

Battleground Blog: Analyzing the 2006 U.S. Senate Campaign Blogs through the Lenses of Issue
Ownership, Agenda setting, and Gender Differences

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(ABSTRACT)

The 2006 Congressional elections included some of the closest elections in recent history. Party control was on the line in both houses of Congress. As a result, candidate message strategies were subject to intense scrutiny by media and voters alike since each election played a significant role in determining which party would control the Senate. This thesis employs a content analysis of ten candidate-controlled blogs from five 2006 U.S. Senate elections to evaluate candidate issues, incumbent and challenger strategies, and message tactics used by the candidates to reach a wide classification of voters. The entire population of posts from the ten candidate blogs ($N = 474$) was included in this analysis. The thesis assesses candidate blog strategies and candidate gender differences through the theoretical perspectives of the issue ownership framework, agenda setting, and incumbent and challenger strategies. Findings show evidence of intercandidate agenda setting through blogs, general adherence to assumptions of the issue ownership framework, and offer foundations for future communication research focused on candidate blogs. Recommendations for future research include a more expansive study of all campaign blogs as well as an intermedia agenda setting study to measure systematically the influence of blogs on other media.

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Introduction

Political campaign communication is a fundamental aspect of the political process because it provides citizens with information about candidate image, issues, trust, credibility, and qualifications for public office. Political communication researchers employ varied theoretical perspectives when analyzing the wide array of campaign communication content and effects. Two theoretical perspectives that treat campaign issues as the central variable in analysis, agenda setting and issue ownership, guide this thesis. Agenda setting is rooted in ideas presented by Lippman (1922) and Cohen (1963) about the media's influence on the public. The theory's solidification began with McCombs and Shaw's 1972 study examining the 1968 Presidential election between Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey. McCombs and Shaw provided insight into how the news media influenced what issues were salient for the public. Since then, agenda setting evolved and adapted to the myriad of new forms of communication. A large aspect of agenda setting theory explores the way media communicate issues and media influence on public agendas. However, more recently agenda setting research includes analysis of intercandidate agenda setting (Tedesco, 2005). The issue ownership theory explains how political party guides the range of issues candidates typically emphasize on the campaign trail and add to their specific issue agendas. Issue ownership theory asserts that the selection of issues by a particular party depends on their previous performance with the issue. Agenda setting and issue ownership provide the theoretical foundations for the study reported in this thesis.

Political communication research demonstrates that candidate gender is an additional necessary variable for consideration in studies focused on candidate-level differences. Gender differences in issues, strategies, and agendas influence public perceptions of a candidate. Thus, candidate gender is included as an intervening variable for the study of issue ownership and

agenda setting reported in this thesis. Furthermore, this thesis contributes to agenda setting, issue ownership, and candidate gender research while focusing on political blogs as an emerging and potentially powerful candidate medium.

Technological changes and advances in recent years influence all forms of communication. In fact, communication technologies significantly influence the way campaigns are organized, planned, implemented, funded, and targeted to media and citizens. The way media and citizens view and receive campaign communication changes with the use of technology. Web logs, or blogs, are one of the more innovative and popular technological changes influencing campaign communication in recent elections. Prior to 2004, “blogs were a curiosity, a cult phenomenon, a faintly embarrassing hobby on the order of ham radio and stamp collecting” however 2004, “unexpectedly vaulted [blogs] into the pantheon of major media, alongside TV, radio and yes, magazines” (Grossman, 2004). According to a 2005 Pew Internet and American Life Project, approximately 27% of internet users acknowledged accessing blogs, an increase of 58% during a nine-month period. Taking into account that “a new blog is created every second,” Pew’s report appears to capture the increasing significance of this communication medium. Moreover, *PR Week’s* study of blogs (“Study: Blog readers,” 2005, para. 1) reports that “political blogs were the most popular” when compared to other forms of active blogs. The significant increase in public use of blogs and their popular focus on political topics makes blogs an important emerging area of political communication research. In this thesis, the candidate blog in particular will be studied in depth to explore message content on this developing candidate-controlled medium. This introduction defines blogs and presents a brief overview of their emerging credibility and influence in campaigns.

Blogs Defined

Dyrud and Worley (2005) humorously discuss that blogs might sound like an “old-world Scandinavian folk dance” to those unfamiliar with them or conjure up images of “a bleary-eyed user, ensconced in front of the computer at 2am, attired in bathrobe and jammies, whining about politics” (p. 66). More seriously, Dyrud and Worley (2005) rely on a description from Siemens (2002), who stated that blogs are “somewhere between writing a column and talk radio” (p. 66). The debate over how to define blogs continues as their usage increases significantly and their formats evolve. However, more concise and accepted definitions describe blogs as a personal journal with posts arranged reverse chronologically. Additionally, blogs 1) enable desktop publishing to the web without major technical knowledge, 2) allow readers to provide comment or feedback, and 3) contain an archive of posts and hyperlinks to other content (Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2004; Huffacker, 2004). Most political campaign or candidate-controlled blogs differ slightly from typical blogs by not allowing visitor comments or not providing opportunities to post to the blog without undergoing content filters controlled by the blog host. Research suggests that campaigns avoid interactivity due to their desire to maintain command of the messages presented about a candidate (Stromer-Galley, 2000).

Blogs come in various types with diverse goals, formats, and structures. For example, within the subset of political blogs, there are various political types including those associated with political parties and ideologies, activist groups, issue groups, political satire, and conglomerate blogs that aim to help present an overview of the political blogosphere. Generally, when people think about political blogs, they think about popular citizen blogs such as *DailyKos*, *InstaPundit*, *The Huffington Post*, or *Powerline*. These citizen blogs are popular for not only their reporting, but also for creating dialogue and opening discussion about the issues facing the country and world. Not only are the numbers and purposes of blogs expanding to meet varied

interests of users, but also blogs are earning higher credibility ratings and reputations from citizens and traditional media. In a study comparing credibility evaluations among blog readers and political talk show listeners, Johnson and Kaye (2004) found that when compared to other forms of political media, “weblog users are likely to consider blogs a highly credible source of information” (p. 624). The mainstream media helped legitimize blogs as a reliable source of information by referencing them in breaking stories. *Time* magazine named the *PowerLine* its first Blog of the Year, crediting the three lawyers who created it for challenging mainstream media and questioning the validity of documents behind a "60 Minutes" report on President Bush's National Guard service (Grossman, 2004).

However, this thesis examines candidate-controlled campaign blogs in order to examine how politicians are utilizing the medium. Campaign blogs, as a formal feature of the candidate's message strategy, are relatively new since candidates began to incorporate them in 2004. Blogs create dialogical opportunities between the author and users as well as between users. Since research shows that dialogical features in candidate blogs are rare (English & Tedesco, 2007), it seems appropriate to explore how candidates use this new campaign medium.

The 2004 presidential election ushered in this innovative communication tool for political candidates. Howard Dean spearheaded this effort with his *Blog for America*, which was created in March 2003 and received 30,000 visitors per day by September of that same year (Gill, 2004). The success of Dean's blog at mobilizing his supporters and raising campaign funds prompted others to follow quickly in order to keep pace with the 2004 U.S. Democratic presidential leader from Vermont. Although Dean lost in the primary, his blog gained steam after his defeat. *Blog for America* continues to report Dean's and the Democratic agenda since Dean currently serves as head of the Democratic National Committee.

Trammell (2005) analyzed the content of the 2004 presidential general election blogs and reported Bush and Kerry differed somewhat in their use of the medium. For example, in the sample analyzed, Kerry used the medium more frequently and had more average posts per day than Bush (11.96 vs. 8.08). Interestingly, Bush did not offer a comment feature where Kerry offered comment opportunities to his blog users. Additional research on blogs during the 2004 presidential election indicates that candidates were using blogs to “enhance viability” for their campaign (Williams, Trammell, Postelnicu, Landreville, & Martin, 2005). In addition, Williams et al. (2005) conclude that politicians used blogs to present more diverse topics than they provide on their websites. Despite research findings concluding that blogs are useful to political candidates, many politicians and practitioners remain undecided about their value and skeptical of their influence.

The blogosphere, or the “ever-expanding universe of bloggers who link to news sites and each other,” is an outlet for people to express their thoughts and feelings in a format and on a level not previously available (Lawson-Borders & Kirk, 2005, p.548). The political campaign communication arena offers researchers a context to measure blog usage and impact during elections.

Blog Credibility and Influence

However, because “anyone can create a blog and bloggers are not bound by ethical and professional standards of trained journalists,” the inherent credibility of their material is in question, especially by members of the mainstream media (Johnson & Kaye, p. 624). Reynolds summed it up in an interview with Johnson and Kaye (2004) by stating, “a blog is a disclosure of the blogger’s biases” (p. 624). In fact, the bias of bloggers is one of the attractions readers cite as important to why they visit blogs. The mainstream media are cognizant of the changing

communication patterns and needs of their consumers and are changing the way they report political information. News organizations also incorporated blogs widely in their campaign reporting.

Former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott's gaffe – about how the U.S. would have avoided much of its problems if then-segregationist Strom Thurmond was elected president – was first published in online column at abcnews.com. Bloggers, outraged by Lott's statement, are credited with elevating Lott's comments to the mainstream media agenda and the Democratic party leaders and cited as largely responsible for Lott's resignation (Bloom, 2003). In fact, McCoy Roth (2004, p. 23) indicates that bloggers "fanned the fires of the story." Lott's quote was widely carried on blogs read by influential people in mainstream media and political circles and subsequently re-emerged as an important issue. Though studies of traditional media suggest opinionated writing lowers credibility, bloggers and blog readers contend that Weblogs contain thoughtful analysis of the news events missing from mainstream media (Johnson & Kaye, 2004, p. 625). Academics and practitioners continue to question whether blogs are a valuable source of information either independently or in conjunction with mainstream media.

In addition to exploring the emerging role of candidate blogs, this thesis contributes to the call for more research below the presidential level (e.g., Benoit & Hansen, 2005; Banwart & McKinney, 2005; Tedesco, 2002). This thesis also combines two significant political communication theories and applies them to an emerging form of campaign communication. Since blog research is still in its foundational stage, this thesis also previews how presidential candidates may use the medium in 2008. Because blogs are new to the campaign communication landscape, the systematic content analysis reported in this thesis will lead to a better understanding of how candidates use this new communication outlet.

2006 U.S. Senate Election Contexts

Overview of the 2006 U.S. Senate Elections

With President Bush's public opinion ratings reaching all-time lows in the lead up to the 2006 elections and increased sentiment questioning Bush's strategies in Iraq, the midterm Congressional elections turned into a battle over control of the Senate and a fight to determine whether Bush's policies would face significant challenge. Additional public sentiment is reflected in a Gallup Poll showing "voters recently gave Congress a 23 percent approval rating, the lowest that the Gallup Poll has recorded for it since October 1994" (Cook, 2006a, p. 3). Thus, President Bush and the Republican-controlled House and Senate faced significant public disapproval. According to an article in *The New Republic*, "in Senate elections, Democrats are mounting the most credible challenges to Republican incumbents in states that [Bill] Clinton won and that were at least competitive, if not Democratic, in the last two presidential elections – Pennsylvania, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Missouri, to name a few" (Judis, 2006, p. 20). The eyes of the nation watched closely as many of the elections were close right up to Election Day.

To shift the majority in the Senate, the Democrats had to unseat five Republican incumbents, win Bill Frist's open seat in Tennessee, and maintain their current seats, including the vulnerable Washington seat held by Maria Cantwell (D). According to the *National Journal's* summer 2006 *Cook Election Preview*, the Senate seats most vulnerable to party change were those up for reelection in the following states: Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Arizona, Minnesota, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, and Washington (Cook, 2006b, p. 6-7). The *Cook Election Preview* classified the races in these thirteen states as either "highly vulnerable" or "vulnerable." The volatile nature of the 2006 Senate elections provides good reasoning for examining campaign discourse.

In addition to the Iraq War, several issues gained prominence during the 2006 election cycle. Candidates echoed national party platforms with Republicans repeating the phrase “stay the course” when it came to the Iraq War and Democrats consistently attacking President Bush, especially on his low approval ratings. The issues of stem cell research, immigration, and gay marriage featured prominently in the media during the 2006 elections. For example, an advertisement featuring Michael J. Fox promoting the importance of stem cell research aired in several key states to bolster support for candidates in favor of stem cell research. Fox made an appearance in Missouri to endorse Claire McCaskill (D) and his cause was featured prominently on television news, newspapers, and magazines. In addition, President Bush signed into law an initiative to build border fences as a means to prevent illegal immigrants from crossing the border with Mexico. Encouraged by party Republicans, the timing and placement of the bill signing were planned to support those running in key states. There were also marriage amendments on seven states’ ballots during 2006. On top of these policy issues, the sexual solicitation controversy surrounding now former Representative Mark Foley (R-FL) sparked an ethics debate about Republican leadership and their questionable lack of response to prior knowledge of Foley’s alleged misconduct. Candidates on the campaign trail addressed this controversy in varying degrees.

Although the sample selection criteria for the content analysis method will be discussed in the Method section, Senate races in five states are the focus of this thesis. Thus, more specific campaign context information about the races in the five states is summarized below. For each state election, candidate blog formats, major candidate issues, voting record/political experience, and polling data are summarized as well. In each case, polling data reported here was gathered

from large sample surveys of likely voters reported on the *National Journal's* website under the “poll tracking” feature. The following table represents the five elections discussed in this thesis:

Table 1
Election Sample

Party	Status	Name	Category	Blog
Republican	Incumbent	Jim Talent	Highly Vulnerable	<i>Campaign Diary</i>
Democrat	Challenger	Claire McCaskill		<i>McCaskill for Missouri Blog</i>
Republican	Incumbent	John Ensign	Safe	<i>Ensign Blog</i>
Democrat	Challenger	Jack Carter		<i>Carter for Nevada Blog</i>
Republican	Incumbent	Rick Santorum	Highly Vulnerable	<i>Running with Rick Blog</i>
Democrat	Challenger	Bob Casey, Jr.		<i>Team Casey Blog</i>
Republican	Open	Rich Tarrant	Probably Safe	<i>Tarrant Senate Blog</i>
Independent	Open	Bernie Sanders		<i>Progressive America</i>
Republican	Challenger	Mike McGavick	Vulnerable	<i>Mike! McGavick</i>
Democrat	Incumbent	Maria Cantwell		<i>Team Cantwell Blog</i>

Missouri: Talent vs. McCaskill.

In recent election cycles, Missouri figured prominently in media attention due to its consistent pattern of providing a gauge for national election outcomes. Experts described Missouri as a “bellwether” election for 2006 or the election that could potentially predict other election outcomes. Since early spring 2006, the election was consistently listed among the *Cook Election Previews and Reports* top five most vulnerable Republican-held seats (Cook, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). The Missouri election was one of three the Republican National Committee targeted with a high amount of advertising expenditures to support Talent (Epsos, 2006). Republicans recognized Missouri as one of the key states they had to win to keep the Senate majority. There were also potential implications for the 2008 presidential election since Missouri voted for every victorious President in the 20th century, except Eisenhower in 1956.

Poll numbers for the Missouri campaign were very close throughout the campaign. In a late-September poll by Mason-Dixon, Talent and McCaskill were in a dead heat with 43% of public support while 14% of those polled were undecided. A follow-up poll by Mason-Dixon in late October showed McCaskill leading with 46%, Talent with 43%, and 11% other/undecided. The plus or minus 4% margin of error indicated a near statistical dead heat again. In the final days before the election, Mason-Dixon showed McCaskill leading by just 1% (46% to 45%) over Talent with 9% still undecided or committed to another candidate.

Talent titled his candidate-controlled blog *Campaign Diary*, using a more personal approach than other Senate candidates. The campaign posted about every other day during the general election phase ($n = 35$). The blog disclosed the names of post authors and, in most cases, provided their title within the campaign. Talent also allowed comments on his blog, though there were few posted. Talent used pictures frequently to show events and images of his surrogates and supporters. The blog was available as an RSS feed, allowing users to subscribe for updates.

The *McCaskill for Missouri* blog provided very few posts ($n = 9$) during the general election phase, but did provide an extensive archive of posts dating back to May 2006. McCaskill allowed users to leave comments with a disclaimer at the bottom stating, “Comments made to the McCaskill for Missouri blog are subject to approval” (McCaskill for Missouri, 2006). The comments were open to all users for viewing; however, there was an account required to post comments.

Nevada: Ensign vs. Carter.

The *National Journal* classified the Nevada Senate election as “safe” for the incumbent Republican Sen. John Ensign. By late October, most polls had Ensign ahead by at least a 7%

margin (Ball, 2006). Jack Carter (D), son of former President Jimmy Carter and Ensign's challenger, campaigned strongly during the surfacing stages and appeared likely to emerge as a formidable opponent. President Carter joined the campaign trail and raised visibility of the Carter for Senate campaign by earning significant amounts of media coverage. Carter's issue agenda was fairly consistent with the voter profiles in Nevada and he was with the majority of voters in his support for stem cell research, which figured significantly in Nevada. Ensign frequently aligned himself with the President even while Bush's poll numbers dropped to historic lows. However, Ensign had a huge cash advantage over Carter that enabled the Ensign campaign to advertise and organize more effectively. Carter also had to fight against the fact that he had only lived in the state for three years, prompting many to say that he was unfamiliar with the issues and concerns of Nevada citizens.

Few large survey polls were available for this "safe" election. A Mason-Dixon poll completed two weeks after Labor Day revealed a large lead for Ensign (58% to Carter's 35%). Trainor, a third party candidate, had 1% and other/undecided voters made up just 6%. In the final week before the election, another Mason-Dixon poll showed only a small shift with Ensign at 54%, Carter at 37%, and the other/undecided vote at 9%.

Ensign created *Ensign Blog*. Like McCaskill, Ensign's blog had only a few posts ($n = 10$). The low number of posts shows that the Ensign campaign did not invest heavily into using their blog as a significant communication vehicle for their campaign. Ensign did not allow comments to his blog. In fact, there were very few examples of the various forms of interactivity. Ensign did not utilize pictures or video within the blog posts.

Carter's blog was simply titled *Jack Carter Nevada 2006 Blog*, and posted more often than the other candidates ($n = 98$). Carter was one of the candidates that extensively used the

blog medium, providing many different features generally associated with typical, non-candidate blogs. He also featured his daughter, Sarah Carter as the blog author, providing a more personal approach than other candidates. Sarah frequently referred to Carter as her “dad.” One of the most interesting elements of the Carter blog was a feature called “Blog Round-up,” where Sarah Carter would post a group of links to other blogs that discussed Jack Carter in some form. The blog also had an RSS feed option for users to subscribe to for convenient updates.

Pennsylvania: Santorum vs. Casey.

Many political sources categorized the election between Rick Santorum (R) and Bob Casey (D) as the most contested senatorial election of 2006 (Cook, 2006a). The election was the focus of much media and national party attention. The election coverage on the national stage emphasized how Santorum’s voting record consistently supported President Bush’s agenda. Thus, media tied Santorum to Bush. Throughout the campaign, Casey attempted to establish himself as more than the “anti-Santorum” candidate. Though positioned as the opposite of Santorum, Casey agreed with Santorum on the support for gun owners’ rights and the opposition of abortion. The wedge issues of gun rights and abortion distinguished Santorum from his opponents in previous elections and arguably led to his prior victories. Santorum was unable to drive a wedge between himself and Casey on these pivotal issues in 2006.

The Pennsylvania campaign featured extensive polling, some polls dating back four years prior to the election. Most polls showed an overall advantage for Casey. From the early part of 2006, in a Quinnipiac poll during the first week of February established Casey as the frontrunner in a general election matchup 51% to 36% over Santorum with a 13% undecided vote. Then, in a Princeton Research Associates poll the week after Labor Day, Casey still led with 52%, Santorum dropped to 31%, activist candidate Carl Romanelli garnered 3%, and the

other/undecided vote made up 14%. A Zogby poll the week before the election showed Casey with 48% and Santorum with 40%, and 12% remained undecided.

Each Pennsylvania candidate presented a campaign blog with its own unique features. Santorum's *Running with Rick* blog was in existence more than a year before the 2006 election, with posts dating back to October 2005. He divided posts into archives by month as well as into 17 different topic categories, including agriculture, compassion, education, and Social Security. The blog was consistently updated for the entire hot phase of the campaign ($n = 51$). Santorum's blog offered a comment feature, however access to read or post comments was restricted to those people who signed up for a 'Rick Running Mate' account.

The *Team Casey Blog* began in May 2006 and had seven categories of posts, themed with titles slightly different from Santorum such as "On the Road," "Santorum Watch," and "Manager's Memo." There was also an archive by month. Posts were uploaded a few times each week ($n = 44$). Casey's blog frequently used video and pictures within the posts and used "YouTube" to host the video clips. The use of YouTube for hosting video clips was a trend throughout many of 2006 campaign websites. The Casey blog did not provide the ability to leave comments.

Vermont: Sanders vs. Tarrant.

Vermont's one House of Representatives member, Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), was labeled as a safe bet to win the Senate seat vacated by independent Senator Jim Jefford who retired instead of seeking a fourth term. Sanders won the Democratic primary in Vermont, but decidedly ran as an independent with an agreement he would Caucus with the Democrats in Congress (Remsen, 2006). *National Journal's Summer 2006 Cook Report* (Cook, 2006c) described the election as "probably safe," but many said that Vermont was not as liberal or

Democratic as the rest of the country believes. The challenger, Rich Tarrant (R) personally funded over 90% of his election campaign from personal resources like those from the \$1.2 billion he received from selling his company, IDX Systems Corporation (Federal Election Commission, Post-General Report). As of October 14, 2006, Tarrant spent an average of \$25.13 per vote, almost two dollars above the current record of \$23.18 held by Democrat Blair Hull who lost to Barack Obama for the Illinois Senate seat in 2004 (Hemingway, 2006). At the end of the campaign, Tarrant spent \$7.2 million of his own fortune or a record \$27.37 per voter. State leaders accused Tarrant of attempting to “buy his seat in the Senate” (Hemingway, 2006, para. 7). Large polling organizations spent little time polling in Vermont. A Research 2000 poll, conducted about two weeks after Labor Day, revealed that Sanders lead Tarrant 58% to 33% with other/undecided voters totaling 9% of the vote.

Sanders’ blog was quite different from the other candidate-controlled blogs. The Sanders blog was unique in that it was not directly a part of the campaign website. Instead, Sanders’ blog, *Progressive America, Official Blog of Bernie Sanders for Senate*, was a separate site with its own web address and design. There was extensive commenting as well as a consistent author from the campaign who posted and responded to many of the comments left by citizens. The site provided both an RSS feed for users to subscribe and an archive of posts documenting the history of the blog. While *Progressive America* was the official campaign blog, it served the dual function of conveying a message of the American progressive movement.

Tarrant’s blog, *Tarrant Senate Blog*, was one page and did not contain an archive of posts beyond those appearing on the page. The campaign did update frequently during the general election phase ($n = 48$). Since the blog page length did not grow much during the campaign, older blog posts were removed to allow space for newer posts. The blog had no discernable

author as representative of the campaign. Tarrant's campaign allowed comments, but few were displayed on the page. The comment policy was unclear with regards to any formal gatekeeping or editing of comments. The blog used some pictures within posts.

These purposively selected 2006 U.S. Senate elections provide a cross-section of the 2006 Senate elections. Since relatively few, 13 of 33 Senate elections contained the required criteria that both candidates established an active blog, selected elections were chosen to enable comparison for incumbent – challenger, male – female, and a range of elections on the safe – highly vulnerable continuum established by the Cook Election Previews (Cook, 2006b; Cook, 2006c). This sample was selected to maximize the comparison possibilities across elections. It should be noted that the selection of “safe” and “vulnerable” seats was based on the *National Journal Summer 2006 Cook Election Preview* with the understanding that election status could change significantly throughout the course of the general election.

Washington: Cantwell vs. McGavick.

