



Discussion

I have argued thus far that e-petitions and e-comments represent a difference-in-degree rather than a difference-in-kind with regard to the strategic repertoire of political advocacy groups. Replacing the tactic of faxed or photocopied petitions and regulatory comments with emailed and web-submitted petitions and regulatory comments is a relatively minor change in the public sphere. This should not be read as a broader claim about the Internet's impact on political associations. Indeed, a related line of research posits that the Internet has prompted a “generational displacement” within the political advocacy sector, noteworthy in two areas. First, the rise of email and web-based communication allows for the creation of new groups, utilizing novel organizational structures. Second, the lowered transaction costs of this new medium allows for a more data-driven or “analytics”-driven approach to membership communications, spawning new norms for participation within advocacy organizations (Karpf 2009). As an example, consider the following blog entry, posted after the MCP data

collection was completed and titled “The Thinking Behind Our First Email,” by Chris Bowers of DailyKos.com:

A lot of you will ask, justifiably, “*what possible difference can a petition make?*” As progressive activists, you probably get 10–20 requests to sign a petition every week, and they don’t seem to have much impact. So, in the spirit of openness, let me explain to you our thinking behind this action.

1. The first goal of the petition is to use it to get meetings with Senators, or their staff. If we get a lot of signatures, we can meet with returning Senators and candidates for Senate, when we deliver the petition to them. During those meetings, we will have a chance to ask them if they support changing Senate rules with only a simple majority vote on the first day Congress is in session next year.
2. Through these meetings, if we get 51 returning and potential Senators in support of changing the Senate rules with 51 votes, then we will have proven that the Senate rules can be changed with 51 votes. Obtaining such proof is the first threshold in actually changing the Senate rules next year. From that point, other actions will follow.
3. Finally, if you take the action, then we will know you are interested in taking part in other, later actions we will conduct on Senate rules reform. We need a list of which activists are, and are not, interested in order to conduct this campaign. That way, we will contact the right people for future actions on this topic (Bowers 2010).

This post is noteworthy for several reasons. Firstly, Bowers explicitly reveals the strategic context of the email tactic—it is meant to (1) demonstrate member support, (2) enhance a lobbying tactic, and (3) build a list for future actions around the issue. Rarely are strategic considerations made public in this manner. He frames that explanation in direct response to the “clicktivist” or “slacktivist” critique—“*what possible difference can a petition make?*” The answer, simply put, is that the petition alone is not *supposed* to make a difference—it is one piece of a broader campaign to leverage organizational resources into power to affect Senate decision makers.

Secondly, we should note that Bowers is not writing this post for MoveOn, the Sierra Club, or the American Civil Liberties Union, but for a

political blog. DailyKos is the largest political blog in America,⁴ and previous research has explored that it demonstrates a quasi-interest group style of engagement—the blog community selects issue priorities, endorses candidates, and even holds an annual in-person convention (Karpf 2008; 2010a). Here the difference-of-degree has an important impact, because it allows an online community-of-interest to delve into the tactical repertoire of more traditional interest groups. DailyKos has neither the staff nor the resources to operate the sort of petition or comment drives conducted by progressive interest groups in the 1990s. The Sierra Club and similar organizations devoted dozens of its field staff to the work of educating and mobilizing members about the Roadless Rule and the mercury campaign, also relying upon a massive member list derived through canvassing and direct mail programs. DailyKos faced tremendously reduced costs in launching its email program, allowing this non-traditional advocacy association to adopt the tactic of email engagement. This “organizational hybridity” (Chadwick 2007) constitutes a substantial change within the political advocacy community, and one that is overlooked in discussions of “slacktivism” and “mass email campaigns.”

Third, note Bowers’s final sentence, where he indicates “[if you take action] that way, we will contact the right people for future action on this topic.” This points to a broader behind-the-scenes change with regards to data management. A suite of “analytics” tools allows advocacy groups to receive real-time data on open-rates and action-rates on their email action alerts. This contributes to the practice of “A/B testing,” in which groups send competing messages to randomly selected segments of their email list. Groups use this process to measure the popularity of competing action requests, issue frames, and even alternate issue topics. Political advocacy groups have traditionally engaged in such testing with their direct mail packages, but direct mail testing is both costly and slow. The introduction of “analytics” gives organizations dramatically more information on membership preferences, creating a form of *passive democratic feedback* that has gone essentially unnoticed by the research community (see Howard 2006 for a discussion of analytics in electoral campaigns). In this manner, the difference-of-degree between e-petitions and photocopied petitions opens up a window onto the dramatic transformation in the political economy of political associations (Bimber 2003; Karpf 2009).

These transformations cannot be observed through either Shulman’s dataset or the MCP dataset, because they occur behind data firewalls.

⁴ As measured by the Blogosphere Authority Index (www.blogosphereauthorityindex.com).

