

# Netroots: Ned Lamont, Social Capital, and the Liberal Blogosphere

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## I. INTRODUCTION

A year and a half after the 2006 general election, members of the Ned Lamont for Senate campaign stood in a stairwell at the University of Connecticut School of Law. They gathered as invited guests to the Spring Symposium to talk about how digital technology has shaped recent elections.<sup>1</sup> As participants Tim Tagaris, Melissa Ryan, and Matt Stoller spoke about their experiences with the 2006 senatorial race in Connecticut, it became apparent how many of the tactics and strategies utilized in that race served as the backbone for one of the most revolutionary campaigns of our time.

Drawing on in-depth interviews with campaign staff members and volunteers participating at the symposium, this article illuminates how the intersection of offline and online social networking helped propel Ned Lamont to a historic Democratic Party primary victory in 2006.<sup>2</sup> Through grounded theory analysis of four interviews, it is argued that four main characteristics of Ned Lamont's digital campaign earned him substantial social capital from his online supporters. These characteristics are: valuing a Web presence, embracing interactivity, empowering the liberal blogosphere, and maintaining relations with his blog supporters. This article also describes how political history dating back to the 2004 election may have caused incumbent Joe Lieberman to take a conservative, non-interactive approach to his online campaign in 2006, thus limiting him from attaining such social capital.

This research suggests that, while it may not be the finite solution for scholars who see a decline in deliberative democracy and social capital, the Internet does have the power to play an important role in the revitalization

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<sup>1</sup>The Spring 2008 Symposium, "e-Democracy: Democratic Values in a Digital Age," was held on February 7, 2008 at the University of Connecticut School of Law in Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>2</sup>Interview respondents include Tim Tagaris, Melissa Ryan, Tom Swan, and an individual who will be referred to by the pseudo name Ray.

of American society. Although only a single case, the Lamont campaign gives us perspective and encouragement on how social capital can be built online and maintained for the future. When coupled with other similar case studies, such as the candidacies of Jesse Ventura and Howard Dean, we see that this is not an isolated incident.<sup>3</sup> An emerging pattern of social mobilization and empowerment of the average citizen exists.

## II. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

### A. *The Political Context*

The election of 2006 proved to be dynamic in many respects, with the political world watching, Democrats gained six seats in the Senate, thirty seats in the House, and six governorships across the country.<sup>4</sup> Fueled in part by a general disapproval with the war in Iraq, powerful Republican incumbents tumbled, including Jim Talent (R-MS), Rick Santorum (R-PA), and George Allen (R-VA).<sup>5</sup> Other incumbents dodged bullets by changing the nature of their candidacy, as in the case of Joe Lieberman (I-CT), who changed party affiliation to Independent after his upset in the Democratic Party primary.<sup>6</sup>

#### 1. *Joe Lieberman, The Incumbent*

It was no surprise when Democrat Joe Lieberman announced he would be seeking his fourth term in the U.S. Senate. A very popular incumbent, Lieberman came to power in 1988 by upsetting moderate Republican Lowell Weicker by a margin of 10,000 votes.<sup>7</sup> Lieberman never looked back, winning his next three elections by significant victories.<sup>8</sup> In 1994, he landed the biggest landslide ever in the history of Connecticut Senate races, raking in sixty-seven percent of the vote.<sup>9</sup> While Lieberman had an unsuccessful bid for the vice presidency in 2000, and again four years later for the presidency, he was still able to retain his Senate seat, winning reelection in both 2000 and 2006.<sup>10</sup> The race in 2006 was a far cry from

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<sup>3</sup> See MOUSEPADS, SHOE LEATHER, AND HOPE: LESSONS FROM THE HOWARD DEAN CAMPAIGN FOR THE FUTURE OF INTERNET POLITICS 115–16 (Zephyr Teachout & Thomas Streeter eds., Paradigm Pubs. 2008).

<sup>4</sup> America Votes 2006, CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2006/> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> William Yardley, *Lieberman Plans Independent Bid if Primary Fails*, N.Y. TIMES, July 4, 2006, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/04/nyregion/04lieberman.html?ex=1309665600&en=b7084ad65ed6cd2e&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>.

<sup>7</sup> Joe Lieberman, Senator From Connecticut, Biography, <http://lieberman.senate.gov/about/> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> *See id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *See id.*

his previous landslide victories, with no political forecaster being able to predict the viability of Democratic Party challenger Ned Lamont.

## 2. *Ned Who?*

Ned Lamont, a successful businessman from the southwest region of Fairfield County, announced his candidacy for U.S. Senate on March 13, 2006.<sup>11</sup> A virtual political newcomer, his only experience in office was in the capacity of a selectman for the town of Greenwich, as well as various civic boards.<sup>12</sup> Starting the campaign as an unknown in Connecticut, nobody could have imagined the fight he would give Lieberman throughout the course of the race.

Amidst heated negative sentiments towards President Bush and the Iraq War, Lamont consistently attacked the popular incumbent on television and the radio throughout the duration of the race.<sup>13</sup> Accusing Lieberman of being a loyal Bush supporter, Lamont painted his opponent as a staunch Republican and disloyal Democrat.<sup>14</sup> He continually reminded constituents that Lieberman voted in favor of the Iraq War resolution, and attacked his attendance on the Senate floor.<sup>15</sup> This message began to take hold in route to the primary, and Lamont slowly started to widen his lead in the polls.<sup>16</sup>

By July of 2006, Lamont found himself in a statistical dead heat with Lieberman in many statewide polls.<sup>17</sup> It became increasingly obvious that Lieberman's primary victory was far from certain. Lamont creatively used the incumbent's words to make his point about the need for new blood in the Senate.<sup>18</sup> Taking a clip from Lieberman's 1988 debate against Republican incumbent Lowell Weicker, Lamont captured a video file of

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<sup>11</sup> *Lamont to Announce Candidacy for Lieberman's Senate Seat*, Boston.com, Mar. 8, 2006, [http://www.boston.com/news/local/connecticut/articles/2006/03/08/lamont\\_to\\_announce\\_candidacy\\_for\\_liebermans\\_senate\\_seat/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/connecticut/articles/2006/03/08/lamont_to_announce_candidacy_for_liebermans_senate_seat/).

<sup>12</sup> Mark Pazniokas, *Out of the Political Shadows; Election 2006: Ned Lamont is On The Road to Make a Good First Impression In His Underdog Race Against Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman*, HARTFORD COURANT, Apr. 23, 2006, at A1, available at 2006 WL 7280485.

<sup>13</sup> Susan Haigh, *Two Days Before Primary, Sen. Lieberman Campaign Says Challenger's Ads Have Taken a Toll*, CBS NEWS, Aug. 6, 2006, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/08/06/ap/politics/mainD8JB7OEO0.shtml>.