The 2006 Washington Senate election featured a Democrat female incumbent (Maria Cantwell) and a Republican male challenger (Mike McGavick). Washington's Senate election featured one of five Democrat-held seats labeled “vulnerable” by both *Spring 2006* and *Summer 2006 National Journal Cook Election Previews* (Cook 2006b, Cook 2006c). Interestingly, both candidates emphasized their independence from party control and their bipartisan spirit to accomplish goals and address issues for Washington. Cantwell and McGavick shared similar backgrounds in the private sector and held positions as executives in large companies, incumbent Cantwell (D) for RealNetworks and McGavick (R) for Safeco Corporation. McGavick had his share of scandal, the most damaging was the disclosure of his DUI arrest from 1993 (Brownstein, 2006). However, both candidates displayed strong qualities to represent

Washington in the Senate. Cantwell was a tireless fundraiser and gained recognition for standing up to Alaska's Ted Stevens on the issue of drilling in the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge.

McGavick maintained a strong presence within the State and was expected to benefit from votes among his home city of Seattle while also appealing to the majority Republican voter in Spokane.

Initially, based on results from a July 2006 poll by Strategic Vision, Cantwell maintained a small lead of 48% to 44% over McGavick with 8% other/undecided vote. Then, in a late-September poll by Mason-Dixon, Cantwell's lead increased to 10%, with a 50% to 40% advantage over McGavick. Other and undecided voters made up the remaining 10% of the vote. A final poll in the week before the election, completed by the University of Washington, Cantwell came out ahead 53% to 41% over McGavick and other/undecided voters at only 6%. It looked like Cantwell established a clear lead over McGavick and continued to distance herself from him in the polls.

The *Team Cantwell Blog* was very similar to Casey's (D-Penn.) *Team Casey Blog* in its layout, features, format, and title. The campaign posted on average once a day ($n = 78$). Cantwell frequently used video and pictures in her posts. Cantwell utilized video for many different occasions, including presenting clips of surrogates, interactions with citizens, and rallies. The campaign did not utilize YouTube like many of the other candidates; however, it did have the same type of embedding function that appeared and played within the individual blog post. Users could simply click on the video box and it would play within the blog post page instead of pushing or redirecting visitors to YouTube. Her blog offered six different topic categories. Three Spanish language posts appeared in Cantwell's Spanish category. There were no RSS feeds for user subscription.

The McGavick campaign divided the *Mike! McGavick* blog into fifteen different topic categories complete with RSS feeds, which allowed visitors to subscribe for updates. Posts averaged about one a day ($n = 63$). McGavick did not use embedding technology for videos. Instead, he provided a link outside of his website to the video instead of embedding it within the post. The comment feature made the McGavick blog unique. Though there were some restrictions on the allowable comment content, the following disclaimer posted below each comment box prefaced them: “MikeMcGavick.com reserves the right to control the content submitted to the blog. Content that is deemed inappropriate may not be approved” (McGavick, 2006). McGavick’s blog freely allowed visitors to post comments.

Theoretical Foundations

Agenda setting

In the more than 35 years of agenda setting research, the theory is applied to media, political and social processes and events, cultures, and sources. McCombs (2005) outlines five active areas of research in agenda setting – basic agenda setting effects, attribute agenda setting, psychology of agenda setting, sources of the media agenda, and consequences of agenda setting effects. Since the research on agenda setting spans beyond the limits of this thesis, only essentially relevant agenda setting research is reviewed here. This thesis focuses specifically on the sources that have an influence on the media agenda, also referred to as agenda building. While there are anecdotal accounts of blog influence on current events and mainstream media agendas (e.g., Lott’s resignation), it is important to examine more systematically the effects of blogs on agendas.

Cohen (1963) provides the foundation of agenda setting theory with his statement about the press that “it may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is

stunningly successful in telling its researchers what to think *about*” (p. 13). McCombs and Shaw (1972) tested this idea of media agenda setting with their investigation of the 1968 Presidential election. The study provided groundbreaking evidence of political issue agenda setting or “the ability of the media to influence the salience of events in the public mind” (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 5). They acknowledged their study did not prove agenda setting without a doubt; however, it did establish the groundwork for future studies in order to reinforce the existence of the agenda setting function within the mass media. As the theory evolved, McCombs and Shaw pointed out the press’s power was forged in the “ability to structure the unseen environment of symbols” (1976, p.18). The agenda setting function of the media influences the public’s awareness of certain issues and affects what issues are salient to voters during election years.

Application of agenda setting theory requires articulation and differentiation of independent and dependent variables before a study begins. Scheufele (2000) established that agenda building states, “the media agenda is considered the dependent variable” (p. 303). Agenda building is in what McCombs (2005) labeled the fourth stage of agenda setting research, which takes into account the sources of the media’s agenda (Berkowirz & Adams, 1990; Lang & Lang, 1981). Because of how campaigns use multiple campaign media to build their agendas, it is important to apply the theory of agenda building to candidate-controlled campaign blogs.

Campaigns exemplify the two major variables of agenda-building, real-world events and the activities of political actors (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). The campaign is set around important issues for citizens and they involve constant monitoring of the candidates activities. Thus, the campaign provides an ideal model for examining agenda building. Campaigns are always looking to establish and build their agenda before and during an election cycle. A main goal of a

campaign is to exert a high level of control over the messages presented in all formats. Paid political advertising and campaign websites are the two candidate-controlled media that offer candidates complete control of their message. Websites allow for the presentation of information in a quick and efficient manner. The campaign or candidate blog, usually contained within the candidate-controlled website, presents a forum for which a candidate can present detailed information about their issue positions in addition to schedules, photos, and policy issues. Arguably, the most important function of the blog is the presentation of dialogical opportunities through features such as commenting (English & Tedesco, 2007). However, comment features raise questions and concerns about control of message.

The Internet and other emerging communication technologies are the focus of much current agenda setting research. Davis and Owen (1998) pondered the question about who would set the new media agenda in the 21st century. McCombs (2005) acknowledged that the Internet drastically changed the functionality of agenda setting due to the large increase in new forms of communication. Davis (2005) discussed the agenda setting process in relation to online discussion boards and their “threads,” which exhibit sequenced responses in a virtual discussion. He postulated that because of the tedium involved in following all of the different posts, users tend to select only those that interest them. This selection process leads to a different view of the discussion board by each user and allows them the opportunity to create their own individual agenda. Individual selectivity in the online news environment raises questions about the power of agenda setting influence among Internet users.

Ku, Kaid, and Pfau (2003) compared press releases from campaign websites, television newscasts, and newspapers in the 2000 Presidential election by examining whether campaign websites influenced the media’s agendas. They found a correlation between the agendas on

candidate websites and those in the traditional media. A study by Roberts, Wanta, and Dzwo (2002) examined agenda setting through electronic bulletin board (EBB) discussion, finding that users' set their EBB discussion agendas through the media's coverage of the issues. Roberts et al. (2002) found a correlation between the EBB discussion agenda and the media agenda correlated for bulletin boards focused on immigration, health care, and taxes. Abortion was the only issue discussion not correlated between EBB and media agendas. Lim (2006) examined intermedia agenda setting among online news media in South Korea and found that a primary online newspaper influenced a secondary online newspaper as well as an online wire service. Though researchers are utilizing the agenda setting framework to investigate various forms of Internet media, this study looks to add to the scholarship on agenda building, issue ownership, and candidate blogs.

Agenda Building

One of the most recent advances in agenda setting theory is intercandidate agenda setting. Tedesco (2005) investigated the issue agendas of the candidates in the 2004 Democratic primary season through official press releases downloaded from their campaign websites. The study demonstrated that the primary candidates maintained consistent and common set of issues. John Kerry attempted to shift the agenda away from President Bush's priority to pass the \$87 billion budget bill due to Kerry's seemingly inconsistent support of this bill. However, Kerry was unsuccessful in his efforts to shift the agenda and ended up reverting to the overall issue agenda set by the balance of the primary candidates. Tedesco (2005) was the first to study intercandidate agenda setting with his examination of candidate press releases. This thesis looks to expand intercandidate agenda setting theory to candidate-controlled or campaign blogs through investigating the 2006 Senate elections.

The blogosphere is the next realm where agenda setting theory is becoming relevant. McCombs (2005) discussed blogs in his review of the past, present, and future of the theory first articulated with Donald Shaw more than thirty years prior. Though he acknowledges that many people cannot define a blog, their usage is up significantly in the last year (Pew Internet and America Life Project, 2005). He postulates that “if blogs have an agenda setting role, it is likely to be an influence on the media agenda” and this fact is especially important when considering political blogs (McCombs, 2005, p.549). Despite McCombs’ assertion about the likely influence of blogs on the media agenda, it is appropriate for this study to begin by examining whether blogs influence candidate-to-candidate communication, or what Tedesco (2005) labeled intercandidate agenda setting.

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are the candidate blog issue agendas in the 2006 U.S. Senatorial elections?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Do blogs posts reveal evidence of intercandidate issue agenda setting?

Issue Ownership

Issue ownership theory is built on research dating back to voter identification studies (Maggiotto & Pierson, 1977; Holm & Robinson, 1978; Conover & Feldman, 1981), examinations of voting (e.g. Kelley & Mirer, 1974; Popkin, 1991), and political issues research (Budge & Farlie, 1983; Sellers, 1998; Simon, 2002). Ansolabahere and Iyengar (1994) also examined issue ownership and “riding the wave” when comparing news coverage and campaign advertising to assess whether candidates held to established issue preferences (ownership) or adapted their campaigns to current and changing issues (riding the wave). Ansolabahere and Iyengar studied the 1992 California elections and found support for issue ownership, but

acknowledged, “not all advertising or news messages produced the anticipated effects” (1994, p.355).

Petrocik (1996) was first to explain issue ownership in terms of concentration and distribution across various types of campaign discourse and its impact on voters in presidential elections. Petrocik (1996) laid out a framework by providing lists of issue categories for future researchers to test. He confirmed that Democrats and Republicans “own” certain issues and will frequently concentrate their efforts in campaigns on these particular issues in order to maintain and reinforce their party base as well as stress their importance to the public. Petrocik (1996) acknowledged that issue ownership is a long-term process despite some short-term or election specific trends or shifts. The following table exhibits the categories created by Petrocik (1996):

Table 2

Petrocik's Issue Categories

Topic/Issue	Owned by
Civil Liberties	Democrats
Civil and Social Order	Republicans
Foreign Relations	Performance
Defense Spending & Policy	Republicans
Civil Rights	Democrats
Social welfare/spending	Democrats
Farmers and Agriculture	Democrats
Social Class and group relationships	Democrats
Women	Democrats
Organized Labor	Democrats
Big Government	Republicans
Economy	Performance
Government Functioning	Performance

Note. From "Issue Ownerships in Presidential Elections, with 1980 Case Study," by J.R. Petrocik, 1996, *American Journal of Political Science*, 40(3), p. 848.

Benoit and Hansen (2004) discussed issue ownership in reference to primary and general election Presidential debates. Their study found strong support for issue ownership theory in presidential debates. Primary and general election debates were analyzed separately and collectively. Overall, the results revealed, “Democrats emphasized Democratic issues more, and Republican issues less, than Republicans” (Benoit & Hansen, 2004, p.149). However, they also found that candidates more often referenced Republican issues (63%) than Democratic issues (37%). The most unexpected finding, according to Benoit and Hansen (2004), is evidence of a “significant shift over time; Democratic issues were discussed more in recent than early years, [and] whole Republican issues decreased over time” (p.153). They also presented an exception to the general finding by discussing how George W. Bush, in the 2000 election, emphasized the typically Democratic issue of education and overcame the traditional assumption that Republicans could not be strong with this issue. Their explanation for why this shift occurred included two potential reasons: 1) Bush established his program for creating private school vouchers for alternatives to a public school education, and 2) Laura Bush added to his credibility because of her experience as a teacher (Benoit & Hansen, 2004).

Meirick and Pfau (2005) examined presidential primary advertisements through the issue ownership framework. They found there “was not a significant relationship between issue ownership and evaluations of ads for candidates” due to the one party involvement during the primary phase of the campaign (p.15). This study’s findings were contrary to previous research, revealing that issue ownership was not an aspect voters paid attention to in their evaluation of the primary ads. While not a variable under analysis in this thesis, it is interesting to note that “an indication of an interaction between ad tone and issue ownership” (Meirick & Pfau, 2005, p. 15)

occurred in another form of candidate-controlled communication, which has obvious implications for blog research.

Much of the research into issue ownership theory is in the presidential campaign area of political communication. However, at least one study by Benoit and Airne (2005) discusses the theory for non-presidential television spots. The study establishes the relevance of examining non-presidential campaigns by stating that the results from studies of presidential campaigns may “not necessarily apply to non-presidential messages” (Benoit & Airne, 2005, p.494). Therefore, their analysis covers local, gubernatorial, House, and Senate elections from 1980 to 2002. Overall, they found that Democratic candidate ads more frequently mentioned Democratic issues and the same was true with Republican candidate ads with Republican issues. Benoit and Airne (2005) argued that issue ownership theory held up in an analysis of non-presidential spots with the exception of the 2002 US Senate ads. The reasoning behind that year’s departure from the norm was the events surrounding 9/11 and the fact that the typically Republican issue of security topped the list of most important issues for that election.

Issue ownership theory established through several forms of campaign discourse that the expectation is Republican candidates will discuss the issues they “own” to gain an advantage whereas Democrats are likely to do the same for their issues. However, there is a lack of issue ownership research exploring online forms of communication. Therefore, this study provides some foundational research in the area of issue ownership by examining U.S. Senate candidate campaign blogs.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): Is the Issue Ownership hypothesis supported across different types of candidate status (incumbent, challenger, open seat)?

Research Question 4 (RQ4): Does incumbency influence adherence to traditional issue ownership through blog posts or allow candidates to campaign beyond traditional party issues?

Linking Agenda Setting and Issue Ownership

Agenda setting and issue ownership theories frequently provide the framework when scholars examine political issues. It is appropriate to apply both theories to investigate the 2006 U.S. Senate elections because campaigns are grounded in their issue agendas. McCombs and Shaw (1972) provided insight into how the news media influenced what the public thought about in regards to issues. Since then, agenda setting evolved and adapted to the myriad of new forms of communication. Several studies look at agenda setting through various forms of campaign communication (e.g. Brasher, 2003; Kiouisis, 2005; Ku, Kaid, & Pfau, 2003; Roberts & McCombs, 1994; Tedesco, 2005). Candidate-controlled blogs provide a unique media format for candidates and offer researchers a resource to study agendas presented on blogs and evidence of intercandidate agenda setting via blogs.

Blog agendas in Senate campaigns are ideal for investigating issue ownership theory because Senate candidate issue agendas often follow closely the national party issue platform. The issue ownership theory establishes that Republican and Democratic parties “own” certain issues and attempt to set the campaign agenda with these issues. For example, Republicans have a history of being stronger when it comes to the issue of security and taxes while Democrats are traditionally stronger on issues such as education and social welfare. Voting studies (e.g., Kelley & Mirer, 1974; Popkin, 1991) show that issues are the most important aspect citizens consider when they make voting decisions. Both agenda setting and issue ownership theories are widely

applicable to campaign communication research, however this thesis is the first to explore a melding of these theories in an online environment.

Prior Research

Incumbent and Challenger Status

Most elections provide an incumbent, or the current office holder, and a challenger. Each status (incumbent and challenger) has a set of strategies typically used in order to gain the edge during the course of the campaign. Most of the information we attribute to incumbent and challenger strategies is associated with presidential elections, but they are relevant at every level of election. Trent and Friedenber (2004) established a set of traditional incumbent and challenger strategies. However, incumbents and challengers are likely to use a wide range of strategies depending on several factors including their political experience and whether they hold a lead in the campaign. In fact, Trent and Friedenber (2004) contend that there are really three styles that candidates employ during an election, incumbent, challenger, and a combination of incumbent/challenger.

Incumbents come into the election with a considerable advantage over challengers for several reasons, including already possessing the media's attention and a demonstrated record in office. Shea and Burton (2006) state that "perhaps the strongest voting cue is simple incumbency" (p. 5). In addition, "as Nixon did in 1972, presidents can campaign by doing their jobs, while challengers, as George McGovern discovered, have to manufacture positions that may dissolve on close scrutiny or criticism" (Polsby & Widavsky, 2004, p. 79). Jacobson (2001) indicates, "on average, Senate incumbents are about three times as likely to lose as House incumbents, but only on average. Reelection rates of senators vary widely from year to year,

ranging in post-World War II elections from a high 97 percent in 1990 to a low of 55 percent in 1980” (p. 198).

Trent and Friendenberg (2004) establish two categories of incumbent strategies, symbolic and pragmatic. The symbolic strategies attempt to capture the power and prestige of the office by emphasizing the symbolic trappings of their position as well as transmitting the images of legitimacy, charisma, and competency of the office (Trent & Friendenberg, 2004). Pragmatic strategies refer to the actual activities an incumbent can engage in to exemplify the office’s power and importance. Pragmatic strategies include emphasizing accomplishments, making leadership and position appointments, appropriating funds, and depending on surrogates. These strategies allow an incumbent to exhibit themselves practically within the office, an approach not usually available to challengers.

Additionally, research identifies the advantages of incumbency across election levels. Lau and Pomper (2004) found that “some incumbents are so popular, and some states are so dominated by one of the political parties, that the Senate election is never really in doubt” (p. 47-48). Kahn and Kenney (1999) establish that “if the candidate sending the message is a U.S. Senator, the press may pay careful attention to the message when writing stories about the campaign” (p. 136). The media frequently consult public officials when searching for sources to develop news stories. This process, if treated strategically, allows politicians to gain control of the media agenda.

Elections do not always favor the incumbent. Bradshaw (1995) states the incumbent is “the issue in the campaign” and the voters’ behavior comes down an incumbent’s performance while in the office. He adds, “if voters are surly, as they were in 1992, the incumbent is at a

disadvantage because there is a predisposition to change” (Bradshaw, 1995, p. 38). This statement is poignant when considering the situation heading into the 2006 U.S. Senate elections.

Challengers, typically in a defensive position during election campaign because they are lesser known to citizens, must work harder to earn media coverage. Because a challenger does not generally have an image or record established with the public, they are required to build an image. Frequently, media – with influence from incumbent attempts to frame their opponent – define the challenger’s image. However, with strategies such as calling for changes, taking offensive positions on the issues, and attacking their opponent’s record, challengers attempt to gain credibility and prove themselves as a viable candidate to hold public office (Trent & Friedenber, 2004).

In most election contexts, the challenger candidates follow a formulaic process to establish themselves. First, a campaign will “introduce the candidate to the public with a series of press interviews combined with ‘establishment’ ads – those designed to let viewers know who the candidate is in the broadest terms” (Trent & Friedenber, 2004, p. 157). Then, with the idea that a positive image was projected, “the campaign might build credibility with a series of ‘issue’ ads, laying out the high points of a candidate’s agenda” (p. 157). These strategies, when put into action, provide a foundation for the challenger candidate in the minds of the public.

However, challengers have some advantages with certain strategies available to them. For example, challengers “with no office to lose, similarly will be willing to bear any downside risks of negative campaigning” (Hale, Fox, & Farmer, 1996; Kahn & Kenney, 1999; Kaid & Davidson, 1986; Tinkham & Weaver-Lariscy, 1995). They will often employ every strategy at their disposal because they know that winning an election over an incumbent is a long shot and, in order to have a change, they must put the incumbent in the hot seat as often as possible. One

of the strongest ways of doing this is by attacking the incumbent's record because incumbents "may have difficulty finding a comparable record to assail on the other side – unless, of course, the challenger succeeds at making his or her own proposals the issue" (Polsby & Widavsky, 2004, p. 80). In addition, "ironically, challengers may be able to shape news coverage because they are not well-known political figures. Many challengers have never held public office and therefore do not have records that can be scrutinized by the press" (Clarke & Evans, 1983). These advantages provide challengers with certain strategies to present themselves as a viable opponent.

Kahn and Kenney (1996) argue both "incumbents and challengers who discuss issues are more likely to experience a closer correlation between what they say and what the press is reporting than when they only discuss their traits or carry forth ambiguous themes such as 'time for a change'" (p. 137). This theme speaks to the necessity to examine how election status influences the agenda setting and issue ownership theories. Election status influences the flexibility candidates have in articulating issue positions and their ability to skirt concrete positions. For example, a challenger often takes the role of a moderate when discussing issues because they do not have a record and they want to keep their issue stances ambiguous. This technique allows the challenger to minimize alienation of moderate and undecided voters.

According to Bradshaw (1995), when an election does not feature an incumbent, "a strategy must be constructed to make one of the candidates more acceptable than the other" to separate the candidates in the eyes of the voters (p. 38). This idea is consistent with candidates' attempts to prevent alienation; generally, one candidate comes out as more desirable than the other on specific issues. The election status of a candidate is an important variable to consider

when looking at who sets the agenda and which issues are high on that agenda, especially in vulnerable elections like those in the 2006 Senate campaign.

Research Question 5 (RQ5): Are established incumbents and challengers campaign strategies observed through candidate blog posts?

Research Question 6 (RQ6): Are there differences in male and female candidate uses of incumbent and challenger strategies as evidenced through candidate blog posts?

Gender Differences in Campaigns

Scholars study gender extensively, especially when examining the many aspects of the political discourse. In order to establish some continuity and provide clear objectives for this thesis, the literature review of scholarship will provide a general overview of studies specific to campaigns, and focus more specifically on those projects dealing with gender variables in online communication.

The topic of candidate gender often comes up when discussing the issue of candidate representation in the news media. Len-Rios, Rodgers, Thorson, and Yoon (2005) explore the textual and visual portrayal of women in news. According to their study, women appear less often than men both in photographs and news stories. Their finding was consistent with public perception that males dominated news photographs (p. 162). The researchers concluded that the newspapers studied reflected the masculine cultural hegemony that prevails in United States culture.

Representation of gender in politics is a topic debated among scholars. Robertson, Froemling, Wells, and McCraw (1999) discussed the difference in issues, rhetorical styles, and appeals contained in male and female campaign advertisements. They established that females

stressed children's issues and taxes more often than males. Females were more likely to use the "emotional involvement style" and appeals to credibility while males more often used logical appeals (p. 339). Banwart and McKinney (2005) highlight gender in non-presidential debates by viewing mixed-gender televised U.S. Senate and gubernatorial debates in 2000 and 2002. The study looked to establish grounding for "female and male candidate debate styles" (Banwart & McKinney, 2005, p. 362). Ultimately, their findings revealed no significant differences in female and male debate styles and only subtle differences in party affiliation and level of office. The researchers concluded when non-presidential candidates meet in a debate format, they are aware of gender stereotypes and participate in "gendered adaptiveness" to prevent limitations imposed by gender-specific language or responses.

Yates (1997) presented several different issues concerned with computer-mediated communication (CMC) and gender in the analysis of the "social construction of online identities" (p. 284). Yates quotes Habermas (1984, 1987) when referring to the 'democratic model' and claims that many relations of power and many markers of social and cultural status are removed by making this interaction [referring to CMC] free from 'systematic' distortion (Yates, 1997, p. 284). CMC "provides the possibility of creating new kinds of identity not present in face-to-face situations" (p. 288).

Puopolo (2001) studied Internet usage, not just CMC, in the 2000 U.S. Senatorial campaign. Campaign website content differences for issue discussion and interactive features were found for male and female candidate websites. First, female candidates were more likely to concentrate on the issues of social security, taxes, senior citizens, technology, and housing. On the other hand, male candidates were more likely to discuss education, health care, prescription drugs, the environment, and employment. Female candidate websites contained more interactive

features than male candidate websites. The female candidates provided features including email, newsletters, search functions, video and audio files, netcasting, as well as a town hall forum.

When compared to female candidate websites, male candidate sites only offered hyperlinks to other content and the opportunity to purchase campaign-related products (i.e. T-shirts). Bystrom, Banwart, Kaid, and Robertson (2004) studied 48 gubernatorial and U.S. Senate websites from 2000 and 2002 and reported that the male and female candidates were likely to discuss much of the same issues. In fact, the top five issues discussed by male and female candidates were the same issues with some slight variation in frequency.

