Real Challenges, Virtual Challengers: The Democracy for America Movement

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Date of Approval:
April 30, 2007

Keywords: Internet, social movements, politics, elections, Howard Dean

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my friends, family, and my girlfriend, Jessica Torres, whose love, support, and encouragement kept me going. Thank you.
Acknowledgements

I owe a debt of gratitude to many people who have directly or indirectly made this dissertation possible. First, I would like to thank Gregory Reck, Diane Mines, Susan Keefe, and Kevin Yelvington, who each served on committees for previous major research projects, which were invaluable experiences in conducting my doctoral research. Second, I would like to thank Susan Greenbaum, Michael Angrosino, James Cavendish, and Navita Cummings James for serving on my doctoral committee, and whose teachings prepared me for this undertaking. Third, I would like to thank Elizabeth Bird for serving as my Major Professor for both my thesis and dissertation research at USF. Fourth, I would like to thank the DFA organizers who allowed me to be a part of their groups, and the members who took time away from their busy schedules to talk to me. Fifth, I would like to thank Alvin Wolfe for his proofreading assistance. Finally, I would like to thank everyone who gave me permission to reprint their images in this dissertation, including: Matthew Kerbel, Ellen Salvador, Stephanie Robinett, Rob Suls, Joanna Raczkiewicz, Eric Compas, Tara Liloia, Matthew Daly, Keri Carpenter, Pamela Corn, Byron LaMasters, Jim Brayton, David Iozzi, Gail Bondi, Lada Adamic, Deborah Cotton, Tracy Van Slyke, and David Sifry.
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The Democracy for America Movement

Noah Porter

ABSTRACT

The project examines the effects of Internet use by the social movement organization (SMO) Dean for America/Democracy for America (DFA). This study describes the relationship between Internet usage and SMO beliefs, organization, causes, reasons for joining, strategies, reactions, and effects.

Dean for America started out with few resources or supporters, and was seen as an unlikely contender for the 2004 presidential campaign. From its humble beginnings, it skyrocketed from being virtually unknown to frontrunner status in the span of a year. After Howard Dean withdrew from the race in February 2004, Dean for America transformed itself into Democracy for America, which corresponded with a shift in focus from the presidential election to local elections and a variety of local progressive causes.

DFA’s belief in the necessity of being politically active generally prevents Internet discussions taking the place of offline activism. Their organizational structure allows groups and members to initiate their own activist projects without relying upon a hierarchy. DFA was caused by the discontent of a politically progressive, Internet-savvy population being channeled into blogs and Meetups (that is, offline meetings arranged by Meetup.com based on a shared interest). These innovations led to grassroots support and fundraising that would have been impossible without the Internet, which in turn led to media coverage and high member morale. However,
Dean for America was largely derailed by negative framing of Dean by political rivals and mainstream media. The failure of the Dean campaign did not mean the death of DFA as some predicted, but it did mean a drop in membership due to disillusionment. Because politics is a domain of specialized knowledge, DFA’s membership growth has been slow due to having a limited base to draw from. DFA was effective in making critique of the Iraq War more mainstream and in making the Internet a more serious consideration in electoral politics, but also shows that existing systems of power that Internet-using SMOs enter into social relationships with have a mediating influence on their ability to effect social change.
Introduction

Allow me to start with a bit of reflexivity. I went from playing video games in elementary school, to using Bulletin Board Systems in high school, to writing a 50-page paper on “Internet Anthropology” during my senior year at Appalachian State University. Given this interest in computing, it should come as no surprise that I chose Falun Gong for my thesis topic once I started in the graduate program at University of South Florida. Members of Falun Gong, a spiritual belief system and practice that has been outlawed in China, have utilized the Internet to organize their practice sessions and try to get practitioners’ stories of oppression out of China, bypassing their state-run media. While they did not force China to reconsider its policy, the persecution of Falun Gong proved to be more costly and embarrassing than the Chinese Government had bargained for. Zhong Gong, a qigong group that ran into a similar situation shortly after the crackdown on Falun Gong, was handled in much more low-key way than was Falun Gong, suggesting the Chinese government wished to avoid a repeat of the Falun Gong fiasco. While a multitude of factors was at work, Falun Gong showed there was clearly something politically interesting going on with the power of the Internet (Porter 2003).

Following the completion of my thesis on Falun Gong in 2003, I knew I wanted to pursue another study looking at the cultural impact of the Internet, although I was not yet sure right away what that topic would be. Given this, it seemed reasonable that my next step be an independent study consisting of a literature review of what I had termed Computer-Mediated Anthropology (CMA). I wished to examine not only what anthropologists had contributed to cyberspace studies, but also look at their use and views of computing technology more generally. By surveying anthropologists, I found that while CMA was increasingly being accepted as a
legitimate area of study, those who saw its relevance were mainly scholars of linguistics and globalization. In addition, I found that defenses of the concepts of virtual ethnography and virtual community seemed to be a regular feature of recent anthropological writings on the Internet. Indeed, the question of whether “community” is achievable in virtual reality has dominated much of the debate on cyberspace. The result has been that discussions of the potential of the Internet, whether in anthropology or other disciplines have tended to lock the debate into an either/or argument – either the Internet has utopian potential to unite people and transform society, or it is at best a sham and at worst a destructive influence on society. In order to move past this polarization, it is useful to offer a specific example of how that debate has typically been framed.

For instance, in the course of this research, I encountered an essay by Joseph Lockard (not an anthropologist), whose caustic (yet amusing) commentary on the idea of virtual communities (as extolled by Howard Rheingold, 1993, 1996) was quite memorable:

Rheingold’s desire for “virtual communities” speaks of a basic human need. In the midst of desire we sometimes function under the conceit that if we name an object after our desire, the object is what we name it. Hard-up men buy large blow-up figures of women and hump desperately, admiring the femininity of their “girlfriends” and groaning women’s names over them. But whatever their imagination makes of them, the reality is rubberized plastic, not a woman. Likewise, cyberspace is to community as Rubber Rita is to human companionship. [Lockard 1997: 225]

Of course, as my CMA project revealed, Lockard was not alone in doubting whether virtual communities are truly worthy of the term “community,” or if “virtual community” is an oxymoron. They idea of a virtual community raised many questions for academia to debate: What is required for community? Is communication and emotion sufficient? Must geographical proximity and materiality also be present? Is the time used in virtual communities pulling people
away from their face-to-face, geographically-based counterparts? While these are important debates, I was not finding very many ethnographic studies about the political uses of the Internet use, as opposed to the questions around virtual community.

Once I had finished my CMA project, I eventually decided on making my dissertation topic a study of DFA—that is, Dean for America/Democracy for America, the organization started by Howard Dean and reborn after his failure to win the Democratic presidential nomination in 2004. This is where this story begins. Part of my literature review consisted of a book by Joe Trippi, Howard Dean’s techno-enthusiast campaign manager, entitled: *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Democracy, the Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything* (2004). Trippi’s view of the Internet could not have been more different from Joseph Lockard’s; although he is less concerned about the question of whether true virtual “community” is possible, he is positively utopian about the potential of the Internet for creating social change:

This generation of activists is being defined by what they accomplish using the Internet… while TV was a medium that rendered us dumb, disengaged, and disconnected, the Internet makes us smarter, more involved, and better informed. The Internet was designed to foster cooperation; it’s built on a foundation of shared innovation. [Trippi 2004: 227]

Indeed, much had changed since Lockard’s 1997 argument. Meetups—that is, meetings arranged by the website Meetup.com—were now connecting Internet users to each other in physical locations. Given this, when I learned that Lockard had reviewed Trippi’s book, I was anxious to find out if his Internet cynicism had been mollified by such developments. As it turned out, he was just as cynical as ever:

No one remotely familiar with the Internet underestimated its communicative power by the first years of the twenty-first century, but Trippi still employs shop-worn “they didn’t believe, now they do” rhetoric of record sales accomplishment
in behalf of Howard Dean. Tellingly, Trippi invests the Internet itself with animated purpose, describing it as a meta-mind that identified and grew the Dean campaign without the agency of human will. What the experts underestimated, he states, “was the Internet’s ability to grow rapidly, virally, to create a movement. What they never understood was that we were not using the Internet. It was using us.” He locates an immanent animation within the inanimate circuitry and processors that constitute the Internet; it is an unspecific force that produces a new, interconnected political life. Just as the market has been mystified commonly as a self-inventing mode of value production beyond effective human control, in this account so too the Internet-as-social-market creates a political economy beyond controllability. [Lockard 2005]

Anthropologist David Hakken (1999: 1-22) has argued for years now that the potential of what he terms “advanced information technologies” should not be confused with their actual use. While he questions the “embarrassing willingness of so many otherwise apparently intelligent people to act as if this potential alone ensures its reality (1999: 22), he also provides a “testable proposition that a computing actor network has become hegemonic, that ‘cyberspace’ will have a computing [technology actor network]-related distinctly new general social dynamic” (1999: 24). Lockard’s review is rightly critical of the idea of the Internet as “a meta-mind that …grew the Dean campaign without the agency of human will” and Trippi’s financial motivations for his beliefs. However, Lockard also reiterates his criticisms of virtual community, making only brief mention of such phenomena as Meetup: “To make an effective transit into material communities, the necessary condition for realizing political functionality, Trippi employed Meetup.com to gather the initially meager numbers of Dean supporters amid crowds of online vampires, Goths, and witches. Blog for America, undoubtedly the leading blogsite of the presidential campaign, began functioning” (Lockard 2005). I found it puzzling that his only specific comment on Meetup.com
was to call it a political necessity and to frame its use in terms of subcultures often considered strange or ridiculous by mainstream cultural standards. He also does, however, seem to make indirect reference to its use later on in the review:

Too many discussions of Internet culture rely on similar obfuscations of labor and commodity production, and it is precisely these vaporous fogs that need dispelling by focusing on the role of labor. The Internet is the work of labor far more than capital, and Internet-conscious politics need to make this clear. A political campaign provides a special case of Internet labor, since it relies on the mobilization of vastly more voluntary than paid labor and Internet-based campaigning provides a more effective means of mobilization. That is a form of voluntary labor mobilization that can be optimized through ‘online communities’ that share common ideological and practical political commitments. Yet these remain mythical communities that disappear as the elections and their labor mobilizations end. [Lockard 2005]

To claim that DFA disappeared as the election ended is simply not true; Dean for America was reborn as Democracy for America. However, let me state the obvious here: simply because Lockard is incorrect about DFA’s disappearance after the election does not also mean he is incorrect in denying Trippi’s claims that a revolution is occurring. Just as we should question Trippi’s claims that “the Internet makes us smarter, more involved, and better informed” (Trippi 2004: 227) we should also question Lockard’s claim that: “The Internet and political contribution sites are just a bigger and better means of passing around the collection hat” (Lockard 2005). To quote Hakken again: “Another obvious limitation of [Computer Revolution] Thought is its binary quality: A revolution either has or has not taken place. However, the potential relationships between computing and social change are clearly matters of degree. We need to be able to talk
about them more developmentally, to have a more explicit, sequenced continuum which reflects the multiple dimensions of underlying forces for social change” (Hakken 1999: 25).

So, if it is not a computer revolution or just passing around a large, virtual collection hat, how should the Internet’s impact upon politics be best described? There is plenty of speculation among academics. For instance, Noam Chomsky has said: “The Internet is a tremendous tool for information, understanding, organizing, and communication. There is no doubt at all that the business world, which has been given this public gift, intends to turn it into something else. If they’re able to do it, that will be a very serious blow to freedom and democracy” (Chomsky and Barsamian 2001: 137). Other scholars (e.g. Meikle 2002, Ribeiro 1998: 333) have expressed similar concerns about the Internet’s potential being undermined, while yet others (e.g. Ungar 2003) see this potential as exaggerated. While the questions of how the Internet works as a tool for communication and organization has already received some scholarly attention, the rapid development of Internet technologies means that conclusions drawn by studies conducted only a few years ago may not accurately depict the current state of cyberspace (Wilson and Peterson 2002). Also, even in other cases where a communication medium itself did not fundamentally change over time, cultural attitudes towards the medium were shown to change as time progressed (Pace 1993). Further complicating this picture is the interaction between the Internet with older forms of media, where developments in this newer medium affect older forms of media and vice-versa in sociohistorically contingent, difficult-to-predict ways (Jenkins 2006). Therefore, the need for up-to-date research should be an important part of cyberspace studies, and the political implications of the Internet have been identified by the aforementioned scholars as an important subject to monitor.

My research examines how DFA as a social movement organization (SMO) utilizes the Internet as a communication, organizing, and fundraising tool throughout both its incarnations. My goal is not simply to further academic knowledge for its own sake, but also to identify
political opportunities and limitations. As Chomsky pointed out, the effectiveness of Internet communication and organization has implications for democracy. Social movement researchers have also pointed out that SMOs influence each other (Whittier 2004), so a high-profile case of SMO Internet use, as in the case of DFA, could inspire similar attempts by other SMOs. Thus, as an applied anthropologist, I will also make specific recommendations to DFA.

During the course of this research project, participants often were surprised that an anthropologist was studying DFA. While partly explainable as a lack of knowledge about anthropology among the public, anthropology as a discipline has a unique history with social movements that contributed to its lack of involvement with them. Escobar (1992) asks: "How have anthropology's modes of knowledge worked in order to exclude [collective political practice] from serious consideration? If anthropology's analytical constructs have made visible certain social, cultural, and economic realities, why have anthropologists in general turned a blind eye to the crucial issue of collective political practice?" (p. 397). This relationship must be acknowledged before proceeding to analyze the subject matter, as task undertaken in Chapter 1.

Once reflexivity on a disciplinary level has been established and a robust conception of social movements and social movement organizations has been established, the next logical question is how one goes about studying them. What are the important questions to ask, and how should we go about answering them? Carpenter et al (2004) organized a conference panel on online political organizing, and raised a set of important questions that go beyond the binary of whether a revolution is occurring or not:

…what exactly is the role of online political organizing now and what will it be in the future? Will it be relegated to energizing a base of supporters for “outsider” candidates or will its influence become important and effective for mainstream candidates as well? What methods employed at the national levels will still be relevant in state or local elections? (….)
What about blogs? How do they differ from more mainstream media sources and can or will they simply be folded into an ever increasing array of online extensions to traditional media? Are there clear technological or sociocontextual gains that blogs offer over traditional media sources that are unlikely to be co-opted in the near future? Do blogs flourish only in underserved market niches or does the blogging itself confer some advantages that traditional media is unable to serve? What do we, as researchers, feel are the advantages of blogging technology or context?

What place will organizational tools such as Meetup.com have in the political campaign? Meetup.com is an online web application which facilitates offline (face to face) meetings which has been used extensively in the most recent U.S. election cycle’s national political campaigns. Campaigns, such as the Dean campaign, saw Meetup as a chance to “connect the ends” with their constituents – a chance for constituents to meet face to face to provide local visibility between constituents but also to allow constituents to organize local events on behalf of the national campaign. What place will tools like this have on future election cycles? [Carpenter et al 2004: 59-60]

Ethnographic study is an important step in exploring the answers to questions like these, as I will discuss in Chapter 2. Establishing a clearer conception of culture, how it operates at multiple levels of analysis, and how multi-sited ethnography can be used to study people who do not confine themselves to a single field site, online or offline, will help guide my study of DFA.

In Chapter 3, I will trace the history of DFA. Dean for America started out with few resources or supporters, and was seen as an unlikely contender for the 2004 presidential campaign. From its humble beginnings, it skyrocketed from being virtually unknown to frontrunner status in the span of a year. After Howard Dean withdrew from the race in February
2004, Dean for America transformed itself into Democracy for America, which corresponded with a shift in focus from the presidential election to local elections and a variety of local progressive causes.

Chapters 4 through 10 address the seven aspects of social movement organizations (SMOs) identified by Lofland (1996): beliefs, organization, causes, reasons for joining, strategies, reactions, and effects. Combining these aspects into a statement to illustrate what we mean by each, we might say that: “Based on given beliefs, SMOs form, devise an organization, and people join, in order to [strategically] work towards goals associated with the beliefs” (1996: 257, bullets removed) within “complex environments of diverse social entities” (1996: 51) who react to the SMO, resulting in “[long]-term and [wide] consequences of various sorts that stem from SMOs” (1996: 51). Lofland’s work provided an invaluable, comprehensive framework for studying DFA as an SMO; not only did his work provide a conceptual tool for parsing these chapters, but, in some cases, I retained his (or similar) heading titles as an homage to his influence.

In Chapter 11, I return to the question of how the Internet’s influence on politics can best be described, as viewed through the lens of DFA, and conclude by offering some recommendations drawn from this study.
Chapter 1: Scholarship on Social Movements: Three Historical Strands

Social Movements across Time and Disciplines

In this chapter, I begin my journey of tackling issues involved with the concept of social movements by tracing historical trends in social movement theory in sociology, “basic” anthropology, and applied anthropology. Any history is a cultural construction that entails selectivity, but I hope this selective representation will satisfactorily explain the unfolding of discourses on social movements. Guiding my attempt at constructing a historical overview of social movement theory is the idea of maintaining tensions. Donna Haraway advocated keeping “the ‘four temptations’—positivism, Marxism, feminism/antiracism, and poststructuralism—in tension with one another, without allowing any one of these epistemological frames to silence the others” (di Leonardo 1998: 22). While her list of epistemological frames is not the only way that such a list could be constructed (nor, arguably, is it the best), I feel that the idea of keeping different frames in tension allows for a more nuanced historical overview. In particular, I have tried to maintain a tension between the contributions of individual theorists and the generalizations of historical periods and schools of thought. Just as ethnographies strive to give their informants a voice, I liberally use quotations from social scientists to give a voice to the individuals to counterbalance the necessity of using generalizations. Because anthropology is a rather small discipline, comparatively speaking (Garfield 1984: 514), I draw out more specific writings in anthropology that mention social movements, while using broader strokes in the picture I paint of sociology. This is an unfortunate inevitability since doing justice to sociology’s voluminous record would require more time and space than I have. Still, I hope that a reasonable
balance is maintained between generalization and multivocality in all three cases. Also, I hope that the advances in theory are given an adequate context of broader scholarly, sociopolitical, and technological trends, without giving the impression of any form of determinism. Computers and colonialism, for instance, did not solely determine the course that sociology and anthropology were to follow, but did have a noteworthy influence upon them.

Finally, drawing upon trends in the existing social movement theory, I will make a case for the Cultural Politics approach. This approach, developed in recent years in anthropology by Arturo Escobar, sees social movements as the encounters between groups with different cultural meanings and practices in their attempts to achieve social change. Developing this approach lays the groundwork for the study of DFA.

**Definition of a Social Movement**

Snow et. al. (2004), while acknowledging the existence of a wide variety of definitions of social movements, have distilled them down to a few essential elements. They write: “most [definitions] are based on three or more of the following axes: collective or joint action; change-oriented goals or claims; some extra- or non-institutional collective action; some degree of organization; and some degree of temporal continuity” (p. 6). Within these general themes, a variety of competing definitions (and underlying ideologies) exist. For example, Nicholas (1973) has criticized Heberle’s definition of social movements for its basis in political economy, claiming the emphasis on social movements changing relations of labor and property “betrays its Western bias” (p. 69). He also takes issue with Wilkinson’s criticism of “charismatic leadership,” which he finds “indispensable” (Nicholas 1973: 69). At this point, it will be sufficient to note these common elements in the definitions of social movements that have been proposed rather than come up with an exact definition, with a couple of caveats; there are two specific problematic themes within these definitional debates that I would like to touch on before
proceeding. These two points must be addressed so that the applicability of the social movement concept and literature to DFA is clear.

One of these themes is whether it is possible and meaningful to distinguish between social movements and interest groups. Snow et al. (2004: 7-8) attempt several distinctions between the two: 1. social movements attempt to change other institutions in addition to the state; 2. social movements lack the political legitimacy of interest groups; 3. social movements use non-institutional means to achieve their goals, such as boycotts and marches. However, as Burstein (1998) points out, these distinctions collapse upon examination.¹ He notes, for instance: “If SMOs [that is, Social Movement Organizations²] represent outsiders, then once they begin to succeed, they seemingly cease to be SMOs, even if their goals, membership, and tactics do not change” (p. 42). Tarrow notes that the use of classical forms of protest (sit-ins, etc.) has become more commonplace and accepted by authorities since the 1960s, and “the decades since the 1960s have seen the appearance of hybrid forms of interest group/social movements like the public interest group and the franchised movement organization” (1998: 33). This leads him to ask: “How do changes such as these affect the analytical distinction between social movements and institutional politics? If the forms of collective action formerly associated with social movements are also used by interest groups, civic associations, and, on occasion, elected politicians, what remains distinctive about social movements?” (p. 34). Burnstein convincingly answers his question as follows: “Rather than continue trying to make the distinction…we should simply say that a variety of non-party organizations try to influence political outcomes; the organizations vary in a variety of important ways (tactics, organization, number of members, resources, goals, etc.), but the simple dichotomy between ‘interest group’ and ‘social movement organization’ cannot stand up to scrutiny and should be abandoned” (1998: 45).³ (This point will be discussed further in Chapter 3.)
The second problematic theme is the common definitional assumptions made about the targets selected by social movement for change. “There is a tendency within social movement research to conceptualize social movement actors as opponents of the state,” Smith (2004: 315) writes, and for social movement researchers to assume that “the national state defines the relevant political space for political contenders” (p. 314). Yet the nation-state’s reign as the dominant institution has not gone unchallenged. Wolfe (1977) describes the formation of a supranational sociocultural system where “[s]tates and firms are to the emerging supranational system what tissues and organs are to a biological organism” (p. 617). The changing sociopolitical context in which the state exists suggests that the state by itself cannot be considered the reference point by which we define social movements, since nation-states are part of a larger system. The state may still be the target of social movement demands despite these changes (e.g. Edelman 1999: 187-8), though international organizations are now on the menu of possible targets also (e.g. DeLuca and Peeples 2002).

These distinctions were necessary to lay the groundwork for my literature review in this chapter and throughout this dissertation. Maintaining the artificial distinction between social movements and interest groups may have led to the exclusion of some sources where the distinction was not clear, thereby impoverishing the breadth of the review. Problematizing the state as the reference point for social movements calls attention to the forces of globalization, which must be accounted for in our theorizing on, and methodological approach to, the study of social movements. As Rubin explains, “Analysis of social movements from a historical and cultural perspective enables us to see the interconnectedness of movements and states and suggests that these are neither homogenous nor distinct spheres. In this way the study of social movements contributes new tools and perspectives to the analysis of politics” (Rubin 2004: 107). DFA has change-oriented goals, has some degree of organization and temporal continuity, and is
involved in cultural conflicts; these similarities suggest the applicability of the social movement concept and literature.

**A History of Social Movement Theory in Sociology**

Anderson (2001) argues that the imagined community of the nation-state arose “only…when, and where, three cultural conceptions, all of great antiquity, lose their axiomatic grips on men’s minds” (p. 589). The first was that a particular language reflected ontological reality. The second was the belief in the divine right of monarchs to rule. The third was “a conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable” (p. 589). In the eighteenth century, “the consolidation of the national state… created the framework in which national social movements developed. They resulted both from statebuilders’ penetration of society and from their creation of common frameworks of citizenship. Although expanding states sought to repress opposition and reduce the periphery to obedience, they also created categories of identity, standard relationships, and offered a fulcrum on which people could fight out their social conflicts with others” (Tarrow 1996: 567; also see Calhoun 1993: 395).

The use of “movement” in the English language in the context of collective action first appeared in 1828 (Douglas 2001), and was “used to describe group responses to the social and cultural crises produced by the conditions of factory labor and urban life during the industrial revolution” (Nicholas 1973: 63). The labor movement became a paradigmatic social movement for European sociologists, leading later theorists to declare the discovery of “new” social movements by contrast to it (Calhoun 1993: 385, 389). The social movements of the nineteenth century in both the United States and Europe “played a significant role… in virtually provoking the discipline [of sociology] into existence” (Bash 1994: 249). The sociopolitical contexts of the two differed, however; Europeans at the time believed that “the very existence of society was in jeopardy” (p. 249), while for Americans, “the legacy of the Enlightenment had rendered progress
as something of an article of faith” (p. 250). Or, “[s]tated another way, American sociology sought, through social reform, to cope constructively with a proliferating scatter of ‘social problems’ that seemed to impede the realization of social progress; its European counterpart attempted, through social reconstruction, to stem and, hopefully, to avert the threat of ‘The Social Movement’ that was massing in response to what was perceived as the failure of social progress” (p. 258, emphases in original).

Writings in American sociology on social movements during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were “largely isolated from the broader structural contexts of society” (Bash 1994: 257). “In nineteenth-century images of the mob, normal, reasoning individuals were thought to be transformed in the presence of a crowd, becoming angry, violent, impressionable, and generally unthinking” (Goodwin et al. 2000: 66). Even in much of the first half of the twentieth century literature on social movements, one finds the dynamics of crowds as a central question and the distinction between emotions and rationality as a theoretical truism (Reed 2002; Jenkins 1983: 528). Sigmund Freud, for instance, wrote: “When individuals come together in a group, all their individual inhibitions fall away and all the cruel, brutal and destructive instincts, which lie dormant in individuals as relics of a primitive epoch, are stirred up to find free gratification” (Freud 1959 [1921]: 15, quoted in Goodwin et al. 2000: 66). Many other psychologists have pathologized social movement participants in a variety of similar ways (Goodwin et al 2000: 67; Jasper 2003: 156-7). The major theoretical strands of this era were mass society theory, relative deprivation theory, and collective behavior theory, collectively known as Classical Theory, which “pointed to sudden increases in individual grievances generated by the ‘structural strains’ of rapid social change” (Jenkins 1983: 528).

Until 1939, sociology was characterized by the “time-honored technique of rational speculation” (Hedley 1993: 123, quoted in Crist and McCarthy 1996: 87). An early Classical Theorist, Le Bon, wrote: “If we wish… to remain within the narrow but safe limits within which
science can attain to knowledge... all we must do is simply to take note of such phenomena as are accessible to us, and confine ourselves to their consideration” (Le Bon 1896: 7). His methodology, in his own words, consisted of “the most attentive observation of the facts of history” (p. 4). However, he also made a distinction between using “pure reason” and “practical reason” (p. 5), allowing him to safely “explain to the reader why he will find me draw conclusions from my investigations which it might be thought at first sight they do not bear” (p. 4). Goodwin et al. note that: “In the absence of empirical investigation, what LeBon and Hoffer thought they saw in crowds was more a projection of their own fears and anxieties than an accurate psychological portrait of the protestors” (2000: 69). Smelser, another Classical Theorist, looked for “structural conduciveness,” “conditions of strain,” and “generalized belief,” in order to “generate a systematic account of the activation of events and situations as determinants” (Smelser 1997[1963]: 108). Again, no empirical evidence is offered other than an implied reading of history.