<sup>14</sup> David Lightman, *Backing Away From Bush; Liberman Stresses Differences in Views*, HARTFORD COURANT, Aug. 21, 2006, at A1, available at 2006 WL 14471289.

<sup>15</sup> Nicholas Confessore, *Pressing Lieberman Once More, Lamont Shifts Back to Iraq War*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 31, 2006, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/31/nyregion/31lamont.html?Ex=1319950800&en=a6ec02eb587028e4&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Preston, *Lamont Increases Lead Over Lieberman*, CNN, Aug. 3, 2006, <http://www.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/08/03/mg.thu/>.

<sup>17</sup> *Lamont Pulls Even with Lieberman*, MSNBC, July 20, 2006, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/13949967/>.

<sup>18</sup> *See Ned Lamont Uses Lieberman's Own Words Against Him*, Discourse.net, Oct. 10, 2006, [http://www.discourse.net/archives/2006/10/ned\\_lamont\\_uses\\_liebermans\\_own\\_words\\_against\\_him.html](http://www.discourse.net/archives/2006/10/ned_lamont_uses_liebermans_own_words_against_him.html).

the Senator stating he felt eighteen years was enough time for one to serve in the Senate.<sup>19</sup> This message bombarded airwaves in the weeks leading up to the election, and on August 8, 2006, the previously unknown challenger made national headlines by beating the three-time incumbent in the party primary.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. *The Outcome*

In the days leading up to the primary, Lieberman began collecting signatures to get on the ballot as an independent candidate.<sup>21</sup> While he likely would have preferred to keep this move silent until after the primary so as not to upset Democratic Party loyalists going to the polls, he was forced to abide by Connecticut campaign laws. State statutes required him to submit 7,500 valid signatures the day after the primary in order to earn a place on the November ballot.<sup>22</sup>

Despite narrowly losing the primary by 10,119 votes, Lieberman was ultimately able to capitalize on the large independent base in the state, as well as the lack of a viable Republican Party candidate.<sup>23</sup> He was able to secure 70% of the Republican vote in the general election, and went on to win the seat by 115,648 votes over challenger Ned Lamont.<sup>24</sup>

### B. *The Creation of Networks*

Understanding the background of the race, we can now better reflect on how the Internet played a role in mobilizing people for a common cause. An important debate surrounding the functionality and importance of the Internet in American society deals with the topic of social capital.

Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* documents the decline of social capital in American society.<sup>25</sup> He defines social capital to mean the trust, reciprocity, and feelings of connectedness that stem from face-to-face interactions.<sup>26</sup> Looking at multiple measures of connectedness, from memberships in organizations such as the World Wildlife Federation and

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<sup>19</sup> Posting to Lamont Blog, <http://lamontblog.blogspot.com/search?q=weicker+debate+clip> (Oct. 10, 2006, 8:46 EST).

<sup>20</sup> *Lieberman Concedes; Lamont Wins Primary*, MSNBC, Aug. 9, 2006, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14228351/>.

<sup>21</sup> Susan Haigh, *Lieberman Says He'll Collect Signatures for Independent Campaign*, Boston.com, July 3, 2006, [http://www.boston.com/news/local/connecticut/articles/2006/07/03/lieberman\\_to\\_announce\\_plans\\_for\\_possible\\_independent\\_campaign/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/connecticut/articles/2006/07/03/lieberman_to_announce_plans_for_possible_independent_campaign/).

<sup>22</sup> *It's an Independent Lieberman on Fall Ballot*, MSNBC, Aug. 23, 2006, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14482646>.

<sup>23</sup> *Lieberman Defeats Lamont to Hold Senate Seat*, USA TODAY, Nov. 8, 2006, <http://www.usatoday.com/news/politicselections/vote2006/CT/CT.htm?csp=34>.

<sup>24</sup> See *America Votes 2006*, CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2006/pages/results/states/CT/> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> ROBERT D. PUTNAM, *BOWLING ALONE: THE COLLAPSE AND REVIVAL OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY* 27 (Simon & Schuster 2000).

<sup>26</sup> *Id.* at 19.

trade unions to participation in civic groups and social clubs such as bowling leagues, he finds a steady downward trend in social capital.<sup>27</sup> As the title of the book suggests, people are increasingly “bowling alone,” deserting once highly popular leagues and organizations and thereby cutting any resemblance of interconnectedness.<sup>28</sup> The older generation, Putnam argues, was the foundation of these organizations.<sup>29</sup> As their participation has dwindled, the younger generation has failed to fill in.<sup>30</sup> As mediums for social connectedness die off, the maintenance of this capital will become increasingly harder, and eventually, non-existent.

An important consideration in the social capital framework is the concept of maintenance, working to maintain the capital so it does not deplete. The Lamont case study reflects how important bloggers believed maintenance to be. Online Lamont supporters created and maintained a “social ozone,” a concept coined by Cote & Healy, for the continuation of their social network.<sup>31</sup> They created this ozone through a strong sense of community and altruism, which is a crucial foundation for bettering relations between people.<sup>32</sup> Without its renewal, as articulated by Coleman, social capital faces the prospect of total depletion.<sup>33</sup> This concept is also mirrored in the works of Putnam.<sup>34</sup> He argues the more individuals decide to come together, relying on each other, the more production of social capital increases.<sup>35</sup> Conversely, the less people come together, the less social capital will be created.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, social connectedness does not simply exist.<sup>37</sup> As with intimate relationships that one has with other people, we as a society must work at maintaining a sense of trust and altruism.<sup>38</sup> We can apply this to Internet politics by saying that simply having a Web page is not enough to build social capital. As we will explore in the context of the Lamont campaign, empowering and maintaining relations with Web users forms the building blocks of a meaningful relationship.

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<sup>27</sup> See *id.* at 25–26.

<sup>28</sup> See *id.* at 63–64.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.* at 268.

<sup>30</sup> *Id.* at 275.

<sup>31</sup> See generally TOM HEALY ET AL., THE WELL-BEING OF NATIONS: THE ROLE OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL (OECD Pub. 2001).

<sup>32</sup> U.K. OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS, SOCIAL CAPITAL: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE 7 (2001), available at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/socialcapital/downloads/soccaplitreview.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> See generally James S. Coleman, *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital*, 94 AM. J. SOC. S95 (Supp. 1988); JAMES SAMUEL COLEMAN, FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL THEORY 318–21 (Harvard Univ. Press 1988).

<sup>34</sup> See PUTNAM, *supra* note 25, at 27–28. See generally Robert Putnam, *The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life*, AMERICAN PROSPECT, Spring 1993.

<sup>35</sup> PUTNAM, *supra* note 25, at 21.

<sup>36</sup> See *id.*

<sup>37</sup> *Id.* at 338.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.* at 136.