While it is impossible to cover the entirety of gender studies in political communication in this review, the studies provided here show that gender is an important consideration in studies attempting to draw theoretical conclusions. Since blogs represent a new form of candidate-controlled messages, blogs are particularly important to research how female candidates present themselves. This thesis looks to extend the research into the area of the differences between male and female candidates in what strategies, issues, and tactics they employ with their use of the blog as a form of controlled campaign discourse.

Research Question 7 (RQ7): Are there issue ownership differences in mixed gender elections?

Research Question 8 (RQ8): Are there gender differences in issue or image emphasis in mixed gender elections?

Method

This thesis assesses the issues, appeals, and strategies U.S. Senate candidates emphasize on their blogs. Issues, appeals, and strategies are all aspects of campaign communication that are present throughout elections at every level in the United States. The increased usage of candidate blogs in recent years begs research exploring applicability of current media theories to blogs.

For the purposes of this study, blog was defined as a personal journal with posts arranged reverse chronologically. Blogs enable desktop publishing to the web without major technical knowledge, allow readers to provide comment or feedback, and contain an archive of posts and hyperlinks to other content (Herring, et al, 2004, Huffaker, 2004). More specifically, this project examines the features and complexities of a subset of political blogs, the campaign or candidate-controlled blog. Establishing this distinction is important because there are some features that candidate-controlled blogs do not include that are inherent in the typical blog.

Sample Selection

In order to identify official blogs for U.S. Senate candidates during the 2006 election cycle, the official candidate website for each major party candidate was accessed and searched for presence of a blog or campaign diary link on the homepage. Since this thesis focuses on issue and agenda comparisons, only Senate elections where both candidates maintained a blog were considered for inclusion.

Additional factors were considered when selecting elections for analysis. For example, level of vulnerability for Senate seats was classified by the *National Journal's Cook Election Preview*. Those classifications were considered in this thesis with the aim to select races with varied levels of vulnerability. Vulnerability was classified as highly vulnerable, vulnerable,

probably safe, and safe. Selection was limited due to the few number of Senate campaigns in which both candidates actively utilized the blog medium.

The following states and candidates' blogs were selected for analysis based on *The Cook Election Preview, Summer 2006*: Rick Santorum (R) and Bob Casey, Jr. (D) from Pennsylvania (highly vulnerable); Maria Cantwell (D) and Mike McGavick (R) from Washington (vulnerable); Claire McCaskill (D) and Jim Talent (R) from Missouri (highly vulnerable); Jack Carter (D) and John Ensign (R) from Nevada (safe); as well as Bernie Sanders (I) and Rich Tarrant (R) from Vermont (probably safe). Their incumbent/challenger status, party affiliation, and gender is shown in Table 1. Though the selection of these elections was not random, they do represent races from specific levels of vulnerability. It is important to note that they represent different classification to test whether candidates from different types of races are compelled to use blogs differently. Units of analysis for this study were individual blog posts identified by a date and time stamp. The time interval for the study included the "hot phase" or the general election cycle from September 4, 2006 (Labor Day) to November 7, 2006 (Election Day). The entire universe of posts for this election phase was included in the analysis ($N = 474$).

Coders

The systematic collection of blogs posts occurred at regular intervals to prevent content irregularities and ensure blog availability after the close of the 2006 elections. Each post was downloaded and archived in the event they became unavailable online. The recording of each post's URL, in addition to downloading and saving the individual webpage, provided real-time coding while blogs remained available online. As coding was not complete before blogs closed for the election cycle, the archived posts were available to coders.

This study utilized two undergraduate communication students trained in using the content analysis coding instrument. Coders went through a one-month of training process, during which there was an assessment of codebook reliability before actual blog coding for the study. Blog posts were archived and distributed to the coders on a post-by-post basis. By presenting the posts individually, it prevented the coders from having to distinguish one post from another. The random distribution of posts also ensured against systematic or patterned coding of related posts. The coders established presence or absence for each one of the variables. When measuring intercoder reliability, the use of Holsti's formula was appropriate because there were two coders and they coded the same dichotomous units for the project. Reliability was assessed on 50 blog posts and achieved an alpha of .89, with a range from .78 (issue/image) to 1.00 (several categories) across categories.

Variables

Coding included several variables for each blog post. Coders first identified and recorded descriptive information such as candidate's name, gender, and political party. There were three main sections within the codebook assessing issue ownership, agenda setting, and incumbent/challenger strategies.

Issue Ownership & Agenda-Setting In order to assess issue ownership theory that "explains the structural factors and party system variables which lead candidates to differentially emphasize issues," the codebook included an extensive list of issues. These issues were assigned party ownership using Petrocik's issue ownership profile (Petrocik, 1996, p. 825). The study employed a systematic process to develop an exhaustive list of issues to code. First, a search of previous content analysis projects revealed a historical list of issues found in political campaigns (Tedesco, 2005; Williams, 2004). To increase salience of the list with 2006 United States Senate

elections, other sources were consulted including the issue platforms presented on the candidates' websites, issues appearing in media outlets, as well as issues identified in major public opinion polls. Once this initial list was compiled, it went through a review by the advisory committee members for any additional expected and potential issues for inclusion. Finally, the inclusion of an "other" category allowed for the possibility of emergent categories.

The full list of the issues included in the coding are as follows: Economy, Taxes, Budget/deficit, Unemployment/jobs, Cost of Living, Recession/Depression, Job Growth, Fuel prices, Social, Affirmative Action, Racism, Education/schools, Welfare/Welfare Reform, Poverty/Hunger/Homelessness, Ethics/Moral Decline, Abortion, Civil Rights, Gay Marriage, Gay Rights, Women, Women's Issues, Equality, Environmental, Pollution, Global climate change (including global warming), Energy dependence, Alternative energy development, Commerce, Tourism, Gambling, Civil Liberties, Protection of civil liberties, Patriot Act, Civil & Social Order, Crime/Prisons, Death Penalty, Drugs/Drug Abuse/Drug Trafficking, Gun Control, Foreign Relations, International Issues/Foreign Policy, Defense/Security, Spending, War, Homeland Security, Terrorism, Military, Health, Prescription Drugs, Medicare, Health Care Quality, Social Security, Health Care Costs, Insurance, Farmers & agriculture, Farming/Agricultural, Tobacco, Social class & group relationships, Senior Citizen Issues, Youth Violence, Immigration, Children's Issues, Family Issues, Family Values, Organized Labor, Labor Unions, Size of Government, Big Government, Government functioning, Satisfaction with Government, Dissatisfaction with Government, Judicial, Transportation, Disaster, Disaster preparedness, and Stem Cell Research. The full operationalizations of issues is available in the codebook (see Appendix I).

Typically, researchers use a month-by-month strategy that provides an interval to evaluate issue agendas (i.e. Winter & Eval, 1981 and Tedesco, 2005). However, based on the fact that varied time lags are suggested for various media (Wanta & Hu, 1999), a one-week time lag is used in this thesis. The departure from the standard is primarily due to the nature of the blog medium and the 24-hour news cycle. Bloggers have the opportunity to update or post on their blogs at any time of the day, providing for the chance of multiple posts in one day as well as several over the course of a week.

Incumbent & Challenger Strategies Another major area of inquiry for this study analyzed strategies used by the candidates on their blogs. Trent and Friedenber (2004) establish that there are specific strategies typically used by incumbents and challengers to gain an advantage. The following categories, developed by Trent and Friedenber (2004), were included. Traditional incumbent strategies include: Use of symbolic trappings to transmit importance of office; Incumbency stands for legitimacy; Competency and the office; Charisma and the office; Consulting or negotiating with world leaders; Using endorsements by party and other important leaders; Emphasizing accomplishments; Creating and maintaining "above the trenches" posture; and Depending on surrogates to speak. Traditional challenger strategies include: Calling for changes; Emphasizing optimism for the future; Speaking to traditional values; Appearing to represent the philosophical center of the party; Taking the offensive position on issues; and Attacking the record of the opponent. The full operationalization of these strategies is contained in the full codebook in the Appendix.

Coders evaluated a range of content categories beyond those reported in this thesis. The additional categories will be used in future studies. For those additional categories and their operationalization, please see Appendix 1 for the complete codebook.

Coding Process

The coders had in their possession the codebook with all of the operationalizations for the variables as well as the hyperlink to the online codesheet. A codesheet, created using survey.vt.edu, assisted in streamlining the coding and data collection process. Each week, the researcher provided each coder with a list of links to the posts they were to code. Coders completed the content analysis by entering coded responses directly into an online codesheet. Once they completed those posts, the researcher would forward them another list. The researcher was the only person with access to the completed codesheets.

To measure the issue agendas, coders analyzed each blog post for the presence of issues contained on a predetermined list of 75 campaign issues. Additionally, an open-ended “other” category allowed coders to add issues that emerged beyond the 75 predetermined issues. The list was extensive in order to provide coders with the most specific number of issues so little interpretation was required on their part. Three issues emerged from the “other” category as potentially sizable (ten or more mentions) were included after the coding was complete and they are campaign ethics, youth voting, and minimum wage. After the completion of issue frequencies, Petrocik’s (1996) categories provided a foundation in order to narrow down the list of issues into appropriate categories creating 26 final issue categories, including Petrocik’s original 13.

To streamline analysis, similar issues were collapsed to form broader categories. The following paragraph provides examples to illustrate this process. Economic issues provide an example of how issues were collapsed. For example, all mentions for economy, budget, unemployment/jobs, cost of living, recession/depression, job growth, fuel prices, and minimum wage were included in the group. Under the social issue set, all mentions of social in general,

affirmative action, racism, welfare/welfare reform, poverty/hunger/homelessness, and ethics/moral decline. Civil rights, gay marriage, gay rights, civil liberties, and protection of civil liberties were included within a broad civil rights/civil liberties category. In order to explore this question completely, issues are analyzed in general by candidate and election.

Data Analysis

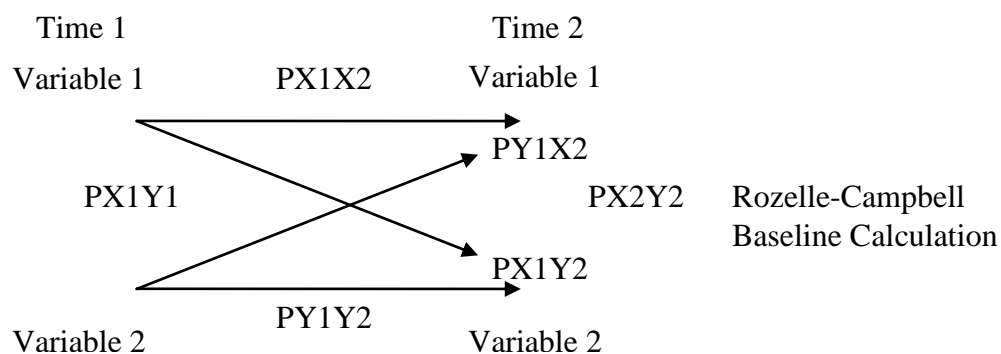
Recent emerging technologies challenge the established ways of measuring agenda setting effects. Agenda setting effects occur over a certain interval, measured using a “time lag.” Many scholars continue to use a standard of a four- to six-week interval to test for agenda setting effects (Winter & Eval, 1981). However, this time lag does not take into account all factors associated with forms of media present today. Wanta and Hu (1994) provided some insight into time lags when they examined those associated with five different types of news media. Their study found that the optimal time lags for national newscasts was one week, local newscasts was two weeks, regional newspapers carried a lag of three weeks, local newspapers that of four weeks, and national news magazines, eight weeks.

There is a necessity to re-evaluate time lags to more accurately assess agenda setting theory since the introduction of many new forms of communication, including the 24-hour cable news channels, websites, and blogs. Cable news, websites, and blogs allow for a higher turnover rate when it comes to the discussion of issues and topics. Roberts, Wanta, and Dzwo (2002) studied agenda setting through electronic bulletin boards and found that using a time lag of seven days or less was ideal. Therefore, taking into consideration the closeness of blogs to electronic bulletin boards, a time lag of one week is used in this thesis instead of the standard four- to six-weeks in order to analyze a new time reference for agenda setting theory.

Correlation measures allowed relationship comparisons between issue agendas by gender and incumbent/challenger status. Correlations are assessed based on the following guidelines set out by Williams (1986) with $<.20$ characterized as a slight correlation and almost negligible relationship, $.20$ to $.40$ as a low correlation with definite but small relationship, $.40$ to $.70$ as a moderate correlation and a substantial relationship, $.70$ to $.90$ as a high correlation and marked relationship, and finally, $>.90$ as a very high correlation with a very dependable relationship.

Chi-square and crosstab comparisons provided testing of differences in cases with categorical data. Statistical significance was set at $p \leq .5$.

The time lag for measuring agenda setting in this study was one week. As a result of setting the time lag at one week, eight time lags were created. Rozelle-Campbell baseline calculations provide a measure for agenda setting effects. Previous scholars (i.e. Roberts and McCombs, 1994; Tedesco, 2002, 2005) use a standard equation to calculate the Rozelle-Campbell baseline. Rozelle and Campbell (1969) first proposed the idea of comparing influence of variables over time. There are six correlations assessed with the Rozelle-Campbell calculations: variable one at time one and variable one at time two ($PXIX2$), variable two at time one and variable two at time two ($PYIY2$), variable one at time one and variable two at time one ($PXIYI$), variable one at time two and variable two at time two ($PX2Y2$), variable one at time one and variable two at time two ($PXIY2$), and variable two at time one and variable one at time two ($PYIX2$). The figure below illustrates these correlations visually.

Figure 1: *Cross-lagged Correlations*

Most researchers are interested in PY1X2 and PX1Y2 because they indicate the influence of each variable on the other over time. While the time-lag correlations are necessary to show influence of variables on each other over time, in order to determine whether one variable was more influential than the other, a baseline comparison is calculated (e.g. Rozelle-Campbell).

Rozelle-Campbell is calculated using the following formula:

$$\frac{[(PX1Y1 + PX2Y2)/2]}{\{[(PX1X2)^2 + (PY1Y2)^2]/2\}^{1/2}}$$

Results

RQ1: What are the candidate blog issue agendas in the 2006 U.S. Senatorial elections?

In order to assess candidate blog issue agendas, issue frequencies were summed for each candidate's blog. Several issues emerged as most salient among the ten campaign blog agendas. The top five issues, expressed by their overall *N* size in Table 3, mentioned in the ten blogs were *defense* (*N* = 165), *health* (*N* = 103), *government functioning* (*N* = 94), *economy* (*N* = 75), and *environmental issues* (*N* = 73). *Defense* appeared in the top five issue mentions for each of the candidates examined in this study and was the top issue in blog agendas for five of the ten candidates. Carter (D-NV) mentioned defense the most of any candidate (*n* = 57) while McCaskill (D-MO) had the least (*n* = 3). *Health* issues were the second most frequently discussed issues and they were among the top five salient issues for every candidate except Santorum (R-PA). The *health* issue category included references to health care costs, health care quality, Social Security, and Medicare. A closer look at the analysis of issues by candidates offers comparisons by election, by party, and by gender.

Missouri

In Missouri, Republican incumbent Jim Talent's top five issues, displayed in Table 3, were *defense* (*n* = 19), *health* (*n* = 7), *taxes* (*n* = 5), *civil and social order* (*n* = 4), and *environmental issues* (*n* = 3). Three of these (*defense*, *health*, and *environmental*) are consistent with the entire sample's overall blog issue agendas. Other important issues Talent discussed were *farming and agricultural issues* (*n* = 2) and *government functioning* (*n* = 2). Missouri's Democratic challenger Claire McCaskill, who posted just nine blog entries over the course of the general election cycle, only made reference to specific campaign issues nineteen times (*n* = 19). McCaskill's infrequency of posts and the limited number of issue mentions resulted in the ability

to establish four issues in her top issue agenda. Those top four issues in her blog agenda were *government functioning* ($n = 6$), *health* ($n = 4$), *defense* ($n = 3$), and *environmental issues* ($n = 2$). In addition to those four issues, three other issues received one mention each in her posts – *economy*, *education/schools*, and *class and group issues*. All four of McCaskill's top issues were consistent with those in the overall blog issue agendas of the ten candidates included in this thesis. Surprisingly, the issue of *stem cell research* did not appear on either Talent or McCaskill's blog issue agenda, even though the issue received heavy media coverage within the state and there was an amendment on the election ballot. Talent's blog issue agenda was significantly correlated with McCaskill's blog issue agenda ($r = .49, p \leq .05$) and both Talent's ($r = .80, p \leq .01$) and McCaskill's ($r = .75, p \leq .01$) issue agendas were correlated with the issue agenda for the total sample.

Nevada

Like McCaskill, Nevada's Republican incumbent John Ensign posted a limited number of times to his campaign blog ($n = 10$). In fact, Ensign posted one more time than McCaskill during the general election phase. As a result of the limited number of posts, the top four issues best represent Ensign's agenda. Ensign's most important issues were *environmental* ($n = 9$), *health* ($n = 8$), *economy* ($n = 8$), and *defense* ($n = 5$). Five other issues had two mentions each – *taxes*, *social welfare/spending*, *civil and social order*, *class and group relationships*, and *government functioning*. Ensign's blog agenda was significantly correlated with the overall issue agenda of the ten candidates ($r = .82, p \leq .01$). Two of Ensign's top issues, *defense* and *civil and social order*, are traditionally Republican-owned issues. More discussion about the issue ownership comparisons will come later in the results section.

Ensign's opponent, Democratic challenger Jack Carter (D-NV) produced more posts ($n = 98$) than any of the other candidates during the general election phase. Carter's high number of posts also resulted in a high number of issue mentions ($n = 161$). The five issues at the top of Carter's issue agenda were *defense* ($n = 57$), *government functioning* ($n = 27$), *economic* ($n = 11$), *class and group relationships* ($n=9$), and *environmental issues* ($n = 7$). Clearly, defense was by far the most substantial issue in Carter's agenda. Four of Carter's top issues (*defense*, *government functioning*, *economic*, and *environmental*) matched the top issues for the overall ranking of issues discussed in the sample. Thus, it is not surprising the Carter's agenda was significantly correlated with the overall issue agenda ($r = .87, p \leq .01$). The *defense* category, as described in the Method section, was an umbrella category for several related issues. The War in Iraq was a prominent aspect of *defense* and constituted nearly half of Carter's (25 of 57) mentions on this issue. Carter's and Ensign's issue agendas were significantly correlated during the general election phase ($r = .49, p \leq .05$).

Pennsylvania

In Pennsylvania, incumbent Republican Senator Rick Santorum's top five issues, in order of frequency, were *defense* ($n = 26$), *economy* ($n = 13$), *class and group relationships* ($n = 10$), *taxes* ($n = 5$), and *women's issues* ($n = 4$). Although only two of Santorum's top issues (*defense* and *economy*) are consistent with the overall blog issue agendas, his other issues were very close to the overall agenda as is evidenced by the high correlation between his agenda and the overall agenda ($r = .79, p \leq .01$). The issues leading Democratic challenger Bob Casey, Jr.'s blog issue agenda were *defense* ($n = 15$), *health* ($n = 8$), *government functioning* ($n = 6$), *foreign relations* ($n = 4$), and *class and group relationships* ($n = 4$). Three of Casey's issues (*defense*, *health*, and *government functioning*) are consistent with the overall blog issue agendas for these candidate

blogs. Like Santorum, Casey's agenda was strongly and significantly correlated with the overall blog issue agenda for the ten Senate candidates ($r = .86, p \leq .01$). Not surprisingly, based on the high correlations both candidates share with the overall, issue agendas for Casey and Santorum were significantly correlated ($r = .76, p \leq .01$).

Vermont

Lack of an incumbent candidate in Vermont resulted in an open-seat race. Republican Rich Tarrant placed *economy* ($n = 16$), *health* ($n = 11$), *environmental* ($n = 9$), *defense* ($n = 6$), and *social* ($n = 5$) issues at the top of his agenda. Four out of five of those issues (*economy*, *health*, *environmental*, and *defense*) are consistent with the overall blog issue agenda and Tarrant's agenda correlated significantly with the combined issue agenda for the campaigns ($r = .73, p \leq .01$). Independent candidate Bernie Sanders' issue agenda was not only significantly correlated with his opponent Tarrant ($r = .57, p \leq .01$) but also represented the highest correlation with the combined agenda ($r = .90, p \leq .01$). Sanders' most salient issues were *defense* ($n = 15$), *health* ($n = 10$), *government functioning* ($n = 10$), *civil rights and liberties* ($n = 9$), and *environmental issues* ($n = 7$). Since Sanders represents the only Independent candidate in this sample, it is interesting that his issue agenda achieved the highest correlation with the combined issue agenda.

Washington

In the Washington Senate election, Democratic incumbent Maria Cantwell led all ten candidates in the number of total issue mentions for the general election phase ($n = 181$). Her issue agenda concentrated on the following issues: *environmental* ($n = 37$), *health* ($n = 32$), *government functioning* ($n = 27$), *economy* ($n = 16$), and *defense* ($n = 13$). Cantwell's top five issues were the same top five issues as the combined issue agenda. Not surprisingly, Cantwell's

agenda was significantly correlated with the combined issue agenda ($r = .74, p \leq .01$).

Republican Mike McGavick's top issues were *health* ($n = 16$), *government functioning* ($n = 10$), *economy* ($n = 10$), *taxes* ($n = 9$), and *defense* ($n = 8$). McGavick and Cantwell shared four of the top five issues in common and their agendas were significantly correlated ($r = .60, p \leq .01$).

McGavick's agenda was slightly more correlated with the combined issue agenda ($r = .80, p \leq .01$)

Summary

Many of the same issues ran through all ten candidate blog agendas, with *health* and *defense* issues gaining prominence among the issues. In fact, each candidate's agenda was significantly correlated with the combined agenda for the ten Senate candidates' issue agendas. While there may be state-specific issues that emerged in elections not covered in this thesis, it seems safe to assume that the issue constituting the combined issue agenda in this study were the major campaign issues during the 2006 election cycle. Further analysis of the issue agenda relationships shows that the Republican candidates were all significantly correlated with each other and the Democratic candidates were significantly correlated with each other. In fact, the issue agendas for the candidates in this study were significantly correlated (with three exceptions) despite the fact that they came from different states. Cantwell's agenda was not significantly correlated with Santorum or Talent and agendas for McCaskill and Santorum were not correlated. It is interesting to note that Santorum is involved in two of these exceptions and that the women candidates play a role in all three exceptions. These will be explored more closely in the gender and party aspects of issue ownership.

RQ2: Do blogs posts reveal evidence of intercandidate issue agenda setting?

In order to answer RQ2, Rozelle-Campbell cross-lag correlations were performed between opposing candidates in each election using a weekly time lag during the hot phase of the general election. Results for RQ2 are presented by state.

Missouri

Talent's issue agenda provided five week-to-week lag correlations that were significantly correlated, including a perfect correlation between weeks one and two ($r = 1.00, p \leq .01$, week 1-week 2; $r = .90, p \leq .01$, week 2-week 3; $r = .56, p \leq .01$, week 3-week 4; $r = .65, p \leq .01$, week 4-week 5; $r = .74, p \leq .01$, week 8-week 9). During weeks six, seven, and eight, Talent's issue agendas from week to week were not significantly correlated. The lack of issue mentions by Talent during these weeks likely resulted in the shifts in issue agendas as the mentions of issues appeared sporadically.

Since McCaskill did not post to her campaign blog during the first two weeks of the general election phase, her number of week-to-week time lag comparisons were reduced to five. Of McCaskill's five week-to-week lag correlations, only two were significantly correlated ($r = .60, p \leq .01$, week 3-week 4; $r = .79, p \leq .01$, week 6-week 7). McCaskill's low number of blog posts throughout the general phase of the campaign caused the appearance of inconsistent issue agendas since absence or low numbers of posts resulted in issues on her agenda one week and off her agenda the next. Clearly, the blog was not a primary campaign vehicle in these cases.