After World War II, the European and American sociological traditions began to influence each other more, partly because of refugee European sociologists. This led to American sociologists considering social movements not simply in terms of the collective behavior of crowds, but as distinct, goal-oriented social phenomenon to be empirically studied. However, they still retained their view of social movements as social problems (Bash 1994: 259-60).

During the 1950s, there were “[p]rofound changes...within the methodological repertoire of sociologists...which included the ascendancy of survey research, the elaboration of techniques for statistical analysis, and the increasing availability of data collected by bureaucratic organizations” (Crist and McCarthy 1996: 87). Improvements in communication and transportation technology “blended to create an extra-local infrastructure which permitted direct electronic communication with large numbers of individuals in relatively brief periods of time, the basic recipe for survey research” (p. 88). Classical theorists began to use more empirical
evidence; “classical theorists have frequently inferred the presence of the presumed psychological state (alienation, dissonance, anxiety) from objective, rather than subjective, data. Thus, after comparing income, education, and occupational levels for whites and non-whites, Geschwender concludes that, as an explanation of the civil rights movement, ‘the Status Inconsistency Hypothesis…is consistent with the data examined’” (McAdam 1985:13; also see Marx and Wood 1975: 378).

Changes in social movement theory in the second half of the twentieth century may be partially explainable by changes in who was doing the research: “The emphasis of the field has changed. At the turn of the century it was dominated by higher status theorists threatened by social change. In the 1950s its spokesmen were more or less detached researchers. These have given way to an increasing number of more activist researchers, who view the study of collective behavior as a way to encourage social change” (Marx and Wood 1975: 364; also see Aguirre and Quarantelli 1983: 200-6).

The 1960s gave birth to a variety of successful social movements that “highlighted the inadequacy of existing social scientific frameworks and gave rise to new ideas and rich debates” (Edelman 2001: 285; also see McAdam 1999: 1, Calhoun 1993: 414). On the other hand, some have argued that social movement theory in general draws too heavily upon certain movements, many formed or popularized around this period, for informing its theory. Smith (1996) writes: “we ought to remember that the peace, women’s, student, and environmental movements are not the only movements to be studied. Indeed, once could argue that the great attention paid in recent years to these four ‘core’ movements… has produced something of a counterproductive myopia in social-movement studies” (p. 4). Crist and McCarthy (1996: 94) found that the civil rights movement was indeed the most frequently studied movement by sociologists. The civil rights movement has even been referred to as “the paradigmatic American social movement” (Costain and McFarland 1998: 1). If sociologists had focused on this “paradigmatic American social
movement” to the exclusion of others, they at least had good reason to do so; the civil rights movement has had perhaps the most profound effect of any other on American society and culture.

Methodological repertoires changed during the 1960s and 1970s as well. During the 1960s, the availability of computers in American universities gave quantitative methods a boost; complex statistical analyses could be completed in a fraction of the time they once took (Crist and McCarthy 1996: 88). During the 1970s, “[t]he federal government cut back its funding of social research, which turned sociologists toward cheaper, more efficient ways to collect data. The use of survey research designs declined markedly, giving way to a variety of other data sources” (p. 88; see di Leonardo 1998: 265 for a discussion of 1970s budget-slashing). The reliance on rational speculation, “objective” data, and surveys up to this point had created a blind spot in social movement research; Marx and Wood (1975) noted that: “In general… data used to study crowds are gathered before or after the crowd behavior occurs. This is all the more striking when one considers that theories… depend on data acquired during the occurrence of the collective behavior” (p. 372). In the early 1970s, “[t]he study of social movements and collective action [had] expanded greatly…and many of the important studies responsible for the advancement of social movement theory have relied on qualitative research techniques” (Staggenborg 1998: 353). Social movement theory was merely one arena in which the theoretical and methodological disputes of this time were played out (Buechler 2004: 47); Glaser and Strauss’s The Discovery of Grounded Theory was published in 1967, which opened the door for other sociologists to legitimately write about and utilize qualitative methods (Oakley 1998: 709). Some have even gone as far to claim that the push for qualitative methods should be seen as a social movement itself, attempting to change the quantitative ‘Establishment’ (Reinharz 1990:294, quoted in Oakley 1998: 724-5). Qualitative methods were a needed corrective to the past sociological methods used to study social movements, as historical research and questionnaires alone proved
to be a poor indicator of the psychological and cultural dynamics of movements (Goodwin et al. 2000: 72). Still, the emergence of qualitative methods did not overtake more traditional methods; “the vast majority of event studies have used newspapers as their primary source of data” (Swank 2000: 29). This is not to say that newspapers are not an important data source, but they cannot be treated as an unproblematic recording of events, as media practices are shaped by a variety of cultural and political factors (see Chapter 2). Crist and McCarthy (1996: 96) found that participant-observation accounted for only 11%-13% of the published studies on social movements in major sociology journals. Other methods used around this time include computer simulations, field experiments, and videotaping (Aguirre and Quarantelli 1983: 199-200; Crist and McCarthy 1996: 90; Marx and Wood 1975: 414).

In the early 1970s, rational choice theory became the social movement theory of choice by many sociologists (Goodwin et al 2000: 70; Smith 1996: 3; Jasper 2003: 153); “[r]ather than being studied alongside fads, crazes, and panics, social movements were now seen as ‘politics by other means’” (Goodwin et al 2000: 70). The newfound emphasis on the rationality of movement participants seemed to have been a reaction against their supposed irrationality in Classical Theory. Rational choice theory sees individuals as rational actors seeking to maximize their personal gain. Mancur Olsen, an economist, “posited individuals as so rational that they would not participate in collective endeavors… because each could benefit from others’ activity as a ‘free rider,’ pursuing low-risk self-interest at the group’s expense” (Edelman 2001: 287-8). As Edelman notes, countless examples of people’s personal sacrifices for the good of a collective can be found, and therefore this theoretical framework leaves much to be desired (p. 288; also see Greenbaum 2002: 18-9, 168; Douglas 1986: 9, 18-22, 30, 47). Still, the concept of the “free rider” has often emerged in subsequent writings on social movements.

Developed during the 1960s but popularized during the late 1970s (Duijvelaar 1996, sec. 2.2), resource mobilization (RM) theory focuses on the strategies by which social movements
mobilize resources—including material, psychological, technical, and social—which are utilized in order to “expand, reward participants, and gain a stake in the political system” (Edelman 2001: 289). This theoretical framework regards “collective action mainly as interest group politics played out by socially connected groups rather than by the most disaffected” (p. 289; also see Jenkins 1983: 529). One major flaw of the RM paradigm is that it tended to focus on groups with greater resources and neglected those “contexts of extreme inequality, severe repression, and hopeless odds” (Edelman 2001: 290); it also “understood ‘success’ primarily as the achievement of policy objectives rather than in relation to broader processes of cultural transformation” (p. 290).

During the early 1980s, another view of social movements was developed. The “political process” theory model “tended to examine movement strategizing in the context of the balance of opportunities-threats for challengers and facilitation-repression by authorities” (Edelman 2001: 290). Two concepts introduced by this theory are political opportunity structures, meaning the opportunities available to a movement within a given political situation, and cognitive liberation, defined as the “subjective meanings [people] attach their situations…. [that] must occur if an organized protest campaign is to take place” (McAdam 1985: 48). This approach did not adequately take into account the social construction of the movement or the interplay of identity within movements, and its synchronic approach was charged with being imprecise by critics. In addition, in contexts of authoritarian regimes, this model has little explanatory power (Edelman 2001: 292). McAdam developed the political process model in his study of black insurgency; in the study, his methodology consisted of measuring a variety of quantitative variables such as the outcome of supreme court cases, numbers of NAACP chapters opened, annual numbers of lynchings, percentages of the black population in urban areas, and the number of political activities reported in The New York Times (McAdam 1985: 112-3, 144). In another study,
McAdam used quantitative variables such as marriage rates, unemployment rates, and measures of participation in movement activities (Earl 2000: 7).

During the 1980s, the study of social movements experienced a “cultural turn,” consisting of two main approaches (Williams 2004). The first approach, the New Social Movement (NSM) perspective, synthesizes Marxian and Weberian theoretical approaches (Edelman 2001: 288). This approach claims that the conflict between capital and labor has weakened with the transition into a postindustrial society, resulting in “struggles over symbolic, informational, and cultural resources and rights to specificity and difference” (p. 289). The newness refers to “greater emphasis on group or collective identity, values and lifestyles rather than or in addition to developed ideologies, and a tendency to emerge more from middle than working class constituencies” (Reed 2002). “New social movement theory questions the resource mobilization emphasis on rationality, strategy, and organization, instead focusing on questions of meaning, identity, and cultural production in collective action” (Hercus 1999: 35). NSM theory emerged from particular groups in Europe such as the Greens, whose emphasis on cultural demands rather than material concerns seemed new when viewed from European sociology, which was more influenced by Marxist theory than American sociology (Williams 2004: 94; Calhoun 1995: 385). However, in the American academic contexts, these claims of newness were questioned (Williams 2004: 92; Edelman 2001: 291, 294-298).

The second approach generated by the “cultural turn” of the 1980s was the “framing” perspective, inspired by interactionist theorists such as Herbert Blumer and Erving Goffman (Williams 2004: 93). While not the only “culturalist” approach besides NSM, it was the most popular (p. 93). This perspective criticized existing social movement theories of the time for “neglect[ing] the process of grievance interpretation…suggest[ing] a static view of participation…and…over-generaliz[ing] participation-related processes” (Snow et al. 1986: 465). It used the concept of “master frames,” which are “broad interpretive templates through which
movements clustered temporally and ideologically explain and attribute blame for the problem they are trying to ameliorate” (Polletta 1997: 438). This approach is flawed in that it views these master frames as being strategic, rational choices on the part of movement leaders; “[w]hat is missing is a recognition that definitions of ‘strategic,’ ‘instrumental,’ and ‘rational’ are themselves shaped by prevailing ideological frames” (p. 439).

Despite this “cultural turn,” ethnographic methods remained somewhat marginal within the study of social movements; most studies preferred newspapers and other existing data sources over participant observation (Swank 2000: 29; Crist and McCarthy 1996: 96). This reliance on newspapers is often done in a manner that is uncritical of the role of media institutions in representing reality (Swank 2000: 29-30). Aguirre and Quarantelli (1983) noted that despite the “renaissance of qualitative methodology in sociology…more collective behavior studies have been produced [between 1973 and 1983] than probably in the whole prior history of the field, and several observers have noted the greater use of quantification” (p. 199).

**Anthropology and Social Movements**

Why have anthropologists paid scant attention to social movements? Methodologically, ethnography, the hallmark of anthropological methodology, is better suited to micro-level rather than macro-level analysis (Nicholas 1973: 64). Also, different social sciences have staked their claims in different intellectual territory. Edelman claims: “In part, anthropologists’ marginal involvement in discussions of collective action reflect an academic division of labor that assigned them peasants, the urban (especially Third World) poor, ethnic minorities, and millenarian or syncretic religious and allocated other types of mobilization (and national-level phenomena) to sociologists, political scientists, or historians” (2001: 286). This emphasis can still be seen in the first explicitly anthropological reader on social movements, published in 2005: “The overwhelming emphasis on certain geographical regions—Latin America, Africa, and Asia—and
the absence or paucity of others—Europe and North America—reinstates the vision of anthropology as a discipline suited to studying ‘marginal’ political and social processes, mainly in the Third World” (Osterweil 2006: 251). In addition, while Nicholas noted in 1973 that “restricted movements aimed at limited social reform rather than a major social transformation appear infrequently in anthropologists’ research” (Nicholas 1973: 66), anthropologists have subsequently tended to focus on “everyday” resistance rather than organized, overt forms of resistance, particularly during the 1980s (Edelman 2001: 286; Escobar 1992).

Nineteenth century anthropology consisted largely of analyzing second-hand accounts rather than conducting fieldwork, but by the early twentieth century, participant observation became the standard in anthropological studies. Ethnographies done in this early period were done on small-scale societies that were presumed to be self-contained systems, manageable for solitary anthropologists to describe (Kaplan and Manners 1971: 20-2). “It was generally assumed that the part studied stood for the whole, that if you had seen one or a selected few segments of tribe X you had seen them all” (p. 22).9 British anthropology tended to study African cultures while American anthropology tended to study Native Americans, which influenced their respective theoretical perspectives. African societies experienced less drastic sociocultural change than Native Americans did, and “[t]hus the British could more readily assume that ‘life-as-it-is-lived-now’ is much like ‘life-as-it-was-then,’ while the American anthropologist was compelled to reconstruct or recreate life-as-it-was-then through the use of oral histories, legends, and so on” (p. 24). Both agreed in the value of documenting cultures before they “disappeared;” this was often seen as an inevitable outcome. For instance, James Mooney’s 1896 classic *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, “resists casting Ghost Dance adherents as ignorant barbarians and refuses to see the Wounded Knee massacre as the end of a backward race, [but] the work’s circular emplotment does not make an easily available entry point for
historical agency, either on the part of the Ghost Dancers or the government that reacted so fearfully to them” (Elliott 1998: 214).

Some early anthropologists who documented social movements appear disturbingly similar to Classical Theorists. For instance, one early American Anthropologist article said:

Is the whole new movement, then, nothing but an aping of the whites, a rebellion against the contempt of race discrimination, a desire to be “as good as the whites”? Partly, but not entirely. It is like all “slaves’ religions,” an expression of inferiority complex through the building of a rigid moral code that makes one feel superior to the others. Insofar, it is a universal expression of a certain social-economic situation. But it is thoroughly Indian, and Californian at that, insofar as it taps the powerful reservoir of the mystical sense so strong in Indian nature…

[Angulo & Freeland 1929: 268]

While culture (in a very essentialist understanding of the term) is at least given lip service (“thoroughly Indian, and Californian at that”), the primary explanation is still based in individual pathology (“an expression of inferiority complex”).

By the 1930s, the study of acculturation began in earnest (Murphy 1987: 14). Besides their desire to capture a presumed-to-be-authentic, pre-contact (“baseline”) version of culture, anthropologists working in colonial contexts were also influenced by the need to get approval for their research from colonial administrators (Kaplan and Manners 1971: 27). This limited the potential for lauding the efforts of social movements since this would likely also be a critique of colonial power and an abandonment of the value of “authentic” culture. This belief in an authentic cultural past and an unwillingness to critique Western institutional power can be seen in how Ray (1936) traces the rise of the “Kolaskin cult” among the Sanpoil, Spokane, and Southern Okanogan in the 1870s. He portrays the “cult” in an authoritarian manner: “So strong was the control of Kolaskin over his followers that they actually contributed… funds and labor” (p. 71),
he writes. Kolaskin was described as exerting “arbitrary authority” (p. 73), implementing standards of conduct that “were ones set by the cult, not by Sanpoil tradition” (p. 73), leaving “[o]fficials of the Indian agency…at a loss to know what action to take to curtail [the Kolaskin cult]” (p. 73). Kolaskin was later claimed to have admitted that “the whole scheme had been a hoax to gain power. But those who had remained faithful…would not listen to him” (p. 75).

“Millenarian, nativist, and revivalist movements were paid growing attention during the 1940s, 1950, and early 1960s… [I]t can be said in general that the historical context (colonialism), the types of movements, the goals and practices of the movements, and the theoretical frameworks (anthropological and otherwise) used by the researchers were largely different from those at stake in contemporary movements” (Escobar 1992: 399). Nativistic movements, a concept proposed by Ralph Linton in 1943, were organized, conscious attempts to revive or preserve elements of culture during cultural contact (that is, colonialism) (Keyes 1997). Millenarian movements, in contrast, “are characterized by declarations of the end of one age or form of life and the arrival or dawning of another” (Kapferer 1997: 324); one is oriented towards preservation while the other is oriented towards change. These concepts, or variations of them, made up the conceptual toolkit of anthropologists of this period, as we can see in the writings of Heizer (1941), Wallace (1956), Krader (1956) and Williams (1963).

Heizer (1941) gives a brief translated passage about a “messianic movement” among the Chumash he ran across while doing archival research. He writes: “It is possible that this type of reaction, explainable as a desperate expedient to seek relief from oppression, was fairly common in the mission district of California…” (p. 128). Heizer’s wording suggests a psychological purpose to the movement, similar to the Classical Theorists.

Anthony Wallace can be credited with coining the term “revitalization movement” that still enjoys some usage today\textsuperscript{10}. He writes:
…a revitalization movement is defined as a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture…the persons involved in the process of revitalization must perceive their culture, or some major areas of it, as a system (whether accurately or not); they must feel that this cultural system is unsatisfactory; and they must innovate not mere discrete terms, but a new cultural system, specifying new relationships as well, in some cases… [Wallace 1956: 265]

The difference between Wallace’s theory and the theory of other social sciences at the time is striking; while Classical Theorists generally saw movements as crowds that were “angry, violent, impressionable, and generally unthinking” (Goodwin et al. 2000: 66), Wallace’s view of movements as conscious efforts to “construct a more satisfying culture” stands in stark contrast. I believe these differences may reflect anthropology’s use of ethnographic methods, which put them closer to the lived realities of those they wrote about. Wallace’s concept also seems to be a reflection of two theoretical trends within anthropology at the time. First, it was published at a time when structural-functionalism was popular, which saw society as a set of integrated institutions that functioned to serve the needs of the individuals that comprised it (Applebaum 1987: 3; Murphy 1987: 19-21). Second, there was a real need to account for cultural change in light of all the sociopolitical changes that occurred after World War II in the third world (Applebaum 1987: 3; Murphy 1987: 12; Kaplan and Manners 1971: 31). Wallace’s definition suggests that revitalization movements create new integrated institutions to serve individual needs; other anthropologists conceived of movements in similar ways.

Krader (1956) applies the concept of a “nativistic movement” to the Altai Turk people of Western Siberia. He defines nativistic movements as having a messianic element, rejection of foreign cultural elements, idealization of the past, and a list of commandments. The movement
he discusses, Burkhanism, fits all four elements. The movement prophesizes that Oriot Khan, an ancient leader, will reappear and free the Altai Turks from Russian domination.

Williams (1963) studied the Murut people of Borneo. Defining revitalization movements as “short term, turbulent modifications in custom” (p. 543), he details the Murut responses to a series of foreign invasions, culminating in a man named Garing starting a religious movement that was widely embraced as a means of achieving stability. He concludes that Anthony Wallace’s “scheme for analysis of short term cultural change provides a most effective device” (p. 550).

*American Anthropologist* carried a large number of articles with a structural-functionalist perspective from 1953 to 1963 (Murphy 1987: 21), though its theoretical dominance declined subsequently. In the 1960s, anthropology began experiencing a tremendous expansion in its membership (Murphy 1987: 28; Baba 1994: 176). This expansion could be traced to the GI Bill providing the economic opportunity for many to get educated (Williams 1999: 69-70; Murphy 1987: 10) and cross-cultural exposure from participating in the war effort piquing the interests of many (Murphy 1987: 10). The influx of new anthropologists during the 1960s came at a time when several social movements were prominent, as previously noted, and this helped to politicize anthropology (Murphy 1987: 29). Murphy describes the resulting situation as follows: “There has been a burgeoning of schools of thought that are all with us today—structural-functionalism, structuralism, just plain ecology, cognitive anthropologists, neo-evolutionists, cultural materialism, and so forth—and none is dominant. Indeed, this may just be the future condition of anthropology: a pluralistic discipline that loosely shelters a plethora of interests and which lacks a center” (Murphy 1987: 29; also see di Leonardo 1998: 267; Ortner 2001). Indeed, we can see this blossoming (or fragmenting?) of theoretical diversity in the anthropological writings on social movements that followed. In addition, anthropologists had to adjust their research methodologies to increasing awareness of globalization, generally either by continuing to search out small-scale
social units that were manageable to study with traditional ethnographic methods while pointing out cultural connections to larger social units, or by adding the quantitative techniques of other disciplines to their methodological repertoire (Kaplan and Manners 1971: 31-3).

La Barre (1970) gives us an example of an anthropological perspective on social movements with a rather psychological bent. He claimed that “crisis cults” arose around “culture heroes” when culture, apparently in the structural-functionalist sense, is threatened. He writes: “Culture fantasies protect men from clear knowledge of their predicament at all times. But that is the function of sacred culture… When such fantasies are threatened, men are thrust back, shorn of defenses, to the same old anxieties and unmastered problems, and new dream work must be done by culture heroes” (p. 207). La Barre seems to blend the anthropological view of movements as contestations of cultural meaning with Classic Theory views that saw movements in terms of anxieties and regression: “When the ego-adaptations of adult men [sic], as individuals or in societies, fail to cope with the austerities of an inhuman universe, then the means they use will naively borrow from their own emotional prehistory, from the more archaic adaptation to other people whom they would command or placate in the childhood family, when under stress, all men regress” (La Barre 1970: 222-3).

While La Barre still seemed to retain structural-functionalist views, other anthropological writings began to move away from this perspective. Markides (1974), in his study of the Enosis movement, concludes that the movement “clearly shows the importance of studying social structural change and its relationship to the oscillations of social movements whose time spans are long. Furthermore…nativistic anticolonial movements may not be simply homogenous cultural responses to colonialism… They could very well be products of strifes between rival political forces that compete for supremacy within the native social structure” (p. 325). This conclusion shows a departure from traditional structural-functionalism and toward conflict theories in that it acknowledges a lack of integrated institutions.
As previously mentioned, the 1980s were a time when anthropologists tended to focus on “everyday politics” (Edelman 2001: 286), and thus very little has been written on social movements during this period by anthropologists. This decade saw the “rise of postmodernism across the disciplines [which] deflected progressive concerns in anthropology from the realm of the political to the realms of discourse on the political” (di Leonardo 1998: 268).

The writing on social movements by anthropologists in the early 1990s (Nash 1992, Escobar 1992) showed the lingering influence of the previous decade’s postmodernist focus. Anthropologists in the 1990s and 2000s began taking notice of NSM theory because of its critique of American power and the “central role… accorded cultural practice as a force for political transformation” (Edelman 2001: 292), though often taking issue with its division between “old” and “new” (Edelman 1999: 185; Inoue 2004: 86; Chuang 2004: 236). Also during this time period, some of the finer points of movement dynamics began to receive increased exposure in anthropology journals (Santiano 1999; Inoue 2004; Khasnabish 2004).

Nash (1992) uses interpretive anthropology in her analysis of a social movement; “As anthropologists we must… seek to capture process in our ethnographic description” (p. 291), she writes. She describes the constantly evolving interpretations of situations by the social entities involved. The influence of 1980s postmodernism is still evident in her writing: “As I saw how the people of the mining community were able to act in a field rife with conflicting claims to authentic interpretations, it occurred to me that they seemed more prepared to deal with the multivocalic complexity of human consciousness than did social scientists in academic settings” (p. 292).

In 1992, Escobar wrote an article for *Critique of Anthropology* that would foreshadow his later development of an extremely promising anthropological theory of social movements. Escobar’s (1998) later article on the political ecology of biodiversity social movements shows his theoretical approach fully developed and in action. He found a “highly transnationalized
nature/culture field” (p. 53) with “network composed of sites with diverging biocultural perspectives and political stakes” (p. 53) in which “[m]arginal sites, such as local communities and social movements, come to be seen as emergent centers of innovation and alternative worlds” (p. 54). He describes his perspective as “cultural politics”: “Cultural politics is the process enacted when sets of social actors shaped by, and embodying, different cultural meanings and practices come into conflict with each other…. Culture is political because meanings are constitutive of processes that, implicitly or explicitly, seek to redefine social power” (p. 64).

Edelman (1999) studied peasant social movements in Costa Rica, and found that the theoretical models of social movements were inadequate for the reality of social movements. The complexity of the story of Costa Rican social movements “is not a history easily pigeonholed in an arid taxonomy of ‘identity-based’ versus ‘class-based’ movements, nor does it describe a single thing, prototypically ‘new’ or ‘old,’ in the ways in which social movement theorists have employed these designations” (1999: 185). He claims that social movement theorists have often presented social movements as monolithic entities, and have not taken into consideration the problematic nature of organizing (p. 185). Suspicious of grand theoretical constructs, he draws only a couple middle-range generalizations from his research (p. 186-7), such as that that the state is still the focus of demands despite Neoliberalism, and that co-opting social movements is a common practice by the state (p. 187-8).

Santiano (1999) discusses public displays by conservative movements. He describes his methodology as follows: “I will draw my primary data from my firsthand experiences with parades, demonstrations, and other forms of public display in Northern Ireland” (p. 515). When politically left and right movements protest in opposition to each other, “the protesters on both sides…share the same repertoire of public symbols and actions: that is, they all draw upon a shared style” (p. 515). However, “[r]esisters from the Right frequently find that there is a gulf, a class-based distance, between themselves and those whom they support” (p. 515). His article is
somewhat of an anomaly in that he addresses social movements without drawing on any of the well-established literature on them.

Paley (2001) examined Chilean social movements in the transition from a dictatorship to a democracy, and notes that the collection and use of quantitative data has strategic use for social movements. She notes that some groups, such as Llareta, a grassroots health group, make use of quantitative data while being critical of its use. Quantitative data has an aura of objectivity, thus making invisible the human decisions involved made by survey designers, interviewers, and interviewees.

Inoue (2004) attempts to trace the emergence of conceptions of citizenship and the practices of resistance in the local context of Okinawa, the national context of Japan, and a global context involving United States policies. In this context, he adopts a NSM perspective, but with a critique of how it “tends to overlook ‘old’ questions of class, the material conditions of life, and the unity of actors and agendas by privileging ‘new’ issues of cultural difference and the politics of identity in everyday life” (p. 86).