### C. *Social Capital and the Internet*

Much research has been conducted on the effects of the Internet on the creation of social capital, with the results being substantially mixed. On one side of the literature, academics argue that the Internet leads to the destruction of social capital, loss of community, and decreasing amounts of social connectedness.<sup>39</sup> Another camp of literature has found just the opposite, stating that the Internet is a great medium for the creation of social connectedness, increasing sense of altruism and community, and allowing for the greater sharing of resources.<sup>40</sup> As predictable with any highly polarizing issue, some scholars have taken the middle road, arguing that the Internet neither increases nor decreases social capital creation, and instead is just an intricate part of our daily lives that maintains the status-quo.<sup>41</sup> This article describes how the Lamont campaign, using digital connectivity as the backbone, was able to create connectedness both in the online and offline worlds.

Scholars who point to the Internet as a major culprit towards the decline in social capital fear the decreasing presence of face-to-face interactions.<sup>42</sup> By increasing alienation and decreasing social relations, this camp of thought states that the Internet does not foster face-to-face relations, and instead boosts feelings of loneliness among users.<sup>43</sup> They argue that although we do see increased online relations, the Internet is a cause for weaker offline interaction.<sup>44</sup> Nie also argues that because the Internet consumes so much of people's time, the amount of time spent in face-to-face interactions becomes limited.<sup>45</sup> His later work, co-authored with Hillygus, further builds on this argument by concluding that family bonds are diminished when an individual spends a substantial amount of weekend time online.<sup>46</sup>

Analysis of the Lamont case study will show that online interaction

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<sup>39</sup> Robert Kraut et al., *Internet Paradox: A Social Technology that Reduces Social Involvement and Psychological Well-Being?*, 53 AM. PSYCHOLOGIST 1017, 1025–29 (1998); N. Nie & L. Erbring, SIQSS Internet Study (2000) available at <http://www.stanford.edu/group/siqss>.

<sup>40</sup> See generally Michelle M. Kazmer & Caroline Haythorhwaite, *Juggling Multiple Social Worlds: Distance Students Online and Offline*, 45 AM. BEHAV. SCIENTIST 510 (2001); Robert LaRose, Matthew S. Eastin & Jennifer Gregg, *Reformulating the Internet Paradox: Social Cognitive Explanations of Internet Use and Depression*, 1 J. ONLINE BEHAV. 2 ¶¶ 2–3 (2001), available at <http://www.behavior.net/JOB/v1n2/paradox.html>.

<sup>41</sup> See generally B. Wellman et al., *Does the Internet Increase, Decrease or Supplement Social Capital? Social Networks, Participation and Community Commitment*. Revised version, 45 (3) AM. BEHAV. SCIENTIST 436 (2001).

<sup>42</sup> Kraut et al., *supra* note 39, at 1017–18.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.* at 1028.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.* at 1029.

<sup>45</sup> Norman H. Nie & Lutz Erbring, *Our Shrinking Social Universe*, 11 PUB. PERSP. 3, 44–45 (2000).

<sup>46</sup> See Norman H. Nie & D. Sunshine Hillygus, *The Impact Of Internet Use On Sociability: Time-Diary Findings*, 1 IT & SOC'Y 1, 9–10 (2002).

can lead to powerful offline interaction. Online and offline interactions are not always separate from one another. We see that previous authors tend to treat interactions as things that stay in the same mode indefinitely. This case study shows us that interactions can move between modes almost seamlessly. It is not an either/or dichotomy.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This article takes a qualitative approach to understanding how Ned Lamont was able to successfully build social capital through online interactions. Drawing on in-depth interviews with two campaign staff members and one blogger, we will explore an important network that propelled Lamont to victory in the primary; a network of regular citizens that came together for a common cause over the Internet.

#### A. Case Study: *The Value of Ned Lamont*

Scholars may be quick to dismiss the findings presented here because it focuses on a single case. Quantitative analysis is privileged for this exact reason. Since one can generalize from the results of most quantitative studies, qualitative research can easily be overlooked, particularly when the N is in the single digits or case study of one. However, political scientists remind us that a case study of one holds substantial value.<sup>47</sup> Most notably, King, Keohane, and Verba offer:

[A] single observation can be useful for evaluating causal explanations if it is part of a research program. If there are other single observations, perhaps gathered by other researchers, against which it can be compared, it is no longer a single observation.<sup>48</sup>

This 2006 Connecticut Senate race case study is offered in hopes that it encourages others to bring new examples to the social science literature. We already see such research on select candidates and social movements, but more is needed.

The Ned Lamont campaign represents one blip in the historical timeline of the Internet. People may look back on this race a few years from now and feel that the Web strategy used by the Lamont staff is seemingly outdated. High-profile candidates such as President-elect Barack Obama have not only replicated many of the strategies put forth by

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<sup>47</sup> GARY KING, ROBERT O. KEOHANE & SIDNEY VERBA, *DESIGNING SOCIAL INQUIRY: SCIENTIFIC INFERENCE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH* 209 (Princeton Univ. Press 1994).

<sup>48</sup> *Id.* at 211.

Lamont, but have also taken them to the next level.<sup>49</sup> With that said, we must judge this case study and its significance in its appropriate political and social context. The campaign was revolutionary for its time. In 2006, a substantial amount of the strategy used was new territory. The fact that these strategies are being built upon today is very telling of their perceived value.

### B. *In-Depth Interviews*

In-depth interviews provide a unique lens through which to view political and social issues. All too often, due to their lack of generalizability, they are overlooked as a valuable research tool in the social science disciplines. It is important to remember that we can utilize in-depth interviews to inform quantitative analysis, and vice versa.

Analysis of the four interviews referenced in this article was conducted via grounded theory.<sup>50</sup> An inductive method, grounded theory allows researchers to tackle specific aims of a project without any preconceptions or hypotheses.<sup>51</sup> Through the use of constant comparisons between interviews, researchers can extract sensitizing theoretical concepts, major themes that appear repeatedly.<sup>52</sup> Through this method, four sensitizing concepts arose addressing the question of how the Lamont campaign was able to build its extensive social capital network.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Tom Curry, *Clinton, Obama in Last-Ditch Connecticut Fight*, MSNBC, Feb. 4, 2008, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22978049>.

<sup>50</sup> See BARNEY G. GLASER & ANSELM L. STRAUSS, *THE DISCOVERY OF GROUNDED THEORY: STRATEGIES FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH 2-6* (Aldine Pub. Co. 1967). Four in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted for this project. Three interviews were conducted between March and April of 2008. One was conducted in March of 2006. The 2008 interviews were conducted face-to-face, with the 2006 interview being conducted via telephone. After receiving consent from the respondents, all interviews were digitally recorded and archived for transcription purposes. Three of the four respondents wanted to be referred to by their real names. Meeting locations were selected by the respondents. Since the campaign occurred two years ago, some of the respondents have since moved to other locations. Interviews lasted between fifty-five minutes and one hour and thirty-minutes.