The cross-lag correlations between McCaskill and Talent revealed several examples where their issue agendas were negatively related from week-to-week. This trend is observed in week seven and in the final week of the campaign. Even with the low number of posts and lack of consistency on the part of McCaskill, cross-lag correlations reveal that McCaskill influenced

Talent's issue agenda in week six. McCaskill and Talent also exhibited mutual influence on each other's issue agendas heading into week eight. Thus, there is no clear intercandidate blog issue agenda setting in the Missouri general election, but there are several examples of agenda influence.

Nevada

Carter maintained a strong and consistent agenda throughout most of the general election phase of the campaign. Carter's agenda consistency is evidenced by the six weekly comparisons that were significantly correlated ($r = .49, p \leq .01$, week 1-week 2; $r = .70, p \leq .01$, week 2-week 3; $r = .68, p \leq .01$, week 3-week 4; $r = .81, p \leq .01$, week 5-week 6; $r = .68, p \leq .01$, week 6-week 7; $r = .24, p \leq .05$, week 7-week 8). Ensign, on the other hand, had such few posts that three of the weeks under analysis did not contain a single post and a fourth week had a single post without any issues mentioned. Ensign's blog featured just one comparison that was significantly correlated ($r = .49, p \leq .01$, week 8-week 9).

As for the cross-lag correlations, there were just two possible comparisons for the Nevada election (see Table 6). Neither cross-lag correlation exhibited an example of agenda setting, but Carter did influence Ensign's issue agenda heading into week four of the general election.

Pennsylvania

Santorum's lack of blog posts reduced to seven the number of possible time-lag correlations possible to evaluate for his campaign. Only three week-to-week lag correlations show that Santorum's weekly issue agendas were significantly correlated ($r = .62, p \leq .01$ for week 2-week 3; $r = .59, p \leq .01$ for week 4-week 5; $r = .56, p \leq .01$ for week 7-week 8). Lack of consistent issue agenda throughout the nine-week campaign raises questions about whether shifts in Santorum's agenda were self-directed or forced by the opponent's agenda. Like Santorum,

seven time lag comparisons were possible for Casey since he failed to post during the final week of the campaign. Casey's issue agenda, as presented on his blog, was more consistent than Santorum's since five of the within candidate lag correlations were statistically significant ($r = .63, p \leq .01$ for week 1-week 2; $r = .79, p \leq .01$ for week 3-week 4; $r = .39, p \leq .05$ for week 4-week 5; $r = .73, p \leq .01$ for week 6-week 7; $r = .82, p \leq .01$, week 7-week 8). Casey's strong and consistent issue agenda has implication for the Rozelle-Campbell procedure. A strong, stable, and statistically significant agenda is less susceptible to agenda setting influence, particularly when an opponent's issue agenda is inconsistent. In fact, for five of the eight comparison weeks Casey's own issue agenda is more strongly correlated than Santorum's own issue agenda. Surprisingly, despite the more consistent issue agenda throughout the campaign, the one clear example of agenda setting from this election shows Santorum setting Casey's agenda during week 6 of the election.

Cross-lag correlations from the first three weeks in the general election phase indicate that Santorum influenced Casey's agenda during both the second and third weeks. Cross-lags showed a similar influence for Casey on Santorum's agenda during the second week. Thus, it appeared as though the first weeks into the campaign demonstrated some mutual influence on agendas as the candidates jockeyed their issues. However, cross-lag correlations in later weeks of the election show Casey influenced Santorum's agenda throughout the last three weeks in October. Interestingly, data show that Casey made a major agenda-shift from week five to week six since his own week-to-week issue agenda correlations was extremely low, $r = .029$. Rozelle-Campbell cross-lag correlations show that Casey's shift was in the direction of Santorum's issue agenda and evidence reveals the only example of agenda-setting in Pennsylvania occurred during this time period to Santorum's advantage. Despite the evidence that Santorum's week five issue

agenda set Casey's issue agenda for week six, Santorum failed to maintain a consistent issue agenda and appeared to shift his issue agenda during this same time period toward Casey's agenda. Thus, the final three weeks of the campaign demonstrate that Casey was leading the issue agenda in Pennsylvania.

Vermont

Tarrant's own week-to-week lag correlations revealed three examples where his agenda was significantly correlated between weeks ($r = .64, p \leq .01$, week 5-week 6; $r = .42, p \leq .05$, week 7-week 8; $r = .77, p \leq .01$, week 8-week 9). Overall, Tarrant's agenda exhibited a lack of consistency, including one lag comparison (week 3-week 4) with a negative correlation ($r = -.144$), which demonstrates a clear disconnect between issues discussed by the campaign during the two weeks analyzed. Comparisons of Sanders' agenda were possible for only six of the weekly lags due to lack of issue mentions in posts. Of those six week-to-week lag correlations, only two indicated Sanders' weekly issue agendas were significantly correlated ($r = .41, p \leq .05$, week 5-week 6; $r = .60, p \leq .01$, week 6-week 7). Neither candidate showed a strong and consistent agenda, leading to the implication that agenda-setting results in Rozelle-Campbell seemed unlikely.

However, cross-lag correlations show that five of the six cross-lag correlations indicated either influence or examples of agenda setting. Tarrant exhibited influence over Sanders' issue agenda only once (week three) during the general election phase. On the other hand, the cross-lag correlations revealed Sanders set Tarrant's agenda in weeks four, five, and seven. As Table 8 shows, the level of influence Sanders exhibited on Tarrant's agenda heading into week seven was not as powerful as in weeks four and five, but nonetheless Sanders set Tarrant's agenda during that week too. Sanders also demonstrated influence over Tarrant's issue agenda during

the first week of the campaign. Neither candidate had a strong and consistent agenda throughout the election, but Sanders clearly led the agenda during most of the general election phase.

Washington

The Senate election in Washington was the only election which enabled within candidate and between candidate cross-lag comparisons for all eight weekly-lags. Of the eight possible time lag correlations, Cantwell's issue agenda was significantly correlated for four weeks ($r = .76, p \leq .01$, week 1-week 2; $r = .81, p \leq .01$, week 3-week 4; $r = .82, p \leq .01$, week 4-week 5; $r = .46, p \leq .05$, week 5-week 6). Three of Cantwell's significant correlations were in successive weeks. However, following week six Cantwell's agenda consistency decreased substantially to the point where her final within candidate lag correlation was negligible ($r = .071$). McGavick's issue agenda was slightly more consistent than Cantwell's throughout the campaign. Five of the eight weekly lag correlations for McGavick's issue agenda were significantly correlated ($r = .47, p \leq .05$, week 3-week 4; $r = .58, p \leq .01$, week 4-week 5; $r = .56, p \leq .01$, week 5-week 6; $r = .60, p \leq .01$, week 6-week 7; $r = .59, p \leq .01$, week 7-week 8). Both McGavick and Cantwell maintained consistent issue agendas during weeks four, five, and six. However, Cantwell's correlations were much higher than McGavick's, which suggests an unlikely possibility that McGavick would set Cantwell's agenda during these weeks. Nevertheless, a shift occurred between weeks six and seven because Cantwell's correlation decreased ($r = .34$) and McGavick's increased ($r = .60, p \leq .01$). This shift suggested a possible agenda setting possibility during this lag period.

As the within candidate correlations suggest, between candidate cross-lag correlations produced evidence of influence during week six to seven in McGavick's favor over Cantwell.

Despite strong correlations for the within candidates during week five to week six, cross-lag correlations show McGavick influenced Cantwell during this period as well.

McGavick maintained influence over the issue agenda in week eight as results reveal he set Cantwell's agenda during this time period, which is the only example of agenda setting in the Washington election. As Table 4.13 shows, more evidence that Cantwell was thrown off her agenda is revealed by the low week-to-week within candidate correlation during this period ($r = .028$). During the last week of the campaign, Cantwell regained some control over her own agenda and influenced McGavick's some since the Rozelle-Campbell results show mutual the campaigns had mutual influence on each other during the final week of the election.

Summary

The Rozelle-Campbell procedures rely on correlation and autocorrelation procedures. The within candidate and between candidate lag correlations show varied degrees of relationship for issue agendas as presented in blogs. Some candidates, such as Casey and Carter, maintained strong, consistent agendas throughout the general phase of the election. In other cases, such as Ensign and McCaskill, consistent issue agendas were difficult to establish due to limited posts and limited discussion of issues. Results indicate that the answer to RQ2 is that very few examples of intercandidate agenda setting were evident from analysis of candidate blogs. For all ten candidates across eight lag periods, only six examples of agenda setting were found.

RQ3: Is the Issue Ownership hypothesis supported across different parties?

In order to answer RQ3, frequencies of issue mentions for Petrocik's issue ownership framework were compared by party. Petrocik (1996) identified ten issues traditionally owned by either Republicans or Democrats (see Table 2 & Table 10) and an additional three based on

performance. For the purposes of this thesis, *civil rights* and *civil liberties* were combined into one issue, owned by Democrats, since coding for these issues was linked in the content analysis.

As Table 10 shows Republican had fewer mentions than Democrats on the issue of *defense* ($n = 62$ to $n = 88$, respectively), which received the most mentions from both Republican and Democratic candidates. According to Petrocik (1996), *defense* is a traditionally Republican owned issue. With the War in Iraq, it is clear that candidates from both parties made defense the top issue in their campaigns. Since Democratic candidates mentioned defense more than Republicans, it appears that Democrats seized the issue of *defense* during the 2006 Senatorial elections. Republicans held ownership over the issue of *civil and social order* ($n = 8$) slightly over Democrats ($n = 5$). The final issue traditionally owned by Republicans, *big government*, was not a major factor on candidate agendas, garnering only three mentions over the course of the general election phase. Democrats ($n = 2$) mentioned big government more than Republicans ($n = 1$). Crosstab analysis shows no significant difference between Republicans and Democrats on the three traditionally Republican-owned issues, $X^2(2) = 2.01, p = \text{n.s.}$

As for traditionally Democrat-owned issues, Petrocik (1996) identifies six categories that fulfill this designation. Several issue frequencies support the issue ownership hypothesis for Democrats. First, the *civil rights and civil liberties* combined category supported the hypothesis of Democrats owning this issue ($n = 8$) and Republicans trailing ($n = 3$). *Civil rights and liberties* was also one of the top five issues for Democrats overall in their blog agendas. The other issue category Democrats owned was *labor* ($n = 5$) since Republicans did not mention the issue at all in their blog agendas.

Of the six categories, Petrocik (1996) established as Democrat-owned, four did not uphold the issue ownership hypothesis as discussed in blogs. First, Republicans more heavily

concentrated their issue agendas on *social welfare/spending* ($n = 12$) with Democrats barely mentioning the issue ($n = 2$). Republicans also mentioned *farmers and agriculture* more than Democrats. In fact, Republicans doubled the number of mentions than Democrats ($n = 8$ to $n = 4$, respectively). The issue of *class and group relationships* appeared on both of the parties top five issue lists, but Republicans ($n = 20$) slightly outnumbered Democrats in mentions ($n = 18$). Finally, for the *women's* issue category, Democrats slightly lagged behind Republicans in number of mentions ($n = 3$ to $n = 5$, respectively).

Within the six issue categories identified as traditionally Democrat-owned, the Democrats led only two within the campaign blog agendas in the 2006 election. Crosstab analysis revealed that there was a significant difference between Republican and Democrats on the six traditionally Democrat-owned issues, $X^2(2) = 15.76, p \leq .01$. Republicans demonstrated an ability to take ownership of the traditionally Democratic issues.

Three of the thirteen issues Petrocik (1996) identifies in his issue ownership framework are “owned” by performance. These issues are *economic*, *foreign relations*, and *government functioning*. *Economic issues* were among the top issues on most of the candidates’ agendas; Republicans owned this issue with Democrats trailing in the number of mentions ($n = 41$ to $n = 29$, respectively). The second performance issue is *foreign relations*. In this election, *foreign relations* was not high on the campaign blog agendas ($n = 13$). Democrats ($n = 8$) held a strong dominance over the issue (Republicans, $n = 3$). The most crucial performance issue was that of *government functioning*. Democrats overwhelmingly owned this issue ($n = 67$), featuring it second on their issue priorities. Republicans attempted to utilize the issue, but trailed significantly ($n = 17$).

Performance based issues were handled significantly different by Republicans and Democrats with Republican leading the way on *economic* issues and Democrats using significantly more references to *government functioning* and *foreign relations*, $X^2(2) = 24.55, p \leq .001$. While Republicans tried to campaign on positive aspects of the *economy* (their second highest issue), Democrats used *government functioning* (their second highest issue) as a way to attack the Republican presidential administration and the Republican-led Congress.

Overall, out of the thirteen issue categories set out by Petrocik (1996), Republicans led six categories and Democrats led the other seven. This trend seems appropriate due to the number of close elections resulting from the 2006 Senate campaigns. The significant differences among Democrats and Republicans show their varied issues to their advantage during the 2006 midterm elections.

RQ4: Does incumbency influence adherence to traditional issue ownership through blog posts or allow candidates to campaign beyond traditional party issues?

To answer RQ4, Petrocik's (1996) issue ownership categories were compared with candidate election status to assess whether incumbency has any effect on issue ownership. The results that follow are organized by those elections featuring a Republican incumbent versus a Democratic challenger and those with a Democratic incumbent versus a Republican challenger.

Republican-owned issues

Under the Republican-owned issues, the category of *civil and social order* was owned by the Republican incumbents ($n = 7$) over the Democratic challengers ($n = 2$). Surprisingly, the Democratic challengers ($n = 74$) led the Republican incumbents ($n = 51$) on the *defense* issue. The final Republican-owned issue is *big government* and it was practically a non-issue because

none of the Republican incumbents mentioned it and Democratic challengers mentioned it just two times in their posts.

In the election featuring a Democratic incumbent against a Republican challenger, the picture is slightly different. The Democratic incumbent had more mentions ($n = 3$) than the Republican challenger ($n = 1$) for *civil and social order*. This trend remained the same with the *defense* issue, with the Democratic incumbent mentioning the issue with higher frequency ($n = 13$) than the Republican challenger ($n = 8$). The frequency differences indicate no significant difference between Republican and Democratic candidate ownership of the traditional Republic-owned issues, $X^2(2) = .44, p = \text{n.s.}$

Democrat-owned issues

The first of the Democrat-owned issues is the combined *civil rights and civil liberties* category. In this category, the Democratic challengers ($n = 5$) edged out the Republican incumbents ($n = 4$) with a higher number of mentions. Surprisingly, the Republican incumbents took advantage of the *women's* issue category ($n = 9$), but the Democratic challengers did not mention *women's issues* specifically. Another surprise was that *social welfare/spending* issue was mentioned more by Republican incumbents ($n = 5$) than the Democratic challengers ($n = 1$). Democratic challengers led the way ($n = 4$) on the labor issue as Republican incumbents did not mention this issue in their blog posts. The traditionally Democratic issue of *farmers and agriculture* appeared more frequently on the Republican incumbents' agenda ($n = 4$) than the Democratic challengers ($n = 1$). *Class and group relationships* was relatively balanced in mentions from Democratic challengers and Republican incumbents ($n = 14, n = 13$, respectively). Results of crosstab analysis shows that the Democratic challengers and

Republican incumbents differed significantly in their mentions of these traditionally Democrati-owned issues, $X^2(5) = 16.40, p \leq .01$.

As for the election between the Democratic incumbent and Republican challenger, the issue of *civil rights and liberties* went to the Democratic incumbent ($n = 7$) because there were no mentions by the Republican challenger. Another issue category without any mentions by the Republican challenger was *women's issues*, while the Democratic incumbent mentioned *women's issues* a few times ($n = 3$). *Social welfare/spending* issues belonged to the Republican challenger ($n = 4$) because the Democratic incumbent mentioned the issue only once. The *labor* issue category was again important with just one mention by the Democratic incumbent. *Farmers and agriculture* was a close issue category with the Democratic incumbent leading the way ($n = 3$) and the Republican challenger close behind ($n = 2$). *Class and group relationships*, was a top issue for this election cycle because it includes mentions of immigration and other group-related policy. The Republican challenger ($n = 6$) edged out the Democratic challenger ($n = 4$) with this issue.

Performance-based issues

There are three performance-based issues within the issue ownership framework set up by Petrocik (1996). *Foreign relations* was not high on the issue agenda within the blog posts, but the Democratic challengers ($n = 6$) had a higher number of mentions than Republican incumbents ($n = 3$). The *economy*, on the other hand was a very important issue on the agendas of most candidates within their blogs. Again, the Democratic challengers ($n = 13$) edged out the Republican incumbent ($n = 12$) with a higher number of mentions for *economic issues*. Finally, the issue of *government functioning* was top on many candidates' agendas. Not surprisingly, the Democratic challengers owned this issue ($n = 40$) while the Republican incumbents followed

with less than a third of the mentions of Democrats ($n = 12$). Results indicate no significant difference between Republican incumbents and Democratic challengers in the issue mentions for performance-based issues, $X^2(2) = 4.88, p \leq .10$.

When looking at the other election context with the Democratic incumbent and Republican challenger, the issue of *foreign relations* was even less of an issue with only two mentions by the Democratic incumbent and none by the Republican challenger. *Economic issues* were mentioned more by Democratic incumbent's ($n = 16$) than Republican challengers ($n = 10$). The final performance issue of *government functioning* was somewhat surprising because the Democratic incumbent was utilizing the issue at almost triple the frequency as the Republican challenger ($n = 27, n = 10$, respectively). Crosstab analysis shows no significant difference between Democratic incumbent and Republican challenger use of performance-based issues, $X^2(2) = 1.85, p = \text{n.s.}$

Overall, the Republican incumbents owned four issue categories, Democratic incumbents had the advantage in nine, Republican challengers maintained control on just two categories, and Democratic challengers garnered higher frequencies in eight of the categories. The election outcome speaks to the fact that Democrats, both incumbent and challenger have more issue categories in their control than Republicans.

RQ5: Are established incumbents and challengers campaign strategies observed through candidate blog posts?

This research question required identifying frequencies for each of Trent and Friedenbergs' (2004) incumbent and challenger strategies by election status (incumbent, challenger, open). Traditionally, incumbents use strategies that demonstrate their success in elected office and employ the incumbent message strategies in an attempt to show leadership and

experience they gained in office, which is typically strategies their challenger has difficulty matching. Challenger strategies, including calling for changes, are not typically cloaked in the symbolic advantages of the office but work well when there are areas of the incumbent's record or of the political environment that are not favorable.

Incumbent Strategies

Trent and Friedenber (2004) identified nine main strategies employed by incumbents during election campaigns. As Table 12 shows, the ten candidates' blog posts featured incumbents dominating all strategies, with the exception of one category where frequencies were tied with challenger candidates. First, incumbents emphasized the *symbolic trappings of the office*; incumbents used this strategy ($n = 21$) more often than challengers ($n = 6$). Not surprisingly, incumbents were in complete control of the *incumbency stands for legitimacy* strategy over challengers ($n = 64$ to $n = 0$, respectively). Then, looking at *competency and the office*, incumbents used it more often ($n = 52$) than challengers ($n = 29$). With *charisma and the office*, incumbents utilized the strategy more than double the use of challengers ($n = 50$, $n = 24$, respectively). *Consulting world leaders* was not a highly utilized strategy in this election, however incumbents used it slightly more often ($n = 2$) than challengers ($n = 1$).

Challengers frequently used the strategy of *endorsements*, but incumbents ($n = 27$) edging out challengers ($n = 22$) in overall use within the blog posts. Incumbents ($n = 33$) nearly tripled the use of the *emphasizing accomplishments* strategy over challengers ($n = 13$). The only tie between incumbents and challengers in strategy use came with the *above the trenches attitude* with both candidates using the strategy just one occasion each. Finally, the use of the *depending on surrogates* strategy was widely used by all candidates, however incumbents came out ahead in use ($n = 91$) over challengers ($n = 86$). Crosstab analysis revealed that there was a significant

difference between incumbents and challengers on the nine incumbent strategies, $X^2(7) = 54.20$, $p \leq .001$.

Challenger Strategies

There are six main challenger strategies that Trent and Friedenber (2004) identify for use in campaign discourse (see Table 12). Of these strategies, challengers only dominated in two categories with incumbents leading in the other four. The first of these categories was *calling for changes*. Challengers ($n = 101$) used this strategy almost four times as often as incumbents ($n = 26$). Incumbents also utilized the strategy of *emphasizing optimism* more frequently ($n = 40$) than challenger candidates ($n = 31$). Incumbents utilized the strategy of representing *traditional values* nearly twice as much as the challengers ($n = 34$, $n = 18$, respectively). For the *representing the center of the party* strategy, incumbents' use of the strategy was nearly triple the number ($n = 21$) of challenger uses ($n = 8$). *Offensive position on issues* strategy use was close between incumbent and challengers candidates with incumbents edging out challengers ($n = 49$ to $n = 47$, respectively). Finally, the other strategy challengers dominated was *attacking the record of opponent* and challengers had more than double the number of uses ($n = 92$) as incumbents ($n = 45$). There is a significant difference between incumbents and challengers in the six challenger strategies, $X^2(5) = 60.77$, $p \leq .001$.

Overall, candidates attempted to combine incumbent and challenger strategies to gain an advantage over their opponent. It is clear that challenger candidates did not take advantage of several categories traditionally available to them. Incumbents tried their best to take advantage of the favorable incumbent strategies while also trying to run as challengers where possible in a political climate that was generally not favorable for incumbent members of Congress.

RQ6: Are there differences in male and female candidate uses of incumbent and challenger strategies as evidenced through candidate blog posts?

To answer RQ6, only the two mixed gender elections were used since it was important to see how male and females campaigned while facing an opponent of the opposite sex. This process involved examining just the Missouri and Washington election because both elections featured male and female candidates. These elections provided not only two males and females making up the comparison groups, but also allowed for a balance of two incumbents and two challengers. It is important to note that the female group is heavily skewed with Cantwell's strategies because she had considerably more posts ($n = 78$) than the other female McCaskill ($n = 9$).

Incumbent Strategies

Of the nine main incumbent strategies, males dominated three, females dominated five, and one category was a tie. First, the tie was in the *symbolic trappings of the office* strategy, indicating the same frequency of use by both males and females ($n = 6$). The three incumbent strategies where males maintained higher frequencies than females were *incumbency stands for legitimacy*, *charisma and the office*, and the *above the trenches attitude*. In the *incumbency stands for legitimacy* strategy, males used the category slightly more than females ($n = 13$ to $n = 9$, respectively). There was a larger margin of difference with the *charisma and the office* strategy (males = 19, females = 11). A strategy not used often in the election was maintaining an *above the trenches attitude*. Males utilized the strategy just one time during the general election phase where females did not use it at all. Because of the overall lack of negativity in the Washington race, it is surprising this strategy was not recorded in a higher frequency.

There were five incumbent strategies where female candidates had higher frequencies than male candidates. First, females ($n = 12$) held a slight edge over males ($n = 10$) when it came to utilizing the *competency and the office* strategy. A strategy not utilized widely in the election was that of *consulting world leaders*. Females had just once instance of its use and males had no uses. This trend may be because consulting with world leaders is not as crucial in the election of Senators as it is with presidential elections. Females heavily dominated the use of *endorsements* ($n = 15$), maintaining triple the number of uses than males ($n = 5$). Another incumbent strategy females ($n = 19$) utilized more frequently than males ($n = 13$) was *emphasizing accomplishments*. The final incumbent strategy dominated by females was *depending on surrogates*. This strategy was heavily utilized during the election with females emphasizing its use ($n = 60$) much more than males ($n = 35$). There is not a significant difference between males and females in mixed gender elections within the nine incumbent strategies, $X^2(7) = 13.89, p \leq .10$.