Though they are the subject of open discussion at conferences and training events, the new analytics environment and novel organizational structures are proprietary data, and thus they present barriers to academic researchers. Faced with an abundance of public data, the research community has largely overlooked the dramatic changes occurring in fields where data remains privately held. Such changes must be studied through qualitative methods such as ethnography, elite interview, and participant-observation (or through painstaking and long-delayed academic partnerships with private organizations). This is as much a limitation of the MCP dataset as it is of Shulman's e-comment dataset—the move towards analytics is at present a quantitatively inaccessible research area. The research community should look at such challenges as unexplored terrain, rather than as a topic of settled research. We do not at present know what effect the newly hybridized organizations have on major forms of political participation. All we do know is that the common concern—that the ease of email action alerts will lead to a constant state of clickstream mobilization—does not match the strategic thinking or empirical reality of advocacy group mobilization today.

It also bears noting that political advocacy groups, new and old, have increasingly used the Internet to support offline mobilization since the 2004 Mercury campaign. Hara (2008) provides one such example, focusing on MoveOn volunteers participating in the 2004 “Leave No Voter Behind” campaign. The organization has developed over 200 local “MoveOn Councils” in cities around the country (Karpf 2009) and local action requests came as frequently as requests to sign an e-petition during the MCP data collection.⁵ Such online-to-offline participation is well worth further consideration in light of the changing structure of the newly formed advocacy groups like MoveOn. Given longstanding concerns about the decline of cross-class civic federations (Skocpol 2003), scholars interested in “clicktivism” could refocus away from the emails themselves and instead ask whether the new generation of political associations represents a structural improvement over the professional advocacy organizations decried by the civic engagement literature.

⁵ Based on common list segmentation practices, it is reasonable to suspect that the MCP *under-reports* instances of online-to-offline mobilization messages. Groups that segment their lists as part of a ladder-of-engagement will more frequently send these higher-level requests to their council members and members who have already taken online action. These practices are proprietary in nature, so they are beyond the bounds of this study.

Conclusion

The email action alert constitutes a single tactic in the strategic repertoire of political advocacy associations. Longstanding concerns about the possible perverse incentives underlying such “clicktivism” or “slacktivism” make the mistake of treating e-petitions as a single-minded campaign effort, rather than as an individual tactic within a broader strategic mobilization effort. The research community’s predicted harms to the public sphere have not occurred, and this is because we have failed to recognize the placement of email in the suite of campaign tactics used by progressive advocacy groups. To demonstrate these points, I have relied on a combination of qualitative data, obtained through years of active participation in a major environmental organization, and on a new dataset tracking advocacy group email activity. The MCP dataset reveals that major progressive advocacy groups do *not* engage in “large scale, continuous e-mobilization” around rulemaking procedures. Rather, they use email to mobilize member interest around their top campaign priority, as a first step in a ladder-of-engagement. Those campaign priorities are selected in response to the broader strategic environment, including venue-selection considerations based on which party controls various branches of government.

Email action alerts have largely replaced photocopied, faxed, and mailed action alerts in the tactical repertoires of progressive advocacy associations. This constitutes a difference-of-degree, rather than a difference-in-kind. The Internet’s broader impact on political associations is not housed in the rise of these “clicktivist” tactics, but in the new organizational structures and data management schemes employed in an increasingly “hybridized” world. The impact of these newly hybrid groups must be judged through analysis of their campaign efforts and membership communication schemes (do they represent an improvement over the professionalized political associations Skocpol decries?) rather than through the isolated analysis of individual communications tools. To the extent that Shulman’s “Case Against Mass E-mail” is focused on changes to internal bureaucratic processes in the handling of email comments, his point is largely unassailable. But the broader indictment of “email campaigns” finds limited empirical support from an analysis of the membership communications originating from prominent progressive advocacy groups in America.

Appendix. List of Organizations Included in the Membership Communications Project

From *The Practical Progressive* (50 groups)

21st Century Dems
Advancement Project
Alliance for Justice
American Constitution Society for Law and Politics
American Progressive Caucus Policy Foundation
Brennan Center for Justice
Bus Project
Campaign for Americas Future
Catholics in Alliance
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Center for Community Change
Center for Progressive Leadership
Century Foundation
Citizens for Tax Justice
Color of Change
Citizens for Responsibility and ethics in washington
DemocraciaUSA
Democracy for America
Demos
Economic Policy Institute
EMILY's List
Fair Vote
Faith in Public Life
Free Press
The Gathering
Human Rights Campaign
Human Rights First
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
League of Conservation Voters
League of Young Voters
Media Matters
Moms Rising
MoveOn
NARAL
National Council of La Raza

National Security Network
Planned Parenthood
Progress Now
Progressive Majority
Progressive States Network
Public Campaign
Rock the Vote
SEIU
Sierra Club
Sunlight Foundation
Truman Project
US Action/True Majority
Vote Vets
Women's voices, women's vote
Young Dems

Additional Organizations (20 groups)

Organizing for America
Courage Campaign
New Organizing Institute
EDF
NRDC
350.org
1sky
Alliance for Climate Protection
PCCC
Greenpeace
NOW
ACLU
NAACP
IAVA
AFSCME
AFL-CIO
Amnesty International
Defenders of Wildlife
Change Congress
Open Left

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