<sup>51</sup> *Id.* at 5. I am aware of the criticisms of the grounded theory, and in spite of these, feel that this approach is the best one for constructing the framework for this research. This article embraces the perspectives offered by Haig and Kinach in saying that grounded theory is far from "naïve empiricism." Brian D. Haig, *Grounded Theory as Scientific Method*, in *PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION* (Alven Neiman, ed. 1995), available at [http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/95\\_docs/haig.html](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/95_docs/haig.html); Barbara M. Kinach, *Grounded Theory as Scientific Method: Haig-Inspired Reflections on Educational Research Methodology*, in *PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION* (Alven Neiman, ed. 1995), available at [http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/95\\_docs/kinach.html](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/95_docs/kinach.html).

<sup>52</sup> GLASER & STRAUSS, *supra* note 50, at 101-15.

<sup>53</sup> Open coding played a crucial role in illuminating the repetition of these concepts. Each transcript paragraph was coded with important notations, including the essence of what the respondent was talking about and adjectives that described the phenomenon. As coding occurred, memos were kept on the side for additional information, serving as a reference for thoughts regarding more general themes.



## IV. ANALYSIS

The four key behaviors identified as sensitizing concepts were: embracing interactivity; empowering the liberal blogosphere; maintaining relations with the blogosphere; and valuing a Web presence. We can consider each of these four points individually.

*A. Embracing Interactivity*

From day one of their respective campaigns, it was clear that the Lamont and Lieberman camps were taking two vastly different approaches to their online strategy. However, in a quick glance, their approach may seem more similar than different. Both candidates maintained up-to-date Web pages from very early dates. Both Web sites offered press releases, stances on issues, a substantial amount of photographs, and quotes from supporters. The major area where the campaign sites differed, something that could easily be overlooked at first glance, was in their implementation of interactivity on their respective Web sites.

While vying for the Democratic Party nomination, Lieberman kept a very up-to-date, professional campaign home page that offered virtually no interactivity. There was no blog, no streaming video, and no personalized interactive feature. As noted by Ray, a blogging supporter of the campaign, “Before the primary, his Web page was a joke. It was not interactive. It just had a few articles that were updated, no blog.”<sup>54</sup> The closest thing a Web site visitor could do to be “interactive” was to submit a story on how Joe’s work in the U.S. Senate impacted his or her personal life. This feature was a far cry from his challenger’s interactive features.

With only a few weeks remaining until the general election, the Lieberman campaign added a blog.<sup>55</sup> This blog allowed for communication to be posted by the campaign staff for others to read.<sup>56</sup> Such non-interactive blogs are not unique. Fellow Connecticut Senator Chris Dodd created the “Dodd Blog” on his 2004 Senate re-election page.<sup>57</sup> The blog was similar to Lieberman’s in that it only permitted staff members to create a post.<sup>58</sup> “Blogs” of this nature allow the campaign to fully control the discourse of the site. People should be cognizant of the

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<sup>54</sup> Telephone Interview with Ray, Blogger, Joe Lieberman Campaign for U.S. Senate (Mar. 10, 2006).

<sup>55</sup> See e.g., Internet Archive Wayback Machine, <http://web.archive.org/collections/web.html> (search “joe2006.com”; then follow “November 1, 2006” hyperlink; then follow “Blog” hyperlink) (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>56</sup> *Id.*

<sup>57</sup> See Blog, Chris Dodd for President, <http://chrisdodd.com/blog>, as an example of a staff member who blogged on the 2008 Dodd for President Web site (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>58</sup> See e.g., Chris Dodd for U.S. Senate, Internet Archive Wayback Machine, <http://web.archive.org/collections/web.html> (search “www.chrisdodd.com”; then follow “September 23, 2004” hyperlink; then follow “Dodd Blog” hyperlink) (last visited Nov. 15, 2008).

distinction between this type of internal campaign journaling and interactive blogging. There is a big distinction in terms of what these two entities mean for free political discourse.

It was clear that the Lamont team felt comfortable taking the risk of having a truly interactive blog on the campaign Web page. Unlike Lieberman, Lamont's blog could be accessed and added to by any Web page browser.<sup>59</sup> It encouraged open discussion and allowed for questions and answers to be posted.<sup>60</sup>

Along with having an actual interactive blog on his site, Lamont placed hyperlinks to other third-party blogs throughout his campaign page.<sup>61</sup> This is a potentially dangerous move for a candidate, because one is leading site visitors to a third-party page in which he or she has no control over the discourse. It is also risky because it is encouraging the Web browser to leave the campaign page with the potential of not returning. Lamont's staff took this risk, thus integrating local and national netroots activists and ultimately advancing the campaign's top media and political objectives.<sup>62</sup> This risk paid off. As the primary campaign heated up, these third-party blog sites became an additional campaign resource. Having a blog on his page, coupled with links to other active blogs made for an interconnected network of highly interactive virtual spaces.

### *B. Empowering the Liberal Blogosphere*

Having this interactive space is a good step towards building a social capital network. Supporters can identify one another, learn about events, and share ideas with other like-minded people. While networking is invited simply by having this virtual space, there are additional things candidates can do to help these supporters feel empowered. We can point to Ned Lamont as a candidate who went out of his way to make the bloggers feel not only welcomed, but also needed, both before and after his campaign.

One of the first steps Lamont took towards empowering the bloggers was to continually vocalize their importance to his campaign. This happened in the context of television interviews, newspaper quotations,

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<sup>59</sup> See Internet Archive Wayback Machine, <http://web.archive.org/collections/web.html> (search "www.nedlamont.com"; then follow "August 4, 2006" hyperlink; then follow "Blog" hyperlink; then follow any "comment" hyperlink) (last accessed Nov. 15, 2008).

<sup>60</sup> A basic level of policing did take place on the blog. In his interview, Ray noted that he deleted comments that contained certain curse words. Telephone Interview with Ray, Blogger, Joe Lieberman Campaign for U.S. Senate (Mar. 10, 2006).

<sup>61</sup> See Ned Lamont: Democrat for U.S. Senate, <http://web.archive.org/web/20060813124012/nedlamont.com/blog> (last visited Nov. 26, 2008).