Challenger Strategies

Challenger candidates typically draw on six main strategies when presenting their campaign discourse in the different media formats. Of these six, males dominated the use of four, while females maintained an advantage in just two. First, males utilized *traditional values* ($n = 14$) more often than females ($n = 12$). Male candidates also presented themselves as *representing the center of the party* twice as frequently as females ($n = 9$ to $n = 4$, respectively). In addition, males took the *offensive position on issues* in higher frequency ($n = 26$) than females ($n = 18$). Finally, males were more likely to *attack the record of the opponent* ($n = 16$) than females ($n = 11$). As for females, they had a higher rate than males for *calling for changes* ($n = 32$ to $n = 30$, respectively) and *emphasized optimism*, again slightly more often than males ($n =$

19 to $n = 18$, respectively). Overall, the challenger strategies were close between males and females, and there is a significant difference between them in the six challenger strategies, $X^2(2) = 3.19, p = n.s.$

The results from this research question do not indicate that gender impacts the use of strategy within campaign blog posts. Because the differences between the female and males candidates were not significant, it can be assumed that females and males use these strategies with similar frequency.

RQ7: Are there issue ownership differences in mixed gender elections?

To answer RQ7, the two mixed gender elections (Missouri and Washington), were broken out as they were for RQ6 so that comparison could be made in just these two elections. The two male candidates were Republicans Jim Talent (incumbent) from Missouri and Mike McGavick (challenger) from Washington. Female candidates were Democrats Claire McCaskill (challenger) from Missouri and Maria Cantwell (incumbent) from Washington. Thus, both males were Republicans and the females were Democrats. It is noted here and in Table 12 that the females frequency totals are heavily skewed towards Cantwell because McCaskill lacked a high number of posts ($n = 9$) with relatively few issue mentions ($n = 19$).

The top issues on the blog agendas for males were *defense* ($n = 27$), *government functioning* ($n = 12$), *economic issues* ($n = 11$), *class and group relationships* ($n = 7$), and *civil and social issues* ($n = 5$). Three of the issues on the male agendas (*defense*, *government functioning*, and *economic issues*) were also consistent with the overall blog agendas. On the other side, female candidates in the mixed gender elections had the top issues of *government functioning* ($n = 33$), *economic issues* ($n = 17$), *defense* ($n = 16$), *civil rights and liberties* ($n = 7$),

and *class and group* ($n = 5$). Four of the top five issues for both males and females in the mixed gender elections ranked the same, but the frequency totals were different.

Republican-Owned Issues

As mentioned earlier, Petrocik (1996) identified three issue categories traditionally owned by Republicans, *civil and social order*, *defense*, and *big government*. As Table 12 shows, in the mixed gender elections, males had more *civil and social order* issue category mentions than females ($n = 5$ to $n = 3$, respectively). Males had almost double the number of *defense* issue mentions ($n = 27$) when compared to females ($n = 16$). The issue of *big government* had no mentions by any candidate in the mixed gender elections. Crosstab analyses could not be performed due to the zero frequency of both males and females for one issue in the comparison.

Democrat-Owned Issues

As seen in Table 2, Petrocik (1996) identified six issue categories typically owned by Democrats, *civil rights and liberties*, *women, farmers and agriculture*, *class and group relationships*, *labor issues*, and *social welfare and spending*. Females effectively owned the *civil rights and liberties* issue category compared to males ($n = 7$ to $n = 1$, respectively). The *women's* issue category was not an important issue on any of the candidates' agendas during this election, but females did have more mentions ($n = 3$) than males ($n = 1$). *Labor issues* were only mentioned once among the four candidates in the mixed gender elections and it was by a female.

There were three typically Democrat-owned issue categories where Republican males attempted to take ownership away from the Democratic females; *social and class relationships*, *farmers and agriculture*, and *social welfare/spending*. Another surprising trend was seen with the *class and group relationships* issue having a higher number of mentions by males ($n = 7$) than females ($n = 5$). Males had a slightly higher number of mentions ($n = 4$) of *farmers and*

agriculture issue category compared to females ($n = 3$). The *social welfare/spending* issue produced the biggest difference between male and female candidates (males = 15 , females = 1). The Democrat-owned issues were used in significantly different ways by the male and female candidates, which may not be surprising since the males were Republicans and the females were Democrats, $X^2 (5) = 18.40, p \leq .01$.

Performance-Based Ownership

The last three issue categories identified by Petrocik (1996) were *economic*, *foreign relations*, and *government functioning*, all of which have performance as their basis for ownership. Females had a higher number of mentions for *economic issues* than males ($n = 17$ to $n = 11$, respectively). Many argue over who owns the issue of *foreign relations*. Surprisingly, this issue was not high on the agenda. For the mixed gender campaigns, males did not mention the issue at all and females mentioning the issue sparsely ($n = 2$). The final performance-based issue category is *government functioning*. This issue was high on seven of the ten candidates in this study and possessed the third highest number of mentions out of all issues ($n = 95$). In the mixed gender elections, females had almost triple the number of *government functioning* mentions when compared to males in the mixed gender elections ($n = 33$ to $n = 12$, respectively). The three performance-based issues are critically important to the success of either party's campaign issue agenda. Despite the fact that female candidates had more mentions for each of these performance based issues, the difference between female and male usage was not statistically significant $X^2 (2) = 2.20, p = n.s.$

In the mixed gender elections there was a wide range of results. Of the thirteen issue ownership categories, males owned five categories, females owned six, and there was one (*big government*) where none of the candidates mentioned the issue. Within the Republican-owned

categories, males owned two of the three issues while the third issue had no mentions by any of the candidates in these races. As for Democrat-owned issues, the categories were split three for females and three for males. Within the performance categories, females came out dominant in all three.

RQ8: Are there gender differences in issue or image emphasis in mixed gender elections?

The final research question examines the differences among males and females when it comes to the issue or image emphasis of the campaign blog post. Typically, any form of campaign discourse is concentrated on either the candidate image or an issue on their platform. As mentioned previously, the female frequencies are heavily skewed towards Cantwell in Washington because she had more posts ($n = 78$) than the other female, McCaskill from Missouri ($n = 9$). In the mixed gender elections, females had more posts with issues emphasized ($n = 46$) than image ($n = 39$). Males on the other hand, had less than half the number of issue-focused posts ($n = 32$) as those centered on image ($n = 63$). There is a significant difference between males and females in the blog post emphasis on issue or image, $X^2(2) = 7.63, p \leq .01$.

Discussion

The 2006 U.S. Senate elections provided a unique opportunity to examine the blog medium and to advance the theoretical foundations of how candidates communicate with citizens about their stances on important issues and their aspirations for public office. This study examined campaign blog posts and found interesting extensions of the current theories of agenda setting and issue ownership. It also explored how aspects of gender and election status affected a candidate's use of the blog medium within the explored theoretical frameworks.

Agenda setting

The central focus for this thesis was on the agenda-building aspects of agenda setting. During an election, politicians are always searching for ways to disseminate their campaign discourse to a mass audience. Davis and Owen (1998) pondered questions about agenda setting in the new media environment and whether agenda-setting effects would be as measurable considering the highly selective and individualized news patterns of consumers in this new media environment. By creating and maintaining a campaign blog, candidates provide their own voice within the blogosphere, and the blogs enable them to control these types of messages. McCombs (2005) postulated that if blogs were going to exhibit an agenda setting role, it would likely be to influence the media agenda, thus making it critically important for candidates to push their agenda in the blogosphere.

Blogs are an interesting medium to examine for agenda building because they exhibit the two critical components of interest in agenda setting research (Dearing & Rogers, 1996): real-world events and the activities of political actors. Dearing and Rogers (1996) discuss trigger events that "help newsmen and the public attach meaning to an event by linking it to an issue" (p. 6). This idea is evident in the blog posts, adding the element of a political candidate's

view of the event and issue. Defense emerged as the major issue in the 2006 midterm election. This is not surprising since the central issue to the 2006 Senate elections was the Iraq War, security in a post-9/11 world, and the threat of nuclear weapons. Dearing and Rogers (1996) establish that the “agenda setting process is an ongoing competition among the proponents of a set of issues to gain the attention of media professionals, the public, and policy elites” (p. 6). Blogs add an element to that process and competition surrounding agenda setting.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) state that agenda setting is “the ability of the media to influence the salience of events in the public mind” (p. 177). By providing a source for the media, blogs play an important role in setting their agenda as well as establishing a place for direct access to the citizen. Therefore, ultimately playing a dual role in the process, being both source and media outlet, depending on the user’s vantage point. Blogs, specifically candidate-controlled or campaign blogs, are unique in that they have the potential to influence both the media and the public. When one examines press releases, generally information is provided to the media, who then interpret it for the public. Since blogs are a controlled medium, no gatekeeping or media filter exists between the campaign blog and its readers. Websites and campaign ads provide this form of message control to candidates, which making the emergence of candidate blogs a critical campaign tool.

Another important aspect to consider is how candidates interact with one another during the campaign through their agendas. Tedesco (2005) found clear evidence of intercandidate agenda setting in press releases on candidate websites. However, the results from this thesis were unable to extend Tedesco’s finding to blogs. In fact, out of 28 total time lag correlations between candidates, only six examples of agenda setting were found. Overall, issue agendas lacked correlation within individual candidate’s agendas, only Carter maintained a majority of

significant correlations between his weekly issue agendas. In most cases, the blog issue agendas were very sporadic in nature, constantly changing throughout the general election phase of the campaign. While Wanta & Hu (1994) argue to abbreviate the lag time for various media, separating the lags into weekly periods appeared to work against the ability to identify the clear agendas candidate held. While issues emerge in different levels each week, the agenda appears easier to identify when looking at the totality of the campaign rather than the weekly issue profiles.

Many people who access campaign websites do so intentionally and are actively seeking information about a particular candidate. Generally, they are supporters or at least think positively about the candidate and content. Although campaign do a great deal of opponent-research, they may not feel the need to use their blogs to counter their opponent's blog issues since their main goal may be to reinforce supporters visiting the blog. If reinforcement is a primary goal for blogs, agenda-setting effects would not be expected on blogs. This finding leads to the conclusion that campaign blogs differ from the traditional forms of campaign discourse and how that affects the way researchers investigate them. While this thesis looked at intercandidate agenda setting through blogs, it may be best to explore how blogs influence traditional media. However, additional assessment of intercandidate agenda setting in blogs may be warranted. For example, examples of candidates using candidate advertising – the other controlled medium – to respond and dialogue about issues on their opponent's agenda are widely available. Thus, it may be that the evolution of the blog medium may see significant shifts in its usage by campaigns, especially if readership levels for blogs increase.

Issue Ownership

Few studies use the issue ownership framework to examine elections. Benoit and Hansen (2004) found strong support for issue ownership theory within the presidential debate context. This study provides support for the issue ownership framework. However, because the medium is generally for engaged supporters, there is less of a need to “preach to the choir” within the blog posts. While support for issue ownership exists in blogs, there is not universal attachment to the partisan issues. It is also the case that candidate variability in gender, incumbency, and performance appears to be a significant factor influencing whether a candidate “owns” issues.

This thesis established what issues candidates were including in their campaign blogs posts as well as applied Petrocik’s (1996) issue ownership framework in an effort to examine whether candidates were following party lines in their issue agendas. The issue ownership framework provides that Democrats emphasize Democratic issues and Republicans stress Republican issues, based on successful campaigning on the issue in past elections. This theory speaks to the idea that one party utilizes certain issues more often during the election cycle. Benoit and Hansen (2004) found that Republican issues were discussed by media more often than Democratic issues. This study supports that finding by presenting results that candidates discussed Republican (62%) issues more often than Democratic issues (38%) in their campaign blog posts. Thus, Republicans may have an advantage in agenda control.

The top five issue ownership categories across all ten candidate blogs were *defense*, *government functioning*, *economic issues*, *class and group relationships*, and *civil rights and liberties*. Issues related to *defense*, including war, the military, and homeland security, were high on the agenda for all candidates. This finding is not surprising considering the War in Iraq, homeland security in a post-9/11 world, and the threat of nuclear weapons from nations such as Iran and North Korea. Due to all of these factors, this study presents an argument establishing

that the *defense issue* category was not partisan in this election. It is argued here that when a campaign issue dominates the political environment for a campaign, the issue becomes a necessity for all candidates to address. One of the extensions of issue ownership that could be worth exploring in future studies is whether or not candidates from parties not owning an issue spend more time attacking the record of their opponent or attempting to build credibility for that issue. Nevertheless, discussion of *defense issues* was a necessity in this election whereas international issues were not high on the political agenda.

Government functioning issues also had a strong presence in this election and there are several reasons for this trend. First, the President's and Congress' record low approval ratings contributed to an overall re-examination of that nation's government by voters, proving that politicians are held accountable. It appears that the partisan politics that dominated our political environment during the past several decades continued to translate to questions about the effectiveness of government in the 2006 Senate elections. The issues under the class and group relationships category, including immigration, gay rights, and gay marriage were wedge issues that increased the focus on partisan differences. These three issues shaped the agenda through heavy media coverage and divided the country on how to handle these delicate subjects. The campaign blogs included all of these issues, providing the candidates with another forum to disseminate their campaign agenda.

Iyengar and Kinder (1987) established a strong connection between issues candidates emphasize and the perceptions voters have of the candidates. This study clearly revealed that defense and health issues led the way as critical issues, at least when examining the blog agendas. It is not difficult to understand why defense was a heavily emphasized issue due to the

government's position in this post 9/11 world. The issues covered extensively in the media and it is not surprising politicians would place them high on their issue agendas.

Health issues emerged strongly as an issue category in this election, separating itself from the overall social issue category that Petrocik (1996) initially solidified in his framework. It seems appropriate that this would be the case because of the recent attention paid to topics such as malpractice, the rising cost of health insurance, debates about prescription drugs, and our nation's continued battle with significant numbers of uninsured citizens. Health issues, including Medicare, consume larger portions of our nation's budget each time our nation wrestles with budgetary considerations. Because of the amount of government money that goes into health issues, it seems fitting that this issue is beginning to re-emerge as a critical issue in all levels of political campaigns.

Other issues, such as the environment, emerged as prominent in this study that Petrocik (1996) does not refer to in his issue list. It is recommended that researchers in the future explore ways to extend Petrocik's issue ownership dimensions to incorporate the relevant emergent or campaign-specific issues. The environment was an issue high on many candidates' agendas for the 2006 election, especially the Washington election with Cantwell and McGavick. The contention for environmental issues also requires that a party be associated with owning this issue. If you examine recent media coverage of the issue, former Vice President Gore's success with his lectures and movie, as well as the fact that Democrat Cantwell most often emphasized the issue in her victorious re-election campaign, one can associate environmental issues with Democrats. Though issue ownership theory requires testing over time and voter surveys, this study provides a foundation and hypothesis for future projects.

This study is the first to link agenda setting and issue ownership as a way to examine the political blog format. The connection between the issues presented in the candidates' agendas and how the candidates build and adapt those agendas is an important transition for looking at campaign discourse. Owning a particular issue can influence the production of a candidate's agenda as well as the media and citizens' perception of it. Linking these two theories is especially important when examining non-presidential campaigns because of the general consistency candidates have with the national party platforms. While this study focused on midterm elections, it is argued that blogs may be more influential in presidential election years since research shows that elections below the presidency receive much less media coverage when a presidential race is being waged. Thus, candidate controlled media may not only be more influential on voters, but candidates may be more likely to shape their opponents agenda.

Gender Differences

In addition to the two theoretical frameworks used to analyze the campaign blogs, candidate gender and election status (e.g. vulnerable, safe) were tested as potential influences. By testing other factors like gender and election status, their influence on the theoretical frameworks provided a gauge for how, if at all, they effected the overall perception of the candidate.

Bystrom et al. (2004) found that female and male candidates emphasized the same issues at different frequencies on their campaign websites during the 2000 and 2002 gubernatorial and Senate election. When examining the differences in issue concentrations of the male and female candidates in this study, there were only two that were not shared by the male and female candidates: *class and group relationships* and *education/schools*. The findings here mostly support Bystrom et al's (2004) examination of gubernatorial and Senate elections in 2000 and

2002 because the issue concentrations of the male and female candidates were very similar despite the variability in mention frequencies. This trend is evident in the fact that the issues of *defense, health, the environment, and government functioning* all appeared among the top issues for both male and female candidates.

One of the most interesting findings was the significantly different emphasis male and female candidates placed on issue or image. There was a significant difference in the mixed gender elections in the emphasis of issue or image. Females more often used an issue emphasis in their blog posts, whereas males had almost double the number of posts focused on their image. This significant finding is intriguing because of it exhibits a philosophical difference in how candidate gender differences impact their controlled messages in blogs. Clearly, female candidates wanted to bolster their credibility on issues and male candidates wanted to emphasize their image. This finding is inconsistent with research on candidate image and issue in political advertising and debate strategies in mixed gender races (Bystrom, et al, 2004; Banwart and McKinney, 2005), which is parallel since it is also a controlled medium. It will be interesting to study more mixed gender races to see whether this trend continues.

Incumbent/Challenger

This thesis presented four elections featuring incumbent and challenger candidates. Out of those four elections featuring an incumbent, two lost to the challenger. Lau and Pomper (2004) stated when incumbents are very popular and one particular party dominates states, the Senate elections are not usually in question. Wide-scale public disapproval with the President and Congress created a unique environment in 2006. Lau and Pomper's arguments, while usually supported in research, were not supported in 2006 as popular incumbents became vulnerable in the election climate.

As stated in the results, there was a significant difference between incumbents and challengers in the way they relied on campaign strategies typically available to them based on their position as the incumbent or challenger. Challengers only managed to dominate the use of two strategy categories, *calling for changes* and *attacking the record of the opponent*. This trend shows that incumbents were attempting to utilize all of the techniques they could to win elections, a tendency usually seen only in challenger candidates. Incumbents, in an environment that was anti-establishment, tried to present themselves as challengers to avoid being associated with the Congress. There was also a significant difference between incumbents and challengers when examining their use of strategy in their blog posts.

Blog Research

After examining the theoretical frameworks and their applicability to blogs, it is important to look at the contribution of research about the blog medium in general. Benoit and Airne (2005) explore issue ownership theory with non-presidential messages. They suggest a continuation and inclusion of this area in future research exploring campaign discourse. This thesis extends this line of research to examining candidate-controlled or campaign blogs and establishes a foundation for future studies and presents trends in this emerging technology. Trammell (2005) and Williams et al. (2005) began the process of examining campaign blogs with the 2004 presidential election. Because of the rapid evolution of technology on the Internet, it is important to evaluate blogs continually as they emerge, especially comparing the different levels of campaigns and their use of technology. The findings presented here provide a starting point for organizing projects in the 2008 Presidential and Congressional elections.

Perhaps one of the most interesting observations, beyond the research questions of this thesis, was that three candidates in this study offered an open comment feature on their blogs.

Open comments allow dialogue and deliberation whereas traditionally campaigns selected favorable or non-threatening public comments and posted them to the site. An open comment feature, although exposing candidates to attacks, demonstrates that the candidate is willing to engage in a free flow of ideas. Of the ten candidates, there were distinct differences in how each blog framed the use of the comment feature. Three of the candidates, Carter, McGavick, and Sanders used the feature most extensively, providing an open forum where citizens were not required to sign up for an account or log in to view or post comments. Though they were encouraged to identify themselves, there was no mechanism for verifying their identity, allowing for the anonymity to ensure honest and open dialogue.

Two other candidates' blogs required an account to view or post, two showed comments openly, but required an account to post, and three did not offer comments. Talent and Santorum required accounts in order to view or post comments. Both also framed the account as a "supporter" or "campaign volunteer" position, thus discouraging opposing viewpoints. McCaskill and Tarrant offered users to view the comments posted, but required an account to post. Finally, Cantwell, Ensign, and Casey all chose to go without the comment feature as part of their campaign blog.

Limitations/Extensions

One of the major complications creating difficulty in analyzing the candidate blogs was the varied interpretations and uses of the medium by each of the candidates. The newness of the technology provides for a very different interpretation by each of the candidates and their campaigns. Because campaigns are still in the process of adapting the blog medium, variations in the candidates' agendas, the overall lack of agenda setting between candidates, and attempts to step outside the party's issue platform provide a view into how candidates are using blogs

differently than other campaign media. Since campaign contexts are so important to strategies and issues candidates will use, findings from campaigns in 2006 should not be generalized to other election years. As the years change, and the medium transforms, patterns of findings will provide the best gauge as to generalizability of blog research.

The future of political blog research is rich in possibilities. Surveys of blog authors and campaign managers could provide answers to questions about motives behind why campaigns are incorporating this technology as well as what their goals and objectives are for utilizing blogs. As for deeper analysis of agenda setting and issue ownership, the addition of utilizing computerized content analysis software may provide more insight and accuracy into the issues present in the blog posts. Another study, comparing intermedia agenda setting would provide insight on the level to which media outlets consult campaign blogs specifically in their election coverage.

Conclusion

These findings provide a foundation to build future studies concerned with campaign discourse via campaign blogs. It is important to keep track of the emerging campaign media as they develop in order to track their progress and attempt to explain their influence on various campaign outcomes. Since blog readership is currently confined mostly to more active, engaged groups of citizens, the potential evolution and adaption of this medium into the mainstream will be exciting to monitor. Especially because of the expansiveness of the blogosphere and the many different opinions floating around the web, it is crucially important for candidates to provide their perspective. While many citizens float aimlessly through the Web, many others have pointed and purposeful uses of the Web so campaigns have clear reasons to establish themselves as a credible and dominant source of online information during campaigns. Since the

blog is a controlled medium for candidates and a primary source of information for many young voters, there is a great deal of promise in the ability of campaigns and young voters to establish dialogue online. If done strategically, campaigns can target young voters and address issues relevant to this audience group. Since young voters commonly assert that campaigns do not address their issues, the blog – as an extension of the campaign’s website – creates a huge opportunity for campaigns to engage young voters and respond to their concerns through the comment features possible via blogs.

Media outlets utilize blogs as sources of information, but also refute their reliability and credibility. Some authors create their blogs purely to rant without any real understanding of the process or interest in becoming engaged with or involved in the political process. Other blogs are created to give voice to credible issues, intriguing research, and logical and rational deliberation. Therefore, it would seem that blogs are clearly a mixed bag. Additional exploration into public attachment of credibility of blogs and the various ways they influence cognitive, affective, and behavioral variables in our political system is certainly an interesting research area for the future.

As media technology continues to evolve, politicians will attempt to use the media to their advantage. Already, advancements are pushing candidates to stretch outside of their comfort zone and adapt to the ever-changing digital landscape. By quickly incorporating the newest forms of technology in useful ways, candidates will have the ability to reach citizens as never before possible. The technology is also changing the participatory and dialogical possibilities and expectations of the next generation. As comment features become more popular, they may become an institutionalized expectation for candidates much like the way candidate debates emerged as an expectation in elections since 1976.

The Internet continues to have its optimists and skeptics. It is clear the medium has not fully evolved and critics are necessary to help shape the future possibilities of this medium in politics and beyond. Having the capacity to interact with campaigns, other citizens, and the political system at large could lower apathy and distrust in our system. Though, this is an ideal outlook, the blog medium and Internet in general has this potential if candidate and citizens alike are willing to make the necessary efforts to elevate our campaign discourse.