Khasnabish (2004) has studied what he calls “moments of coincidence” among the Zapatista movement. He defines such “moments” thus: “a point of intersection between diverse social movements, each with their own agenda, yet each finding themselves somehow galvanized and united, albeit loosely, at a particular moment in time and by a particular event or series of events. It is vital that this ‘moment’ not be seen in a purely instrumental or strategic light, rather, it represents a moment of culmination and perhaps even revelation for those involved” (p. 257).

Chuang (2004) has studied recent Taiwanese social movements. She concludes that scholars have focused too much on the “social” part of the term and not enough on the “movement” aspect. Describing her study, she writes, “I have sought to explore a state of coordination in social movement webs, seeking to understand various directions of movements/struggles, to feel their intensity/stress/torque, and to measure the magnitude/breadth

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of their organization. All of these understandings, I believe, will lead to commentaries on, if not a
general answer to, questions of the organization of social movements and of grassroots
imaginings” (p. 253). These words could just as well serve as a general description of what
ethnography, anthropology’s brainchild, has to offer the study of social movements. As
Osterweil (2006) put it, “rather than assume social movements are reactions to… macroeconomic
and dominant political processes… ethnographic studies make visible the ways in which
movements are the products of historically and geographically specific processes that, while
certainly constituted by economic and global processes, are also the result of explicit efforts at
building political, social, and religious project” (p. 251).

**Applied Anthropology and Social Movements**

There have been two articles specifically about social movements published in *Annual
Review of Anthropology* (Nicholson 1973, Edelman 2001). In neither of these articles will one
find a citation for an article from *Human Organization*, the journal of the Society for Applied
Anthropology (SfAA). This just seems to be further evidence that the research discoveries made
by applied anthropologists “seem to have little or no impact on the intellectual direction of
anthropology” (Baba 2000: 17; also see Kozaitis 2000:46-7; Shore and Wright 1996: 476; Baba
1994: 180-3; Ervin 2000: 6-7; Foster 2002: 173-174; Foster 1952: 5; Garfield 1984; Rounds
1982). Accounting for applied anthropology’s relationship with social movements, therefore,
must be done separately from “basic” anthropology. However, the founding of the SfAA
included members of other disciplines, including sociology (Ervin 2000:18-19), and sociology
has remained influential in applied anthropology (Olson 1990, fig 4a). We should therefore
expect to see the influence of both “basic” anthropology and sociology in applied anthropological
writings on social movements.
Van Willigen (1993:18-38) breaks the history of applied anthropology down into five periods: the Predisciplinary Stage (pre-1860), the Applied Ethnology Stage (1860-1930), the Federal Service Stage (1930-1945), the Role Extension, Value-Explicit Stage (1945-1970), and the Policy Research Stage (1970 to present). While the first three stages’ relationship to social movements would undoubtedly be an interesting historical review, I am confining my discussion in this paper to the last two stages.

To quickly recap the intellectual environment in anthropology in the early twentieth century, Boasian concern with preserving “disappearing” cultures was waning by the mid 1920s. Structural-functionalism, which viewed societies as akin to biological organisms in which the different social institutions all had a function to play in providing for individual needs, was on the rise. In addition, there was also the acculturation approach, which starts by constructing a “baseline culture” and documents foreign intrusions that subsequently modified it. These two approaches were dominant from the 1930s to the 1960s in applied anthropology, overlapping the Federal Service Stage and the Role Extension, Value-Explicit Stage (Ervin 2000: 15-16), and their influence can be seen in most of the articles on social movements during this period.

During the Role Extension, Value-Explicit Stage, van Willigen outlines three changes in applied anthropology (1993: 28-29). First, new opportunities opened up for applied anthropologists to play roles they had not traditionally played. Second, applied anthropologists became more reflexive about their own values. The third change, which is perhaps the logical outcome of the first two, is that applied anthropology was increasingly politically active; “[i]nstead of merely providing information and the occasional recommendation, anthropologists began to take responsibility for problem solution. Anthropologists were no longer merely monitors and predictors of change but came to actually work as agents of change” (p. 28).

However, there was still a “widely held premise that [‘underdeveloped’] peoples are all in need of guidance, health care, technological development, and cultural change” (Thompson 2002: 11) that
was particularly evident in much of the writing during the Role Extension, Value-Explicit Stage (McDonald 2002: 248).

Streib (1952) examined an attempt to unionize a Navaho group at a gas company. He saw it as “an interesting example—in the sense of an ‘experiment’—of what can be expected when the non-technological aspects of Western industrial development are introduced into a strikingly different cultural milieu” (p. 23). Despite this article being written during the Role Extension, Value-Explicit Stage, Streib’s does not explicitly state any values besides a commitment to science; keeping with his analogy of an experiment, he talks of “innovator factors” and “recipient factors” as being like independent and dependent variables. His implicit values seem to be anti-union, however; the union leader is portrayed as ill-informed and culturally insensitive (p. 28). He finds it “quite understandable that Navahos would have little feeling of ‘working class solidarity,’ for they are essentially a pastoral-agricultural folk” (p. 30), although the “more acculturated Navaho has tended to break away from the familistic individualism of the more traditional tribesmen and has begun to follow the patterns and norms of white individualism” (p. 30). Structural-functionalism and acculturation can both be seen these statements.

In contrast to Streib, Wax (1953) makes her values chillingly explicit: “One of the many complex responsibilities forced upon the citizens of powerful nations subscribing to democratic principles is that of developing in conquered or dependent groups or nations an understanding and appreciation of democratic principles” (p. 11). In describing the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, she described the War Relocation Authority as “subscribed to the highest liberal, democratic, and humanitarian ideals” (p. 11). Not surprisingly, her view of the Japanese-American social movement was less than positive: “Blocked from political responsibility and power through formal channels, the evacuees, when they wished to influence the administration, adopted less formal means which invariably inconvenienced and embarrassed
the administration” (p. 12). The participants themselves were referred to as “hotheads” (p. 17), “young toughs” (p. 18), and “fanatics” (p. 21). She even says without a hint of irony that a crowd of protesters had caused administrators to be “[v]irtually imprisoned in the administration building” (p. 18). Her view of social movements seems little different from the Classical Theorists: “If the members of a representative body passively follow the suggestions of the leaders and make no effort to express their individual points of view, or if, in the classic and not always accurate picture of the ‘revolutionary mob,’ they are easily led to excesses which they would not commit as individuals, they incline towards authoritarian behavior” (p. 14).

Halpern (1961) wrote an article comparing attitudes towards cultural change in Laos and Serbia during this period, touching on social movements though not explicitly identifying them as such. Elements of the structural-functionalist and acculturation approaches are evident in his work. This theoretical commitment can be seen in how he begins by documenting the political incursions into their societies (p. 11-12), and then identifies several factors affecting the attitudes towards change in the two cultures: “the peculiar historical factors of the origin of the state, the relationships among national church, government and local population, the villager’s view of his own history and that of his country, and his conceptual relationship with the outside world” (p. 12). Structural-functionalism’s influence can be seen in the question he leaves open for the reader to consider: “Is it possible that certain types of structural relationships, such as that between peasant and the national state may, from the functional point of view, be considered most desirable…?” (p. 14). He suggests that “there may exist an optimum degree of peasant participation in order for a government to function as a modern national state….A highly individualistic acceptance of innovation in Serbia is evidently just as undesirable as a completely passive attitude toward the state in Laos” (p. 13), revealing his faith in development.

Jamieson (1961-62) writes about Native Americans within the trade union movement in British Columbia, also during the Role Extension, Value-Explicit Stage. Similar theoretical and
value commitments are found in his writing: “Indians…show much diversity in their acculturation, integration, and commitment to the industrial system…” (p. 220); “cultural barriers tend to create a self-perpetuating ‘vicious circle’ in human relations between native Indians and white employers that prevents a successful adjustment to the emerging industrial system” (p. 220); “More important for the Indians in the attainment of equality in this limited area [of equal participation and benefit from unions] is the fact that it has not had to be at the price of losing their sense of pride and identity as a distinct ethnic and cultural minority” (p. 225).

Ames (1963) discusses Buddhist revitalization movements in Ceylon. Like other applied anthropologists of this time period, he is influenced by acculturation, structural-functionalism, and faith in development. He first traces the introduction of Buddhism to Ceylon, then noting that “the Sinhalese have managed to maintain a continuity of religious tradition until the present time” (p. 45). He also views Buddhism and “magical-animism” as each “perform[ing] the special functions of worship and therapy respectively” (p. 46). One of the conclusions he draws is that “Revitalization movements… function like socialization mechanisms in that they facilitate the individual’s learning of and adjustment to a new way of life. Doctrinal changes illustrate the cognitive process of attempting to interpret disturbing social changes in a more meaningful way” (p. 53).

Smith (1963), in his study of a small American town, describes the “organization and techniques of an ascendant elite to superimpose reforms on a sedate but growing community” (p. 152). He describes the “indigenous element” with the Durkheimian term “organic solidarity” (p. 152). His analysis indicates that “self-government and self-determination are not synonymous, because insiders dominate under a façade of popular approval” (p. 154). He describes a few political tricks used by the new elite and chastises them for failing to “work for genuine consent rather than assent for adoptions and reforms” (p. 158, emphases in original).
The Policy Research Stage is characterized by applied anthropologists filling legally-mandated policy research roles and a shrinking academic job market, thus closing off opportunities to oscillate between applied and traditional roles that applied anthropologists of earlier periods enjoyed (van Willigen 1993: 33). A side effect of this development is that “[f]rom the early 1970s to the present, much of applied and practicing anthropology grew independently of theoretical or basic anthropology” (Ervin 2000: 7). This was furthered by the theoretical developments of “basic” anthropology developed between the 1950s through the 1970s having little practical application for applied and practicing anthropologists (p. 7), and the postmodernism of the 1980s being even less useful to applied anthropologists (Angrosino 2000: 67). Writings by applied anthropologists on social movements from the 1970s to the 1990s are characterized by borrowing from sociology with modifications.

James and Hessler (1970) analyze the student movement. They summarize the state of social movement theory at the time as follows: “Theories which have attempted to explain the myriad forms of group protest appear to derive basically from either the frustration / aggression approach, the structural / functional conduciveness / strain approach, or combinations of these” (p. 82). They accept a combination of these theories, and look at values, frustrations, and outlets as their variables. With the help of their Introduction to Personality and Social Roles class, they designed a survey intended to measure these three variables, and used a randomly selected sample of 700 students on the campus to take the survey. They found that “the mythos of student power is a widespread belief that cuts across the traditional barriers of conservatism and radicalism, and that the ethos of demonstration and confrontation is at least tacitly accepted by close to the majority of students” (p. 91).

Luebke (1981), writing during the Policy Research Stage, draws upon the Resource Mobilization (RM) perspective in his article on an anti-expressway movement. He modifies RM theory slightly, however: “Defining resource mobilization as the bringing together of previously
unapplied human energy and skills…, this paper suggests that the ability of a movement organization to inspire others to action is an important psychological resource. Such resources have been ignored by the resource mobilization model in favor of an economistic emphasis on costs and benefits” (p. 256). His methods included observation, interviews, and content analysis of publications (p. 256-7).

Fisher (1994) looked at Kayapó environmental movements and finds that they “are best understood as a continuation of long-term attempts by the Kayapó to influence Brazilian institutions and to serve their own interests” (p. 220). Furthermore, “[t]he present-day Kayapó’s ability to either disrupt or, through threat of disruption, create space for negotiations can be seen to be the key to their success” (p. 221). Not surprisingly, given these Political Process theoretical leanings, he cites Doug McAdam as one of his references.

Hopkins and Mehanna (2000) studied the barriers to environmental movements in Egypt. There are two main ones, they contend: political repression and the “various frames available to Egyptians seeking to attribute meaning to the environmental and social issues…in which intentions to act can be formulated” (p. 251). They found three frames available: the good prince frame (“rulers are just and caring”), the ignorant citizen frame (“many individuals are careless or malicious in their individual behavior”), and the egocentric citizen frame (“cooperation is difficult because of the egocentrism of others”) (p. 251). These two barriers they identify suggest both political process and framing influences.

Hackenberg (2000) draws a parallel between the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the WTO protests, noting three particular similarities. First, the IWW used the railroad network to recruit members nationwide, and the WTO protesters did the same with the Internet. Second, both the IWW and WTO protesters used the media to their advantage. Third, there was an emphasis on coalition-building in both. Hackenberg draw his theory and values from a Marxist perspective, praising worker resistance to global capitalism.
Moberg (2001) challenges the dichotomy between “mainstream,” white, middle-class environmental movements and “justice-oriented,” poor, minority environmental movements, arguing that the dichotomy is “temporal and context-specific, rather than a lasting attribute of social movements” (p. 166). He shows how Mobile Bay Watch originated with about a dozen while, middle-class activists, but later spread to poor minority communities affected by the pollution of local factories, causing the group to alter the way it frames its issues. Moberg draws upon RM theory (p. 167), arguing that the group “seized upon environmental justice as a new resource” (p. 166). Noting that Mobile Bay Watch “has made no public demands for environmental justice or outreach to the black community since its defeat on the phenol issue” (p. 174), he sees this as evidence of how “efforts to perpetuate organizations often take precedence over their original objectives…and…grievances themselves are ‘manufactured’ to correspond to the funds and other resources available to the group” (p. 167).

Whiteford (2002) discusses the changes in Colombia that occurred since his last visit to do fieldwork there. He describes conflicts between several groups with “roots in the very uneven distribution of resources—principally land” (p. 108). “Caught between the military, the narcotraffickers, the guerillas, the criminal groups, and the paramilitary vigilantes are several million Colombians who, on a daily basis, try to create islands of normalcy in seas of chaos” (p. 109). He draws theoretical inspiration from Clifford Geertz and Pierre Bourdieu (p. 110-1); this conflict “is carried out by groups who benefit more by maintaining a somewhat tenuous status quo than by actually changing the rules of engagement” (p. 111), thereby “unconsciously reproducing] the existing structure on a continuing basis” (p. 111).

Simonelli and Earle (2003) show some of the ethical issues involved with working with a social movement. In their work with the Zapatistas in Chiapas, they discovered that there was a “shadow government… [with] a foreign policy and an embassy to handle the official clearances to boot” (p. 78). This shadow government asked of them all the documentation that a “real”
government would, and had many concerns with their research. Their answer to the shadow government’s concerns as well as their own ethical concerns was “ethnographic dialogue, an in-depth process by which knowledge can become a source of power for all involved” (p. 86). This consisted of “the formal sharing of our work and words through presentation and writing” (p. 87).

Hackenberg and Hackenberg (2004) provide a thought-provoking essay on the direction of applied anthropology in the 21st century. They describe the forces of globalization as making the subject of anthropological inquiry chaotic; “we are enjoined to address research that is multitemporal, multisite, multilevel, and multivocal, while at work in the world of the ethnoscape. And we must do it within reduced budgets, higher administrative costs, shorter time frames, and a thicket of regulations” (p. 387). Civil society, “an omnibus term applied to a wide range of nonpublic forms of social organization” (p. 391), is said to be one of three spheres of democratic societies, along with state and market. The local elements of civil society can be divided into social movements and NGOs. They note that the writing on this subject is divided into North and South, where Northern civil society consists largely of international NGOs that seek to change Southern societies, while Southern civil society often consists of social movements opposed to Northern NGOs and the Southern governments they manipulate (p. 391). Escobar and Alvarez are said to be “most often cited” (p. 392). The Internet’s ability to aid social movements is said to be exemplified by Chiapas and the Zapatista uprising. They see success in Chiapas in terms of the movement’s continued existence and dialogue, but failure in that it has so far produced mainly “symbolic concessions” (p. 392) rather than more concrete results.

Discussion/Conclusions

Sociocultural theories are mostly generated in university settings, where the “[t]opics are selected by individuals in universities, approved by academic peers, supported by granting agencies and journals, and reinforced by professional academic societies such as the American
Anthropological Association” (Ervin 2000: 3). These individuals, agencies, journals, and academic societies exist within larger political, cultural, and historical contexts that influence their practice. Social movement theory originally developed as a response to the labor movement in Europe. Theories of social movements differed between Europe and the United States because of their differing orientations to the idea of social progress. Changes in methodology, technology, funding, politics, migration, and a variety of other factors help explain many of the later transitions in social movement theory.

The history of the social movements literature in sociology suggests a number of issues to be addressed: the emotions triggered by movement participation, the individual motivations for participation, the resources available to the movement, the political opportunities available to (and political obstacles in the way of) movements and their recognition as such by movement participants, whether the focus of movements is on culture and civil society or political and economic reform, and how movements frame their grievances. Yet the way these questions are framed often rely on problematic assumptions about culture that sociology has only been starting to recognize and begin to come to terms with in the last decade or so (Polletta 1997).

Culture has been anthropology’s most widely recognized contribution to social scientific discourse, and thus it is not surprising that the anthropological approach to social movements is defined by the “assumption…that social movements are at base contests over cultural meaning frequently merging public (collective identities and discourses) and private (subjectivities, experience, and self-understanding) arenas of social life” (Gustafson 2003). Or, put another way, there are “two axioms of ‘fundamentalist’ cultural anthropology: 1) Culture always is a vital component of political encounters; and 2) it is important to examine major social, economic, and political events from the perspective of the cultural logic of the participants—from the emic viewpoint” (Davis 2002). This view stands in contrast to approaches such as rational-choice and
resource mobilization (Gustafson 2003). This is not to say that other social movement theorists have completely neglected culture, as Polletta points out:

…recent treatments of the cultural dimensions of protest have begun to reconceptualize the very terms of movement theorizing. Political “opportunities” should be expanded to include the contradictions and gaps in dominant ideologies which trigger opposition, they argue; movement “resources” made to encompass compelling narratives and traditions of protest. And movement “success” should be judged not only by the number of officials elected, legislation passed, and policies changed, but by the transformations wrought in culture and consciousness, in collective self-definitions, and in the meanings that shape everyday life. [Polletta 1997: 431]

However, other disciplines often employ problematic views of culture. Polletta (1997) also shows that considerations of culture in sociology were made with the assumption of a dichotomy between culture and structure, strategy, and politics, resulting in culture being seen as apart from, rather than a part of, other aspects of social movement dynamics. The field of cultural studies has mistakenly “remained heavily oriented toward the textual… and thus has failed to address the political stakes for concrete social actors in struggles over meanings and representations” (Assies & Salman 2000: 290).

While anthropology seems to have more or less consistently viewed social movements as contests over cultural meaning, how these meaning-contestations have been characterized has changed over time. The assumption of an authentic cultural past and structural-functionalist assumptions seemed to characterize the majority of what anthropologists had to say about social movements during the first half of the twentieth century. Because of this, the cultural contestations of movements were often seen as a deviation from “authentic” culture or as an attempt to revive or preserve an “authentic” culture under attack from colonialism. From the
1960s onward, the hegemony of structural-functionalism began to wane, leaving a plethora of theoretical approaches to culture that began to recognize agency within cultural systems. While this variety of approaches still remains, the cultural politics approach is beginning to be cited more frequently.

Applied anthropology up to that point showed similar theoretical inclinations, but with an added faith in development that often led them to view social movements as impediments to its realization. Afterwards, applied anthropology grew more distant from “basic” anthropology. Articles about social movements in Human Organization from the 1970s onward typically drew upon theories from sociology, such as classical theory (James and Hessler 1970), resource mobilization (Luebke 1981, Moberg 2001), political process (Fisher 1994), and framing (Hopkins and Mehanna 2000). The use of these theories was often accompanied by an attempt to make it take cultural contexts into account more. And, like “basic” anthropology, Escobar’s cultural politics approach to social movements has come to be frequently cited in more recent years (Hackenberg and Hackenberg 2004: 392).

Cultural Politics theory “involves an expanded concept of politics and a decentered view of power and politics that transgresses reductionist conceptions of politics, political culture, citizenship and democracy that prevail in mainstream political science and in some versions of resource mobilization and political process approaches to social movements” (Assies & Salman 2000: 291). It contends that “political phenomena are best analyzed through a combined focus on their origins and emergence and on the diverse pieces of representation and meaning out of which they are made. This dual focus, in turn, enables us to understand how political actors form, the places where politics occurs, and the resignifications that lie at the heart of political conflict” (Rubin 2004: 107). Sociologists like Polletta (1997) seem to have arrived at the same sort of conclusions independently. The cultural politics approach is finding use in both academic and applied anthropology, and for good reason, I contend.
It is rather common among social scientists of different theoretical orientations and disciplines to engage in “theory bashing” (Thomas 1999: 262; Lofland 1996: 177-9, 372-3). My intent in doing this literature review is not to add to these conflicts, but instead to make a case for anthropology to become more engaged with social movements. Ethnographic studies offer insights into the cultural processes of social movements that are not as easily captured by surveys and newspaper archives alone. Examining such processes reveals how structures and strategies are a product of these cultural processes rather than standing apart from them. Moreover, anthropology’s historical involvement with studying both Western and non-Western societies and their social movements may fruitfully problematize the cultural assumptions of Western concepts, such as politics (e.g. Alvarez et al 1998: 8), democracy (e.g. Paley 2002), and elections (e.g. McLeod 1991, 1999; Smith 1963; Ala'ilima and Ala'ilima 1966; Wiebe 1969). Cultural Politics is an approach to studying conflicts of meaning between social entities that does not rely on assumptions of “authentic” cultures in a structural-functionalist sense, as earlier anthropological approaches did. If social movements are sites of meaning-creation, as the Cultural Politics approach contends, then the study of such sites should be considered important for anthropologists to be engaged in. By being engaged with politically relevant issues like SMOs, anthropology, the SMOs it studies, can become an “emergent [center] of innovation and alternative worlds” (Escobar 1998: 33), creating new understandings of how SMOs operate and basing applied projects upon these understandings.
Chapter 2: Ethnographic Study of a Social Movement: A Few Words on Methodology

“We should not ask what the words mean, as though they contained secrets, but what they are doing, as though they embodied actions.” –Donoghue (1990: 54).

“[Scientific inquiry] begins as a story about a Possible World--a story which we invent and criticize and modify as we go along, so that it ends by being, as nearly as we can make it, a story about real life.” –Medawar (1982: 110-1)

Introduction

Viewing social movements from a cultural politics framework means recognizing that politics occurs in a cultural context, and that “political phenomena are best analyzed through a combined focus on their origins and emergence and on the diverse pieces of representation and meaning out of which they are made. This dual focus, in turn, enables us to understand how political actors form, the places where politics occurs, and the resignifications that lie at the heart of political conflict” (Rubin 2004: 107). We should “recognize the importance of a generative conception of culture, in which culture is not only the product of but also the precondition for meaningful action, thought, and expression” (Bashkow 2004: 452). Views of social movements that neglect culture, use culture only as a fallback explanation when other factors fail, or that do not do justice to the dynamic and globally-interconnected nature of culture are insufficient. Since the “stable or ‘settled’ character of social structures depends on an active reproduction of meanings…that are always contestable” (Polletta 1997: 434), our definition of culture must be
able to take into account the structural forces that push meanings toward conformity, and the countervailing pull factors from groups and individuals that contest this active reproduction of meanings. In this chapter, I first attempt a conceptualization of culture with which the variety of push and pull factors shaping it may be explored, and then describe a corresponding methodological approach for its study. While the approach I describe is geared towards my study of DFA, I also attempt to show a more generalized framework that can be used to study the cultural politics of other SMOs.

**Defining Culture**

A definition of culture is a necessity for studying social movements (Earl 2000: 7-8). Bodley (1994) has divided anthropological definitions of culture into eight categories: topical, historical, behavioral, normative, functional, mental, structural, and symbolic. While hundreds of definitions of culture exist (Kroeber and Kluckholn 1952), most anthropologists would agree that culture is something learned, as opposed to something innate within our biology. Biology may play a role in shaping what will be learned in that “[t]here is now massive evidence that children build a sophisticated conceptual repertoire on the basis of domain-specific principles…That is, the way they use similarity between objects to build categories and the way they notice certain recurrent features rather than others differ according to the ontological domains objects belong to” (Boyer 1999: 207). These domain-specific principles do not shackle our minds, but rather are loose constraints that give rise to the incredible variation of human experience.

The sense of self that a human possesses arises out of interacting with one’s physical and social environment, as well as through one’s psychological processes of self-reflection. Some have theorized that the self may be constructed to make coherence of the past (Crites 1986: 171) or “to appear as a socially competent person” (Komulainen 1998). Battaglia (1999) takes the position that “the ‘self’ is a representational economy: a reification continually defeated by
mutual entanglements with other subjects’ histories, experiences, self-representations… Selfhood by this figuration is a chronically unstable project brought situationally – not invariably – to some form of order, shaped to some purpose, consciously or otherwise, in indeterminate social practice” (p. 116). For the individual, “experiences come to one not in discrete instances but as part of an ongoing life… Experience gains its density and elusiveness precisely through a continuous contextualizing or meshing of part to changing whole; the relating of itself to itself” (Kirby 1991: 16). New experiences may interact with existing selves in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to): being integrated into or resisted by a “self-laminated” identity (Bataggia 1999: 136), allowing different discourses of identity to coexist “as part of a lived-with tension that is tolerated rather than resolved” (Schiff 2002: 280), and allowing one’s beliefs and practices to “cyclically [regenerate] a condition of internalized ‘believing’” (Kirsch 2004: 700).

How is it that individuals with unique experiences come to have a sufficient degree of ideational and behavioral sameness for us to speak of culture? One way that individuals may achieve sameness is through conventions. A convention “arises when all parties have a common interest in there being a rule to insure coordination, none has a conflicting interest, and none will deviate lest the desired coordination is lost” (Douglas 1986: 46). However, “[f]or a convention to turn into a legitimate social institution it needs a parallel cognitive convention to sustain it” (p. 46). Conventions “which everyone would like to see maintained, have little chance of survival unless they can be grounded in reason and nature” (p. 57). Douglas contends that: “[p]ast experience is encapsulated in an institution's rules so that it acts as a guide to what to expect from the future. The more fully the institutions encode expectations, the more they put uncertainty under control, with the further effect that behavior tends to conform to the institutional matrix: if this degree of coordination is achieved, disorder and confusion disappear” (1986: 48). A successful institution is able to create sameness by creating the “[effect] of turning individual thought over to an automatic pilot” (Douglas 1986: 63), though perhaps this is too strong of a
metaphor. Sameness is aided by “our families and cultures encourag[ing] us to remember certain
types of experiences by providing us with the cognitive and linguistic resources necessary to
capture and encode them, [while] many other of our experiences do not receive such memory-
enhancing resources” (Hollan 2000: 541). The abundance and dearth of cognitive and linguistic
resources have been respectively called “hypercognition” and “hypocognition” (p. 541).
However, “[b]ecause no two individuals internalize instituted cultural models in the same way,
and because their subjectivity, consciousness, and self-states therefore vary, the reproduction of
culture necessarily must be a highly dynamic process subject to constant, even if subtle,
modification and change” (Hollan 2000: 543). We may say then that unstable selves may be
stabilized and bestowed sameness through institutions that provide particular cognitive and
linguistic resources which have been historically produced, though the degree of sameness is
never absolute because of the uniqueness of individual experience.