<sup>62</sup> Ari Melber, *Ned Lamont's Digital Constituency*, THE NATION, Aug. 9, 2006, available at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20060814/melber>.

and even on the liberal blogs themselves.<sup>63</sup> Recognizing the Internet's role in constructing a more deliberative democracy, he continually offered bloggers verbal support.<sup>64</sup> In an interview at "Blogosphere Day" held at Yale University, Lamont stated:

I am happy for blogosphere day. I will be there any way I can 'cause you guys were there for me at the beginning and helped us, and as I told people here this evening, helped to get a lot of interest and excitement and grassroots in this campaign early on, and I think this is something we can replicate around the country, where you get grassroots people energized and you have primary and challenges like this, and you can't have too much democracy in our system.<sup>65</sup>

Lamont empowered the blogosphere by giving them his time, both in person and on the internet. He conducted numerous exclusive interviews with blog supporters, and importantly, granted them the same campaign access as traditional media reporters.<sup>66</sup> During the primary election return party, multiple interview respondents discussed how the bloggers, just like members of the mainstream media, were given their own dedicated space to blog at the hotel.<sup>67</sup> They blogged about the returns and the atmosphere of the campaign at the primary night party as it was occurring.<sup>68</sup> This was a new phenomenon, a trend that continued at the Democratic Party Presidential Convention.<sup>69</sup>

Bloggers also empowered and united themselves by posting videos on YouTube.<sup>70</sup> Bloggers would bring cameras to Lieberman and Lamont campaign events and post home videos online.<sup>71</sup> Often, the bloggers would then initiate a discussion by posting a comment on the video.<sup>72</sup> One respondent for this project cited Charles, who ran the LamontBlog, as well as CTBob, and SpaceBoy, as some of the most prominent pro-Lamont

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<sup>63</sup> Ned Lamont Thanks Bloggers, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrqVgMrp1sY> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>64</sup> Jane Hamsher Interviews Ned Lamont, <http://youtube.com/watch?v=SgPoEFqqiiQ> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>65</sup> *Id.*

<sup>66</sup> Melber, *supra* note 62.

<sup>67</sup> *See id.*

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Tim Tagaris, Internet Director, Ned Lamont Campaign for U.S. Senate, in New Haven, Conn. (Mar. 10, 2008).

<sup>69</sup> Michael Settle, *An Event Made for Movers, Shakers and Bloggers*, THE HERALD (GLASGOW), Aug. 25, 2008, at 13, available at [http://www.theherald.co.uk/search/display.var.2432470.0.an\\_event\\_made\\_for\\_movers\\_shakers\\_and\\_bloggers.php](http://www.theherald.co.uk/search/display.var.2432470.0.an_event_made_for_movers_shakers_and_bloggers.php).

<sup>70</sup> YouTube, Nedheads, <http://www.youtube.com/group/nedlamont> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>71</sup> *Id.*

<sup>72</sup> *Id.*

posters of videos.<sup>73</sup> As Tim explains, bloggers would also go to events and report back on their blogs:

They also did a great job of on their own, without us giving them information or us telling them to do something, did a great job of telling the story about the campaign. There were bloggers that actually went to events and videotaped them, you know, interview Ned, [Tom] Swan, or myself, or go to a Lieberman event and try to ask questions. They did a great job of telling the story of the campaign, not just to their readers, but to people across the country following this race who only had access to one article in the Hartford Courant every day or every other day . . . they did a great job of giving people a window into the campaign that they couldn't get anywhere else.<sup>74</sup>

As Tim describes, blog supporters empowered themselves by conducting research about Lieberman without direction from the Lamont campaign.<sup>75</sup> As will be discussed in more detail below, when the Lieberman campaign accused Lamont's blog network of hacking into his Web site the day before the primary, the bloggers conducted independent research to help identify what the issue was with Lieberman's page.<sup>76</sup> They broke the story on a fact that became very useful for the Attorney General, who ultimately determined that there was no foul play in the malfunction of the Senator's page.<sup>77</sup> One blogger discussed this experience in a post-election interview with Lamont:

Lamont: 'Did bloggers hack into Joe Lieberman's web site?' seemed to last forever, which was just sort of a trivial nonsense story that had no fact basis to it at all.

ConnecticutBob: Not only no facts, but we found on our

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<sup>73</sup> Interview with Tim Tagaris, Internet Director, Ned Lamont Campaign for U.S. Senate, in New Haven, Conn. (Mar. 10, 2008); Interview with Melissa Ryan, member, Ned Lamont Campaign for U.S. Senate, in Boston, Mass. (Mar. 17, 2008). See also TrueBlueCT Profile, <http://youtube.com/user/TrueBlueCT> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008); ctblogger Profile, <http://youtube.com/user/ctblogger> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008); CTBob Profile, <http://youtube.com/user/CTBob> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Tim Tagaris, Internet Director, Ned Lamont Campaign for U.S. Senate, in New Haven, Conn. (Mar. 10, 2008).

<sup>75</sup> *Id.*

<sup>76</sup> See Thomas Kaplan, *Explaining Lieberman's Web Crash*, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 10, 2008, at B2.

<sup>77</sup> See Posting by Patrick LaForge, Finding: Lieberman Site Wasn't Hacked, <http://empirezone.blogs.nytimes.com/2006/12/21/finding-lieberman-site-wasnt-hacked/> (Dec. 21, 2006, 13:22 EST).

own the proof that the reason why Lieberman's site crashed, and yet it took the Justice Department and the FBI and whoever else investigated it until well after the November election to let us off the hook, and, I mean, it had to occur to you that maybe they were dragging their feet for a specific reason, maybe there was some kind of, uh...

Lamont interrupting: Well, on issues like that, the Lieberman campaign played them like a violin and the mainstream media followed right along<sup>78</sup>

Supporters posted this and other videos documenting their research experience.<sup>79</sup> Other videos included supporters at parades, events where Lamont made appearances, and home-made videos of why they supported Ned.<sup>80</sup> These video uploads were not limited to those who were active bloggers, though bloggers certainly had a prominent role.<sup>81</sup>

Bloggers became an empowered group very early in the campaign. Tim describes how they found their place in national politics well before the primary:

[Y]ou had local bloggers who would ask local elected officials whether or not they would support the winner of the democratic primary. We called it "one simple question". [...] The first one that got on board was Mayor Malloy, who was running for governor, and he did it in the comments of a chat on Myleftnutmeg [.com], and as soon as we got him to say that he was on board, we used that piece to get Mayor Destephano on the record as well [...] Then we used those to push that information out to the traditional media [...] We used it as a way to put pressure on Senator Lieberman not to run in the general election if we had won in the primary, to let him know very publicly that all of these people were going to abandon him that endorsed him in the primary. So, from there the effort spread outward with national bloggers getting U.S. Senators on the record, like Hillary

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<sup>78</sup> The Ned Lamont Interview, Spazeboy, [www.spazeboy.net/2007/03/the-ned-lamont-interview/](http://www.spazeboy.net/2007/03/the-ned-lamont-interview/) (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>79</sup> See e.g. *id.*

<sup>80</sup> See YouTube, Nedheads, <http://www.youtube.com/group/nedlamont> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>81</sup> See Ned Lamont Thanks Bloggers, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrqVgMrp1sY> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

Clinton [...] just having the bloggers call up their legislative staffs just like they were a blogger from the New York Times trying to get an answer to the question, and getting lots of people to call.<sup>82</sup>

This empowerment was all part of a larger strategy on behalf of the campaign.<sup>83</sup> Melissa and Tim's commentary best exemplifies the strategy of the Lamont campaign, a clear lineage from local blogs to mainstream news.<sup>84</sup> Local Connecticut bloggers would write about the race.<sup>85</sup> These stories would be elaborated on by the national blogs, such as Dailykos.com.<sup>86</sup> In this day and age, traditional media reads the national blogs on a daily basis.<sup>87</sup> This gave online supporters a clear window of opportunity to make national headlines.