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Table 3

Combined Issue Frequency Totals: Ten U.S. Senate Candidate Blogs During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day) with Top Five Ranks in Parentheses

	Total (N=474)	Talent (n=35)	McCaskill (n=9)	Ensign (n=10)	Carter (n=98)	Casey (n=44)	Santorum (n=51)	Tarrant (n=48)	Sanders (n=38)	Cantwell (n=78)	McGavick (n=63)
Economic Issues	82 (4)	1	1	8 (2.5)	11 (3)	1	13 (2)	16 (1)	5	16 (4)	10 (2.5)
Taxes	33	5 (3)	0	2	1	2	5 (4)	4	3	2	9 (4)
Social Issues	16	1	0	2	0	1	2	5 (5)	0	1	4
Education/schools	17	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	3	11	0
Abortion	6	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	1
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties	23	1	0	0	5	0	1	0	9 (4)	7	0
Women's Issues	11	1	0	0	0	0	4 (5)	0	3	3	0
Environmental Issues	80 (5)	3 (5)	2 (4)	9 (1)	7 (5)	0	2	9 (3)	7 (5)	37 (1)	4
Commerce Issues	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil & Social Order	15	4 (4)	0	2	1	1	1	2	0	3	1
Foreign Relations	13	0	0	0	3	4 (4.5)	2	1	1	2	0
Defense Issues	167 (1)	19 (1)	3 (3)	5 (4)	57 (1)	15 (1)	26 (1)	6 (4)	15 (1)	13 (5)	8 (5)
Health Issues	106 (2)	7 (2)	4 (2)	8 (2.5)	7	8 (2)	3	11 (2)	10 (2.5)	32 (2)	16 (1)
Farming/Agriculture Issues	16	2	0	0	1	0	2	2	4	3	2
Class & Group Relationships	40	1	1	2	9 (4)	4 (4.5)	10 (3)	2	1	4	6
Children's Issues	7	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	2	0
Family Issues	6	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	1
Family Values	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Labor Issues	5	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	1	0
Big Government	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Government Functioning	95 (3)	2	6 (1)	2	27 (2)	6 (3)	3	2	10 (2.5)	27 (3)	10 (2.5)
Transportation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disaster Issues	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Stem Cell Research	6	0	0	1	3	0	1	1	0	0	0
Campaign Ethics	19	0	0	1	1	2	0	2	5	0	8
Other	128	5	1	12	24	15	12	10	15	15	19
Total	888	53	19	45	162	61	96	75	95	181	101

Table 3.1

Combined Issue Frequency Totals: Talent's Candidate Blog During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day)

	Total (n=35)	Week 1 (n=2)	Week 2 (n=4)	Week 3 (n=4)	Week 4 (n=4)	Week 5 (n=4)	Week 6 (n=4)	Week 7 (n=2)	Week 8 (n=6)	Week 9 (n=5)
Economic Issues	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Taxes	5	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	2
Social Issues	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Education/schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abortion	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Women's Issues	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Environmental Issues	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
Commerce Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil & Social Order	4	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
Foreign Relations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Defense Issues	19	3	3	3	1	1	1	0	4	3
Health Issues	7	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	4	1
Farming/Agriculture Issues	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Class & Group Relationships	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
Children's Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Values	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Labor Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Big Government	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Government Functioning	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Transportation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disaster Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stem Cell Research	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Campaign Ethics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	5	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
Total	53	3	3	5	6	5	2	1	21	10

Table 3.2

Combined Issue Frequency Totals: McCaskill's Candidate Blog During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day)

	Total (n=9)	Week 1 (n=0)	Week 2 (n=0)	Week 3 (n=1)	Week 4 (n=1)	Week 5 (n=1)	Week 6 (n=1)	Week 7 (n=1)	Week 8 (n=1)	Week 9 (n=3)
Economic Issues	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Taxes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Social Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education/schools	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Abortion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Women's Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Issues	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Commerce Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil & Social Order	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Foreign Relations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Defense Issues	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
Health Issues	4	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0
Farming/Agriculture Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class & Group Relationships	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Children's Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Values	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Labor Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Big Government	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Government Functioning	6	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
Transportation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disaster Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stem Cell Research	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Campaign Ethics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total	19	0	0	2	3	4	2	3	1	4

Table 3.3

Combined Issue Frequency Totals: Ensign's Candidate Blog During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day)

	Total (n=10)	Week 1 (n=3)	Week 2 (n=0)	Week 3 (n=2)	Week 4 (n=2)	Week 5 (n=1)	Week 6 (n=0)	Week 7 (n=0)	Week 8 (n=1)	Week 9 (n=1)
Economic Issues	8	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	4
Taxes	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Social Issues	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Education/schools	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Abortion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Women's Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Issues	9	7	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Commerce Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil & Social Order	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Foreign Relations	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Defense Issues	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Health Issues	8	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	2
Farming/Agriculture Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class & Group Relationships	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Children's Issues	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Values	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Labor Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Big Government	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Government Functioning	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transportation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disaster Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stem Cell Research	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Campaign Ethics	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Other	12	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0
Total	45	14	0	6	5	0	0	0	14	7

Table 3.4

Combined Issue Frequency Totals: Carter's Candidate Blog During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day)

	Total (n=98)	Week 1 (n=12)	Week 2 (n=6)	Week 3 (n=7)	Week 4 (n=11)	Week 5 (n=14)	Week 6 (n=16)	Week 7 (n=16)	Week 8 (n=4)	Week 9 (n=12)
Economic Issues	11	3	0	0	0	1	1	5	0	1
Taxes	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Social Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education/schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abortion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties	5	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0
Women's Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Issues	7	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	0	1
Commerce Issues	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Civil & Social Order	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Foreign Relations	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Defense Issues	57	7	8	6	3	12	6	7	4	4
Health Issues	7	0	0	0	0	2	3	1	0	1
Farming/Agriculture Issues	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Class & Group Relationships	9	4	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	1
Children's Issues	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Family Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Values	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Labor Issues	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Big Government	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Government Functioning	27	1	0	3	3	7	7	4	0	2
Transportation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disaster Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stem Cell Research	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Campaign Ethics	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Other	24	7	2	2	3	3	4	2	0	1
Total	162	26	11	15	11	29	23	27	7	13

Table 3.5

Combined Issue Frequency Totals: Santorum's Candidate Blog During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day)

	Total (n=51)	Week 1 (n=4)	Week 2 (n=4)	Week 3 (n=4)	Week 4 (n=11)	Week 5 (n=3)	Week 6 (n=8)	Week 7 (n=7)	Week 8 (n=10)	Week 9 (n=0)
Economic Issues	13	4	0	0	0	1	0	8	0	0
Taxes	5	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0
Social Issues	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Education/schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abortion	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Women's Issues	4	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Issues	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Commerce Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil & Social Order	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Foreign Relations	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Defense Issues	26	4	0	0	3	3	1	7	8	0
Health Issues	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
Farming/Agriculture Issues	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Class & Group Relationships	10	0	0	1	3	1	2	3	0	0
Children's Issues	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Issues	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Family Values	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Labor Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Big Government	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Government Functioning	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
Transportation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disaster Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stem Cell Research	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Campaign Ethics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	12	2	3	2	1	0	2	1	1	0
Total	96	19	6	4	16	5	7	29	10	0

Table 3.6

Combined Issue Frequency Totals: Casey's Candidate Blog During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day)

	Total (n=44)	Week 1 (n=5)	Week 2 (n=4)	Week 3 (n=3)	Week 4 (n=5)	Week 5 (n=4)	Week 6 (n=5)	Week 7 (n=7)	Week 8 (n=11)	Week 9 (n=0)
Economic Issues	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Taxes	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Social Issues	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education/schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abortion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Women's Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commerce Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil & Social Order	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Foreign Relations	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0
Defense Issues	15	1	2	0	0	0	4	4	4	0
Health Issues	8	1	0	0	2	0	1	2	2	0
Farming/Agriculture Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class & Group Relationships	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0
Children's Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Issues	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Family Values	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Labor Issues	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Big Government	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Government Functioning	6	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	0
Transportation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disaster Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stem Cell Research	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Campaign Ethics	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Other	15	3	1	2	3	1	0	2	3	0
Total	61	7	4	2	6	3	7	17	15	0

Table 3.7

Combined Issue Frequency Totals: Tarrant's Candidate Blog During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day)

	Total (n=48)	Week 1 (n=8)	Week 2 (n=8)	Week 3 (n=6)	Week 4 (n=3)	Week 5 (n=4)	Week 6 (n=5)	Week 7 (n=6)	Week 8 (n=5)	Week 9 (n=3)
Economic Issues	16	0	1	0	1	1	5	1	3	4
Taxes	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1
Social Issues	5	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	0
Education/schools	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Abortion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Women's Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Issues	9	6	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Commerce Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil & Social Order	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Foreign Relations	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Defense Issues	6	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	1	0
Health Issues	11	0	1	3	0	0	2	0	3	2
Farming/Agriculture Issues	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Class & Group Relationships	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	0
Children's Issues	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Values	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Labor Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Big Government	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Government Functioning	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transportation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disaster Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stem Cell Research	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Campaign Ethics	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Other	10	3	2	0	2	0	0	2	1	0
Total	75	13	5	6	5	3	14	12	14	7

Table 3.8

Combined Issue Frequency Totals: Sanders' Candidate Blog During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day)

	Total (n=38)	Week 1 (n=3)	Week 2 (n=6)	Week 3 (n=5)	Week 4 (n=5)	Week 5 (n=1)	Week 6 (n=5)	Week 7 (n=5)	Week 8 (n=2)	Week 9 (n=6)
Economic Issues	5	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0
Taxes	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
Social Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education/schools	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Abortion	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties	9	0	0	1	1	0	2	4	0	1
Women's Issues	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0
Environmental Issues	7	1	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0
Commerce Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil & Social Order	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Foreign Relations	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Defense Issues	15	1	3	0	2	1	2	5	0	1
Health Issues	10	0	0	2	0	0	1	5	0	2
Farming/Agriculture Issues	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Class & Group Relationships	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	1
Children's Issues	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Family Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Values	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Labor Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Big Government	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Government Functioning	10	0	2	0	1	0	2	3	0	2
Transportation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disaster Issues	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stem Cell Research	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Campaign Ethics	5	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Other	15	2	2	2	3	0	2	2	0	2
Total	95	11	10	7	13	1	12	39	0	10

Table 3.9

Combined Issue Frequency Totals: Cantwell's Candidate Blog During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day)

	Total (n=78)	Week 1 (n=5)	Week 2 (n=6)	Week 3 (n=10)	Week 4 (n=6)	Week 5 (n=5)	Week 6 (n=10)	Week 7 (n=7)	Week 8 (n=1)	Week 9 (n=28)
Economic Issues	16	6	4	1	0	1	1	1	0	2
Taxes	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Social Issues	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education/schools	11	1	0	2	0	2	2	0	0	4
Abortion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties	7	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	1	0
Women's Issues	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Environmental Issues	37	1	1	7	6	3	2	4	0	13
Commerce Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil & Social Order	3	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Foreign Relations	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Defense Issues	13	1	2	3	1	1	2	0	0	3
Health Issues	32	5	3	5	4	1	5	1	0	8
Farming/Agriculture Issues	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class & Group Relationships	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Children's Issues	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Family Issues	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Values	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Labor Issues	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Big Government	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Government Functioning	27	3	2	6	5	4	1	2	0	4
Transportation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disaster Issues	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stem Cell Research	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Campaign Ethics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	15	2	3	2	0	0	1	1	1	5
Total	181	21	21	36	17	12	16	11	2	45

Table 3.10

Combined Issue Frequency Totals: McGavick's Candidate Blog During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day)

	Total (n=63)	Week 1 (n=5)	Week 2 (n=2)	Week 3 (n=6)	Week 4 (n=10)	Week 5 (n=5)	Week 6 (n=8)	Week 7 (n=8)	Week 8 (n=7)	Week 9 (n=12)
Economic Issues	10	1	0	0	4	2	0	2	1	0
Taxes	9	0	0	1	3	2	2	1	0	0
Social Issues	4	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
Education/schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abortion	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Women's Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Issues	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
Commerce Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civil & Social Order	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Foreign Relations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Defense Issues	8	0	0	0	0	3	2	2	0	1
Health Issues	16	1	0	1	3	6	1	4	0	0
Farming/Agriculture Issues	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Class & Group Relationships	6	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	2
Children's Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Issues	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Values	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Labor Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Big Government	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Government Functioning	10	1	2	3	2	0	1	0	0	1
Transportation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disaster Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stem Cell Research	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Campaign Ethics	8	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	0
Other	19	3	0	1	3	2	2	4	1	3
Total	101	7	6	8	19	18	13	18	3	9

Table 4.1

*Within Candidate Issue Frequency Correlations by Week through the General
Election Phase (Labor Day to Election Day) for Jim Talent (MO)*

	Week 1 (n=2)	Week 2 (n=4)	Week 3 (n=4)	Week 4 (n=4)	Week 5 (n=4)	Week 6 (n=4)	Week 7 (n=2)	Week 8 (n=6)	Week 9 (n=5)
Week 1	1.000	1.000**	.904**	.365	.410*	.693**	-.040	.542**	.664**
Week 2		1.000	.904**	.365	.410*	.693**	-.040	.542**	.664**
Week 3			1.000	.565**	.477*	.608**	.260	.524**	.634**
Week 4				1.000	.659**	.184	.365	.632**	.543**
Week 5					1.000	.225	.410*	.577**	.505**
Week 6						1.000	-.058	.292	.408*
Week 7							1.000	.033	-.098
Week 8								1.000	.743**
Week 9									1.000

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.2

*Within Candidate Issue Frequency Correlations by Week through the General
Election Phase (Labor Day to Election Day) for Claire McCaskill (MO)*

	Week 1 (n=0)	Week 2 (n=0)	Week 3 (n=1)	Week 4 (n=1)	Week 5 (n=1)	Week 6 (n=1)	Week 7 (n=1)	Week 8 (n=1)	Week 9 (n=3)
Week 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Week 2		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Week 3			1.000	.604**	.677**	-.083	.348	-.058	.647**
Week 4				1.000	.388	-.079	-.098	-.055	-.070
Week 5					1.000	.277	.513**	-.085	.423*
Week 6						1.000	.799**	-.058	-.051
Week 7							1.000	-.072	.509**
Week 8								1.000	-.051
Week 9									1.000

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.3

Intercandidate Issue Agenda Correlations For Blog Posts Throughout the General Election (Labor Day to Election Day) in Missouri

		Talent								
		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9
		(n=2)	(n=4)	(n=4)	(n=4)	(n=4)	(n=4)	(n=2)	(n=6)	(n=5)
McCaskill	Week 1 (n=0)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Week 2 (n=0)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Week 3 (n=1)	-.058	-.058	-.089	.184	.592**	-.083	-.058	.415*	.042
	Week 4 (n=1)	-.055	-.055	-.084	.282	.328	-.079	-.055	.662**	.328
	Week 5 (n=1)	.469*	.469*	.383	.272	.603**	.277	-.085	.522*	.333
	Week 6 (n=1)	.693**	.693**	.608**	.527**	.225	.458*	-.058	.538**	.408*
	Week 7 (n=1)	.554**	.554**	.469*	.374	.435*	.348	-.072	.468*	.282
	Week 8 (n=1)	-.040	-.040	.260	.365	.410*	-.058	1.000**	.033	-.098
	Week 9 (n=3)	-.051	-.051	-.079	-.140	.362	-.074	-.051	-.013	-.125

Table 4.4

*Within Candidate Issue Frequency Correlations by Week through the General
Election Phase (Labor Day to Election Day) for Jack Carter (NV)*

	Week 1 (n=12)	Week 2 (n=6)	Week 3 (n=7)	Week 4 (n=11)	Week 5 (n=14)	Week 6 (n=16)	Week 7 (n=16)	Week 8 (n=4)	Week 9 (n=12)
Week 1	1.000	.499**	.600**	.729**	.490**	.433**	.482**	.333**	.379**
Week 2		1.000	.706**	.515**	.415**	.257*	.277*	.412**	.113
Week 3			1.000	.680**	.705**	.641**	.538**	.304**	.466**
Week 4				1.000	.162	.352**	.143	.237*	.423**
Week 5					1.000	.817**	.726**	.463**	.601**
Week 6						1.000	.688**	.186	.609**
Week 7							1.000	.241*	.571**
Week 8								1.000	.166
Week 9									1.000

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.5

*Within Candidate Issue Frequency Correlations by Week through the
General Election Phase (Labor Day to Election Day) for John Ensign (NV)*

	Week 1 (n=3)	Week 2 (n=0)	Week 3 (n=2)	Week 4 (n=2)	Week 5 (n=1)	Week 6 (n=0)	Week 7 (n=0)	Week 8 (n=1)	Week 9 (n=1)
Week 1	1.000	N/A	-.022	.703**	N/A	N/A	N/A	.570**	.436**
Week 2		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Week 3			1.000	-.032	N/A	N/A	N/A	-.039	-.052
Week 4				1.000	N/A	N/A	N/A	.390**	.289**
Week 5					N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Week 6						N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Week 7							N/A	N/A	N/A
Week 8								1.000	.492**
Week 9									1.000

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.6

Intercandidate Issue Agenda Correlations For Blog Posts Throughout the General Election (Labor Day to Election Day) in Nevada

		Ensign								
		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9
		(n=3)	(n=0)	(n=2)	(n=2)	(n=1)	(n=0)	(n=0)	(n=1)	(n=1)
Carter	Week 1 (n=12)	.667**	N/A	-.058	.451**	N/A	N/A	N/A	.351**	.567**
	Week 2 (n=6)	.371**	N/A	-.049	.244*	N/A	N/A	N/A	.185	.303**
	Week 3 (n=7)	.343**	N/A	.706**	.219	N/A	N/A	N/A	.159	.266*
	Week 4 (n=11)	.653**	N/A	.515**	.442**	N/A	N/A	N/A	.344**	.451**
	Week 5 (n=14)	.265*	N/A	.415**	.162	N/A	N/A	N/A	.112	.284*
	Week 6 (n=16)	.417**	N/A	.257*	.352**	N/A	N/A	N/A	.268*	.230*
	Week 7 (n=16)	.252*	N/A	.087	.143	N/A	N/A	N/A	.265*	.439**
	Week 8 (n=4)	.333**	N/A	.149	-.044	N/A	N/A	N/A	-.054	.249*
	Week 9 (n=12)	.378**	N/A	.113	.125	N/A	N/A	N/A	.077	.141

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.7

*Within Candidate Issue Frequency Correlations by Week through the
General Election Phase (Labor Day to Election Day) for Rick Santorum (PA)*

	Week 1 (n=4)	Week 2 (n=4)	Week 3 (n=4)	Week 4 (n=11)	Week 5 (n=3)	Week 6 (n=8)	Week 7 (n=7)	Week 8 (n=10)	Week 9 (n=0)
Week 1	1.000	.226	.081	.307	.677**	.166	.754**	.588	N/A
Week 2		1.000	.616**	.138	-.103	.409*	-.101	.025	N/A
Week 3			1.000	.232	.031	.845**	.064	.025	N/A
Week 4				1.000	.598**	.541**	.353	.508**	N/A
Week 5					1.000	.382	.808**	.884**	N/A
Week 6						1.000	.295	.307	N/A
Week 7							1.000	.563**	N/A
Week 8								1.000	N/A
Week 9									1.000

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.8

*Within Candidate Issue Frequency Correlations by Week through the General
Election Phase (Labor Day to Election Day) for Bob Casey, Jr. (PA)*

	Week 1 (n=5)	Week 2 (n=4)	Week 3 (n=3)	Week 4 (n=5)	Week 5 (n=4)	Week 6 (n=5)	Week 7 (n=7)	Week 8 (n=11)	Week 9 (n=0)
Week 1	1.000	.636**	.835**	.793**	.588**	.226	.497**	.706**	N/A
Week 2		1.000	.372	.252	.407*	.721**	.710**	.836**	N/A
Week 3			1.000	.795**	.554**	-.066	.270	.449*	N/A
Week 4				1.000	.399*	.026	.392*	.488*	N/A
Week 5					1.000	.029	.367	.364	N/A
Week 6						1.000	.733**	.613**	N/A
Week 7							1.000	.828**	N/A
Week 8								1.000	N/A
Week 9									1.000

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.9

Intercandidate Issue Agenda Correlations For Blog Posts Throughout the General Election (Labor Day to Election Day) in Pennsylvania

		Santorum								
		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9
		(n=4)	(n=4)	(n=4)	(n=11)	(n=3)	(n=8)	(n=7)	(n=10)	(n=0)
	Week 1 (n=5)	.255	.624**	.766**	.235	.157	.707**	.151	.316	N/A
	Week 2 (n=4)	.530**	.252	.443*	.416*	.711**	.560**	.481*	.845**	N/A
	Week 3 (n=3)	.225	.795**	.811**	.083	-.062	.585**	-.011	.080	N/A
	Week 4 (n=5)	.079	.604**	.616**	.078	-.103	.595**	-.046	.025	N/A
	Week 5 (n=4)	-.021	.399*	.936**	.281	.082	.852**	.098	-.012	N/A
Casey	Week 6 (n=5)	.457*	-.110	-.008	.600**	.889**	.410*	.566**	.899**	N/A
	Week 7 (n=7)	.395*	.170	.371	.607**	.666**	.679**	.477**	.685**	N/A
	Week 8 (n=11)	.537**	.283	.445*	.377	.580**	.599**	.550**	.673**	N/A
	Week 9 (n=0)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.10

*Within Candidate Issue Frequency Correlations by Week through the General
Election Phase (Labor Day to Election Day) for Rich Tarrant (VT)*

	Week 1 (n=8)	Week 2 (n=8)	Week 3 (n=6)	Week 4 (n=3)	Week 5 (n=4)	Week 6 (n=5)	Week 7 (n=6)	Week 8 (n=5)	Week 9 (n=3)
Week 1	1.000	.218	.115	.218	-.047	-.025	.062	.102	-.123
Week 2		1.000	.231	.834**	.106	.290	.222	.478*	.433*
Week 3			1.000	-.144	-.130	.242	-.172	.459*	.308
Week 4				1.000	.106	.156	.222	.208	.247
Week 5					1.000	.649**	.325	.459*	.448*
Week 6						1.000	.052	.713**	.842**
Week 7							1.000	.426*	.036
Week 8								1.000	.770**
Week 9									1.000

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.11

*Within Candidate Issue Frequency Correlations by Week through the General
Election Phase (Labor Day to Election Day) for Bernie Sanders (VT)*

	Week 1 (n=3)	Week 2 (n=6)	Week 3 (n=5)	Week 4 (n=5)	Week 5 (n=1)	Week 6 (n=5)	Week 7 (n=5)	Week 8 (n=2)	Week 9 (n=12)
Week 1	1.000	.137	.066	.221	.124	.163	.431*	N/A	.289
Week 2		1.000	.374	.600**	.626**	.579**	.258	N/A	.482*
Week 3			1.000	.384	-.082	.376	.248	N/A	.543**
Week 4				1.000	.356	.611**	.101	N/A	-.027
Week 5					1.000	.413*	.393*	N/A	.180
Week 6						1.000	.608**	N/A	.708**
Week 7							1.000	N/A	.632**
Week 8								1.000	*
Week 9									1.000

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.12

Intercandidate Issue Agenda Correlations For Blog Posts Throughout the General Election (Labor Day to Election Day) in Vermont

		Tarrant								
		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9
		(n=8)	(n=8)	(n=6)	(n=3)	(n=4)	(n=5)	(n=6)	(n=5)	(n=3)
Sanders	Week 1 (n=3)	.211	.248	-.100	.248	.095	.108	.895**	.424*	.050
	Week 2 (n=6)	.108	.389*	-.022	.389*	.266	.141	.113	-.020	-.145
	Week 3 (n=5)	.115	.812**	.404*	.568**	-.149	.011	.047	.281	.145
	Week 4 (n=5)	.125	.615**	-.143	.615**	.357	.347	.188	.206	.239
	Week 5 (n=1)	-.078	-.080	-.072	-.080	.554**	.416*	.111	.104	-.063
	Week 6 (n=5)	.323	.395*	.261	.395*	.261	.328	.078	.264	.167
	Week 7 (n=5)	.346	.112	.473*	-.112	.101	.328	.267	.535**	.138
	Week 8 (n=2)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Week 9 (n=6)	.132	.476*	.501**	.242	-.027	.172	.254	.419*	.151

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.13

*Within Candidate Issue Frequency Correlations by Week through the General
Election Phase (Labor Day to Election Day) for Maria Cantwell (WA)*