Power and culture are interrelated. Yelvington notes that “if culture is defined by
routinized practices and a system of symbols and meaning, then the exercise of power is ‘felt’ by
and through its effects on practices, symbols, and meaning” (1995: 19). His definition of power
consists of five interrelated aspects; power is relational (in that power increases in one entity
decrease the power of another), structural (in that predefined power relationships are more easily
perpetuated), definitional (in that those in power can create rules and consequences), historical (in
that unique combinations of past circumstances create power relationships in the present), as well
as cultural (p. 15-20). Thus, the routinized practices and systems of symbols and meanings in
which individuals exist are implicated in these various power relations. By looking historically at
exercises of power, culture in the present can be explained; for example, the Constitution and Bill
of Rights of the United States were documents created by historical exercises of power by social
entities (individuals, colonies, etc.), which structure power relations in the United States to this
day, while imperfect consensus exists as to their proper interpretation. Neo-Boasian theory
distinguishes between *culture areas* and *culture centers*: “Culture areas were conceived not as individual cultures but as aggregations of cultures…with the emphasis on past, rather than present, zones of cultural interaction” (Bashkow 2004: 446). Cultures in this view should be seen as “overlapping zones of trait distribution implying sequences of development and the radiation of influence from historically dominant centers” (p. 446).

Culture, therefore, may be defined as follows: A shared system of ideas and related practices, historically developed through power-mediated social interactions, the learning of which is minimally constrained by biology but mostly acquired through interaction with one’s physical, social, and psychological environment, which serve to pattern ongoing thoughts and behaviors, thereby adding some degree of stability and coherence to one’s sense of self and social interactions.

**Studying Culture: Problems of Heterogeneity and Scale**

When studying cultures, there are two interrelated problems that an ethnographer must contend with. First, one must deal with the problem of heterogeneity. How does one use culture as a unit of analysis when heterogeneity exists within this unit of analysis? Second, one must deal with the problem of scale. Ethnographers of the past may have conceptualized of cultures as more-or-less self-contained systems, but this view is now clearly untenable in the face of globalization. How can we make culture as a unit of analysis work with the different levels of cultural analysis possible?

Angrosino writes: “We often use the term *culture* as if it were an objective entity with clearly demarcated features that we can observe in ‘the field.’ But in fact the abstraction that we call *culture* is a generalization extrapolated from the specific material products, interactions, or ideations that we can observe and measure… We do not, in fact, observe *culture*; we observe phenomena that we choose to group together and *label culture*” (2000: 68, emphases in original).
He distinguishes between a substantivist epistemology that approaches culture as something observable and measurable, and an interactivist epistemology that approaches culture as something adaptive to a particular context (p. 68-9). While the substantivist epistemology offers “conceptual neatness” (p. 72), he cautions that it may also lead to reification of differences that overlooks an individual’s ability to adapt to new situations (p. 72-3). Brumann (1999) defines culture as “the prolonged copresence of a set of certain individual items” (p. S6), but avoids the pitfall of reification by treating culture as a heuristic device that can illuminate the correlation of traits in a way that aims to convince but can never ultimately be regarded as the absolute truth. He points out that that in addition to the possibility of portraying culture in the essentialized and reified manner that Angrosino warned against, there is also a danger of portraying it as being so heterogeneous that there are no patterns to be found at all. Clearly, neither one is a desirable outcome.

Since cultures are never entirely homogenous or heterogeneous, and its manifestation varies by person, setting, and time, we must devise a way to capture these patterns.

Complementing Brumann’s discussion of operationalizing culture quite nicely (1999: S8), Caulkins and Hyatt (1999) break down the varying coherence of cultural domains as follows:

I. Coherent domains, which show a high degree of consensus or homogeneity of knowledge, evaluation, or practice on the part of a population;

II. Noncoherent domains, which exhibit low consensus on the part of a population;

A. Weak agreement domains, which fail to achieve a consensus threshold;

B. Turbulent domains, in which knowledge or evaluations are haphazard;

C. Multicentric domains, in which there are multiple centers of agreement;
1. Subcultural domains, in which there are two or more centers of agreement that are different but not oppositional; and

2. Contested domains, in which some individuals take a perspective opposite to that expressed by others in the same population. [p. 7]

Cultural traits may be measured quantitatively to aid this classification if so desired. Brumann suggests cluster analysis as being suited to this task, and that comparing cultural traits at different times can account for the temporal dimension (1999: S8). Caulkins and Hyatt (1999: 9) advocate a more complex method of quantifying cultural coherence, whereby a list of salient elements within a cultural domain is first generated, informants are asked to rank the elements, and factor analysis is done on the rankings. As an example, they mention an anthropologist who studied the cultural coherence of a particular SMO by getting activists to rank organizations and agencies they thought would be most helpful and least helpful, and found a high degree of consistency between individuals (p. 11). Garro (1986) provides yet another example of statistically analyzing cultural coherence, using a complex procedure involving “term-frame substitution tasks,” interinformant similarity matrices, and multidimensional scaling. If these sorts of quantitative approaches are to be attempted, they should only be done so after more traditional ethnographic study, as “activists may not discuss [implicit meanings] readily in an interview” (Lichterman 1998: 407), and quantitative studies are sometimes used strategically by social movements (Paley 2001).

There are different levels at which the analysis of cultural domains can be done. Hakken has outlined six levels at which cyberspace ethnography can function, which requires little imagination to extend to all ethnographic inquiries:

1. The basic characteristics of the entities carrying (proto-)cyberspace;

2. The self-identities formed by such entities;
3. The micro, close social relations these entities construct (e.g., with intimates and friends);
4. Their meso, intermediate social relations (e.g., community, regional, and civic relations);
5. Their macro-social relations (e.g., national and transnational);
6. The political economic structures which cyberspace entities produce and reproduce and by which they are constrained. [Hakken 1999: 7]

At the first level, we might include Boyer’s (1999) discovery of domain-specific principles, since this tells about the basic characteristics of the culture-bearing entities (that is, human beings, though it may be argued that material objects have culture-bearing properties as well). Many studies in biology, psychology, linguistics, and physical anthropology could go in this category. The second level explores the self-identities (representational economies) of human beings; autoethnography (Ellis and Bochner 2000) and in-depth life history interviews (e.g. Greenspan 1998) are ways of exploring this. The third and fourth levels are where ethnography fits most comfortably. At the fifth and sixth levels, traditional ethnographic inquiry becomes difficult (Edwards 1994: 345), which is why ethnographers have often relied on methods from other social sciences to deal with culture at a national and global level (Kaplan and Manners 1971: 31-3).

These different levels are intimately linked; indeed, they are the building blocks which form the next level. The challenge for social scientists is to adequately acknowledge the existence of these multiple levels while focusing on the level of their specialty. It is generally impractical to use the methods appropriate to one level en masse to account for another level; we cannot expect an entire community to be given in-depth life history interviews (e.g. Greenspan [1998: xv] describes spending 20 years interviewing the same few people), nor can we expect to do traditional ethnographies of every community in a nation. However, the existence of such
limitations does not mean we must surrender to epistemological despair. It is helpful to consider the words of William James at this point:

Take, for instance, yonder object on the wall. You and I consider it to be a "clock," although no one of us has seen the hidden works that make it one. We let our notion pass for true without attempting to verify. If truths mean verification-process essentially, ought we then to call such unverified truths as this abortive? No, for they form the overwhelmingly large number of the truths we live by. Indirect as well as direct verifications pass muster. Where circumstantial evidence is sufficient, we can go without eye-witnessing. Just as we here assume Japan to exist without ever having been there, because it works to do so, everything we know conspiring with the belief, and nothing interfering, so we assume that thing to be a clock. We use it as a clock, regulating the length of our lecture by it. The verification of the assumption here means its leading to no frustration or contradiction. Verifi-ability of wheels and weights and pendulum is as good as verification. For one truth-process completed there are a million in our lives that function in this state of nascency. They turn us towards direct verification; lead us into the surroundings of the objects they envisage; and then, if everything runs on harmoniously, we are so sure that verification is possible that we omit it, and are usually justified by all that happens.

Truth lives, in fact, for the most part on a credit system. Our thoughts and beliefs "pass," so long as nothing challenges them, just as bank-notes pass so long as nobody refuses them. But this all points to direct face-to-face verifications somewhere, without which the fabric of truth collapses like a financial system with no cash-basis whatever. You accept my verification of one thing, I yours of another. We trade on each other's truth. But beliefs verified
concretely by somebody are the posts of the whole superstructure. [James 1907, 
quoted in Archie and Archie 2004, Ch. 30]

A full exploration of the implications of this concept of truth-as-credit system for the social 
sciences is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, there is a salient point that I would 
like to draw out here: we may conditionally accept the conclusions of studies done at the different 
levels of sociocultural analysis as long as it leads to “no frustration or contradiction” at the level 
of our own analysis. As a corollary, when theories of culture at different levels are contradicted 
by findings at our level of choice, then this discrepancy begs explanation, and, quite likely, a 
modification or discarding of one or more of the conflicting theories.

To connect the six levels of analysis, an ethnographer has several options. At the level of 
basic characteristics, this is perhaps best dealt with by simply having some familiarity with the 
relevant literature, unless one’s research topic offers a compelling reason to be more engaged 
with a biocultural approach. Connecting the self-identity level to the micro and meso level can 
be done by taking into account, as previously mentioned, the varying coherence of cultural 
domains. For a more precise accounting of this level, some autoethnography or life history may 
be done, although one must be careful how time is budgeted on such pursuits, lest they detract 
from research at the micro and meso levels. For ethnographic research to connect the micro and 
meso levels to macro and political economic levels, there are two options. First, the “most 
common mode preserves the intensely-focused-upon single site of ethnographic observation and 
participation while developing by other means and methods the world system context. Examples 
of these other methods include working in archives and adapting the work of macrotheorists… as 
a mode of contextualizing portraiture” (Marcus 1995: 96). Second, the “other, much less 
common mode of ethnographic research self-consciously embedded in a world system… moves 
out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to
examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space” (p. 96). This second approach is called multi-sited ethnography.

Multi-sited ethnography can be pursued through several techniques: *follow the people, follow the thing, follow the metaphor, follow the plot/story/allegory, follow the life/biography,* and *follow the conflict* (Marcus 1995: 105-10). Under these techniques, Marcus identifies a number of specific pathways to extending the field site, including: migration, diasporas, gifts, money, commodities, works of art, intellectual property, print and visual media, narratives, life histories, and legal battles. Of course, not all of these pathways can be pursued in a multi-sited ethnography, and of those that are, not all can be pursued with the same intensity.

In this study of DFA, I use print and visual media, especially the Internet, and measures of participation such as finances as being primary research foci. Not all of the settings where these cultural domains are enacted can be a site of multi-sited ethnography in the sense of “being there” and doing participant observation, but other methodologies can capture some degree of the cultural context within these domains. While using such methods lacks the “thick description” that comes from “being there,” they are necessary to capture a larger sociocultural context beyond all the “there’s” where we can “be.” The “thick” and “thin” methods complement each other when used to capture “the effect of simultaneity”: “One wants to demonstrate how action in connected contexts occurring at the same time has implications for and direct effects on each other” (Marcus 1998: 52). Traditional (and virtual) ethnography in which “being there” is an element will work in conjunction with other methods to show how money and media relate to particular local (and virtual) contexts.

**A Methodology for the Study of DFA**

As Bird (2003) notes, “[r]ather than worry about relatively insignificant issues like time spent in the field… we should be thinking more carefully about matching suitable methods to the
subtle questions we are trying to ask” (p. 8). This, since my main question is what role the Internet plays for DFA and what this tells us about Internet-using SMOs more generally, questions about social movements that researchers have traditionally dealt with provided a solid starting point. Lofland (1996) gives seven main questions to which social movement researchers have devoted considerable attention: 1. What are SMO beliefs? 2. How are SMOs organized? 3. What are causes of SMOs? 4. Why do people join SMOs? 5. What are SMO strategies? 6. What are reactions to SMOs? 7. What are effects of SMOs? (p. 47-51). Finding answers to these general questions as a first step has provided a more holistic view of the sociocultural conditions present within DFA. The goal was to answer these questions, move on to more specific ones about Internet use, and finally generalize from these findings to address my main question. To accomplish this, I used traditional ethnographic methods (participant observation and interviews), virtual ethnography, archival research, and analysis of existing quantitative datasets. Specifically, I have attended many DFA meeting in two different areas (D.C. and Tampa), periodically read DFA’s online communications across several forms of social software, used Lexis-Nexis and Google News to collect newspaper articles on DFA, and went to the Federal Election Commission website and other sites too numerous to list to gather quantitative data on DFA. I also reviewed blog entries, both DFA blogs such as Blog for America and external blogs that write about DFA, on a periodic basis and in response to specific research questions. I also conducted 19 interviews, 5 in person and 14 through online methods. Since “political phenomena are best analyzed through a combined focus on their origins and emergence and on the diverse pieces of representation and meaning out of which they are made” (Rubin 2004: 107), I used these methods to construct a brief historical account of DFA (Chapter 3) before attempting to answer Lofland’s seven basic questions about DFA (Chapters 4-10). In the following sections, I will address some salient issues raised by the use of these methods.
**Traditional Ethnography and Social Movements**

Before the nineteenth century, knowledge of other cultures came mainly through the second-hand reports of missionaries, merchants, and other travelers. Henry Schoolcraft, Franz Boas, Bronislaw Malinowski, and others helped develop participant observation as a methodological tool that overcame the ethnocentrism of “armchair anthropology” (Tierney 2002: 11-12). Participant observation is based on the idea that truth is both outside of oneself and inside of oneself, so that efforts to know a subject “require cycling back to the subject again, and again, to understand it. We have to learn it from the outside, then again from the inside” (Bruyn 2002). It is “especially suited for asking questions about everyday, often taken-for-granted meanings of activism,” writes Lichterman (1998: 402). For instance, while past scholarship on social movements has often assumed a very intentional creation and projection of meanings by movement leaders (Lichterman 1998: 402; Polletta 1997: 439), strategies tend to be formulated within a particular cultural context of negotiation among movement members that makes this assumed intentionality problematic. Lichterman (1998: 407-8) discovered through participant observation that the process of consensus-building was surprisingly different than his literature review had led him to expect, showing the value of this approach.

However, using participant observation may elicit resistance from the social movement, especially from those with more radical means and goals. This resistance may occur because “the group does not want to waste time, energy and resources on projects which cannot possibly benefit them, or may even harm them, and over which they have no control” (Bouchier 1986: 5). Movements may not want their claims and beliefs scrutinized by a “professional agnostic” (p. 5). Sociologists and “basic” anthropologists must negotiate these hurdles so that their study does no harm; applied anthropologists must do this and make an additional case for why their study will do some good. This should involve doing needs assessment (Ervin 2000: 63-72). There are several types of needs that may be identified: normative needs that outside experts identify, felt
needs that participants identify when asked, expressed needs that are demanded without prompting, and comparative needs that result from the inadequate distribution of goods and services between different groups (p. 64-65). Participant observation is a useful way of doing needs assessment because of its ability to capture the “native” viewpoint (p. 70).

The use of ethnographic methods inevitably raised the question of whether and how to compensate participants, which in itself can create ethical dilemmas. On the issue of individual compensation, I have another researcher’s example to refer to. A researcher asked DFA members to participate in his online survey on Blog For America, offering a $10 Wal-Mart gift card as a reward for participation. This offer could not be more inappropriate, as DFA considers Wal-Mart an example of extreme corporate greed, and even maintained a section called “Watching Wal-Mart” on Blog For America at one time. One member asked in response: “Got anything a little bit bluer than that?” (Charles*in*Montana 2005) Another said: “you might get this crew to fill it out for free, but offering Wal-Mart gift-certificates is a real bad plan, lol!” (puddleriver*whose*heart*is*in*Dublin 2005). Yet another suggested: “How about for each person that fills out the survey a $10 donation to DFA is made in their name?” (Demetrius 2005). These comments have shown me that offers of compensation must be done appropriately. In hindsight, I wish I had resources to make some sort of culturally-appropriate compensation for participating. For one thing, the number of responses I received to my online questionnaire proved to be less than expected; secondly, it is clearly desirable to recognize the time and effort put into research projects by participants (Martin 2007).

I have utilized a convenience sample (Schensul et al. 1999: 233) for the participant observation portion of my study, which can be problematic. One DFA organizer I have met with made it clear that he did not want me to study his particular group, while other DFA organizers seemed indifferent to my presence. I was, luckily, able to do needs assessments with other local DFA groups, and established better relations through “ethnographic dialogue, an in-depth process
by which knowledge can become a source of power for all involved” (Simonelli and Earle 2003: 86). One way by which this can be done is “the formal sharing of our work and words through presentation and writing” (p. 87). Upon completion of my qualifying exams, I shared a printed copy of them with the then-organizer of DFA-TB, as well as a copy of my M.A. thesis to give an example of my finished work. This approach was culturally appropriate to DFA, as members often do presentations and give handouts on various issues at their meetings. If this group organizer had also decided that he would rather I not study his particular group, I would have had to ethically respect this, as I did with the first organizer. My study could still be have been done by using the other methods I have mentioned, although my data would be weakened by this loss.

Once this hurdle had been overcome, rapport with the group was established through participant-observation at group meetings. Next, semistructured interviews were used to explore the questions raised by Lofland and various aspects of Internet use by DFA. “Semistructured interviews combine the flexibility of the unstructured, open-ended interview with the directionality and agenda of the survey instrument to produce focused, qualitative, textual data” (Schensul et al. 1999: 149).

**Virtual Ethnography and Social Movements**

Before World War I, “with peripatetic missionaries and colonial administrators monopolizing knowledge about ‘the native’, anthropologists had to seek out their own niche of expertise, which they found in the careful, systematic and prolonged observation of indigenous people in a single place. This professionalization of fieldwork led to its circumscription, its concentration on dwelling rather than traveling” (Burawoy 2001: 147). Evans-Pritchard advocated this model of doing ethnography, and “[s]omething much like Evans-Pritchard’s prescription has very long remained more or less the only fully publicly acknowledged model for field work, and for becoming and being a real anthropologist” (Hannerz 2003: 202). If ordinarily
“something of the mystique… of conventional fieldwork is lost in the move toward multi-sited ethnography” (Marcus 1995: 100), then this especially so when virtual ethnography is one of the techniques used. Virtual components may be an essential part of multi-sited ethnography where the Internet is part of the social landscape, but traditional concepts of “the field” and “fieldwork” may hinder anthropologists from accepting the necessity and validity of this step. Killick (1995) claims that “notions of a ‘field’ impose unnecessary preconceptions and are in danger of becoming… an arbitrarily framed and homogenized background to their own self-absorbed experience” (p. 78). He argues that the conception of ethnography that anthropologists have is “structurally phallic” (p. 86), filled with “narratives of penetration” (p. 86) where “the heroic figure of the lone anthropologist [goes] in search of self-renewal” (p. 85) by participating in “a rite of separation from, and reincorporation into, an academic community” (p. 86). The departure from this traditional narrative of how ethnography is done caused one virtual ethnographer to “wonder whether what I was doing really was fieldwork because I never had to go anywhere physically, never had to make demands on my body or endure the tangible hazards that field researchers routinely face” (Lysloff 2003: 235). While “[t]raditionally oriented ethnographers may be surprised (perhaps appalled) at the notion of conducting ethnographic research in virtual communities in cyberspace…. many scholars have shown that these communities are complex, organized, and worthy of study,” writes Nicole Constable (2003: 33). As Forte (1999) notes, “[t]he Internet has not only become one locus where information on one’s subjects can be found, thus now a necessary part of a comprehensive research effort, but it also affords us insights as to how individuals choose to represent themselves to wide audiences, and permits us to also follow leads coming out of our field research sites and taking us to new contacts” (also see Forte 2002a, 2002b).

Virtual ethnography “is not so much a method in itself, but is often a way of applying in a new context…various [other] methods” (Bird and Barber 2002: 130). Still, the application of old
methods in new contexts does demand some new considerations, and, according to Wilson and Peterson (2002: 450), “a coherent anthropological focus or approach has yet to emerge”. To help orient virtual ethnographers of social movements, I suggest Table 1 as a starting point. These questions are not meant to be a definitive list by any means, but simply a thought exercise whose answers should raise further questions for the researcher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtual Community General Questions</th>
<th>Internet Social Movement General Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>source:</em> Baker and Watson 2003</td>
<td><em>source:</em> Diani 1999: 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Personal Need for Community. Does the person really desire to be in a particular community?</td>
<td>a) how do forms of individual participation change?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Availability of Information. Can a person learn something?</td>
<td>b) how do SMOs modify their ways of operating?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Community as Social Destination. Is the community a fun place to hang out?</td>
<td>c) how do individuals and organizations connect to each other to exchange/pool resources and information?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Rigor of Discussion. Can a person participate through mere opinion or does everything require a citation?</td>
<td>d) how do these actors develop identities and solidarities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Tolerance for Argument. Is the community one where argument is allowed, perhaps even valued, or one where argument is discouraged?</td>
<td>e) how do the geographical boundaries of the network change, along with the underlying idea of public space?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Acceptance. Is the community open to those with diverse points-of-view?</td>
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<td>7. Duration. Does the community exist for more than a moment?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Facilitation. Is the community facilitated (moderated) in some fashion?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Entry Barriers. Is it hard to get into the community?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Anonymity. Do people know who you really are?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Locality. Does this community serve a physical, geographical, place?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Focus. Does this community focus on a particular topic?</td>
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Virtual ethnographers must have theoretical models to explain virtual communities. Two such theories I make use of are Technology-Actor Network (TAN) theory and the Community Embodiment Model (CEM). TAN theory “invoke[s] the idea that, rather than being seen as artifacts alone, technologies are best conceived of as interacting human, organizational, and artifactual entities and practices. Particular elements both constitute and are constituted by the networks in which they participate” (Hakken 1999: 23). CEM “draws on cultural notions of ‘imagined community’ to develop a new means for understanding the dynamic within the virtual community and its relations to the physical world’s communities. It proposes that our interactions within virtual communities are a melding of the physical and the virtual that are embodied by the imagined” (Steve Fox 2004: 48). Like TAN theory, it also claims that “each virtual community exists in a unique relationship with physical communities within imagined spaces” (p. 55). TAN and CEM seem to be complementary approaches in that both recognize virtual communities as being embedded within larger technosocial contexts.

Virtual ethnographies raise some thorny ethical issues as well. The American Anthropological Association has no specific ethical guidelines for Internet research, though their more general ethical principles should still apply (Wilson and Peterson 2002: 461). Some considerations include: whether online discussions can be freely used by researchers without obtaining informed consent (Wilson and Peterson 2002: 461; Ess & AoIR ethics working committee 2002: 5), whether it is acceptable to be a “lurker” rather than an active participant (Edwards 1994: 349; Constable 2003: 50-51), how should mixed reactions to the virtual ethnographer’s presence be dealt with (Constable 2003: 48-51), issues of reciprocity (Waskul 2002: 208, 211; Constable 2003: 36), how to deal with illegal behavior encountered online (Lamb 1998: 128-132), and following basic “netiquette” (Plaut 1997: 86). While addressing each of these issues in-depth is beyond the scope of this essay, I used the AAA, SfAA, and AoIR ethical guidelines for informing my ethical decisions. Formulating an ethical stance regarding virtual
ethnography should be seen as an ongoing process of refinement, where new studies may help reveal what is at stake for research participants in virtual environments. Fortunately for myself and unfortunately for those interested in such debates, the only major ethical issue I encountered was the group organizer who did not want me studying his group, so I have little to contribute to this debate from my experiences with this study.

To study a virtual community (such as the one DFA has) using CEM, Fox identifies five aspects that culturally construct the imagined community for participants: “(1) the technology that enables entrance into the community, (2) the content and representation (e.g. in text and graphics) that help create the structure and form of the imagined community, (3) the history of the users (e.g. through logs or daily postings), (4) the intertextuality of context (such as links in text to other graphics or text), and (5) the communication/interaction among individuals” (Steve Fox 2004: 53). The technology itself is imbued with some type of cultural meaning for participants; for instance, Lenhart et al. (2003: 12) found that some men avoided computers because they were embarrassed that their wives and kids knew more about them, and Pickerill found that some environmentalists had reservations about using computers because of their environmental impact (Brunstin 2004: 351). Given these findings, I approached the study of DFA’s virtual community in multiple ways. For instance, I looked at cultural beliefs about the Internet and computing more generally among DFA members as shown through communication, both online and offline. In addition, I also looked at content analysis of sites (e.g. Kerbel and Bloom 2005), studies of DFA’s web design (e.g. Garrett 2004), and personal and/or historical accounts of the development of DFA’s Internet software (e.g. Trippi 2004; Hynes 2005). Analyzing existing accounts of an SMO can be a useful data source (Lofland 1996: 29-32), which I took advantage of; however, where gaps in the literature on DFA’s TAN existed, other methods were required.

The previously-mentioned semistructured interviews consisted of several Internet-related questions. Later on, once the interview protocol had been tested through face-to-face interviews,
an online survey version was made using PulseEFM (Pulseware 2004-7) and promoted on various DFA Internet sites. Like participant-observation done in virtual contexts, interviews in virtual contexts have their own unique differences that researchers should be aware of (see Crichton and Kinash 2003; Fontana and Frey 2000: 666-7). Because I would be unable to explain questions to survey takers, it was important that the questions first be tested in a face-to-face context. Another disadvantage to this method included being unable to ask follow-up questions, and the survey being limited to those with Internet access. Advantages that this method offers includes participants being able to choose when it is convenient for them to take the survey, sparing the researcher from the time-consuming process of transcription, and getting a glimpse into members of the national group in other locations to see if the results generated from the ethnographic study of particular local groups can be generalized. Both types of interviews are useful, and their uses are complementary.