The Lamont campaign clearly reached out to people without blogging interests. They empowered supporters by giving them tasks that could be completed via the Internet. One of the most revolutionary inventions of the election cycle was a digital feature called "Friends, Family, and Neighbors".<sup>88</sup> This allowed online visitors to create virtual cards that would be printed at the expense of the campaign and mailed in hard copy to people of the author's choosing.<sup>89</sup> This was the first feature of its kind.<sup>90</sup>

### C. *Maintaining Relations with the Blogosphere*

If candidates are truly creating social capital, these networks, as well as the benefits that arise from them, should exist well after the election is completed. This may serve as one of the best tests in gauging the strength and existence of this social capital. In Lamont's case, we see that both Lamont himself and his support group have worked to maintain the value of the social capital network. Lamont's Web page is still a fully-functional site to this day.<sup>91</sup> It allows for site visitors to stay connected by signing up for e-mail updates, forward the new site to a friend, read about other

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with Tim Tagaris, Internet Director, Ned Lamont Campaign for U.S. Senate, in New Haven, Conn. (Mar. 10, 2008).

<sup>83</sup> *Id.*

<sup>84</sup> *Id.*; Interview with Melissa Ryan, member, Ned Lamont Campaign for U.S. Senate 2006, in Boston, Mass. (Mar. 17, 2008).

<sup>85</sup> See, e.g., Connecticut Local Politics, 2006 Election Edition, <http://connecticutlocalpolitics.blogspot.com/2006/01/six-questions-for-ned-lamont.html> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>86</sup> CT-Sen: Lieberman Freaking Out About Lamont, Daily Kos, <http://www.dailykos.com/storyonly/2006/1/17/1631/83836> (Jan. 17, 2006, 13:03 PST).

<sup>87</sup> See Tom Regan, *Who Controls the News? On the Web, You Can*, CHRISTIAN SCI. MONITOR, Sept. 26, 2007, at 17.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Tim Tagaris, Internet Director, Ned Lamont Campaign for U.S. Senate, in New Haven, Conn. (Mar. 10, 2008).

<sup>89</sup> *Id.*

<sup>90</sup> *Id.*

<sup>91</sup> See Ned Lamont Homepage, <http://www.nedlamont.com> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

candidates Ned is supporting, and link to liberal blog sites.<sup>92</sup> A highly interactive feature allows for site visitors to identify local and national newspapers by typing in their zip code, then composing a letter to the editor stating what the campaign has meant to them.<sup>93</sup> The site automatically e-mails the letter to the editor of the newspaper one selects.<sup>94</sup>

Lamont has kept his presence known throughout the liberal blogosphere. On June 1, 2007, he held a Liveblog on MyLeftNutmeg.com.<sup>95</sup> During his online conversation there were 51 comments, questions, and answers posted between Lamont and the citizen bloggers, and Lamont has continued this discourse through his Web site.<sup>96</sup> He writes one year after his primary victory:

One year after the primary, so many of you are staying active and continuing to challenge the status quo when it needs challenging.

In this spirit, we have relaunched NedLamont.com as a place where you can keep up to date on my political activities and stay connected.

To start, you can write a letter to the editor about what last year's primary victory meant to you, sign up to stay connected via email updates, read some of my reflections from the campaign trail, take action to help defeat the Republicans up for re-election who have been blocking bipartisan progress on Iraq, or find out what I've been up to since November.<sup>97</sup>

Given that social capital is a two-way street, as Putnam suggests, we would expect to see the bloggers also working to maintain the relationship. Indeed, the bloggers themselves have taken numerous steps to keep the network alive. First, they have worked to maintain access to blogs central to the 2006 election. My LeftNutmeg.com maintains a list of such blogs for reference purposes. In addition to keeping the liberal blog spots alive, these individuals have also maintained an active YouTube presence. Two

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<sup>92</sup> *Id.*

<sup>93</sup> See Ned Lamont: Democrat for U.S. Senate, <http://web.archive.org/web/20060822001003/www.nedlamont.com/page/content/resources/> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>94</sup> *Id.*

<sup>95</sup> My Left NutMeg: Where Connecticut Dems Scratch That Progressive Itch, <http://www.myleftnutmeg.com/showDiary.do?diaryId=7085> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>96</sup> *Id.*

<sup>97</sup> Ned Lamont Website Archive, <http://web.archive.org/web/20070812031744/http://www.nedlamont.com/> (last visited Dec. 1, 2008).

of the most prominent bloggers, ConnecticutBob and Spazeboy, conducted an in-depth interview with Lamont four months after the campaign. They posted the interview on YouTube, offering 33 minutes and 20 seconds of coverage.<sup>98</sup> This is a unique attempt to show the strength of the network in the post-2006 election era.

#### D. Valuing a Web Presence

While it may seem intuitive, the simple act of valuing one's Web presence in a campaign is a solid first step to building social capital networks online. Valuing a Web presence is much greater than simply having a presence. Valuing digital space means putting thought, energy, and resources into the online campaign. Simply having a presence may not necessarily include these steps. Indeed, designing a digital self in line with the campaign is not something that happens easily. It has the potential to be a very challenging task to bear, and even in the context of state-wide elections, may be pushed to the wayside or significantly compromised in favor of other priorities.

There are multiple pieces of evidence from the Lieberman campaign that, when put together, indicate that the campaign could have done more to show a valuing of its digital presence.<sup>99</sup> The first piece of evidence stems from a critical malfunction in the operation of the Lieberman campaign Web page. A topic that made national news, Lieberman's page went down during a period that included the day before, of, and after the primary.<sup>100</sup> His campaign was very vocal in blaming Lamont and his online supporters for the malfunction.<sup>101</sup> Through content analysis of the Lieberman page over a period of nine months, Cohen revealed that the Senator's Web page went down at least two times prior to the primary escapade.<sup>102</sup> Since this prior research called for archiving the Lieberman page once a week<sup>103</sup>, it is possible the page went down, or was hacked or hijacked, additional times between the weekly Web archiving.