	Week 1 (n=5)	Week 2 (n=6)	Week 3 (n=10)	Week 4 (n=6)	Week 5 (n=5)	Week 6 (n=10)	Week 7 (n=7)	Week 8 (n=1)	Week 9 (n=28)
Week 1	1.000	.764**	.427*	.451*	.477*	.602**	.379	.036	.490*
Week 2		1.000	.028	.308	.310	.589**	.297	.279	.416*
Week 3			1.000	.812**	.753**	.535**	.649**	.291	.744**
Week 4				1.000	.829**	.571**	.791**	-.117	.835**
Week 5					1.000	.460*	.696**	-.132	.698**
Week 6						1.000	.343	-.049	.692**
Week 7							1.000	.024	.770**
Week 8								1.000	.071
Week 9									1.000

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.14

*Within Candidate Issue Frequency Correlations by Week through the General
Election Phase (Labor Day to Election Day) for Mike McGavick (WA)*

	Week 1 (n=5)	Week 2 (n=2)	Week 3 (n=6)	Week 4 (n=10)	Week 5 (n=5)	Week 6 (n=8)	Week 7 (n=8)	Week 8 (n=7)	Week 9 (n=12)
Week 1	1.000	-.015	.516**	.666**	.433*	.406*	.742**	.772**	.583**
Week 2		1.000	.337	-.044	-.255	-.159	-.240	-.183	.252
Week 3			1.000	.478*	.228	.362	.262	.195	.229
Week 4				1.000	.587**	.335	.648**	.570**	.199
Week 5					1.000	.560**	.778**	.255	.229
Week 6						1.000	.603**	.227	.523**
Week 7							1.000	.593**	.350
Week 8								1.000	.301
Week 9									1.000

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.15

Intercandidate Issue Agenda Correlations For Blog Posts Throughout the General Election (Labor Day to Election Day) in Washington

		Cantwell								
		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9
		(n=5)	(n=6)	(n=10)	(n=6)	(n=5)	(n=10)	(n=7)	(n=1)	(n=28)
	Week 1 (n=5)	.546**	.602**	.233	.161	.161	.267	.256	.543**	.327
	Week 2 (n=2)	.022	.216	.028	.187	.271	.082	.042	-.147	-.088
	Week 3 (n=6)	.357	.246	.384	.492*	.533**	.176	.412*	.083	.209
	Week 4 (n=10)	.744**	.576**	.250	.186	.194	.299	.405*	.181	.224
	Week 5 (n=5)	.658**	.533**	.267	.297	.074	.676**	.192	.064	.402*
McGavick	Week 6 (n=8)	.234	.230	.392*	.493*	.335	.298	.599**	.181	.565**
	Week 7 (n=8)	.631**	.612**	.383	.361	.181	.607**	.428*	.314	.601**
	Week 8 (n=7)	.435*	.453*	-.066	-.146	-.046	-.008	.095	.348	.068
	Week 9 (n=12)	.166	.278	.029	.047	.020	.049	.043	.436*	.162

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

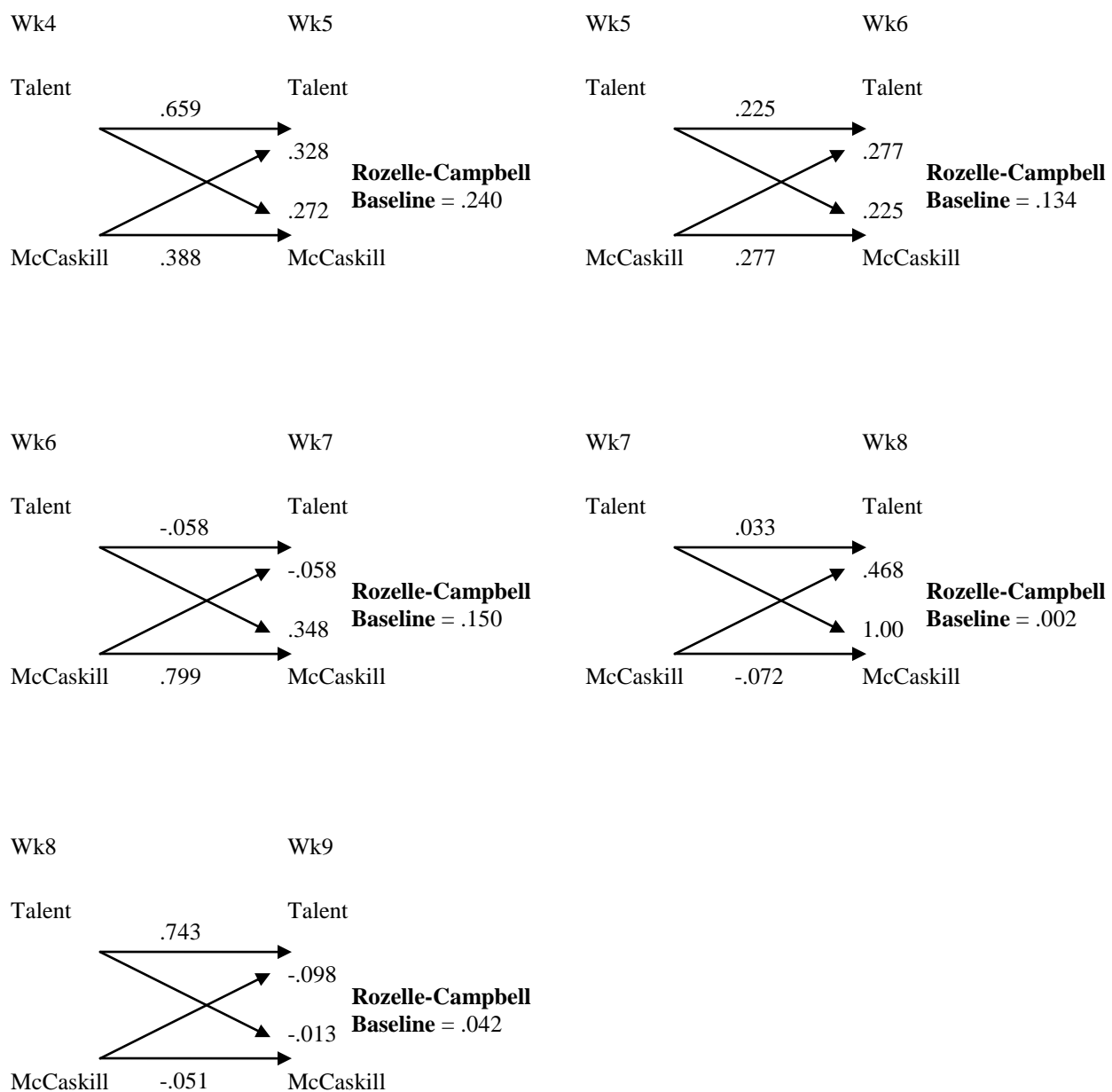
Table 5: *Cross-Lagged Correlations Between Jim Talent and Claire McCaskill*

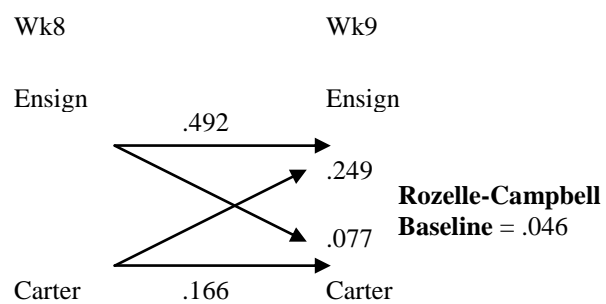
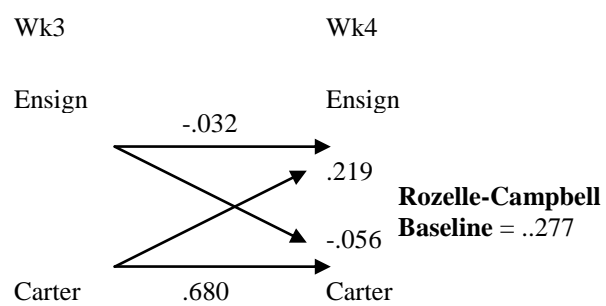
Table 6: *Cross-Lagged Correlations Between John Ensign and Jack Carter*

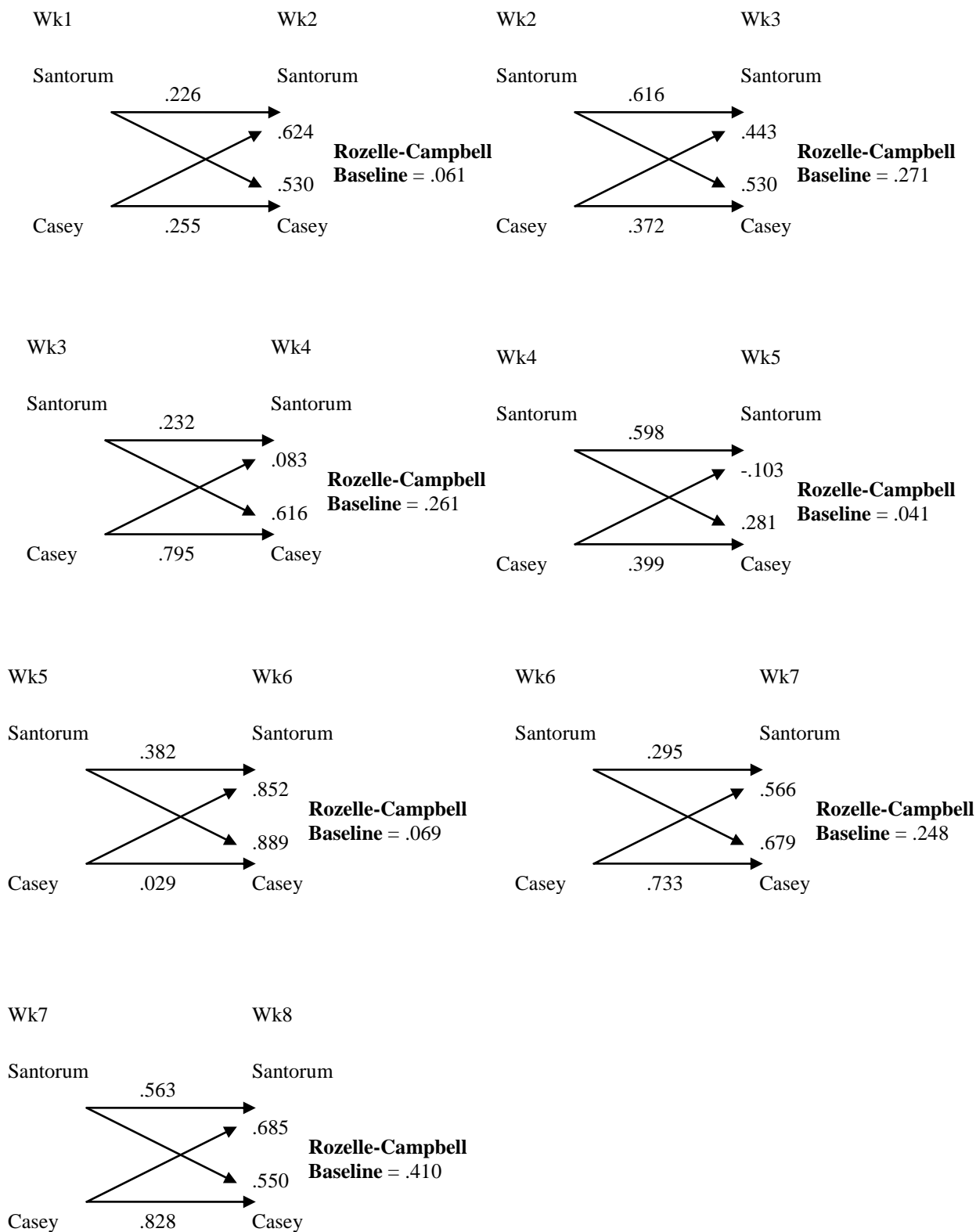
Table 7: *Cross-Lagged Correlations Between Rick Santorum and Bob Casey, Jr.*

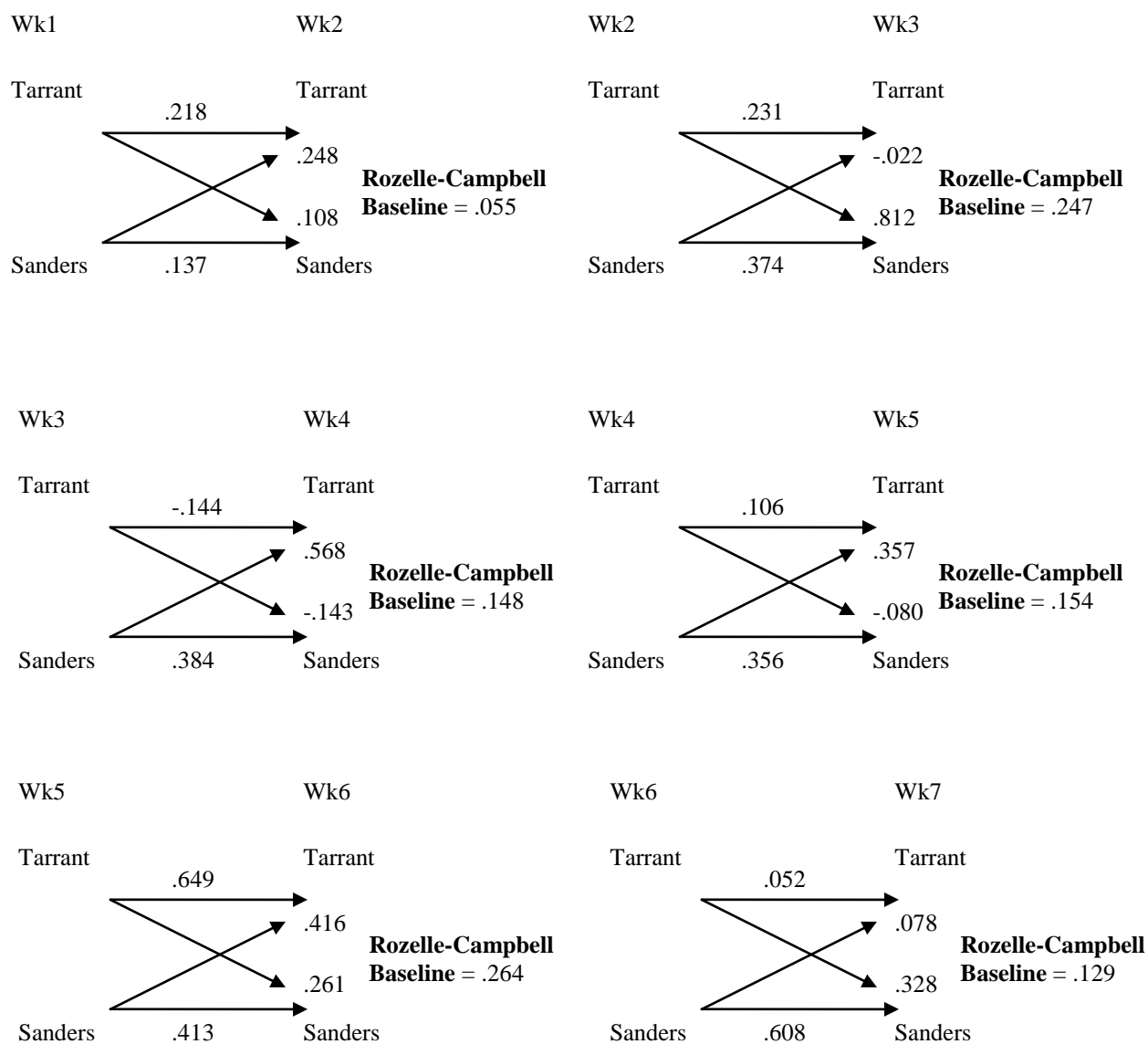
Table 8: *Cross-Lagged Correlations Between Rich Tarrant and Bernie Sanders*

Table 9: Cross-Lagged Correlations Between Maria Cantwell and Mike McGavick

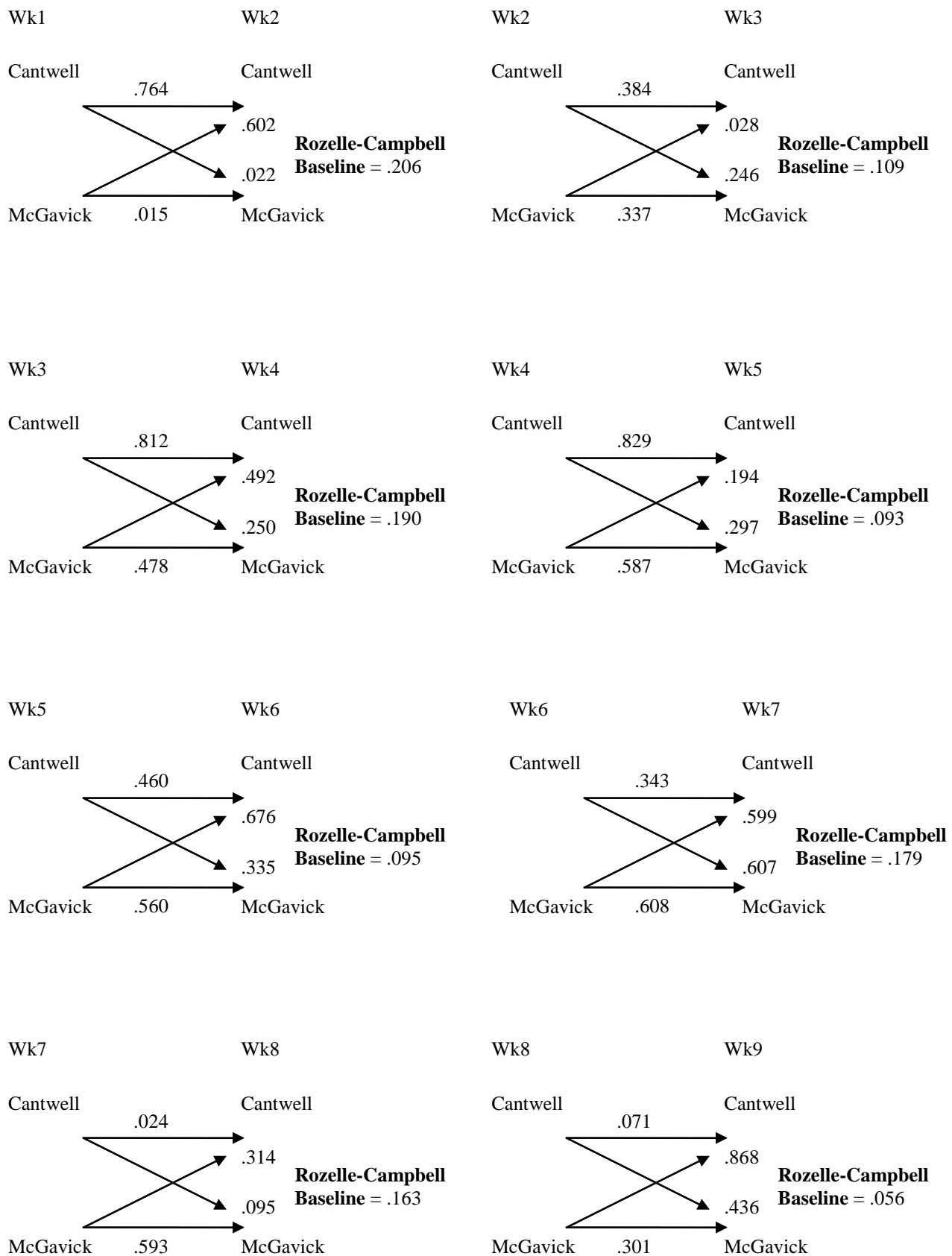


Table 10

Issue Frequency Totals for U.S. Senate Candidate Blogs During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day) by Election Status, Candidate Party, & Candidate Gender

	<i>Status</i>			<i>Party</i>			<i>Gender</i>	
	Incumbent (n=174)	Challenger (n=214)	Open (n=86)	Republican (n=207)	Democrat (n=229)	Independent (n=38)	Male (n=98)	Female (n=87)
<i>Republican-owned</i>								
Civil & Social Order (R)	10	3	2	8	5	0	10	3
Defense Issues (R)	64 (1)	82 (1)	21 (1.5)	62 (1)	88 (1)	15 (1)	149 (1)	16 (3)
Big Government (R)	0	2	1	1	2	1	4	0
<i>Democrat-owned</i>								
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties (D)	11	5	9 (4)	3	8 (5.5)	9 (3)	16 (5)	7 (4)
Women's Issues (D)	12 (5)	0	3	5	3	3	8	3
Social welfare/spending (D)	3	5	5 (5.5)	12 (5)	2	0	15	1
Labor Issues (D)	1	4	0	0	5	0	4	1
Farming/Agriculture Issues (D)	7	3	5 (5.5)	8	4	4 (5)	13	3
Class & Group Relationships (D)	17 (4)	20 (4)	3	20 (3)	18 (4)	1	34 (4)	5 (5)
<i>Performance-based ownership</i>								
Foreign Relations (P)	5	6 (5)	2	3	8 (5.5)	1	10	2
Economic Issues (P)	28 (3)	23 (3)	21 (1.5)	41 (2)	29 (3)	5 (4)	58 (3)	17 (2)
Government Functioning (P)	39 (2)	50 (2)	12 (3)	17 (4)	67 (2)	10 (2)	61 (2)	33 (1)
Total	194	198	79	168	229	49	367	90

Table 11

Petrocik Issue Frequency Totals for U.S. Senate Candidate Blogs During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day) by Election Status & Candidate Party

	<i>Incumbent</i>		<i>Challenger</i>		Open (n=86)
	Republican (n=96)	Democrat (n=78)	Democrat (n=151)	Republican (n=63)	
<i>Republican-owned</i>					
Civil & Social Order (R)	7	3	2	1	2
Defense Issues (R)	51	13	74	8	21
Big Government (R)	0	0	2	0	1
<i>Democrat-owned</i>					
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties (D)	4	7	5	0	9
Women's Issues (D)	9	3	0	0	3
Social welfare/spending (D)	5	1	1	4	5
Labor Issues (D)	0	1	4	0	0
Farming/Agriculture Issues (D)	4	3	1	2	5
Class & Group Issues (D)	13	4	14	6	3
<i>Performance-based ownership</i>					
Foreign Relations (P)	3	2	6	0	2
Economic Issues (P)	12	16	13	10	21
Government Functioning (P)	12	27	40	10	12
Total	115	80	161	41	79

Table 12
Candidate Strategy Frequencies by Election Status and Candidate Gender

<i>Incumbent Strategies</i>	<i>Status</i>			<i>Gender</i>	
	Incumbent	Challenger	Open	Male	Female
Symbolic Trappings of the Office Incumbency Stands for Legitimacy	21	6	3	24	6
Competency and the Office	64	0	5	60	9
Charisma and the Office	52	29	18	87	12
Consult World Leaders	50	24	23	86	11
Endorsements	2	1	0	2	1
Emphasize Accomplishments Above the Trenches Attitude	27	22	7	41	15
Depending on Surrogates	33	13	9	36	19
Total	1	1	1	3	0
	91	86	42	159	60
	341	182	108	498	133
<i>Challenger Strategies</i>					
Calling for Changes	26	101	25	120	32
Emphasizing Optimism	40	31	17	69	19
Traditional Values	34	18	8	48	12
Representing Center of the Party	21	8	2	27	4
Offensive Positions on Issues	49	47	22	100	18
Attacking Record of Opponent	45	92	22	148	11
Total	215	297	96	512	96

Table 13
Candidate Strategy Frequencies in Mixed Gender Election by Candidate Gender

<i>Incumbent Strategies</i>	Male	Female
Symbolic Trappings of the Office	6	6
Incumbency Stands for Legitimacy	13	9
Competency and the Office	10	12
Charisma and the Office	19	11
Consult World Leaders	0	1
Endorsements	5	15
Emphasize Accomplishments	13	19
Above the Trenches Attitude	1	0
Depending on Surrogates	35	60
Total	102	133
<i>Challenger Strategies</i>		
Calling for Changes	30	32
Emphasizing Optimism	18	19
Traditional Values	14	12
Representing Center of the Party	9	4
Offensive Positions on Issues	26	18
Attacking Record of Opponent	16	11
Total	113	96

Table 14

Issue Frequency Totals By Candidate Gender in Candidate Blogs During the 2006 General Election (Labor Day to Election Day)

	<i>Gender</i>	
	Male	Female
	(n=98)	(n=87)
<i>Republican-owned</i>		
Civil & Social Order (R)	5	3
Defense Issues (R)	27	16
Big Government (R)	0	0
<i>Democrat-owned</i>		
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties (D)	1	7
Women's Issues (D)	1	3
Social welfare/spending (D)	15	1
Labor Issues (D)	0	1
Farming/Agriculture Issues (D)	4	3
Class & Group Relationships (D)	7	5
<i>Performance-based ownership</i>		
Foreign Relations (P)	0	2
Economic Issues (P)	11	17
Government Functioning (P)	12	33
Total	164	200

Note: The female issues were compiled from 2 female candidates, heavily skewed for Cantwell who had 78 posts for the general election phase of the campaign.