Archival Research: Social Movements and Media

“Archival data are qualitative and quantitative materials stored for research, service, or other official and unofficial purposes by researchers, service organizations, and other groups” (Rodriguez and Baber 2002: 64). Using news accounts as archival data in studying social movements requires some considerations. In terms of social movement theory, while “[s]pecial attention has been given to the impact of the media on the policy-setting agenda of the state….the actual mobilization function of the mass media is not central to the major theories of collective action, let alone in most empirical research on social movements” (Walgrave and Manssens 2000: 219). More importantly, in terms of methodology, the reliance on newspapers in studies of social movements is often done in a manner that is uncritical of the role of media institutions in representing reality (Swank 2000: 29-30). Those that have been critical of media institutions will point out several factors affecting news coverage, including: the preference for visually-
interesting and dramatic events (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986: 76; Haugerud 2004; Dominus 2005; DeLuca and Peeples 2002: 136), a reliance on authoritative sources (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986: 76-77; Nash 1992: 284; Wall 2005: 155), strategies of hiring and deploying reporters (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986: 77-78), the cycles and rhythms of news reporting (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986: 78-79; Finke 2005), differing conceptions of reporter’s roles (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986: 79), the trend-setting effect of particular news organizations (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986: 79-80; Bagdickian 2004: 121, 135), competition among reporters (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986: 79-80), preconceived notions of how particular groups and subjects should be represented (di Leonardo 1998: 351-9; Merry 2003), and ownership of the media by the rich and powerful who protect their class interests (Lofland 1996: 324-5; DeLuca and Peeples 2002: 136; Alterman 2003; Finke 2005). In addition, the properties of the medium itself (newspapers, radio, television, Internet, etc.) may also affect news coverage (Meyrowitz 1985, especially 102, 274n).

Walgrave and Manssens’ (2002) methodology gives us a recent example of how social movement theorists can utilize the media as data. First, they chose five national-level newspapers, noting that they are representative “in terms of ideology, readership, and market share” (p. 220). They then selected a period of time, and encoded quantitative and qualitative variables from the articles on a particular social movement during that time period. For the qualitative variables, which included the wordings and references to other people and events, only front-page articles (or the article closest to the front page when there was none) and editorials were used, presumably to make the dataset manageable. The eleven quantitative variables they used can be adapted to the study of other social movements: 1. average number of pages on the social movement; 2. average number of pictures on the social movement; 3. average number of letters to the editor; 4. the share of coverage on the social movement relative to total news coverage; 5. amount of pictures of the social movement relative to the total number of pictures; 6.
amount of letters relative to the total number of letters; 7. extent to which the lead story deals with the social movement; 8. extent to which editorial is about the social movement; 9. the extent to which the social movement is the main item in the newspaper; 10. the extent to which the title with the largest type is on the social movement; 11. the amount of pictures of the social movement on the first page (p. 221-2).

News organizations have a variety of ways of helping or hindering a social movement through the content of their reporting (Walgrave and Manssens 2002: 231; Lofland 1996: 322-3; Deluca and Peeples 2002: 139-145), which can be discovered through content analysis of media. Together with the aforementioned ways of quantifying news coverage, a rather thorough picture of media coverage of a particular social movement in a particular medium can be achieved. However, taking both into account both the quantities and qualities of coverage still leaves the problem of reception. Taking into account audience demographics, such as noting that newspapers are mostly read by the middle and upper classes (Bagdickian 2004: 121), only partially addresses the problem. Newspaper readers, for example, vary in how much time they read, which sections they read, and which stories will capture their interests (Malthouse and Calder 2002; Newspaper Association of America 2004; Bird 2003: 21-50). Attempting to capture audience reception of media is not a problem that is easily overcome (Bird 2003).

One way of filling in the gaps left by the various aforementioned factors affecting news coverage and capturing a greater degree of audience reception is to include blogs. We may differentiate between news blogs, which report news, and personal blogs, which are essentially online diaries, though the line between the two is often blurred. News blogs “have been described as outside mainstream journalism norms with fewer gatekeepers or filters and little or no reliance on big corporate sponsors” (Wall 2005: 157). This is not to say that bloggers have no norms of their own; for instance, it has been suggested that “an opinionated voice is a hallmark of blog writing and those mainstream journalists who fail to reflect this are criticized as not being
true bloggers” (Wall 2005: 161; also see Doostdar 2004). Bloggers have their own gatekeepers and filters as well, including the basic costs of computer ownership and Internet service (Lockard 1997). Still, analysis of blogs can provide a valuable complimentary data source to mainstream news sources. In the case of personal blogs, we may even find some suggestive data about audience reception (e.g. Riverbend 2005).

Taking into account the 11 quantitative variables that Walgrave and Manssens (2002) describe would have been a very time-consuming process, and so it will not be included in this dissertation. While I was impressed by the sophistication of their method of quantification, I ultimately decided that simply doing the sort of multi-sited ethnography that was key to this study did not leave enough time for such an undertaking. Collecting the data on media coverage for text analysis (described below), complementing it with both existing scholarly analysis of DFA’s media coverage (e.g. Iozzi 2004) and blogs to offset the various factors affecting news coverage (described above), was the extent of the sophistication of my media archival research. Nonetheless, I included Walgrave and Manssens’ (2002) methodology in the hopes that media scholars may use it to build on my DFA research.

Archival Research: Social Movements and Finances

Lofland (1996: 165) argues that when we look at the financing of social movements, we should not think only in terms of “cash dollars.” While certainly important, he contends we should view social movements as small economies with four other types of important donations: 1. participation; 2. work; 3. lifestyle; 4. goods and services (p. 165-6). In terms of cash donations, he lists 13 common sources of social movement funding: 1. grants; 2. angels (that is, major donors); 3. dues; 4. direct mail; 5. phone banks; 6. fundraising events; 7. sales revenue; 8. public place solicitation and selling; 9; canvassing; 10. gambling; 11. hat passing; 12. expropriation; 13. government aid (Lofland 1996: 166-171). Recall Lockard’s critique of Joe Trippi and DFA from
the Introduction chapter in which he said: “[the] Internet is the work of labor far more than capital… A political campaign provides a special case of Internet labor, since it relies on the mobilization of vastly more voluntary than paid labor and Internet-based campaigning provides a more effective means of mobilization” (Lockard 2005). This suggests these non-monetary donations may well play a greater role in the “small economy” of DFA.

In addition to noting the sources of these contributions, it may also be important to ask why a particular method of financing was chosen by a social movement over another, and what are the consequences of using a particular method of financing (p. 171-2; also see Edwards and McCarthy 2004: 138-9). Cultural issues are involved in all such financial decisions in that the decisions of whether to contribute or not, and whether to accept or reject financial contributions, exist within shared frameworks of meaning. For example, the eco-porn activist site FuckForForest.com has raised $90,000 for forest conservation, but environmental organizations like WWF have refused to accept their money for fear of being associated with pornography (Fuck For Forest n.d.; Dicum 2005).

One aspect of social movement financing that will be of particular interest in my research project is what Edwards and McCarthy call money-mobilizing technologies (2004: 138-40), specifically the Internet as a money-mobilizing technology. Before the Internet, other communication technologies have been used to raise money as well. While many examples could be given, I will restrict myself here to two, one involving radio and the other involving television.

In the 1920s and 1930s, a quack doctor named Dr. John Brinkley operated a hospital in Milford, Kansas, where he performed a surgical “cure” for impotence that involved transplanting goat testicles into humans. He advertised this procedure on the radio, and his claims of a “miraculous cure” were heard nationwide. The American Medical Association, the Federal Radio Commission, and owners of rival radio stations tried their best to destroy his career, but merely made a martyr out of him because it occurred during the discontent of the Great Depression. He
ran for governor of Kansas using this reputation and the rhetoric of leftist radicalism, and nearly won (Frank 2004: 196-7).

Televangelism provides example of television as a money-mobilizing technology. While partially a reaction to social and religious liberalization that occurred during the 1960s and early 1970s, there were many conservative denominations that could conceivably have tapped into disaffected church-goers through televangelism, but only a few who did successfully (Buckser 1989: 375). In the 1950s and early 1960s, the FCC mandated that television broadcasters must devote a certain amount of free airtime to public interest groups, including (and even encouraging) religious groups, which was called “sustaining time.” Fringe religious groups generally could not benefit from sustaining time, and therefore had to purchase broadcast time at odd hours and in small markets. An FCC policy change in the early 1960s allowed broadcasters to use paid broadcast time or sustaining time to fulfill their requirement for public interest broadcasts. Broadcasters did not switch over immediately because mainstream religious groups were well-entrenched, but by 1977, 92% of American religious casting was paid for rather than donated, and by the mid-1980s, 10 syndicated programs not affiliated with mainstream churches dominated the religious broadcasting market (p. 371). Their dominance was achieved because of their experience with fund-raising from before the FCC policy change (p. 372), and because of the challenge to religious authority structures that televangelism would pose to mainstream denominations who tried to utilize it (p. 373-5). For instance, the Methodist church spent $25 million dollars in 1980 to establish their own teleministries, but they encountered strong resistance from local Methodist leaders who disliked the competition for funding and from bishops who felt their authority was ignored by fundraisers (p. 375).

FuckForForest.com, Dr. John Brinkley, and televangelism all show how money-mobilizing technologies exist within cultural contexts. Simply looking at the dollar amounts (or even quantitative data about the four other types of contributions) alone will not tell the whole
In the course of this research, I collected quantitative data on DFA’s monetary and non-
monetary donations from many sources, but I was also interested in putting those numbers into
context through the other methods I have mentioned. For instance, while it was important to
know how much money was being donated to Dean for America, it was just important to know
that donators “would post tearful, emotional comments… about how their collective efforts were
going to restore responsible politics to America. Officials at every other campaign scratched their
heads in wonder at the Deaniacs who demanded that headquarters ask for more of their money”
(Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 14).

Text Analysis

“Ethnographers have only three basic kinds of data: information about what people say,
what they do, and what they leave behind in the form of manufactured artifacts and documents”
(LeCompte and Schensul 1999a: 1). These three types of data are either already in text format, or
get converted into text through field notes. The methods for obtaining this text in my study were,
as described above, traditional ethnography, virtual ethnography, archival research of media
accounts, and archival research of quantitative databases.

An important part of dealing with the textual data collected in this fashion is to arrange
the data in some sort of order. Rodriguez and Baber (2002) recommend that “[y]our recording
system should identify the source of information, the dates, and the location of the [data source]”
(p. 68). LeCompte and Schensul advocate putting data in order by keeping several types of files,
such as chronological files and genre files (1999a: 38). My data was arranged in this fashion as
well so that I could create a history of DFA and answers to Lofland’s seven questions,
conceptually organizing my data during analysis and ultimately creating the structure of chapters
within this text.
There are (at least) three ways that text analysis may be done: (1) content analysis, where repeated observations of themes or content within a body of text leads to the development of analytic categories (LeCompte and Schensul 1999b: 129; McCarty 2005: sec. II-A-2-I-A), (2) concordance analysis, which is the systematic transformations of textual data to “direct your attention to the immediate linguistic environment of the specified word” (McCarty 2005: sec. II-A-2-III-C), and (3) statistical analysis, which “involves counting particular features of the textual data and then applying one or more mathematical transformations” (McCarty 2005: sec. II-A-2-I-A). For my research, I am primarily concerned with doing content analysis, although I have briefly used Amazon.com’s concordance of Howard Dean’s books in Chapter 4.

Discussion/Conclusions

In this chapter, I have attempted to show that the difficulties of using the culture concept are largely related to problems of heterogeneity and scale; levels of analysis above and below culture at the micro and meso levels must not be ignored, nor should they be seen as so mutually constitutive that the analysis of shared systems of ideas and related practices are precluded. While methods such as autoethnographies and large-scale studies of international political-economic structures can both be relevant to ethnography, neither one is a perfect substitute for ethnographic fieldwork. Addressing the impact of these different levels of analysis on the levels of analysis that ethnography is best suited for can be done by assessing the coherence of cultural domains and tracing the power relations that may account for the degree of coherence or incoherence that exists. Building on the idea of truth-as-credit-system that James postulates, I view studies at the six different levels of analysis described by Hakken as having an auditing effect on each other. A macro-level theory of social movements may propose that consensus-building works in a certain way for SMOs, but a micro/meso-level study of a social movement may find that consensus-building works differently from what the macro-level theory predicts.
Traditional ethnographic fieldwork, consisting of participant observation and interviews, offers great auditing potential.

Traditional ethnographic methods are insufficient for studying a group like DFA, however. As pointed out in Chapter 1, “we are enjoined to address research that is multitemporal, multisite, multilevel, and multivocal, while at work in the world of the ethnoscape. And we must do it within reduced budgets, higher administrative costs, shorter time frames, and a thicket of regulations” (Hackenberg and Hackenberg 2004: 387). Through multi-sited ethnography, the potential to address cultural connections is increased, though still limited by time, access, and other factors that would preclude ethnographic study of all possible connections. The multi-sited ethnographer must be selective, and must still rely upon “thin” methods that do not involve “being there” to extend the scope of analysis and contextualize the findings obtained with “thick” methods. In this study of DFA, the use of multi-sited ethnography includes both face-to-face and virtual settings as sites. I contend are both valid and necessary despite the reticence some old-fashioned anthropologists feel towards virtual contexts. And, by also focusing on media coverage and financing, I was better able to connect these local contexts within DFA that I was able to ethnographically study to the larger context of it as a national movement.

As Bird has pointed out, methods should be tailored to fit the questions being asked. The main overarching question I am trying to answer is: What is the sociocultural impact of the Internet upon DFA, and what does this tells us about its impact on SMOs more generally? Tackling this question requires an understanding of DFA first, as both a Technology-Actor Network (TAN) and as a social organization within a society. Drawing upon Escobar and Lofland, I have organized my data collection, analysis, and finally chapter structure into history, beliefs, organization, causes, reasons for joining, reactions, and effects. I believe that using this conceptual framework from the very beginning of my research helped ensure that multiple
These methods, both their use in general by social scientists and their specific application to DFA, have raised a number of questions throughout this chapter. How are the everyday meanings and practices of DFA similar and different from what various social movement theories have predicted? How can we avoid harm and do some good for social movements such as DFA in our role as researchers? What should we look for when researching virtual communities? What are the salient characteristics of DFA virtual environments? What are the methodological and ethical implications for ethnographers of cyberspace who study such virtual environments? What influence is the Internet having on social movements in terms of all seven of the salient characteristics that Lofland describes? How do different media institutions, including the "blogosphere," represent DFA, and why do they represent it as they do? What are the sources from which DFA receives its contribution, both monetary and nonmonetary, and what are the reasons for and consequences of using these particular sources? What general conclusions may we draw about the Internet as a money-mobilizing technology? Some of the answers were found in this chapter, and some will be touched on in later chapters. Perhaps just as significant as the questions themselves is the realization that anthropologists can make a contribution to such debates; if the question is "Is Anthropology Relevant to the Contemporary World?" (Ahmed and Shore 1995), then the answer is yes—as long as anthropologists make themselves topically relevant, and add their theoretical and methodological contributions to interdisciplinary debates. Recall that Crist and McCarthy (1996: 96) found that participant-observation accounted for only 11%-13% of the published studies on social movements in major sociology journals; not all of the aforementioned questions are amenable to quantitative studies, and thus an ethnographic approach is called for. Also recall that Hackenberg and Hackenberg (2004) wrote that applied anthropologists “are enjoined to address research that is multitemporal, multisite, multilevel, and
multivocal, while at work in the world of the ethnoscape” (p. 387); their prescribed course of action is certainly applicable to this study. DFA has gone through two incarnations, has three organizational levels (local, state, and national), has sites of social interaction spread between the “real” and virtual worlds, seeks to influence and reform media, and whose founder’s message of “You have the power” encourages proactive political involvement by its membership. The methods described in this chapter are tailored to fit the study of an SMO with these characteristics.
Chapter 3: A History of American Democracy, and Democracy for America

Examining the history of American democracy is necessary for contextualization because the past shapes present forms of sociocultural practices. As Yelvington explains, “Power is historical because relations of power are always dynamic and grounded in specific contexts… [This] is… a call to understand the relations between relatively continuous and relatively specific factors that limit the claims of our social theories” (Yelvington 1995: 19). In other words, we should “[go] beyond notions of identity politics and approaches to social movements as entirely cultural phenomena, because… identities and cultures do not exist apart from political and economic arrangements and are shaped and reshaped over time. Thus there can be no autonomous identities or cultures per se, and to act in the name of identity or culture is to act out of and amidst the phenomena that have constituted them” (Rubin 2004: 136). In examining DFA, we must also examine the electoral system they have selected as a target for change.

Elections are an opportunity for the population of a nation-state to ritually participate in power struggles at the local and national level. At the national level, “[t]hrough the construction of ritual sociodramas, American society is disarticulated metaphorically every four years and then rearticulated through the election/inauguration cycle” (McLeod 1999: 360; also see McLeod 1991). McLeod goes on to say:

The rhetoric used in these sociodramas includes debates over family values, race, worldviews, economic realities, the nature of the universe, and proper behavior in society. This symbolic mythology deals with issues that are political, legal, economic, religious, and even familial. Political ritual and political rhetoric in
modern cultural contexts are designed and organized events, created for mass consumption and orchestrated for quantitative effects. The process of manufacturing these sociodramas is nothing less than symbolic manipulation by design, playing on deeply held beliefs in the electorate. [McLeod 1999: 360]

Similarly, Dention (2005) writes: “Presidential campaigns are our national conversations. They are highly complex and sophisticated communication events: communication of issues, images, social reality, and personas. They are essentially exercises in the creation, re-creation, and transmission of significant symbols through human communication” (p. xii). Political rhetoric and rituals drawing upon this symbolic mythology are largely created by American political elites for public consumption, with varying degrees of success. “The importance of linking the participants with a wider symbolic universe lies in the ritual mystification of the political process. This process of mystification clothes economic and political realities with the symbolic imprimatur of universal order and truth” (McLeod 1991: 31).

Ethnographic studies of elections have highlighted various aspects of the sociocultural dynamics of elections. Elections based on Western models of plurality follow a different cultural logic than consensus-based cultural models (Ala'ilima and Ala'ilima 1966). This is not necessarily an either-or proposition; “democracy is not a single condition that countries do or do not have, but rather a set of processes unevenly enacted over time” (Paley 2002: 479). Samoan consensus-based decision making’s “primary purpose was to maintain social harmony by an acceptable balancing of deference between families” (Ala'ilima and Ala'ilima 1966: 251), while the “primary purpose of political decision-making is to promote, protect, and regulate the division of social resources in a way that is acceptable to the greatest number of individual voters” (p. 251). Individual voters in a plurality-based election model can (and frequently do) make their voting decisions based upon existing social cleavages, however. Ethnographic studies have revealed how powerful markers of identity such as race, gender, ideology, caste, etc. can unite a
local population against candidates, thereby reasserting hegemonic power relations (Stack 1996: 181-93; Wiebe 1969; Paley 2002: 479-80). At the local level, political cultures can come into conflict, with differing beliefs about which segments of a community should be allowed to make community decisions, and advocating different democratic procedures to reflect these beliefs (Smith 1963). Election Day can be “about the construction of an election as an acultural and apolitical event” (Coles 2004: 557) where mediated messages encourage citizens to think that they “should participate by voting in the election and not allow important decisions to be made without them; they should involve themselves in changing their country for the better” (p. 573). However, ethnography has also revealed cases in which “procedural democracy is so falsified as to become not legitimation but farce” (Paley 2002: 480; also see Smith 1963); when elections becomes farce, ethnography can also reveal the meaning-making processes that occur for participants (e.g. Stack 1996: 183). Aside from the voting public, ethnography has also revealed the power relations among the elected representatives, both to their constituents and to each other. Weatherford (1985) shows how the seniority system in congress blunts the impact of elections (p. 39, 42). He also shows how “congressional clans” exist in constant danger of losing power, electoral losses being one way in which this happens (p. 85), but not particularly often; even in elections that are considered to be a large shift in power such as the 1980 election, relatively few members lost their seats (p. 259-60). However, he does describe “guerilla lobbies” (p. 235-8) who “go straight for the soft spot—the votes. They aim to hit the politician in his home district among his own constituents” (p. 236). Weatherford also describes the role of special interest groups on congressmen as usually being a “petty annoyance,” only occasionally amassing sufficient power, in which case “Congress quickly surrenders on that one issue, the opposition dissipates, and then Congress continues its other policies unimpaired” (p. 260).

This chapter first examines how these changing political and economic realities created changes in America’s electoral “process of mystification” (McLeod 1991: 31) to contextualize the
short history of DFA. Since DFA is a social movement whose targeted social institution of change is the electoral process, some key elements in the cultural-historical development of the American election process will be highlighted as a prelude to a review of DFA’s history.

**Voting In America**

A common theme in recent political commentary is that the tone of modern elections has declined in comparison with those in the past. Indeed, there have been many changes since the electoral system since the founding of the United States of America, but we must be careful not to look upon the past with unfounded idealism. Take for instance the elections of 1824 and 1828, in which we can find similarities to the attack ads, corruption, and election irregularities that have been criticized in contemporary America. In 1824, the candidates were Adams, Clay, and Jackson, all three from the same party. During this election season, “Issues became negligible in the campaign; personalities were the only subject of debates, and slanderous charges were thrown about by all.... the election was inconclusive…and the choice was given to the House” (Davis 2003: 165). Jackson had 43.1% of the popular vote, giving him a semi-legitimate claim to the oval office, but Clay used his influence in the House of Representatives to help get Adams elected. Clay was then rewarded by Adams with the position of secretary of state. Jackson and his supporters claimed that a “corrupt bargain” had been struck, and that Clay was the “Judas of the West” (p. 165). If the focus of the 1824 election was on personalities instead of issues, this was even more the case in the 1828 election. According to campaign rhetoric of varying veracity, Jackson was a murderer with a prostitute for a mother, a mulatto for a father, and a wife who had not divorced her old husband before marrying Jackson; Adams, on the other hand, was accused of installing gambling equipment in the White House with taxpayer dollars, and had pimped out a young American girl to a Russian minister (Davis 2003: 164-6).
Political parties have not always been a part of our political landscape. At his farewell address in 1796, President George Washington warned that political parties “are likely in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the Power of the People and to usurp for themselves the reins of government” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 75). It has been the case since the Civil War that only Democrats and Republicans, not independents or third-party candidates, have been elected president (p. 78).

The nineteenth century town was a “moral grid that channeled the energies of its enterprising citizens and their families into collective well-being” (Bellah et al. 1985: 39). These communities could compel individual sacrifice for the common good, but could also be intolerant institutions that excluded outsiders. By the end of the nineteenth century, “new technologies, particularly in transport, communication, and manufacturing, pulled the many semi-autonomous local societies into a vast national market” (p. 42). The rise of the corporation meant that local governments and organizations lost power (p. 42-3). Bellah et al. write: “These developments changed the working of the political parties in national government. By the early decades of the twentieth century, the Progressive movement was calling for a smoother partnership between large-scale economic organizations and government at all levels to ‘rationalize’ the tumultuous process of social and political change” (1985: 43). This so-called Gilded Age gave rise to “captains of industry who could ignore the clamor of public opinion and rise to truly national power and prestige by economic means alone” (p. 43).

By the time of Woodrow Wilson’s presidency (1913-1921), “it was widely recognized by elite sectors…that within [society], coercion was a tool of diminishing utility, and that it would be necessary to devise new means to tame the [public], through control of opinion and attitude” (Chomsky 2003: 5-6). He exercised this authority, for example, through “Wilson’s Committee on Public Information, which was established to coordinate wartime propaganda and achieved great
success in whipping the population into war fever” (p. 6). The success of the Committee “inspired progressive democratic theorists and the modern public-relations industry” (p. 8), and “[huge] industries have since developed devoted to these ends” (p. 6).

One of the twentieth century’s most remarkable features was the “division of life into a number of separate functional sectors: home and workplace, work and leisure, white and blue collar, public and private” (Bellah et al. 1985: 43). This division of life was modeled upon bureaucratic industrial corporations. Bellah et al. go on to say: “Under such conditions, it is not surprising that the major problems of life appear to be essentially individual matters, a question of negotiating a reliable and harmonious balance among the various sectors of life to which an individual has access” (p. 44). Rather than Americans finding their peers within their local communities as in the nineteenth century, people came to consider their peers to be “those who share the same specific mix of activities, beginning with occupation and economic position, but increasingly implying same attitudes, tastes, and style of life” (p. 44).

This individualism served to quell protest during the great depression:

Most of the people who were thrown out of work suffered quietly, especially at the start of the depression, when officials helped to confuse the unemployed and to make them ashamed of their plight. Men and women haunted the employment offices, walked the streets, lined up for every job opening, and doubted themselves for not finding work. Families exhausted their savings, borrowed from relatives, sold their belongings, blaming themselves and each other for losing the struggle to remain self-reliant. [Piven and Cloward 1977: 48-49]

Yet this reluctance was overcome by the increasingly widespread nature of the impoverishment. Jobless people put pressure on local governments, and, “[driven] by the protests of the masses of unemployed and the thread of financial ruin, mayors of the biggest cities of the United States, joined by business and banking leaders, had become lobbyists for the poor” (Piven and Cloward
By November 1932, both the Democratic Party and Republican Party were controlled by eastern conservative businessmen. However, “the depression created the shifting currents that would bring new leaders to the forefront of the Democratic Party” (p. 65), including Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Federal Emergency Relief Act quickly followed (p. 66), and the fact that many of the millions of unemployed continued to protest ensured that localities participated in the relief programs (p. 67). Simultaneously, a group of wealthy businessmen reacted by planning to seize power from FDR and install a fascist government, and nearly succeeded (Cramer 1995; U.S. House Committee on Un-American Activities 1934).

Voter turnout decreased during the 1940s, bounced back during the 1950s, and then went into a long period of decline; “the period from 1960 to 2000 marks the longest ebb in turnout in US history. Turnout was nearly 65 percent of the adult population in the 1960 presidential election and stood at only 51 percent in 2000. In 2002, turnout was 39 percent in the November election and a mere 18 percent in the congressional primaries” (Patterson 2002a). In addition, 60% of American households watched the presidential debate in 1960, while less than 30% did so in 2000 (Patterson 2002a). How do we account for this ebb and flow in voter participation?

Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society created legislation that weakened economic inequality as a rallying point that politicians could use to win elections. Patterson describes the effects on American politics of these social programs:

As the economic issue weakened, a large set of less comprehensive issues emerged. Civil rights, street crime, school prayer, and welfare dependency were among the earliest of these issues, which were followed by others including abortion, the environment, education, and global trade. All were important, but they intersected with each other in confounding ways. And none had the reach or the endurance of the economic issue. As a result, the issues of one election were
usually different than the issues that had dominated the previous election or would be at the forefront in the next one.

How could the political parties create cohesive and enduring coalitions out of this mix of issues? The short answer is that they could not do so. The issues were too crosscutting and too numerous for either party to combine them in a way that could easily satisfy a following. [Patterson 2002a]

The result of this inability to easily satisfy a large following meant that parties became “relatively weak objects of loyalty and thought” (Patterson 2002a). Those who have party loyalty are more likely to vote than those without party loyalty or an understanding of the political stakes in an election. Voter participation has been dropping more quickly among the poor than the affluent (Patterson 2002a).

The fracturing of a reliable voter base into special interest groups has changed the method by which politicians and parties appeal to voters. “Whereas platforms were once declarations of broad goals and ideals, they have become promissory notes to special interests…. An effect of this relentless flow of campaign promises is a public wary of taking candidates at their word” (Patterson 2002b). Patterson (2002a) writes: “Campaign messages today are strikingly different in the wide range of issues they address, the contradictions they contain, the speed with which they turn over, and the small percentage of voters with whom they resonate. After their defeat in the 2002 midterm election, Democratic leaders were roundly criticized for failing to put out a message that captivated voters. However…. [i]f a simple and compelling message was readily available, they would have seized it. Such messages are today quite rare.”

The considerable changes in the social dynamics of elections over the course of the twentieth century are also partly due to changes in media and journalism. “In the 1950s and 1960s, control of election campaigns shifted rapidly from the political parties to the candidates, largely because of television and refinements in techniques of mass persuasion” (Patterson
This focus on the individual candidate has lead to an increase in negative advertising, as many have discovered that it is easier to win elections by making one’s opponent look unappealing than to develop campaign platforms that will have wide appeal. Negative advertising has had the long-term effect of turning off voters to the electoral process. However, the focus on the personality has also meant that the candidates have to be careful not to appear unlikable and ruin their own campaigns: “Modern-day politics… exalts personality, increasing the likelihood that personal blunders and failings will loom large in campaigns. Through the 1972 presidential election, personal controversies did not receive even half as much news coverage as did policy issues. Since 1972, they have received nearly equal time” (Patterson 2002b). Also, news reporting has become increasingly negative over the years: “By the 1980s campaign… election news coverage had reached a point where more than half of it was negative. Since then, no major-party presidential nominee has received on balance more positive news than negative news over the course of the campaign” (Patterson 2002c). According to Patterson, this is largely attributable to a switch from descriptive journalism to interpretive journalism, where journalists attempt to provide context for what they describe. This style emerged from changes in news reporting in the 1960s that came about because of television (Patterson 2002c). In addition, television news coverage of politics keeps decreasing because then candidates must pay to have their message heard; “[a]ccording to the Alliance for Better Campaigns, candidates, parties, and issue groups spent slightly more than $150 million in 1980 and more than $1 billion in 2002—so much, in fact, that they are now one of television’s leading sources of revenue” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 5).

Changes in campaign finance law have impacted the way American elections operate as well. During the 1960s, Congress approved legislation to expand their personal staff, ostensibly to match the executive branches’ ability to handle policy information. However, at least half of the staff and resources have been devoted towards their own reelection campaigns instead.
During the 1970s, campaign finance laws were passed in reaction to the Watergate scandal that greatly increased the number of Political Action Committees (PACs), the majority of whom support politicians already in power. “Today, upwards of 85 percent of PAC money ends up in the pockets of incumbents, who also operate year-around reelection campaigns at taxpayer expense,” Patterson writes (2002d). The ultimate effect of changes like this are uncompetitive election campaigns; “Only about three dozen of the 435 House seats were actually in play in 2002. In nearly twice that many districts, there was literally no competition: the weaker major party did not bother even to nominate a candidate” (Patterson 2002d).

The Watergate scandal not only resulted in changes to campaign finance laws, but also in the American people’s general attitude towards government. “Since the late 1960s and especially since Watergate, not even those who head the federal government have had much good to say about it. Democrats like Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton expressed very little confidence in government, while Republicans like Ronald Reagan expressed outright contempt. Without doubt, their rhetoric reflects the public’s antipathy toward government, but it also guarantees that such antipathy will continue” (Hetherington 2004: 1).

Until the mid-1970s, fundamentalist Christians believed it was not proper for them to be involved in politics (Freedman 2005). In 1976, Jimmy Carter won the presidency, but outraged religious conservatives. Carter first alienated religious conservatives by agreeing to an interview in Playboy, and then “[alienation] turned to outrage when the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) withdrew the automatic tax-exempt status of Christian schools, giving fundamentalists a compelling reason to enter politics” (Freedman 2005: 238). Other social issues such as homosexuality led to cross-denominational alliances among different Christian organizations, culminating in the major right-wing religious organization Christian Voice in January 1979. The more famous Moral Majority organization was “was created when New Right leaders, convinced
of the potential of social issues, convinced Jerry Falwell to act as a charismatic figurehead” (p. 244). RNC Chairman Brock invited religious leaders on the right to a meeting on December 1979; while religious leaders had concerns about Ronald Reagan’s divorce and socially moderate George Bush, they were willing to compromise with Republicans. These organizations grew powerful very quickly; for example, “Moral Majority claimed 300,000 members by mid-1980 and to have registered 4–8m new voters by November (a still staggering 2m is more likely). By 1980 it had at least skeleton chapters in every state. By 1981, the Moral Majority Report newsletter reached over 840,000 homes and daily commentaries were broadcast on over 300 radio stations” (p. 252).

This alliance between conservative Christians and the Republican Party not only helped to get Ronald Reagan elected, but also gave rise to what Thomas Frank terms the Great Backlash. “The movement’s basic premise is that culture outweighs economics as a matter of public concern—that Values Matter Most, as one backlash title has it’” (Frank 2004: 6). Elsewhere, he provides the major issues of the Great Backlash in list form:

- [Abortion]
- [Affirmative action]
- Bias in the news
- Bible banning/the “war on Christmas”/persecution of Christians
- Busing
- The “culture of life”/stem cells/Terri Schiavo
- Evolution
- Flag burning
- Gay marriage
- Guns
- Hollywood/entertainment issues
• Offensive art
• School prayer
• Swift Boating, i.e., liberal betrayal during Vietnam
• Tenured radicals/university issues
• Trial lawyers
• Vouchers/home schooling/public school issues
• Windsurfing/latte drinking/Volvo driving/blue-state tastes generally
• [“women’s appropriate social role.”] [Frank 2005: 14-15]

As a result of this focus on cultural issues instead of economic issues, it has become a “working-class movement that has done incalculable, historic harm to working-class people” (Frank 2004: 6). It does this by imagining that “America is always in a state of quasi-civil war: on one side are the unpretentious millions of authentic Americans; on the stand the bookish, all-powerful liberals who run the country but are contemptuous of the tastes and beliefs of the people who inhabit it” (p. 13). This Great Backlash has a number of implications for elections. First, it has been transformed into a stimulus-response melodrama with a plot as formulaic as an episode of *The O’Reilly Factor* and with results as predictable—and profitable—as Coca-Cola advertising. In one end you feed an item about, say, the menace of gay marriage, and at the other end you generate, almost mechanically, an uptick of middle-American indignation, angry letters to the editor, an electoral harvest of the most gratifying sort. [Frank 2004: 9]

Second, it provides a cultural framework into which grievances of all types, including those that are economic in nature, can be blamed on the “all-powerful liberals.” The Great Backlash issues listed above are constantly brought up through what he terms “the plen-T-plaint, a curious amassing of petty, unrelated beefs with the world” (p. 123); “the obvious implication of the plen-T-plaint is that liberalism can be held responsible for the world around us, that each of these
objections to the way people drive, the way they cut in line, the way they talk with their mouths full, is somehow an indictment of the left” (p. 124). This creates a priori assumptions that make it difficult for Democrats to appeal to these voters.21

We can see most elements of Frank’s Great Backlash in place in the rhetoric used in George Bush Sr.’s campaign messages. McCleod (1991) analyzed Bush Sr.’s campaign messages in terms of binary opposites, and found that Bush and Republicans portrayed themselves with the following messages: “winners,” “missions defined and completed,” “America on the rise,” “America is Great,” “Values the issue,” “Bush wants a return to basic American beliefs,” “Inflation down (4%),” “Republicans deal in truth,” “Republicans mean jobs,” “America is well under the Republicans,” “Republicans want to arrest inflation,” “Republicans are normal,” “Republicans want to move forward to more prosperity,” “Conservative Republicans want power in individuals and families,” “Republicans want to journey into the New Age,” “Republicans are concerned with others,” and “Republicans see a thousand points of light” (McLeod 1991: 39). The infamous “Willie Horton” advertisements, in which Democratic Presidential candidate Michael Dukakis was portrayed as allowing a black criminal to be released, resulting in the rape of a white woman, was effective in swaying voters.

By the early 1990s, advances in computer technology had progressed to a point where they had significant consequences for elections. “Gerrymandering got a major boost with the advent of redistricting software in 1991. The new algorithms were first used to boost the chances of black and Latino candidates; soon, both parties realized that you didn’t need the fig leaf of minority representation, and they began slicing and dicing districts at will” (Abramsky 2006). Gerrymandering results not only in “crazy-looking, swirling districts whose shapes make sense only under an increasingly complex political calculus” (Abramsky 2006), but also in fewer competitive elections nationwide.
Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity pointed out that “in the last six election cycles, starting with 1991-1992, the Republicans collected more total (hard and soft) campaign contributions than the Democrats each time, with an average GOP advantage of $162 million for each election” (2004: 77). Pharmaceutical Research & Manufacturers of America attorney Judith Bello explained the shift in sworn deposition thus: “We have more heavily made contributions to Republicans than Democrats because they more often favor market-oriented approaches” (p. 104). Waning finances not only affected the Democratic Party, but also progressive organizations in general:

During the 1990s, as the funding for progressive causes waned, many national progressive groups were forced to tighten their belts and close their local field offices. Like corporations that hire workers in India to run their call centers, the canvassing, phone banking, and direct mail outreach that sustains the fundraising and membership base of progressive organizations and campaigns in America were outsourced to national groups that emerged to fill the gap on the left. As word spread of this efficient and cost-effective way to develop and maintain a grassroots base, national groups that had never worked at the grassroots level also decided to outsource. Today, progressive groups have only to sign up with an intermediary organization and trained canvassers will go door-to-door or work the sidewalk traffic on their behalf, dressed in the group’s T-shirt and armed with pitches that work. [Fisher 2006]

These intermediary organizations, such as the Fund for Public Interest Research, have canvassers who are expected to switch from one campaign to another frequently. Turnover is high for these paid activists, and their knowledge of and commitment to the causes they are paid to support is low. And, in 2004 “this type of political outsourcing expanded to electoral politics. During the presidential election, the Democratic National Committee hired a for-profit spin-off of the Fund
to extend its political base” (Fisher 2006). While hiring this kind of support does pay off in the short-term, it does not offer the advantages of genuine grassroots support:

Although she recognized the efficiency of outsourcing grassroots politics, [Karen] Hicks [the National Field Director for the Democratic Party in 2004] also noted that canvassing does not foster long-term dedication and commitment or develop much local infrastructure: “At the end of the campaign, you’re left with nothing, basically, because all those canvassers walk out the door. It’s not a job that most people do time and time again.” So the organizations get members and money out of canvassers, and most of the canvassers go back to their schools or jobs, or move on to an entirely different campaign when it’s over. As a result, this type of outsourced politics leaves the grassroots base on the left disconnected and disorganized.

Indeed, progressive causes and progressive candidates have been losing out to conservative issues and candidates who use a very different model of organization. In contrast to the outsourced politics of the left, political groups on the right work through pre-existing civic associations formed by churches and other locally grounded networks to create lasting connections with its political base. Adopting more and more of the social conservative platform originally developed by the Christian Coalition, Republicans are able to tap into the extensive network of local groups that the Coalition developed since its creation in the late 1980s. [Fisher 2006]

As noted in Chapter 2, part of this coalition that conservatives are able to tap into include televangelists.

In the 1990s, Senator John McCain became implicated in an infamous savings-and-loan scandal called the Keating Five affair. McCain and four other senators had accepted money and
favors from Charles Keating, owner of Lincoln Savings and Loan, and met with federal regulators on behalf of Keating. Although the Senate Ethics Committee found that there was no wrongdoing, for McCain, it “brought home…the importance of the appearance, as well as the reality, of corruption” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 14). In the 2000 Republican primary, after John McCain pulled a surprise victory in New Hampshire over George W. Bush, “a bizarre array of single-issue groups appeared out of nowhere [during the South Carolina primary], angrily trashing McCain” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 19). While there has not been a “smoking gun” linking all these groups to George W. Bush, political scientists William Moore and Danielle Vinson analyzed the communications of these interest groups in the 2000 South Carolina primary and found nearly all of them supported Bush (p. 20). These experiences led McCain, along with congressional colleague Russ Feingold, to push for campaign finance reform legislation since the 1990s (p. 14), and despite the objections of his party, it finally became a reality on March 27, 2002 (p. 31).

The passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (BCRA) was probably the most significant change in election law in recent years. This law targeted “soft money” for political parties and funding for candidate advertisements, essentially promoting contribution limits and disclosure. The effectiveness of the BCRA has been debatable (Malbin, in press), however, partly because “[w]ithin days of signing…a phalanx of party lawyers and Washington lobbyists began successful efforts to eviscerate the new law… The FEC issued a 300-page rule-making document on how the new law would be implemented, weakening the ban on political party use of soft-money contributions” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 33). Part of the BCRA allowed for the doubling of hard-money contribution limits, which favors the Republican Party since they generally have a greater number of maximum-allowance contributors and “astonishingly effective bundling systems” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 115). Because this law created limits on direct campaign spending but allowed broad definitions
of what constituted a 527 group, groups like MoveOn.org and Swift Boat Veterans could spend millions on influencing election outcomes as long as they did not make campaign-specific advertisements (Gronbeck and Wiese 2005: 524-525). These 527 groups often have links to the party that they support that are hidden by the lax disclosure and accountability laws related to them; “[t]heir multimillion-dollar hyperactivity in election campaigns obfuscates the responsibility a candidate has for his campaign, giving him or her ‘deniability’ about the dirty politics being waged” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 26).

Gronbeck and Wiese (2005) claim that the 2004 election was characterized by a new trend towards repersonalization, where presidential elections place greater emphasis on person-to-person contact with voters. They attribute this to four causes: First, the expansion of the caucus system, which encourages candidates and their proxies to interact. Second, DFA showed other campaigns the advantages of using community-building tools like blogs and Meetups. Third and closely related, DFA triggered a rethinking of how Internet technology is used in elections. Fourth, the BCRA encouraged PACs to be the grassroots proxies of the candidates; “although the national committees of both parties could not make candidate specific ads, they still could spend millions on armies of both volunteers and paid personnel to work in battleground states” (Gronbeck and Wiese 2005: 525). While it seems that while politics was “repersonalized” in that there was more interaction between individuals, it is still the case that organizational linkages are obscured from public scrutiny (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004, Ch. 1).

To bring back voters to the polls and make voting a more meaningful process, Patterson (2002e) makes the following recommendations:

- increase television coverage of debates
- shorten campaigns
- extend voting hours
- declare Election Day a national holiday
• have governmental rather than citizen responsibility for voter registration

While I do not dispute his conclusions that these reforms would be helpful, I feel that they are insufficient by themselves. In the next section, I will explore the possibility while ideally the great increase in information could lead to a more informed citizenry, in reality there are serious barriers to reaching informed decisions when one has to navigate such oceans of information (and misinformation) in our national sociocultural landscape.

A Knowledge Society?

According to Ungar (2003), we may be living in a “knowledge-averse society” rather than an “information age” or “knowledge society.” Expanding knowledge bases require strategies of managing information. For example, “[o]nly those versed in the specialized information systems used by the military are capable of making sense of what is otherwise gibberish. This is an extreme example of the knowledge gap hypothesis, which holds that the prior possession of specific conceptual anchors and tools in an area is critical for processing further information in that domain” (Ungar 2003: 333). One strategy for dealing with expanding bases of knowledge is increasingly constricted areas of specialized knowledge. Another strategy, one which goes “beyond constricting areas of specialization is to rely on predigested knowledge packages” (p. 334). Examples of this strategy mentioned by Ungar (2003: 334) include physicians relying on videos and information packets about drugs that are prepared by pharmaceutical companies, and academics who read book reviews in lieu of reading the books themselves. In addition to increasing difficulty in navigating this ever-growing pile of information, Ungar (2003) argues that popular culture has come to devalue educated people (p. 340-342). He asks: “Where are the examples of admiring and upholding intelligence or erudition in public arenas?” (Ungar 2003: 342).
This has had an effect on politics as well; “The average college graduate today knows little more about public affairs than did the average high school graduate in the 1940s” (Putnam 2000: 35-36). Ungar’s criticism of the idea of the knowledge society is that that the ever-growing amounts of information in our society largely lacks “organization into some coherent and useable set of ideas” (p. 337). He did not find the Internet to be an exception here: “The Internet is not just the largest but perhaps the most disorganized library in history. It lacks anything akin to the Dewey decimal system, and finding information is time-consuming, hit-and-miss, and often frustrating. Information is not vetted and varied dramatically in its veracity” (Ungar 2002: 343).

Ungar (2003) does identify one group who overcame these barriers of specialized knowledge, however. AIDS activists have done well to educate themselves and promote treatments even before many medical researchers. However, he points out that “it is noteworthy that this occurred under relatively unique conditions. AIDS activists had unusual amounts of cultural and economic capital, a strong history of activism, close-knit communities and networks, and access to alternative media” (2003: 338). It seems a reasonable conclusion that a group with similar resources might be able to reproduce this outcome.

According to Artieri (1996), our society has become increasingly image-based, “not only because… a large quantity of images is present, available and enjoyable, but also because the image has acquired a central role both in the process of mass information and in the establishment of a new imaginary. The symbolic effect of the image interlaces with the technological mediation of reality, thus changing the role of entry, transmission, and circulation of common symbols in social life” (p. 56). One notable effect of this image-based society is that “human sciences, technology and research nowadays produce more and more ‘images of the world’ rather than systems of cognition…. [resulting in] a self-founded production that makes asking what there is beyond the produced image less important” (p. 56). In essence, Artieri (1996) claims that
“Western culture has…increasingly entrusted the representation of reality to media, which has less and less asserted the image as an indicative sign of the reality” (p. 56).

The layperson’s understanding of American government now relies predominantly upon these media images; “More a predecessor to Disneyland than a successor to Rome, Washington emphasizes the facade over the contents, appearance over reality” (Weatherford 1985: 6). The majority of Americans “feel that we know what the Congress is like. We see pictures of the Capitol in the newspapers; the monuments and postcard vistas of Washington slip through our fingers when we drop a coin into a vending machine, and they cross our tongue when we stamp a letter. Every night the inside and outside of the Capitol intrude into our living rooms with yet another televised report…” (Weatherford 1985: 14). Yet beneath this façade exists both a physical space of underground tunnels and “cloakrooms” hidden from public view (p. 15-18), and also a “many-layered network of relations existing among contemporary politicians, bureaucrats, lobbyists, and journalists” (p. 7). The public façade is crafted to create certain politically expedient appearances that may not correlate with reality. For example, speeches by freshmen congressmen may be delivered in front of television cameras that never reveal that no one else is in the room to watch it (p. 36). Or, failing that, a neophyte congressperson may simply have the written version of a speech he or she never delivered published in the back of the Congressional Record, falsely giving the appearance that “the young congressman is actually voicing local concerns in Washington” (Weatherford 1985: 36). Efforts to become an informed voter may be stymied by this sort of disinformation.

The newfound difficulties in political parties and candidates appealing to voters, the need to present and rely on “predigested knowledge packages,” and the rise of an image-based society in which images circulated by the media are engaged in “a simulated that doesn’t return the object [it represents] in a transparent way but becomes self-referential” (Artieri 1996: 59) can all be seen converging in this laughably tragic anecdote related by Joe Trippi:
I remember working on a congressional campaign in the mid-1980s. We were meeting with the candidate to film a commercial about his views on abortion. As we were setting up the equipment, going over the script, and getting ready to shoot the spot, the guy casually informed me that he wanted to film two spots.

I was confused. Two?

That’s right. He wanted to make a pro-choice ad, and then—as long as we had the crew and everything—just “turn the camera around” and make a pro-life spot. That way, he explained, he’d have one of each ready when his polling people told him which way he should go. [Trippi 2004: 33]

While undoubtedly recounted because it was a particularly extreme example of political duplicity for the sake of one’s public image and perhaps is not representative, it does illustrate the problematic social structure that would give rise to such deception. In order to win, a winning image must be disseminated to one’s constituents (Rosenberg and McCafferty 1987), and this individual simply took this cultural logic further than others (one would hope!).

Whether or not politicians have motives to deceive, they must still take into consideration the images that will be disseminated. In the 2000 election cycle, John McCain faced an unsuccessful attempt to prevent him from getting on the state GOP primary ballot in New York, and in response, he “staged a news conference in front of the Russian embassy and excoriated the ‘Stalinist politics’ of the New York Republican Party” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 29). This kind of consideration of public image is necessary because it is what the public responds to:

It is [hard] to… separate out the essentials from the superfluous in our own political arenas. The Americans reward with reelection that politicians who can best blow-dry his tinted hair and bat his curly eyelashes, rather than the one who is at his desk working on the details of the disarmament treaty. They applaud the
one who most frequently struts and frets across their television screen, but ignore the one who has hammered out a policy on nuclear non-proliferation. The politician who can most passionately deliver an enraged diatribe in the committee room and who knows how to exploit the pauses in question and answer session receives more attention than the one who has dealt thoroughly but less dramatically with the real issue. [Weatherford 1985: 267]

Even the decision not to allow a media-disseminated message is a calculated one. Howard Dean, when signing legislation in favor of civil unions while serving as governor of Vermont, did so in private (Dunnan 2004: 61; Bushnell 2003: 153-157), causing some reporters to speculate that “Dean feared his opponents would have used a photo of the signing to attack him in the coming election” (Bushnell 2003: 156). George W. Bush, after signing the BCRA into law, had no White House speech or ceremony to commemorate the signing, unlike President Gerald Ford after signing the Federal Election Campaign Act in 1974. As a result, “there would be no sound bites from Bush that night on the network evening news on this subject” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 32), which allowed his national party to legally challenge the bill he had just signed into law.

Looking behind the façade designed for public consumption to see the exercising of power is no easy matter. For instance, Weatherford (1985) found a distinctive, troubling pattern in examining the history of Congress: “As each arena in the long procedure was opened to the public, it went through a brief flurry of attention and high drama, but with the exposure, the essence of politics reverted further backstage” (p. 185). As a result, “[t]he floor consideration of a bill in the chamber of the Congress is merely the bestowing of legitimacy on a bill, the fate of which was decided elsewhere” (p. 176-7). Similarly, Charles Lewis describes the existence of a “wealth primary” in presidential elections, which is “the private referendum held the year before any votes are cast anywhere, in which thousands of the richest Americans—one-tenth of 1
percent of the population—make the maximum allowable campaign contribution” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 4). The significance of this can only be appreciated when we take into consideration a finding by political consultant Stan Huckaby, who discovered that since 1976, the candidate who raised the most money in the year before the election and accepted matching funds always became the party’s nominee for the general election (p. 6). What this means is that “otherwise respectable candidates who didn’t put up sufficiently impressive cash numbers are often driven from the race and cast as ‘losers’” (p. 6); in other words, the wealthiest Americans are voting with their checkbooks for which candidates all other Americans are able to vote for.

Recognizing the relations of power is made even more difficult by the focus on the candidate himself or herself rather than on the social network in which they operate. The “predigested knowledge packets” that people use in deciding how to vote are stories about the candidates: “stories are fundamental to how we perceive the world. ‘Stories’ after all, are what newspaper reporters write and television news broadcasts. And voters, awash in the complexity of current events, use stories as their means of boiling down complicated realities to simple choices” (Cornog 2004: 12). According to Cornog, a successful politicians’ story is a hero’s story, in which there “is almost always a moment of emergence, an event that sets them apart from others and marks them as extraordinary” (p. 11), and they succeed in politics by learning how to build on these stories and present themselves in ways that will resonate with voters. It seems inexplicable that George W. Bush would neglect to mention that his birthplace was New Haven, CT on his White House web site biography (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 134), unless we also keep in mind that “many commentators divined in the 2000 [election] map a baleful cultural cleavage” (Frank 2004: 14) where “Democrats were restricted to the old-line, blueblood states of the Northeast, along with the hedonist left coast” (p. 14), and “George W. Bush was the choice of the plain people, the grassroots Americans who inhabited the place we
know as the ‘heartland,’ a region of humility, guilelessness, and above all, stout yeoman
rightness” (Frank 2004: 16).