With Lieberman and Lamont clawing for primary votes, the 72-hour site malfunction surrounding the primary became the center of a heated

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<sup>98</sup> See Interview with Ned Lamont, <http://youtube.com/watch?v=U9Sh3moiPwE> (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>99</sup> Diana T. Cohen, *The Changing Face of Incumbency: An Exploration into Joe Lieberman's Digital Presentation of Self 22* (unpublished manuscript prepared for delivery at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Apr. 12-15, 2007, on file with author), available at [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p\\_mla\\_apa\\_research\\_citation/1/9/9/3/7/pages199377/p199377-1.php](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/9/9/3/7/pages199377/p199377-1.php).

<sup>100</sup> See Robert Yoon, *Lieberman Blames Rove-like Tactics for Web Site Disruption*, Aug. 8, 2006, <http://www.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/08/08/lieberman.website/index.html>.

<sup>101</sup> *Id.*

<sup>102</sup> Cohen, *supra* note 99, at 21.

<sup>103</sup> Diana Tracy Cohen, *Creating Net Roots: Incumbents and the Digital Self 56* (2007) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida) (on file with author).



political battle. The Lieberman campaign accused Lamont supporters of intentionally disabling his Web page the day before the primary.<sup>104</sup> Ray described how the Lieberman campaign was quick to point fingers at Lamont supporters:

[Lieberman] screamed about being hacked, he mentioned that the bloggers did it, which is the most ludicrous thing in the world. Nobody I know who's worked close to the campaign would even know how to do that...so that was like the first big hit. He made us seem like we were nefarious forces attacking his Web site.<sup>105</sup>

The Lieberman campaign accused Lamont's supporters of inflicting what is known as a "Distributed Denial of Service" attack, or DoS.<sup>106</sup> This type of Web-based attack occurs when a hacker wants to have a specific Web page unavailable to online browsers at a particular point in time.<sup>107</sup> It is executed by attacking the Web server such that it cannot adequately communicate with the site browser's computer.<sup>108</sup> It is considered a cybercrime to initiate DoS attacks, and as a result, the Lieberman campaign asked the Connecticut Attorney General's office to launch a criminal investigation.<sup>109</sup>

The evidence tends to support the fact that the Lamont campaign, as well as its supporters, played no role in the disabling of the Lieberman Web page the day before the primary.<sup>110</sup> Multiple sources confirmed that the Lieberman campaign used a very low budget Internet host, paying \$15 a month.<sup>111</sup> The bloggers were instrumental in uncovering this fact and alerting the press.<sup>112</sup> By comparison, the Lamont campaign was paying

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<sup>104</sup> Telephone Interview with Ray, Blogger, Joe Lieberman Campaign for U.S. Senate (Mar. 10, 2006).

<sup>105</sup> *Id.*

<sup>106</sup> Posting by Caroline McCarthy, Lieberman's Still Fighting, But His Web Site Drops Dead, to cnet news: News Blog, [http://news.cnet.com/8301-10784\\_3-6103285-7.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-10784_3-6103285-7.html) (Aug. 8, 2006, 10:40 PDT).

<sup>107</sup> Carnegie Mellon University Software Engineering Institute Online: Denial of Service Attacks, [http://www.cert.org/tech\\_tips/denial\\_of\\_service.html](http://www.cert.org/tech_tips/denial_of_service.html) (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>108</sup> *Id.*

<sup>109</sup> Press Release, Connecticut Attorney General's Office, Attorney General to Investigate Hacking of Lieberman Campaign Web Site (Aug. 8, 2006) <http://www.ct.gov/AG/cwp/view.asp?A=2341&Q=318548>.

<sup>110</sup> See Thomas Kaplan, *Explaining Lieberman's Web Crash*, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 10, 2008, at B2.

<sup>111</sup> CT-Sen: Why Lieberman's Site is Down, Daily Kos, <http://www.dailykos.com/storyonly/2006/8/8/153827/3493> (Aug. 8, 2006, 12:38 PDT).

<sup>112</sup> *Id.*

\$1,500 a month to have their Web page hosted online.<sup>113</sup> On December 20, 2006, the Connecticut Attorney General concluded that no criminal activity had taken place in the disabling of the Lieberman Web page.<sup>114</sup> It was determined that the server could not handle the traffic seen surrounding primary day.<sup>115</sup>

One may be quick to question why the Lieberman team blamed Lamont's online supporters for the hack. Ray gives us interesting insight into this question, theorizing that his negative feelings about bloggers dates back to his experience running for president in 2004:

With the blogs, I think it was genuinely held that we were all yelling, screaming left-wing whackos, and I think this comes from the presidential election of 2004. I think that's where it really comes from, Dean. I think Joe was the frontrunner. You have to look back at the 2004 stuff, because Joe was the frontrunner. Gore took his time deciding if he was going to run in the election. He ended up endorsing Dean, he didn't endorse Joe, and I think Joe felt just so betrayed by that...he always had this idea as bloggers being this evil force of the party. I think he took that with him into this campaign, and it had a lot to do with why he made such poor online decisions. And it had a lot to do with why he didn't want to get involved online. I mean, he had nothing online before the primary, and after the primary it was a very cynical attempt, but it was successful. It was his online presence as he saw us, purely attack and nothing else. But he didn't need that, because he had 70% of the Republican vote, and no Republican candidate.<sup>116</sup>

Ray's insights demonstrate the importance of a candidate's political history in current campaigns and provides potential insight as to why Lieberman started his online campaign so conservatively. Even though the presidential election of 2004 may be a distant memory for many Connecticut voters, its influence is still with us. As a candidate,

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<sup>113</sup> Paul Bass, *Hacking Charge: Was the Lieberman Camp Web-Clueless to the End?*, NEW HAVEN INDEPENDENT, Aug. 8, 2006, [http://newhavenindependent.org/archives/2006/08/hacking\\_charge.php](http://newhavenindependent.org/archives/2006/08/hacking_charge.php).

<sup>114</sup> Posting by Patrick LaForge, *supra* note 77.

<sup>115</sup> Posting by Anne Broache, FBI: Lieberman Campaign, Not Hackers, Caused 2006 Web Site Crash, to cnet news: News Blog, [http://news.cnet.com/8301-10784\\_3-9915434-7.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-10784_3-9915434-7.html) (Apr. 9, 2008, 11:45 PDT).

<sup>116</sup> Telephone Interview with Ray, Blogger, Joe Lieberman Campaign for U.S. Senate (Mar. 10, 2006).

Lieberman carries that losing experience with him. This political history has a place in the 2006 election. It may have influenced how the Lieberman campaign handled its relations with the liberal blogosphere.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Since its inception into American society, the Internet has been a great source of scholarly debate. Questions of if, how, and when the Web assists in the construction of social capital has been one of the most active debates in the social sciences. Scholars can now turn to the 2006 Connecticut Senate election to shed some light on this and other inter-related questions. In this article, we have explored four key factors that led to Ned Lamont's success in creating a vital social capital network online. We have also seen how political history may play a role in determining how a candidate chooses to use the Internet in future elections.