Appendix

Blog I.D.: Copy & Paste web address or first 3 words of title & date.

Candidate name:

Candidate Gender:

- (1) **Male**
- (2) **Female**

Candidate Party:

- (1) **Republican**
- (2) **Democrat**
- (3) **Independent**
- (4) **Green**
- (5) **Reform**
- (6) **Libertarian**
- (7) **Natural Law**
- (8) **Socialist**
- (9) **Communist**
- (10) **Constitution**
- (11) **Other - list**

Author of the Entry:

- (1) **Candidate**
- (2) **Campaign Manager**
- (3) **Campaign Worker**
- (4) **Spouse or family member**
- (5) **A government official or office-holder:** some other politician.
- (6) **Third Party Member**
- (7) **Non-government celebrity:** film star, singer.
- (8) **Supporter/Volunteer**
- (9) **Average Citizen**
- (10) **Unable to Determine:** Specify
- (0) **Other:** some other category than those above.

Type of Blog Entry (Check all that Apply)

- (1) **Event Announcement:** Talking about where the candidate will be.
- (2) **Issue Stance:** Candidate makes a statement about a particular issue.
- (3) **Endorsement:** Discusses an organization, person, or other entity that is endorsing the candidate.
- (4) **Media Endorsement:** Discusses a particular media outlet (i.e. newspaper, television, radio, etc) that is endorsing the candidate.
- (5) **Opponent-centered:** Discusses the candidate's opponent, negative or otherwise.
- (6) **Humor:** Entry uses humor.

(7) **Negative/Contrast:** Entry to analyze and highlight the opposition's/opponents' viewpoints.

(8) **Other:** describe

Number of Hyperlink(s) within entry: _____ (Should be indicated by underlining or color).

Number of Hyperlink(s) taking the user to content outside of the candidate's website: _____

Hyperlink Destination (Check all that apply):

(1) **Post within candidate blog:** leading to another blog within the candidate's own blog

(2) **Link within Candidate's Own Website:** leads to a different section of the candidate's website.

(3) **Donations/Campaign Fundraising:** the contribution section of the website

(4) **Campaign Merchandise:** the campaign's online store for purchasing items associated with the campaign including t-shirts, lawn signs, etc

(5) **Advertisement:** leads to a television, radio, or other type of campaign ad for the candidate

(6) **External blog posts:** leading to other blogs outside of the candidate's

(7) **Mass Media Outlet:** newspaper, radio, television, etc.

(8) **Special Supporter/Endorsing Group:** external and specifically created for the support of the candidate during the election.

(9) **Special Interest Group Website:** external, in existence prior to election & will continue to exist following the election

(10) **National Political Party:** the candidate's political party website

(11) **Other:** (Specify)

Interactive Strategies used in blog entry:

(1) **Link to Comments**

(2) **Link to New Content**

(3) **Link to Contribution Section**

(4) **Link to Get-Involved Section**

(5) **Link to Email Campaign**

(6) **Link to sign-up for email updates**

(7) **Link to "Send to a Friend"**

(8) **Link in order to link to your own website**

(9) **Other:** Specify

Number of comment(s): _____

Is a sense of alienation or cynicism referred to in the entry in any way? Mark any references or statements that apply. (Mark present (1) or absent (0) for each statement)

1. Feeling that ordinary people are not able to influence government or politics.

2. Politicians are not responsive to what the people want; politicians aren't willing to do what people want.

3. Distrust of government and/or of politicians in general

4. Reference to consequences of alienation – might not vote, might as well not bother, no need to participate.

Is the entry candidate or opponent focused? (Code for the dominant emphasis).

- (1) **Candidate-positive focused:** emphasizes the virtues and good qualities of the candidate. Not an explicit attack on the opponent.
- (2) **Opponent-negative focused:** emphasizes the negative qualities, the faults of the opponent. Explicit attack on opponent's record, character, campaign, etc.
- (9) **Cannot determine.**

Is there a negative attack made in the entry? Does the entry make a negative, derogatory, or unflattering statement or references to the opposing candidate? (Code 1 if present, 0 if not present)

If an attack is made, who makes the attack?

- (1) **Candidate attacks his/her opponent.**
- (2) **Surrogate attacks opponent:** or someone other than candidate appears as attacker.
- (3) **Anonymous individual attacks opponent:** attacker is unknown and is not actually identified.

If a negative attack is made, what is the purpose of the attack? (Code 1 if present, 0 if not present).

- (1) **Attack on personal characteristics of opponent:** an attack on the personality characteristics of the opponent; use of negative words denoting flaws in character of opponent.
- (2) **Attack on issue stands/consistency of opponent:** criticizes the issue or policy stands of the opponent; criticizes the opponent's inability to "make up his/her mind" where he/she stands on an issue; may use quotes from opponent to show him/her switching a position.
- (3) **Attack on candidate's group affiliations/associations:** attacks the opponent's ties to certain groups which have undesirable characteristics, members, philosophies.

What strategies are used in making the negative attack? (Code 1 if present, 0 if not present)

- (1) **Use of humor/ridicule:** making fun of the opponent by laughing, ridiculing things he/she has said, or what he/she stands for.
- (2) **Negative association:** associating negative images or phrases with the opponent.
- (3) **Name-calling:** using negative labels or unflattering labels for the opponent.
- (4) **Guilt by association:** describing the opponent with undesirable groups or individuals. Implying that the opponent associates with these groups or people.

Is the emphasis of this entry on: (Code for dominant emphasis).

- (1) **Issues**
- (2) **Image**

Content of appeal of the entry: (First code if the appeal is present (1) or not (0), then code for the dominant content of the appeal).

- (1) **Emphasis on partisanship of candidate:** entry identifies the candidate's party, mention of other members of the same party.
- (2) **Issue-related appeal** (candidate's issue concern): entry reveals that candidate cares about the issue and the issue is salient to candidate, but nothing said about how to solve problem. May mention who should be held responsible for problem.
- (3) **Issue-related appeal** (vague policy preferences): reveals policy preference of candidate, but in a vague, ambiguous, or symbolic way. "I oppose inflation" or "I favor medical care."
- (4) **Issue-related appeal** (specific policy proposals): relates more specific policy proposals. May suggest precise legislation or action he/she will take.
- (5) **Personal characteristics of candidate:** entry attempts to convince audience that candidate has good personality traits or qualities, such as honesty, intelligence, or that opponent does not have these characteristics.
- (6) **Linking of candidate with certain demographic groups:** candidate is shown as being sympathetic to the problems, goals, needs, of certain groups in U.S. Candidate is portrayed as being a good friend to these groups.

Issue(s) present in entry (Check all that apply):

- (1) **Economy**
 - (2) **Taxes**
 - (3) **Budget/deficit**
 - (4) **Unemployment/jobs**
 - (5) **Cost of Living**
 - (6) **Recession/Depression**
 - (7) **Job Growth**
 - (8) **Fuel prices**
- (9) **Social**
 - (10) **Affirmative Action**
 - (11) **Racism**
 - (12) **Education/schools**
 - (13) **Welfare/Welfare Reform**
 - (14) **Poverty/Hunger/Homelessness**
 - (15) **Ethics/Moral Decline**
 - (16) **Abortion**
- (17) **Civil Rights**
 - (18) **Gay Marriage**
 - (19) **Gay Rights**
- (20) **Women**
 - (21) **Women's Issues**
 - (22) **Equality**
- (23) **Environmental**
 - (24) **Pollution**
 - (25) **Global climate change** (including global warming)
 - (26) **Energy dependence**
 - (27) **Alternative energy development**
- (28) **Commerce**

- (29) **Tourism**
- (30) **Gambling**
- (31) **Civil Liberties**
 - (32) **Protection of civil liberties**
 - (33) **Patriot Act**
- (34) **Civil & Social Order**
 - (35) **Crime/Prisons**
 - (36) **Death Penalty**
 - (37) **Drugs/Drug Abuse/Drug Trafficking**
 - (38) **Gun Control**
- (39) **Foreign Relations**
 - (40) **International Issues/Foreign Policy**
- (41) **Defense/Security**
 - (42) **Spending**
 - (43) **War**
 - (44) **Homeland Security** (includes safeguarding ports, safeguarding borders, intelligence gathering, airline security)
 - (45) **Terrorism** (on the domestic and global scale)
 - (46) **Military** (including service record, reorganization of bases)
- (47) **Health**
 - (48) **Prescription Drugs**
 - (49) **Medicare**
 - (50) **Health Care Quality**
 - (51) **Social Security**
 - (52) **Health Care Costs**
 - (53) **Insurance**
- (54) **Farmers & agriculture**
 - (55) **Farming/Agricultural**
 - (56) **Tobacco**
- (57) **Social class & group relationships**
 - (58) **Senior Citizen Issues**
 - (59) **Youth Violence**
 - (60) **Immigration**
- (61) **Children's Issues**
- (62) **Family Issues**
- (63) **Family Values**
- (64) **Organized Labor**
 - (65) **Labor Unions**
- (66) **Size of Government**
 - (67) **Big Government**
- (68) **Government functioning**
 - (69) **Satisfaction with Government**
 - (70) **Dissatisfaction with Government**
 - (71) **Judicial**
- (72) **Transportation**
- (73) **Disaster**

- (74) **Disaster preparedness**
 (75) **Stem Cell Research**
 (76) **Other:** Please specify

Indicate the dominant issue from the entry (Type name): _____

Types of appeals used in entry: (Code if the appeal is present (1), or not (0) in the entry).

- (1) **Logical appeals** (use of evidence in entries): facts are presented in entry in order to persuade viewer that the evidence is overwhelming in favor of some position. This can be use of statistics, logical arguments, examples, etc.
 (2) **Emotional appeals:** appeals designed to invoke particular feelings or emotions in readers (except fear). Could include happiness, good will, pride, patriotism, anger, etc.
 (3) **Source credibility/ethos appeals** (appealing to qualifications as candidate): appeals made to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of candidate by telling all he/she has done, is capable of doing, how reliable he/she is.

Are fear appeals used in the entry? (Code 1 if yes; 0 if no): appeals meant to scare reader about possible consequences of some action.

Character Traits Emphasized in Blog Entry (Check all that apply):

- (1) **Honesty/Integrity**
 (2) **Cooperation with Others**
 (3) **Toughness/Strength**
 (4) **Competency**
 (5) **Leadership**
 (6) **Being of the people**
 (7) **Knowledge/Intelligence**
 (8) **Experience in politics**
 (9) **Washington Outsider Status**
 (10) **Past Performance/Success**
 (11) **Qualifications**
 (12) **Being action-oriented**
 (13) **Aggressiveness/Being a fighter**
 (14) **Sensitivity/understanding**
 (15) **Trustworthiness**
 (16) **Other**

Which strategies are present in the entry? (Code 1 if the strategy is present, 0 if it is not present)

- (1) **Use of symbolic trappings to transmit importance of office** : description of being surrounded by bodyguards, use of title in addressing candidate, travel with entourage, images used that somehow signify the candidate's official government position.
 (2) **Incumbency stands for legitimacy:** emphasis on incumbency in Senate, its legitimacy, the support and respect it is afforded is emphasized.
 (3) **Competency and the office:** candidate relays image of a competent leader: capable of managing the highest office.

- (4) **Charisma and the office:** uses the excitement and glamour afforded the office in his/her entries. Discusses the hoopla that follows him/her when he/she arrives in a town.
- (5) **Calling for changes:** things need to be done differently; changes need to be made.
- (6) **Emphasizing optimism for the future:** things can and will get better in the future; things are already on an upswing now.
- (7) **Speaking to traditional values:** reinforcing majority value, the American dream, traditions, and a past.
- (8) **Appearing to represent the philosophical center of the party:** has support of his/her political party and represents its policies and platforms.
- (9) **Consulting or negotiating with world leaders:** other world leaders are heard in entries with candidate.
- (10) **Using endorsements by party and other important leaders:** party leaders used to speak on behalf of candidate; linking of candidate with established, highly respected leaders.
- (11) **Emphasizing accomplishments:** stressing the achievements of the candidate.
- (12) **Creating and maintaining "above the trenches" posture:** candidate remains removed from politics, aloof from political battle, rarely acknowledges existence of any opponent, refrains from confrontation with opponents.
- (13) **Depending on surrogates to speak:** uses others to speak in the entry.
- (14) **Taking the offensive position on issues:** probing, questioning, challenging opponent's position on issues.
- (15) **Attacking the record of the opponent:** reviewing and criticizing the past accomplishments (or failures) of the opponent.
- (16) **Other (Specify).**

Indicate the dominant audience appeal (Select one): Which of the following groups appears to be appealed to most obviously in the entry?

- (1) **Small Business Owners**
- (2) **Laborers**
- (3) **African-Americans**
- (4) **Hispanics**
- (5) **Asian Americans**
- (6) **Minorities in General**
- (7) **Homosexuals**
- (8) **Women**
- (9) **Disabled**
- (10) **Veterans**
- (11) **Children**
- (12) **Families**
- (13) **Young Voters**
- (14) **Elderly**
- (15) **Conservatives**
- (16) **Liberals**
- (17) **Independents**
- (18) **Moderates**
- (19) **Republicans**

- (20) **Democrats**
- (21) **Christians**
- (22) **Jews**
- (23) **Muslims**
- (24) **Other Religious Groups**
- (25) **Other** (Please specify)

Generic Frames (Check all that apply):

(1) Responsibility

- Does the entry suggest that some level of government has the ability to change the issue?
- Does the entry suggest that some level of government is responsible for the issue?
- Does the entry suggest that an individual/group of people in society is responsible for the issue?
- Does the entry suggest solution(s) to the issue?
- Does the entry suggest the issue requires urgent action?

(2) Human Interest

- Does the entry provide a human example of “human face” on the issue?
- Does the entry employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?
- Does the entry emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue?
- Does the entry do into the private or personal lives of the actors?
- Does the entry contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?

(3) Consequences (economic, social, political, etc)

- Is there a mention of any type of losses or gains (economic, social, political, etc) now or in the future?
- Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved?
- Is there a reference to any kind of consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?

(4) Morality

- Does the entry contain any moral message?
- Does the entry make reference to morality, God, and/or other religious tenets?
- Does the entry offer specific (social) prescriptions or solutions about how to behave/act?

(5) Conflict

- Does the entry reflect disagreement between parties/individuals/groups/countries?
- Does one party/individual/group/country reproach another?
- Does the entry refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the issue?
- Does the entry refer to winners and losers?

(6) Cynicism

Does the entry reflect any attitudes of disdainful or jaded negativity, especially as a general distrust of others' integrity or motives?

Are there any feelings that ordinary people cannot influence what the powerful do?

Are there any statement implying that politicians and other powerful individuals in a society do not care about the others?

Is there any indication of (bitter) irony or sarcasm toward certain individuals or issues?

Is there any perceived sense of surrender to "greater forces" or alienation (i.e. refusal to participate in any social or political actions like voting, protesting, etc)?

(7) Speculation

Does the entry make any speculation about what has happened or will happen?

Does the entry mention any hypothetical assumptions about the issue?

Does the entry ask or imply any rhetorical questions or inferences?

(8) Metacommunication

Does the entry include the candidate's own opinions?

Does the author of entry cite journalists or other bloggers?

Does the entry mention how the news media has handled the issue?

Does the story mention/discuss the communication strategy of a particular individual or group of individuals?

Dominant Generic Frame (Indicate one):

- (1) **Responsibility**
- (2) **Human Interest**
- (3) **Consequences (economic, social, political, etc)**
- (4) **Morality**
- (5) **Conflict**

Dominant Overall Frame (Indicate one):

- (1) **Responsibility**
- (2) **Human Interest**
- (3) **Consequences (economic, social, political, etc)**
- (4) **Morality**
- (5) **Conflict**
- (6) **Cynicism**
- (7) **Speculation**
- (8) **Metacommunication**

Responsibility Frame: If this frame is present, indicate who was identified as responsible for the issue (Check all that apply).

- (1) **George W. Bush**
- (2) **Congress**
- (3) **Conservatives (Right)**
- (4) **Liberals (Left)**
- (5) **Party Leadership**

- (6) **Republicans**
- (7) **Democrats**
- (8) **Opponent**
- (9) **Previous Administration**
- (10) **State Government Leader**
- (11) **Corporations**
- (12) **Other:** Specify

Cynicism Frame: If present, identify who is the subject of the cynicism (Check all that apply).

- (1) **The media**
- (2) **The politics** (the political system, democracy, President, political parties)
- (3) **Third Party group**
- (4) **Other:** (Specify)

Speculation Frame: If present, establish if the speculation is about something that will happen (prognostic) or the reason why something happened (diagnostic):

- (1) **Prognostic**
- (2) **Diagnostic**

Metacommunication Frame: If present, indicate which type of metacommunication emerges from the entry:

- (1) **Self-reflexive** – news media’s coverage of themselves
- (2) **Strategy/process** – reporting of the way the actors involved in the issue have spoken out

Use of Campaign Strategies (Check all that apply):

- (1) **Political Advertisements** – highlighting the types of ads
- (2) **Debates** – discussion of the debates
- (3) **News Story** – discussion of a story presented in a media outlet
- (4) **Polls** – discussion of public opinion polls
- (5) **Endorsement** – presentation of an endorsement (including media, celebrity, other politician)
- (6) **Cynicism** – reflection of negativity, inability to influence the powerful, those in power do not care about the average citizen
- (7) **Experience** – emphasis on a candidate’s past experience
- (8) **National Service** – emphasis of a candidate’s service to a branch of the military, national organization, etc
- (9) **Appeals to Party** – discusses the party ideals
- (10) **Mention of Names** – promotes relationships with other powerful figures including the President, state leadership, past leaders, etc
- (11) **Internet/Blog** – discussion of internet information including profiles or entries in blogs, polls, etc
- (12) **Other:** Specify

Overall Tone of the Entry – This deals with how the entry’s content is framed.

- (1) **Positive**

- (2) **Negative**
- (3) **Neutral**
- (0) **Unable to determine**

Curriculum Vitae

Education

M.A. in Communication, **Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University** *May 2007*

- Thesis: Battleground Blog: Analyzing the 2006 U.S. Senate Campaign Blogs through the Lenses of Issue Ownership, Agenda setting, and Gender Differences.
 - Committee: Dr. John C. Tedesco (chair), Dr. Andrew Paul Williams, Dr. Rachel L. Holloway
- Graduate Certificate in Preparing the Future Professoriate
- Concentration in public advocacy research

Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies, **Richard Stockton College of New Jersey** *May 2004*

- Minor in Political Science
- Program Distinction in Communication

Georgetown University (*Summer of 2003*)

- Participated in The Fund for American Studies Institute for Political Journalism program

Work Experience

August 2005-present **Virginia Tech Department of Communication** *Public Speaking Teacher & Political Communication TA*

- Taught 2 different models of Public Speaking (traditional lecture/recitation & hybrid online model).
- As a TA, responsible for being a liason to 175+ students, organizing review sessions before all exams, grading papers, and providing technical support for professor.

May 2002-July 2005 **Galaxy Scientific Corporation** *Administrative Aide*

- Worked with several areas of the company including Human Resources and Aviation.
- Responsible for directing phone calls, providing support for all departments, greeting guests, editing the newsletter, database maintenance, and filing.

Sept 2003-May 2004 **WLFR 91.7** *News Director*

- Supervised all news functions of the station, including securing a news service, writing and recording stories, editing and reading news on air, as well as scheduling and conducting interviews for the weekly interview show, Stockton Speaks.

Summer of 2003
Journalism

Radio America

Intern as part of The Institute for Political

- Responsible for technical support for on-air personalities, research, teaching interns to use Cool Edit digital editing software, screening calls, aiding affiliate relations, guest booking, and recording interviews.

Publications

English, K.N. (2007/in press). 2006 U.S. Senate candidate blogs: An analysis of dialogical opportunities. Business Research Yearbook.

Presentations

English, K.N. (2007), *Battleground Blog: Analyzing How Politicians Use Blogs in the 2006 Washington Senate Race*. Paper presented at Eastern Communication Association - Providence, RI, April 2007.

English, K.N. (2007). "REAL" Public Speaking: Resource Management, Online Instruction, and Communities of Practice for Graduate Student Teachers and Undergrads. Panelist at Southern States Communication Association - Louisville, KY, March 2007. (Spotlight Panel).

English, K.N. (2007). *Blog Rhetoric: Examining the history and future of campaign discourse*. Paper presented at Southern States Communication Association - Louisville, KY, March 2007. (Top Student Paper Panel – Political Communication Division).

English, K.N. (2007). 2006 U.S. Senate candidate blogs: An analysis of dialogical opportunities. Paper presented at the International Academy of Business Disciplines (IABD) – Orlando, FL, March 2007.

English, K.N. (2006). *The Evolution of Theory in Cyberspace: An Examination of Current and Potential Theories*. Paper presented at National Communication Association - San Antonio, TX, November 2006

English, K.N. (2006). *Politics, Media, and Young Citizens: Gauging Their Knowledge, Caring, Trust, and Consumption of Politics and Government*. Paper presented at Eastern Communication Association - Philadelphia, PA, April 2006.

English, K.N. (2006). *Drugs, Dancing, and Disease: Are HIV/AIDS Messages Incorporated into Queer as Folk Episodes Educating or Just Entertaining?* Kentucky Conference on Health Communication - Lexington, KY, April 2006.

Faculty Development Courses

- Blackboard: Assessment & Interaction
- Test Creation for Distance Classes

- Connecting with Students Through Online Interaction
- Narration: An Easy Way to Add Value to Powerpoint Presentation (Macromedia Breeze)
- EndNote X.0: Managing your Research Citations
- Dreamweaver 8: Web Page Creation Made Easy

Activities

- Committee for Public Speaking Curriculum Development (2006) - aided in the creation of a hybrid online model of teaching public speaking.
- Search Committee for Assistant Professor, Digital Film/Video Production - Virginia Tech (2005-2006)
- Communication Graduate Student Association (2005-present) - Virginia Tech
- Presidential Search Committee - Student Body Representative - Stockton (2002-2003)
- Scholarship recipient for The Fund for American Studies' Institute for Political Journalism
- Peer Educators (2002-2004) - developed and presented workshops, liaison to Student Senate, organized conference trip to Washington, DC, and events such as Night of Sex 2 & 3, World AIDS Day, 3 Stages of Drinking, etc.
- President and Member of Lambda Pi Eta, Nu Chi Chapter (2002-2004) - organized the induction of the Class of 2004.
- The Argo (student newspaper) - writer/editor 2000-2002

Professional Affiliations

Eastern Communication Association
 Lambda Pi Eta
 National Communication Association
 New Jersey Communication Association
 Southern States Communication Association

Professional Service

Vice President, Virginia Tech Communication Graduate Student Association, Fall 2006-present
 Faculty Representative, Virginia Tech Communication Graduate Student Association, Fall 2006-present
 Paper Reviewer, NCA Political Communication Division, 2007-present
 Paper Reviewer, NCA Student Section, 2007-present
 Paper Reviewer, ECA Political Communication Division, 2007-present
 Panel Chair, ECA Political Communication Division, 2006-present (5 total)
 Secretary, Virginia Tech Communication Graduate Student Association, 2005-2006