When we go beyond these dubious hero narratives, we find that, similar to how Escobar
described the sociocultural context of biodiversity discourses, there is “an increasingly vast
institutional apparatus that systematically organizes the production of forms of knowledge and
types of power, linking one to the other through concrete strategies and programs” (Escobar
1998: 56). As Lewis explains, “Each party has an informal working alliance of vested economic,
ideological, or other interests, as major backers directly and indirectly but also as eminently
effective, discreet policymaking partners. The candidates function inside of—indeed, must be
active creatures of—these power networks that substantially control the political governance of
our Republic” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 76). This not only means that
groups like the National Rifle Association and the Christian Coalition rarely attack Republicans
(p. 76), but also that they actively assist the political party that supports their interests in any way
they can. Pharmaceutical Research & Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) not only gave 87
percent of their party donations to Republicans (p. 103), but documents reveal that they met with
high-level Republicans with the stated objective of “expressing PhRMA’s willingness to be a
resource, substantively and politically, to assist in maintaining a Republican majority in 2000” (p.
104). The Republicans have had several industries come to their side, including mining, tobacco,
accounting, defense, and insurance, to name a few (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity
2004: 106). The Democrats, for their part, have the support of unions and trial lawyers (Lewis
and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 110-115), and at least in the case of the unions, this also
means “extensive national grassroots networks composed of thousands of unionized American
workers who are at the disposal of a candidate who wins labor’s endorsement” (Lewis and the
Center for Public Integrity 2004: 110). In addition to these organizational ties, there are also
kinship ties (Weatherford 1985: chp. 3, 7; Weatherford 1993), and “personal bureaucracies” in
which “[g]roups of personal retainers coalesce around individual politicians within a bureaucratic setting, the underlying principle of organization being the relationship of patron to client” (Weatherford 1985: 51). A congressperson’s personal staff, “operating in conjunction with the staff alumni, functions as the problem-solving unit for his district, requiring only occasional token acts by him. The congressman is thereby freed for the more important task of playing politics” (Weatherford 1985: 96). In fact, Weatherford finds that the “hidden authority of today is much more likely to be the undramatic lawyer, policy analyst, or media expert” (p. 220); members of Congress “simply cannot keep up with all the materials [his or her staff] prepare in his [or her] name, the decisions they make for him, or the statements they issue. Their relationship rests more on trust than on oversight” (p. 224). While the personal hero narrative seems to be what wins elections for politicians, the reality of the situation seems to be that politicians are mainly the spokespersons for his or her social network, composed of staff in congress and most likely in other political positions as well, which attempt to form alliances with other social networks, who will contribute money and other resources in exchange for policy favors.

The implications of this reliance on heroic narratives rather than political realities are perhaps obvious, but nonetheless deserve some elaboration. Voters may be unwittingly casting their votes for a candidate based upon their perceived positive personal qualities rather than the policies that they and their social network will enact. They may be, in other words, acting against their self-interests, as these two examples demonstrate:

If you listen to the presidential debates, you can’t figure out what they’re saying, and that’s on purpose. The last debate was supposed to be about domestic issues. The New York Times commented that Kerry didn’t make any hint about possible government involvement in health care programs because that position has, in their words, “no political support.” Well, according to the most recent polls, 80% of the population thinks that the government ought to guarantee health care for
everyone, and furthermore regard it as a moral obligation. That tells you something about people’s values. But there’s “no political support.”

Why? Because the pharmaceutical industry is opposed, the financial institutions are opposed, the insurance industry is opposed, so there’s “no political support.” It doesn’t matter if 80% of the population regard it as a moral obligation: That doesn’t count as political support. [Chomsky 2005]

“Throughout the West, the past 25 years of polls… have indicated a strong desire for Westerners to protect the land and water and air with strict environmental laws and regulations. However, they vote for federal candidates who are on the other side of those very issues. And I believe that division, that gap, that dichotomy is caused by money, and portraying of some candidates in very bad light and other candidates in very good light. Thus, confusing voters to such a degree that they end up voting for people who don’t actually do what the majority of voters want.” [Pat Williams, quoted in Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 88]

If American democracy is maintained through elections, but these elections do not ultimately produce representatives who actually represent the views and strive for the wellbeing of their constituents, we may legitimately ask in what sense is American democracy actually democratic.

In this era of politicians disseminating self-referential images of themselves and the political process that bear little resemblance to reality, how much influence do citizens hold on who represents them and how they are represented? Can citizens decode these manipulative performances and understand the underlying social structures to make informed political decisions? Trends in our educational system are not promising:

Over the last 25 years, dominant discourses of economic competitiveness, academic basics, and accountability have driven national education policy in the
United States and several other liberal democracies. While embracing the rhetoric of democracy, this trend has actually crowded out policies and practices oriented toward civic education for democratic citizenship. Now more than ever, our schools overwhelmingly seek to create the economically competent or adaptable worker, not the democratic or intercultural citizen. The practical consequence of such trends has been the eclipse of subjects and teaching methods that impart the skills and dispositions of democratic citizenship, by the subjects and teaching methods suited for imparting standardized academic knowledge. Much of the latter is justified by a discourse in favor of so-called “lifelong learning”—arguably a euphemism to train flexible labor for capital. [Levinson 2005: 329]

The trends in our political system are not promising either: “What is not well understood by the American people is the substantially lawless extent to which the political parties launder hundreds of millions of dollars throughout their labyrinth of state and local party committees” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 116). Given that: (1) the American educational system is geared towards producing “adaptable workers” rather than “democratic or intercultural systems,” (2) individuals generally rely upon “predigested knowledge packets” for informing themselves on issues not specifically related to their work or hobbies, (3) images have assumed a central role in the processing of information, (4) politicians commonly hide their financial and sociopolitical connections to groups and individuals when it is advantageous for them to do so, this produces a climate in which money buys the images that form the basis for political decisions by citizens, rather than a working knowledge of political issues. Recall that Dean avoided a picture of himself signing the civil unions bill because, according to the press, it could have damaged his chances as a presidential contender; in the next section, we will see how Dean for America went from frontrunner to sustaining irrevocable damage from an unflattering media image.
Putting DFA in Context

So far, we have seen that American elections are ritual sociodramas that have been shaped by historical events. Factors that have shaped elections include the dominance of political parties, development of propaganda techniques and industries, the declining role of economics as a rallying issue, changes in media and journalistic practices, changes in election laws, a shift in the corporate funding of campaigns towards Republicans, changes in computer software enabling new exercises of power (e.g. gerrymandering), and the alliance between the Christian Right and the Republican Party. These factors seem to explain the sociocultural environment in which DFA operates. It becomes more understandable why DFA seeks to reform the Democratic Party instead of allying themselves with a third party, and why the Democratic Party began facing a crisis in electability in the late twentieth century.

In addition, it has been shown that we do not live in a “knowledge society” where the availability of information automatically translates into a nation of polymaths. Instead, domains of knowledge have become increasingly specialized, knowledge is generally devalued culturally, and strategies of knowledge-sifting are often employed even within one’s own area of specialized knowledge (Ungar 2003). Also, the mental processing of knowledge has come to increasingly rely upon compelling imagery rather than systems of reasoning (Artieri 1996). The domain of politics is no exception to these trends; campaign advertising utilizes images and narratives which are “a self-founded production that makes asking what there is beyond the produced image less important” (Artieri 1996: 56). These knowledge/imagery packets are readily available and decipherable, yet for those seeking a more robust understanding of the workings of government, far fewer are in “prior possession of specific conceptual anchors and tools… critical for processing further information in that domain” (Ungar 2003: 333). Politics has become an area of specialized knowledge, where so-called “political junkies” have developed strategies of
knowledge-sifting consisting of distinct media-consumption patterns. This knowledge gap not only means that “You start talking about issues, and [people] blank out” (C. Rodriguez 2004), in the words of one DFA member, but also that a single clip of a candidate appearing “unpresidential,” disseminated widely and frequently enough through media outlets, can have an inordinate influence on voting practices.

Yet there is more to this story than just a failed bid for the White House. The prominent role the Internet is already assuming in the upcoming 2008 presidential is due in large part to the innovative use the Internet by DFA (Westcott 2007). In the next section, I will place DFA’s Internet use in historical context, finally setting the stage contextually for an examination of the history of DFA itself.

**DFA: The First Internet Political Campaign?**

While the Internet is not the whole of DFA’s organizing (Mooney 2003), it had a significant role in each of the five organizational issues. Dean’s campaign has been called “The first ‘Internet’ political campaign” by some (Carpenter 2004: 5-6). There have been other political campaigns that made use of the Internet before Dean, even as far back as 1986 (Foot 2002: 3-4), but Carpenter lists several differences between DFA and these previous election campaigns:

In contrast to previous campaigns, it was less about creating an online presence (brochure website)

More about creating an online social movement using online networking tools (blog, meetup, lists, etc.)

Opened up control of the message

Trusted, accepted and expected their supporters to craft the movement [2004: 6]
As we will see, Carpenter is correct in asserting that Dean’s approach contrasted greatly with previous uses of the Internet in election politics in these ways (see Figure 1).²²

Figure 1: Process Topics on Blog for America Posts, March 2003 to January 2004
(Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 12). Reprinted by permission.

Even though “[d]uring the 1996 presidential election all of the major presidential candidates had Web sites” (Green & Pearson 2005: 5), interaction was minimal. Green & Pearson note that “[o]ne study of the 1996 U.S. elections found 75% of candidate sites used interactive features, such as e-mail addresses, on their sites, but none of the candidates at that time used the Internet to have public discussion with citizens” (Green & Pearson 2005: 5; citation removed; also see Foot 2002: 4-5). Cornfield (2004) writes: “The novelty of the Web site as a form of expression attracted sufficient attention in the mid-to-late 1990s to suggest that constructing one for a campaign might be a good publicity vehicle” (p. 23).
Green and Pearson mention another study of Internet-use in election politics, this one done in 1998, with similar findings: “Kamarack’s analysis of the 1998 U.S. senatorial and gubernatorial races found most sites in the form of ‘brochure-ware’, simply informative pamphlets in electronic form. Only a small number of candidates with Web sites solicited online donations” (Green and Pearson 2005: 5; citation removed). Furthermore, Foot (2002) cites another study which “found that more than two thirds of Senate and House candidates had sites in 1998, and that nearly one third accepted online contributions” (p. 5). One notable success story from this time period was Jesse Ventura, who used a website and e-mail listserv to win the Minnesota gubernatorial race in 1998 (Rice 2004: 4).

In 2000, John McCain used the Internet for fund-raising purposes in the Republican presidential primary, “[b]ut when McCain’s campaign fizzled, so did some expectations for the Internet. During the 2000 Presidential election, George W. Bush and Al Gore created websites, sent out e-mail updates, and accepted online donations, but they still ran their campaigns in a conventional manner with the added use of technology—but not defined by it” (Rice 2004: 5; also see Trippi 2004: 59). While both Democrats and Republicans were limited in how they used the Internet at this point in time, Republicans far outranked Democrats when it came to voter e-mail addresses; Republicans had 1 million nationwide, while Democrats had only 70,000 (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 105). In 2000, “[t]he current trend in both popular and scholarly discourse [was] to downplay, if not reject outright, the revolutionary impact of the Internet on democracy” (Foot 2002: 3). Campaigns during the 2000 election generally did not make concerted efforts to promote their website URL (Cornfield 2004: 24); “By the 2000 cycle, the publicity limitations of the Web site had become apparent, and the novelty value was ebbing” (p. 23).

However, during the 2000 election, there were some promising signs of the Internet being utilized to a greater degree, often (arguably) to promote democratic ideals. Foot identifies five
ways that the Internet was used for mobilization purposes in 2000: “civic promotion, issue
promotion, candidate promotion, vote swapping, and protest” (2002: 14). Both the DNC and
RNC were the victims of hackers during the 2000 election cycle (Cornfield 2004: 1). The
NAACP was able to rapidly readjust the calling schedules of their phone bankers based upon
early returns (p. 1-2). Al Gore learned from the Internet that Bush’s margin of victory in Florida
had narrowed, resulting in Gore challenging the results shortly after conceding (p. 2). Complaints
from Florida voters were able to be collecting rapidly via e-mail (p. 2). A lawyer from Chicago
sent an e-mail to thirty friends that quickly snowballed into a concerted effort by thousands to
bombard the media with messages that Gore should concede (p. 2). ABCNEWS.com solicited
anonymous contributions of election campaign “shenanigans” by users, and published many
stories featuring them, thus allowing the public a new venue of participation. In addition, a
website called “Web White and Blue 2000” was co-produced by several rival campaigns and
political groups to create an opportunity for online debate (Foot 2002: 9).

Meikle (2002) notes a change in the nature of the Internet overall, labeling one ‘Version
1.0’ and the other ‘Version 2.0.’ He contrasts the former from the latter by saying that the Internet
is moving from an open system to being a closed system (p. 10-11). “A close system Internet is
the e-commerce holy grail, and for a time it seemed that every search engine and service provider
was trying to turn itself into a portal, or one-stop Net shop, closing the system as much as it
could” (p. 10). He elaborates:

In the sense in which I used the terms, Version 1.0 offers change; Version 2.0
offers more of the same. Version 1.0 demands openness, possibility, debate;
Version 2.0 offers one-way information flows and a single option presented as
‘choice’. Version 1.0 would try to bring the new space of virtual possibility into
the world as we know it; Version 2.0 would take the world as we know it –
politics-as-usual, the media-as-before, ever more shopping – and impose it upon

This trend of one-way information flows was applicable to politics as well. Meikle did a survey of political websites in 2002 and found that not much had changed from the earlier brochureware websites:

Survey the sites of Australian, British, or US parties and you’ll find Version 2.0 [that is, transmissional model] interactivity in action….The transmissional model of interactivity is dominant – we can read speeches, sift through media releases, watch video clips and ads, play games, and of course contribute money. But we can contribute little else. The conversational dimension is close to nonexistent. Instead, there’s a conscious effort to apply the tried-and-tested models of broadcast politics and information control, of image and spin, to the new medium. This involves all the forms of interactivity, but not the feature which is most important to a Version 1.0 [that is, interactivity model] Internet. Political parties online are, in fact, very much part of Version 2.0 – their tight management of information flow and participation is a micro-level example of the web as a closed system. [Meikle 2002: 43]

He goes on to discuss some specific websites in American politics at that time that continued to utilize the transmissional model over the interactivity model:

Some US sites, such as that of Al Gore’s presidential election campaign, makes more concessions to the conversational dimension, offering a limited forum. But even this is still closer to the jukebox model than to a real debate – the visitor to Gore’s site could *endorse* an idea, but not *contribute* one; could agree or disagree, but not discuss. At Bush’s campaign site the ‘chat forums’ section linked to audio clips at the ‘George W. Bush Radio’ page of
Similarly, the ALP’s petition page is mainly about registrational interactivity, about capturing our feedback on an issue we didn’t propose ourselves.

Let’s imagine that the gains for a party in hosting such a forum might be outweighed by the costs – staff would need to be paid to moderate and maintain the discussion areas, and responding to messages could be time-consuming. Even this excuse, though, doesn’t entirely explain the reluctance of parties to open themselves up to communication. [Meikle 2002: 44; also see Trippi 2004: 5]

There is also a non-Western example to be found. Roh’s 2002 election in South Korea “borrow[ed] methods that NGOs had come to call their own. Roh’s much celebrated community of mostly mid-20 to mid-30 aged supporters and the Rohsamo (‘Roh lovers’) website, which allowed people to vote on his cabinet selections, made ostensible and effective use of the internet and the so-called ‘young generation,’ both of which every sector of society has attempted to mobilize” (Levine 2004: 91; also see Emerson 2003). There was a slightly greater effort to promote candidate websites in 2002 than in 2000 (Cornfield 2004: 24).

**DFA History: The Rise of Dean for America**

Howard Dean and his three brothers were born into an affluent family and grew up in the Hamptons. His parents were members of the Maidstone Club, an organization that excluded minorities. While describing himself as “a solid conservative” during high school, the political movements of the 1960s were an inspiration to Howard Dean that later transformed him politically and personally: “After a post-high-school year in England in 1966, Mr. Dean shrugged off many trappings of his background, including the Republicanism that his father preached at home. He grew his hair long, experimented with marijuana, played guitar and harmonica,
switched from khaki to denim, cut his hair short again and emerged liberal, antiwar and resolutely Democratic” (Lyman 2003). During his college years, he specifically requested to have black roommates (Dean 2003b: 17-8).

After college, Dean spent 10 months skiing and working odd jobs in Aspen, Colorado before returning to New York to work as a stockbroker’s assistant, and two years later, manage a small mutual fund. Finding his Wall Street job unsatisfying, Howard Dean disappointed his father by deciding to pursue a career in medicine instead. At Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, Howard Dean fell in love with and married Judith Steinberg. In 1981, a doctor who evaluated Howard Dean wrote: “Howard is a very solid resident, a good teacher, intellectual in his approach, who performed well in his third year… His major problem continues to be one of impulsiveness” (Lyman 2003).

While attending medical school, Howard Dean worked on Jimmy Carter’s re-election campaign. “Soon afterward, he wandered into a presentation by a University of Vermont professor, Thomas Hudspeth, about revitalizing Burlington's waterfront with a bicycle path” (Lyman 2003). Dean approached Hudspeth afterwards about getting involved, and together with Esther Sorrell, a local Democratic leader, the Citizens Waterfront Group was formed. Sorrell later convinced Dean to become the Democratic Party’s county chairman, and he was elected to the state legislature in 1983.

“[Vermont] Governor Snelling, who died unexpectedly in August 1991…was succeeded in office by the Democratic lieutenant governor, Howard Dean, an internist who continued to practice medicine until he became governor” (Leichter 1993: 74). Shortly after, Vermont was attracting “national attention … in part because of its high profile physician-governor, Howard Dean. A ‘friend of Bill’s,’ Dean was at the time vice-chair of the National Governors’ Association (he became its chair in July 1994), a de facto expert on health care reform, and a frequent commentator in the media and before congressional committees” (Leichter 1994: 79).
However, “Governor Dean was blunt and outspoken. He frequently upset his top aides by lashing out at aggressive reporters or snapping at political opponents” (Lyman 2003).

In 1997, Dean went to the White House to tell Al Gore that he planned to run for president in 2000. However, he decided against this in early 1998 because of his family’s disapproval and a poll of Vermonters that showed they did not like the idea of him campaigning for president while serving as governor (Graff 2001; Dean 2003b: 105).

In 2000, Dean was nearly unseated as governor for his support of gay civil unions (Lyman 2003; Carter n.d.). That same year, George W. Bush won the presidency in one of the closest, most contentious elections in recent years. Debates raged over voting irregularities, everything from “hanging chads” to a “felons list” which seemed to disproportionately target black voters (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004, chp. 2), finally culminating in the U.S. Supreme Court halting all recounts and handing the presidency to Bush along partisan lines, using legal reasoning that disregarded precedent and took the unusual step of saying it should not be used to establish precedent (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 66-72). For these reasons, many Americans—mostly Democrats—questioned the legitimacy of this election.

In late 2001, Dean established “Fund for a Healthy America,” a Political Action Committee (PAC), to fund political travels and contributions. This led to speculation about whether he planned to run for president (Graff 2001).

Meanwhile, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Scott Heiferman, the founder of an online advertising agency, saw a “city of strangers” become “a network of neighborhoods that were connected by grief and caring” (Castrone 2004), and he began pondering the importance of community. Besides 9-11, he got the idea to start Meetup.com from two additional sources. First, he was inspired by Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone*, which claims that American social relationships have been on the decline. Second, when he saw the movie *Lord of the Rings*, he was struck by how many people came together over a particular topic. He said: “my
girlfriend, who is a 'Lord of the Rings' geek, took me to the midnight showing of the movie premiere. In hundreds of cities, people were gathering, people with instant camaraderie who were chatting about their common interests. 'I thought, why aren't there more of these kinds of things? How would they organize? Shouldn't it be possible?''' (Castrone 2004). Meetup.com launched in June 2002 with 400 topics (Fergus 2003). The most popular topic around this time was witches (Castrone 2004).

That same year, Joe Trippi, the man who later became Dean’s campaign manager, was formulating ideas of his own from different personal experiences. “Joe Trippi was a burned-out Democratic operative who had fled Washington for California. Working as a marketing consultant for dot-coms, he was awed to learn how millions of computer whizzes had designed the Linux operating system through a free-form grass-roots collaboration and taken on Microsoft Corp.’s Windows. He wondered if a political campaign could work the same way” (Cummings 2003; also see Trippi 2004).

Howard Dean decided not to run for reelection as governor in 2002. Appleman (2002, in Dean 2002) writes: “Early in 2002 Gov. Dean engaged in substantial campaign-type activity, including four visits to New Hampshire and two visits to Iowa in the first three months of the year. He emphasized three basic themes: fiscal responsibility, health care, and early childhood development.” Dean made the first formal overtures towards running for president on May 29, 2002, by filing the paperwork to establish Dean For America (Milligan 2002). He was the first Democrat to formally declare his intention to run for president. His campaign was seen as a wildcard at first; one political analyst wrote: “The former governor of the nation’s second least populous state might be thought of as having little or no chance, but Dean’s liberal policies and his strong opposition to the war in Iraq have given him considerable attention that may serve him well, especially in the small number of caucus states” (Abramson et al 2003: 4). Dean’s campaign at the beginning had $157,000 in the bank, a staff of seven and 432 supporters
nationwide (Castrone 2004). Bobby Clark, a campaigner staffer who join in January 2003, said that both Howard Dean and Joe Trippi realized at that early juncture “that we could never do enough on our own - that with so little money and so little staff, if this was going to happen, it would be because the American people rose up and did it themselves” (Sawyer 2004; also see Trippi 2004: xvii, 82). When a Meetup.com staffer suggested adding politics to their list of topics, they found Dean supporters to very interested (Castrone 2004).

By January 2003, Dean had received financial contributions from many California democrats (Wildermuth 2003). During this month, the number of staff in Dean’s campaign increased from seven to ten (Sawyer 2004).

In the very beginning, Dean’s vision of a more satisfying culture was articulated on the podium. On February 21, 2003, Dean said in a speech: “I need your help. I need your help. We're going to change this party and then we're going to change this country, and we're going to take back the White House, and we're going to balance the budget, and we're going to have health care for everybody, and we're going to have an America with its best institutions-- right up to the cabinet that looks once again like America” (Dean 2003a). Dean meetups first began this month, with approximately 100 supporters scattered across 11 cities (Associated Press 2003a).

By March 2003, Dean had been endorsed by actor Martin Sheen, who played the president on the television show West Wing (Marinucci 2003a). Dean spoke in California this month, and found that his words emotionally resonated with Democrats:

“WE WANT OUR COUNTRY BACK!”

“I don’t want to be divided anymore,” I said.

“I don’t want to listen to the fundamentalist preachers anymore.”

“I want America to look like America.”

People were weeping quietly. Some were openly sobbing. Others were screaming. Standing on their chairs and stamping their feet.
Outside in the corridors, people were spontaneously writing checks and throwing them at my staff. They lined up, they mobbed us as we tried to make our way through the lobby. Some came away crying again, my aides later told me, because they’d been able to touch my suit. [Dean 2004a: 1-2, emphases in original]

In addition, Dean’s blog started this month. Mathew Gross was a blogger from Utah who posted on the popular blog MyDD.com in support of Dean. Feeling that Dean should have a blog of his own, he volunteered to help the campaign start a blog of its own. Howard Dean recalls: “A young man, Matt Gross…drove from Utah to Vermont to set up our first Call to Action blog on the Internet. (I didn’t even know what a blog was back then.) He didn’t call first. He didn’t check to see if he could have the job. He just showed up” (Dean 2004a: 18). The blog at that time was entitled “Howard Dean 2004 Call to Action Weblog,” though it would later be renamed Blog For America. Concerning this early incarnation of the blog, Gross said: “It was honestly an ugly little thing when it started off” (Weiss 2003a). The first blog entry, dated March 15, 2003, sought to get readers to tell their friends to go his website and donate money. The second entry, posted later that day, read in part: “The most important thing you can do right now is let everyone know about this blog. Email your friends, other Dean supporters, and anyone else you think might be interested, and let them know to check this site. Please post a link on any blogs or websites that are appropriate, and make the link prominent on anything you maintain yourself. Get the word out!” (Trippi 2003).

April 26th, 2003, was anniversary of Civil Unions bill being signed into law in Vermont. A week before, Senator Rick Santorum made some anti-gay remarks to the Associated Press. In response, an e-mail petition was sent out to Dean’s mailing list that asked people to sign their name in condemnation of the remarks and contribute 26 cents in addition to the whole dollar
amount. This resulted in 12,000 signatures and $25,000 within three days of the e-mail being
sent out (Carpenter 2004: 8-9).

By May 2003, Dean For America had more formally allied itself with Meetup.com. When Joe Trippi was hired as campaign manager that spring, he spent a week trying to convince other DFA staff to put a link to Meetup.com on Dean’s website, and finally succeeded (Balz 2003). Approximately 7,000 out of over 22,000 DFA members registered on Meetup.com met in “hundreds” of cities nationwide for a special national meetup event (Marx 2003). In addition, a DFA spokesperson said that more than $1 million has been raised through the Internet, and at least $250,000 of it came from Meetup.com events (Fergus 2003). Dean’s success with Meetup.com was so unexpected that it caused problems for the company; in May 2003, Meetup.com vice-president Myles Weissleder was quoted as saying: “In the political realm, the only problem we're starting to have is accommodating large groups of people to convene…That's a challenge for us because we designed Meetup to cater to groups from half a dozen up to two or three dozen people, but these Dean Meetups are approaching a hundred people and up” (Laverty 2003; also see Trippi 2004:95-6).

In June 2003, MoveOn.org held an online primary, and Dean won with 44% of the votes (Weiss 2003a). That month, the Dean campaign also created the Generation Dean website (abbreviated to “Gen Dean”) to appeal to youth voters (Von Drehle 2004).

By July 2003, it was being reported that Karl Rove wanted Dean to win the primaries because he thought Dean would lose to Bush (Eilperin 2003). That same month, a business entrepreneur and Dean supporter began selling Dean For America silk and cotton scarves (Garchik 2003). During the second quarter of 2003, the campaign raised $ 7.6 million, approximately $4 million of which came through the Internet (Balz 2003). Web design decisions may have played a part in why so many contributed online:
As cyber things go, it's not especially high-tech: a picture of a bat, posted on Dean's website, www.deanforamerica.com during the June fund-raising drive. Supporters who reloaded the campaign website every half-hour could watch the donations grow, like mercury rising in a thermometer. When it was first proposed, some staff members thought it was, frankly, a little cheesy.