It is reasonable to believe that the larger political context, specifically the general disapproval of President Bush and his agenda in Iraq described in the early pages of this work<sup>117</sup>, played a significant role in Lieberman's defeat in the primary. For example, "the kiss" float, a float that creatively brings attention to Lieberman's support of Bush, was a key aspect of ripening his campaign for an upset.<sup>118</sup> This is, however, only part of the story. Beneath the surface of war politics and Lieberman's alignment with the Bush agenda, we see a fascinating story of how Web technology came to change the face of this election. We can point to the Internet as an important way that Lamont was able to mobilize and empower dedicated supporters. Even with a major issue looming in the background, people still need a vehicle for mobilization. The Web was a key vehicle in that fleet.

Further considering the larger political context, one must consider how the timing of the general election influenced the race. Nothing major was going on politically at the national level in August of 2006. The media was in need of a story. Had there been more campaign activity from other races to draw on, the national media may not have covered this race as much as they did. Melissa notes the extensive coverage the race received due to this lack of national political activity:

And this race politically, nationally, was sort of the only thing happening. And it's happening against a former vice presidential nominee. Like, I remember, going on

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<sup>117</sup> Frank Newport, *Bush's 69% Job Disapproval Rating Highest in Gallup History*, GALLUP, Apr. 22, 2008, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/106741/Bushs-69-Job-Disapproval-Rating-Highest-Gallup-History.aspx>.

<sup>118</sup> See Jennifer Medina, *A Boost for Lieberman and a Call for Unity*, N.Y. TIMES, July 25, 2006, at B1.

primary night to cover the event at Lamont headquarters, there were news trucks from around the world. You know, I met reporters from Japan, I met reporters from Sweden, I was on BBC radio twice. Three documentaries were made about it. It was just, like, it was insane. I don't know that any Senate race is ever going to get that kind of national coverage normally, and I think, had the primary happened in September, I don't think it would have been such a big national story.<sup>119</sup>

Some may be apt to argue that if there was more going on politically, people may not have gotten involved in this race with the intensity that they did. Such an argument does not negate the underlying concept that meaningful capital was created. Just because something is not covered by the mainstream media does not mean that activities are not going on. Indeed, what media stations consider to be "news" is very subjective. The reality is that people got together for the purposes of bettering society, and meaningful relationships were built.

Despite the inspiring story presented in this article, many will argue that the Lamont campaign was a failure. In politics, success is measured by electoral victory, a threshold that Lamont did not obtain in the general election. However, one must reflect on their definition of political success. How much credit can we give to a campaign that comes close to victory, yet fails electorally? When does a campaign become a movement? Many argue that Lamont's campaign fundamentally changed the shape of Internet politics in the United States.<sup>120</sup> Leading up to the 2008 presidential election, both Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton had interactive blogs.<sup>121</sup> Barack Obama had an Organizing Fellows Program to help organize grassroots support, and Hillary Clinton had a HillRaisers team.<sup>122</sup> These are all interactive ways to get people involved. This participation begins online, and leads to the construction of offline social capital. The campaigns of Howard Dean, Jesse Ventura, and Ned Lamont

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with Melissa Ryan, member, Ned Lamont Campaign for U.S. Senate 2006, in Boston, Mass. (Mar. 17, 2008).

<sup>120</sup> Posting by Chris Bowers, Ned Lamont for Senate: This is What I Believe In, to MyDD: Direct Democracy, <http://www.mydd.com/story/2006/5/10/12510/8924> (May 10, 2006, 12:51 EST).

<sup>121</sup> See John McCain 2008 Campaign Website, <http://www.johnmccain.com/blog> (last visited Sept. 9, 2008); See Barack Obama's 2008 Campaign Website, <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/hqblog> (last Oct. 21, 2008) (It should be noted, however, that these sites require some searching to actually find the interactive discussion. The actual "blog" page is nothing more than a campaign diary written by staffers. For both candidates, web users must click on additional hyperlinks called "comments" to find the interactive discussion embedded in the Web site.)

<sup>122</sup> Barack Obama Campaign: Organizing Fellows Program, [www.barackobama.com/fellowship](http://www.barackobama.com/fellowship) (last visited Sept. 9, 2008); Hillary Clinton HillRaisers, [www.hillaryclinton.com/actioncenter/raise](http://www.hillaryclinton.com/actioncenter/raise) (last visited Sept. 9, 2008).

served as the framework for the ideas we see today. Many of their ideas, such as submitting videos to campaign Websites, have now been replicated by candidates nationwide.<sup>123</sup>

The next step in this line of research is to attempt to quantify the tangible impacts these social capital networks had for Lamont, and will have for candidates and social movements in the future. For Lamont, how many new people got involved in politics? How many people were involved in the campaign both online and offline? Will these people participate in the future? Some scholars have remained skeptical about the Internet's ability to construct social capital. One way to quell this skepticism is to show that the network did more than just channel those who already participate in politics. This would mean expanding the scope of the study to include people outside of the blogosphere.

Another area of future research is to investigate what this network of individuals will do for democratic politics in the future. Ned Lamont's Web site is still active, and he still has the e-mail list and contact information for all of his supporters.<sup>124</sup> Prior to the 2008 presidential election, Barack Obama was labeled the "Democratic Party Power Broker" for having such a list.<sup>125</sup> He had a database with the names of over two million supporters.<sup>126</sup> How will this list be utilized in the future? Will the Democratic Party attempt to take control of this list? Will these lists lead to individuals like Obama and Lamont becoming more powerful within the Democratic Party? These are fascinating, cutting-edge areas of future research.

Moving forward, one can clearly see that the Internet is fast becoming a highly influential sphere of interaction in the arena of political elections. It brings a newness and excitement to the political system and furthers the relationship between online and offline action. As we see more people getting involved, we can see that there are significant qualitative changes taking place in the political arena. At times, it seems like America has been moving away from a truly democratic state. Voices are not heard. When candidates like Lamont come around and enthusiastically welcome the input and participation of the average citizen, one begins to see evidence of democracy and equality waving their way into the political organization and culture of the United States.

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<sup>123</sup> See BarackTV, on Sen. Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential Campaign Web site, <http://www.barackobama.com/tv/yourstory.php> (last visited Oct. 21, 2008).

<sup>124</sup> Ned Lamont Website, [www.nedlamont.com](http://www.nedlamont.com) (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>125</sup> Christopher Stern, *Obama's 'Gigantic' Database May Make Him Party's Power Broker*, BLOOMBERG NEWS, (Apr. 28, 2008), [http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=washingtonstory&sid=aW\\_Qty8aiVTo](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=washingtonstory&sid=aW_Qty8aiVTo) (last visited Nov. 22, 2008).

<sup>126</sup> *Id.*