But ever since the June drive ended, die-hard supporters have posted pleas on Dean's campaign "weblog," begging the staff to "bring back the bat." Soon enough, it returned, as a cheerleading tool for one of the campaign's more audacious ideas: last month's "Cheney Challenge," in which the campaign famously earned nearly $500,000, surpassing the $300,000 Vice President Dick Cheney took in at a South Carolina fund-raiser. [Weiss 2003a]

By August 2003, the Dean campaign was taking a more active role in the meetups; “For this month's gatherings, Meetup coordinator Michael Silberman sent out information packets, instructing Meetup volunteers to hand-write letters in support of Dean to individual New Hampshire voters” (Weiss 2003a; also see Belasco 2003). The campaign also paid for a television advertisement to air in New Hampshire and Iowa, states chosen because of their early primary dates, in which he criticized the job losses under Bush and urged Americans that “it's time to take our country back” (Belasco 2003). On August 14, Dean played blues songs on guitar and harmonica at a Des Moines club, including a song written by musician and supporter Hawkeye Herman entitled “Dean For America” (Leibovich 2003). Also during August 2003, Dean went on his “Sleepless Summer Tour,” which involved visiting 10 cities in four days. Seattle was one of these 10 cities, and more than 2,250 people signed up through the Internet to attend (Welch 2003). The tour ended in Bryant Park in New York City on August 26 (Burke 2003); his speech there generated controversy because he spoke in front of a graffiti-covered wall (Scotto 2003). 23
In early September 2003, deanforamerica.com featured a “Stop Ashcroft” petition that garnered 60,000 signatures. At a New Hampshire rally, Dean challenged Ashcroft’s patriotism. Majority leader Tom Delay responded by calling Dean a “cruel, loudmouth extremist”; in private, the Dean campaign was reported to have been “gleeful” about the attacks (Martin 2003). Later that month, Dean found himself in Iowa, answering the questions of undecided voters (Branigan 2003). September 2003 was also when Wesley Clark declared his candidacy.

In November 2003, Wesley Clark’s campaign claimed to have overtaken Dean’s campaign in terms of web traffic. Dean’s campaign disputed this claim (Weiss 2003b). Clark’s campaign website copied many elements of Dean’s website, including a “Gen Clark” website to target young voters similar to “Gen Dean” (Von Drehle 2004). During this month, Dean did intensive campaigning around the country, trying to win support from the elderly, African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics (Smith 2003). Also, “[i]n late November, 1,400 Dean supporters registered for six-hour training sessions, billed as ‘organizing summits,’ in 13 cities across the United States, a step in trying to meld a disparate, irregular army of Dean partisans into a political machine” (Mooney 2003). In addition, “[i]n a November dry run of the interactive capabilities of the campaign, Dean invited supporters to decide whether he should opt out of public financing (thereby freeing the campaign from spending caps). About 105,000 of the 600,000 who were contacted took part in the plebiscite, the campaign said. That's about an 18 percent response” (Mooney 2003).

By December 2003, Zephyr Teachout, the director of Internet Organizing for Dean for America, was conducting an intense 58-day campaign of 60-towns in 30-states to rally support for Dean (Peterson 2003). This same month, an 86-year old Denver woman died of heart failure and mourners were instructed to make donations to DFA in lieu of paying their respects with flowers (Rocky Mountain News 2003). Howard Dean was endorsed by Al Gore this month; “Within hours of the endorsement becoming public on Monday, according to Dr. Dean's
campaign manager, Joe Trippi, 15 to 20 members of Congress indicated their readiness to join the fold. Traffic on the campaign's Web log hit a record, at 30 comments a minute, and Internet contributions intended as ‘thank you’s’ to Mr. Gore reached $183,173.50 by 7 p.m.” (Wilgoren 2003; also see Marinucci 2003c). However, after this endorsement, other Democrats began severely criticizing his campaign, calling it “an aberration” and “permanent plagues on the Democratic Party” in some cases (Dean 2004a: 23). In addition, while media coverage of Dean was quite negative during this month (Center for Media and Public Affairs 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d; Toronto Sun 2003), Dean supporters continued writing letters of support to newspapers (St. Petersburg Times 2003; Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 2003).

Also this month, Howard Dean appeared with performers Bonnie Raitt, David Crosby, Phoebe Snow and Dee Dee Bridgewater at a San Francisco concert called “All I Want for the Holidays is My Country Back” (Marinucci 2003c). Dean also made a few public relations blunders this month, including being introduced at an Iowa high school by a student of their rival high school, and speaking about Latin American relations in Miami without mentioning Cuba (Reid 2003). In mid-December, a DFA “home page statistic…[which is] updated automatically, indicated that… 41,670 had taken the extra step online and ‘pledged to attend their primary or caucus.’ That's about 8 percent of the number of individuals who have ‘joined’ via the Web page” (Mooney 2003). In Washington DC, light poles had “Howard Dean For America” posters on them (Moreno 2003). In late December, Dean said that Osama Bin Laden should be presumed innocent until proven guilty, and then recanted a few hours later due to adverse reaction on the Internet and news wires (Oswald 2003).

In January 2004, Blog for America readership was at an all-time high (see Figure 23). Between October 15, 2003 and February 4, 2004, Blog for America received an average of 2,722 comments per day, and over 6,000 on high days (Carpenter 2004: 18). Dean was also doing respectably in terms of funding, though he would find himself in debt soon (see Figures 2, 24).
By January 1, 2004, DFA had sent out 115,000 hand-written letters to potential voters in New Hampshire and Iowa (Sawyer 2004). In early January, another person died and instructed mourners to make donations to DFA (New York Times 2004).

![Figure 2: Chart of Dean’s campaign receipts and disbursements](chart.png)

**Figure 2: Chart of Dean’s campaign receipts and disbursements**

Constructed by author from FEC (n.d.a) data.

On January 7, the Dean campaign handed out fliers at Clark event accusing Clark of being “pro-war” and not being a “real Democrat,” leading to back-and-forth criticisms from campaign spokespersons (Weiss 2004). Clark was not the only one taking shots at Dean; a conservative anti-tax group in Iowa ran a commercial ran a commercial in which “[a] grey-haired couple ask each other about Dean's proposal to raise taxes. The husband replies that Dean should ‘take his tax-hiking, government expanding, latte-drinking, sushi-eating, Volvo-driving, New York Times reading...’ The wife takes over: ‘Body piercing, Hollywood-loving, Left-wing freak show back to Vermont where it belongs’” (Amiel 2004).24 A secret PAC was even formed by Democrats that spent $1 million on attack ads in Iowa (Dean 2004a: 24).
During this month, “Jim Moore, a senior fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society and former CEO of GeoPartners Research, just moved to Burlington to take a position as director of the Internet and Information Services Department for the Dean for America campaign…. RoweCom founder Richard Rowe, who recently vacated that same post, is trying to devise a way to distribute the software tools used by the Dean campaign for fund-raising and organizing to other Democratic campaigns.” (Kirsner 2004).

In mid-January, Dean’s “Perfect Storm” effort was underway in which volunteers from other states traveled to Iowa to canvas for Dean; “[a]rmed with literature, bumper stickers and passion, they are spreading out to small towns and universities and local schools, walking door to door to politely address independents and registered Democrats, handing out pins and bumper stickers, writing letters, and putting up lawn signs in the hard, cold -- and lawn-less -- Iowa earth” (Marinucci 2004; also see Tankersley 2004; Finney 2004). Dean campaigned in Iowa with celebrities Martin Sheen and Rob Reiner, traveling the state in a bus caravan. He criticized other Democratic candidates as Washington insiders, and was criticized by his rivals by claiming that he does not support workers and lacks national security credentials (R. Rodriguez 2004).

Volunteers in Iowa set up “Camp Dean”: “Camp Dean, as they call it, sits in a small forest outside Indianola. It really is a camp, complete with Spartan (but heated) wood cabins, rickety metal bunks topped with dingy mattresses, and a 50-yard walk up a snowy hill to reach the bathroom” (Tankersley 2004). One participant said: “political campaigning was an art and most of us who went to Iowa had no idea how to go about it. We needed local direction and we did not have it” (Cudahy and Gill 2004). As the Iowa caucuses drew near, the competing Democrats felt a growing tension between distinguishing themselves as the better candidate and also maintaining an image of running a positive campaign, which Dean’s campaign seemed as affected by as the others; one pair of reporters noted: “For three successive days, Dean volunteers have distributed critical material at Kerry's events, although it was not until Saturday that the opposition research
was labeled ‘Paid for and Produced by Dean for America’” (Connolly and Harris 2005). Despite DFA’s best efforts, Howard Dean ended up calling John Kerry to congratulate him on his victory in Iowa (Healy 2005). Mere days later, polls and news reports were declaring the end of Dean’s frontrunner status (Spencer 2004; Financial Times 2004a), and a website called DeanGoesNuts.com went up featuring remixes of Dean’s infamous concession speech (Financial Times 2004a). Dean supports tried their best to salvage their candidates’ reputation by writing in to newspapers (Sacramento Bee 2004), but to no avail. The campaign turned their attention to winning New Hampshire on January 27 afterwards, but only came in second place (Cudahy and Gill 2004). On January 28, Joe Trippi quit the campaign after Howard Dean told him that a new chief executive officer, Roy Neel, would be placed above him (Johnson 2004a). According to a CBS commentator, “[Trippi’s] departure is a big deal. He was a popular, almost cult-like figure” (Tyndall 2004).

**DFA History: The Collapse of Dean For America**

In February 2004, Dean’s campaign was on its last legs. One reporter at a Michigan political rally wrote: “Yet for all the grassroots energy, the proceedings bore a veneer of defensiveness. While Howard Dean's Democratic rivals focus on the seven US states voting today, the former frontrunner is the only candidate to have visited Michigan twice in the past week for what some might call the former Vermont governor's last stand” (Daniel 2004). In the Albuquerque primary, DFA poll watchers received icy glares from non-supporters, and were not able to check off a single name from their list of 250 names who expressed interest in supporting Dean (C. Rodriguez 2004). Attrition and funding became problems; “[f]irst his campaign manager, then his national campaign chairman left. By the beginning of this month, the candidate who raised $ 41m in contributions found himself virtually broke, forced to suspend pay to many
campaign staffers” (Cornwell 2004). On February 18, Dean officially announced his withdrawal from the race (Postman 2004; Cornwell 2004).

The collapse of the Dean campaign came as quite a surprise to many; “never before had a relatively unknown candidate emerged to become the solid frontrunner by all normal measures well before the first voters caucused in Iowa –only to collapse …quickly and… thoroughly” (Bernstein 2004: 1). Why this may have happened has been attributed to numerous factors. To help sort through these factors, I will use Lofland’s typology as a framework.

Did DFA’s beliefs contribute to the collapse? Dunnan (2004) asserts that they did: “When the idea that you have become part of a new and different campaign is repeated so often that you internalize it as a mantra, you can accept directions from people who are supposedly experts in politics, even if they fly in the face of your own common sense” (p. 15-16). According to Shirky (2005), there was a false belief in the inevitability of Howard Dean’s victory that did not accurately reflect or predict voter behavior for a variety of reasons. This belief was a result of being successful by many of the ordinary measures such as getting press coverage, raising money, exciting people, and getting potential voters to claim they would vote for Howard Dean (Shirky 2005: 229; Figures 2, 24), as well as new measures like Meetup attendance (Figures 20-22, 25, 26), e-mail addresses (Figure 29), and blog readership (Figure 23). As we will see, this unwarranted optimism may have produced bad data at the grassroots level, which affected important decisions by the campaign headquarters such as how much money to spend.

Did the way that DFA organized itself play a role in the collapse? While DFA’s style of organizing did offer many advantages, it was not without its weaknesses as well. Bernstein claims that a contributing factor may have been that he “brought in a considerable number of volunteers and staff with little or no previous political experience” (p. 9; also see Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 2). One editorial went further and claimed that “[t]he result [of the campaign’s ‘Internet wizardry’] was a self-congratulatory echo chamber populated
by thousands of untrained, highly dedicated Dean partisans” (Cudahy and Gill 2004). This claim would suggest that the Internet can impede one’s understanding of society beyond one’s social network. One blogger agreed with this assessment, and took it yet another step further: “We know well from past attempts to use social software to organize groups for political change that it is hard... because participation in online communities often provides a sense of satisfaction that actually dampens a willingness to interact with the real world. When you’re communing with like-minded souls, you feel like you’re accomplishing something by arguing out the smallest details of your perfect future world, while the imperfect and actual world takes no notice” (Clay 2004, quoted in Green and Pearson 2005: 6). This person believes that not only can the Internet impede one’s understanding, but also one’s motivation for political action. However, while the inexperience of many Dean volunteers is clear, it does not seem to be the case that online interaction impeded offline political activities (Kerbal and Bloom 2005); record Meetup.com numbers and willingness to participate in the Iowa Perfect Storm project attest to this. On the other hand, we may doubt whether these forms of political participation were actually well-suited to influence voters (Shirky 2005: 230-1). In addition, the Dean campaign’s focus did seem to prematurely shift towards defeating Bush rather than defeating Democratic rivals (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 20; see Figure 3), which may suggest that there is some truth to them being a “self-congratulatory echo chamber.” The “echo chamber” problem should not be conceived of in terms of the “virtual world” and “real world,” as DFA was quite successful in getting people away from their computers; however, simply because a DFA group is meeting face-to-face at a Starbucks or even goes canvassing does not mean, prima facie, that they have avoided the problem of being “a self-congratulatory echo chamber populated by thousands of untrained, highly dedicated Dean partisans” (Cudahy and Gill 2004). Many DFA members themselves admit that the Iowa Perfect Storm was rife with organizational problems (e.g. Draper 2005), and perhaps because of this, training has been a major focus during the Democracy for America period.
In addition to these organizational problems, there was also infighting within DFA headquarters, particularly between Joe Trippi and Kate O’Connor (Trippi 2004: 162; Dunnan 2004: 278-280), which may have led to a lack of communication and coordination at the heart of the campaign. Trippi, for instance, claims he was kept in the dark about Al Gore’s public support of Howard Dean until the last moment, despite his position in the campaign (Trippi 2004: 173-4).

Did the causes under which DFA came into existence play a role in its demise? A case for this may be made as well. Dean was motivated by anger and criticized Democrats who supported the war in Iraq, which allowed him to rise out of obscurity, but which also limited his options later on. The role of an “insurgent candidate” was one which existed before Dean came along, which he filled admirably but had difficulty being seen as anything else by those outside his campaign (Dunnan 2004: 270-273). Exit polls from New Hampshire showed that Dean only did well with three groups of voters: those against the Iraq War, those who labeled themselves as very liberal, and those who had decided on a candidate more than a month before the primary (Shirky 2005: 231). In addition, his attempts to court mainstream politicians may have undercut
the insurgent candidate image that made him attractive to many of his supporters (Dunnan 2004: 310).

Did DFA’s strategies play a role in the collapse? Some have criticized Dean For America for using negative advertising (Marlantes 2004), though his rivals used plenty of it against him as well (Dean 2004a: 23-4). One supporter claimed that Dean and Gephardt had engaged in a political “murder-suicide” in which negative campaigning had ruined each other’s chances (MacQuarrie 2004). Joe Trippi (2004) suggested that Dean’s decision to seal many of his records from his time as governor gave the appearance of hiding something unseemly from the public (p. xiii). Dean’s personality has also been cited as a factor; some claim that Dean’s reputation as “gaffe-prone” and an “angry candidate” may have turned off voters (Cornwell 2004; Marlantes 2004; Dean 2004a: 22). Dean may have acquired personality traits that served him well as a doctor, but were not well-received in the political arena (Dunnan 2004: 298-9). He eschewed carefully scripting out his speeches (Dunnan 2004: 74), which was a public speaking strategy that may have furthered this reputation. In addition, his campaign has also been criticized for mismanaging its money (Marlantes 2004). Shirky (2005) contends that Dean canvassing produced unreliable data about voters for the campaign because political newcomers who strongly identified with the campaign and frequently made lifestyle sacrifices had “strong incentive not merely to misrepresent reality, but to actually misunderstand it. If you’re on a mission to change the world, you have an incentive to believe it’s changing” (p. 238). He further contends that this “happy talk and mutual affirmation” (p. 239) led to “convincing their candidate to misallocate precious or even irreplaceable resources” (p. 239). By this, he is referring to the way Dean’s campaign spent the majority of the record-breaking campaign funds it had raised by the beginning of 2004, which Shirky claims reflected their fervent belief that they would win the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries and get a financial boost from these victories (p. 237). He
further claims that they were so assured of victory that Dean did not even have a concession speech prepared (p. 237), although as previously noted, this was not unusual for Dean.

Did the reactions to DFA contribute to Dean’s failure in the primaries? Some have made this claim, arguing that the timing of important successes lead to particular reactions that were to the detriment of DFA. Dean himself claimed: “we did too many things for too long that were right, and so we ended up being the front-runner when the fatigue developed…. The big thing is I peaked too soon” (Wilgoren and Archibold 2004). One result of Dean’s early lead was that Al Gore was willing to endorse him, something he likely would not have done for a candidate who did not appear to have a chance of winning. This endorsement made Dean a target for the other Democratic hopefuls (Dean 2004a: 132; Dillon 2003: 191-2; Margolis 2003: 20-1; Dunnan 2004: 209; Trippi 2004: 176). These candidates were not alone in attacking Dean, however. Dean was also being attacked by the DLC (Dunnan 2004: 174-5, 301). Also, shortly before the caucuses, an old video of Dean criticizing the caucus process on a Canadian television show was uncovered and used by his opponents (Dunnan 2004: 187; Trippi 2004: 181). Some have claimed that Dean For America was negligent when it came to preparing for the damage that the video could cause (Marlantes 2004). And, of course, another factor was the infamous scream, which one humor writer described as follows: “Dean, reacting to his Iowa loss, gives an emotional concession speech that ends with him making a sound like a hog being castrated with a fondue fork” (Barry 2004). Dean supporters point out that he sounded fine to those in the crowd, but he was speaking into a microphone designed to filter out background noise, giving the illusion of shouting without apparent reason (Draper 2005). Mainstream media and blogs repeated this scream numerous times immediately afterwards without providing this background context. Although the media can certainly be blamed for this, Dean’s speaking strategy that day was undoubtedly a failure in that he failed to anticipate the (arguably unfair) media reaction. While the scream incident seems to be a popular explanation for DFA’s collapse, negative media coverage of Dean was already
pervasive before the scream incident (see Figures 4, 39), and this may have affected public opinion (see Figure 5). For instance, the Center for Media and Public Affairs conducted a study that found that “98 percent of the network evening news coverage of Democratic Presidential candidates John Kerry and John Edwards was positive...The study also found Howard Dean received more critical coverage over the same time period, at 58 percent positive” (Center for Media and Public Affairs 2004a). Most Dean supporters saw negative news coverage as the primary cause (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 5). In addition, Margolis (2003) predicted that New Hampshire would be almost a “must-win contest for both Dean and Kerry. It would be hard for either of them to argue that a loss was anything other than a rejection by neighbors” (p. 23). This “rejection by neighbors” must have been especially devastating right after the campaign’s humiliating defeat in Iowa.

![CMPA Studies of Network News Coverage](image)

**Figure 4: Chart of Positive Network News of Dean**
Compared with other Democrat Candidates. Constructed by author from CMPA data (Center for Media and Public Affairs 2004a, 2004b, 2004c).
While different commentators have focused on different elements of Dean for America’s failure to win the Democratic nomination, we need not reduce the collapse of the Dean campaign to a single factor. Instead, as I have shown, a confluence of different factors came together to derail Dean for America (for more commentary, see: Dean 2004a: 21-4, Ch. 5; Dunnan 2004; Trippi 2004: xii, xviii, Ch. 9).  

DFA History: Democracy for America

When Dean announced his withdrawal from the race on February 18, 2004, “[t]he core of Dean’s vaunted Internet forces hit the campaign Web site in large numbers to emote, think big thoughts and make a last-ditch attempt at cyber-campaign love. Many blamed the media and the
Democratic establishment for Dean's collapse. Others opined about how to keep Dean's message alive’’ (Postman 2004; also see Birchall 2004). There was immediate speculation over which Democratic candidate, if any, Dean would endorse after his withdrawal (Mishra and Johnson 2004a; Marllantes 2004; Birchall 2004; Borger 2004; Cornwell 2004), and some Dean groups independently chose another candidate to support (Mishra and Johnson 2004). However, many Dean supporters were unenthusiastic about the other candidates, and an online petition was made to keep their personal information from being given away to another campaign (Postman 2004).

Howard Dean made it immediately clear that “his main priority seems to be to turn his existing organization into a permanent fixture on the political scene, outside the Democratic political hierarchy” (Cornwell 2004); Dean For America would be transformed into a new grassroots organization that “would press for the causes for which Mr. Dean had argued: fierce opposition to a foreign policy built on military muscle, and the weaning of the Democratic party off corporate special interest funding. The organization would also back local candidates with similar political outlook” (Borger 2004). Many Dean supporters seem to have reached the same conclusions independently:

In New Hampshire, unsung organizers and volunteers (led by the incomparable Karen Hicks) were not satisfied merely to identify voters for Dean: They worked to build sustainable networks of activists that could elect Democrats at the local level.

Already, their efforts are paying dividends: A 69-year-old Dean volunteer from Manchester is running for state representative, and she and other recovering Deaniacs are putting together a campaign plan. In Bedford, some Dean volunteers have decided to run for office together. In Nashua, a Dean volunteer who lives in public housing has used her new connections with
neighbors to form a tenants association to better communicate with the housing authority. [Keefe 2004]

At the end of his campaign, Dean For America had run up a $400,000 debt. Dean pleaded online for donations from his supporters to “ensure that Dean for America has the funds to shutdown its operation in a professional manner” (Financial Times 2004b).

After leaving the campaign, Joe Trippi created a new website called “Change For America” on February 4, which some news accounts claimed was to have Dean supporters flock to him instead of Dean. “His threefold purpose is to beat President Bush, elect a Democratic Congress, and support local candidates who subscribe to the campaign ideals he helped frame for his former boss and other political outsiders he has backed during his career” (Johnson 2004a).

Trippi’s website included a link to Dean’s message asking supporters to help Dean settle his $400,000 debt. However, Dean’s strategy at that point included trying to get enough votes so that he would have delegates, and Trippi was critical of this strategy on his site (Johnson 2004a).

Many Dean supporters were said to be confused by this situation, unsure of whether they would have to choose between the two (Houston Chronicle 2004). Trippi claims that he is still on good terms with Dean, and that news stories that claim otherwise are laughable (Trippi 2004: 120).

On February 26, Howard Dean announced to a crowd of 500 supporters that he would specify the details of his plan for the rebirth of DFA on March 18; at that time, he “offered few details other than to say his group will engage in grass-roots democracy, support candidates ‘who tell the truth,’ fight special interests, and push for progressive policies such as universal health insurance, early childhood development, and equal rights” (Johnson 2004b). He also said: “You have revitalized politics, and a lot of times people give up when their candidate doesn't win, and they say, 'OK, that's all I can do.' They go into hibernation. You can't afford to do that because we are fortunate enough to live in a country where politics really matters. And politics, from now on, is going to be ours” (Johnson 2004b). In spite of his words, the fervor for Dean began to weaken
even in his home state of Vermont, and it seemed possible at the time that he may have lost even that primary (MacQuarrie 2004). He did end up winning Vermont, however (CNN.com n.d.).

On March 15, Joe Trippi made headlines at Wired magazine's fifth annual Rave Awards party. He took home an award in the politics category for his role in Dean For America (Vigil 2004).

On March 18, Dean announced his new group, as promised, in Seattle; “[t]he new group plans to use its interactive Web site…to recruit 1,000 candidates for local office, train staff to support them and raise money for Mr. Kerry and for others, like the House members who had backed Dr. Dean's bid” (Wilgoren 2004). The name of the new group was finally unveiled: Democracy for America. “In an interview afterward, Dr. Dean said that he was close to signing a book contract and planned to support himself largely by making paid speeches, since he would not take a salary from the new group, which will have an annual budget of about $2 million” (Wilgoren 2004). On his website, Dean elaborates four goals of Democracy for America:

First, Democracy for America will be committed to strong, sustained grassroots involvement in the democratic process. Today, half of Americans don’t even bother to vote. People see what the problems are, but they are cynical about the system and prospects for change. Only through acting will people recognize the power they have to change this country.

Second, Democracy for America will be committed to promoting an America where candidates and office holders tell the truth about policy choices and stand up for what they believe. The era when politicians equivocate about matters as fundamental as war and peace must end.

Third, Democracy for America will be committed to fighting against the influence and agenda of the two pillars of George W. Bush’s Washington: the far
right wing and their radical, divisive policies, and the selfish special interests who for too long have dominated politics.

Fourth, Democracy for America will be committed to fighting for progressive policies, like health care for all; investment in children; equal rights under law; fiscal responsibility; and a national security policy that makes America stronger by advancing progressive values. [Dean 2004b]

By May 2004, the new DFA was “backing candidates across a broad spectrum of lower-order political races for Congress and state offices. The idea is to organise to try to beat Republican incumbents wherever they are” (Gumbel 2004). The first batch of 12 candidates selected for DFA support were called “the Dean Dozen” (Graff 2004a; Graff 2004b). The second Dean Dozen was announced on May 26, and Howard Dean announced that a new Dean Dozen would be selected every other week (Dean 2004c).

In November 2004, Dean announced his interest in the position of Democratic National Committee chairman. Some saw him as being the right person to revitalize the DNC (Thies 2004). Joe Trippi, however, decided to support Simon Rosenberg over Howard Dean for the position (Financial Times 2005). Despite this lack of support from his old campaign manager, as well as most established Democratic senators, congressmen and governors, Howard Dean was buying dinner for Terry McAuliffe and discussing his new position in February 2005, thanks to “a critical mass of the 447 members of the national committee [who] liked Dr. Dean” (Perdum 2005). Howard Dean’s brother, Jim Dean, was selected as the new leader of DFA since his new role would take up most of his time (Howard & Judy Dean 2005); on February 14, 2005, Jim Dean introduced himself on Blog For America, wishing everyone a happy Valentine’s Day (Jim Dean 2005).

Ned Lamont, the Democratic Senate nominee for Connecticut in the 2006 election, was endorsed by DFA over incumbent Joseph Lieberman, largely because of Lamont’s anti-Iraq War
stance and Lieberman’s pro-war stance on it. In May 2006, DFA “sent out an e-mail… asking for contributions for Lamont, [and] raised $70,000 in the first day” (Haigh 2006), $20,000 of which came in the first three hours (Frontrunner 2006). In late May, Florida Democratic gubernatorial candidate Rod Smith attended a house party thrown by a DFA-Tampa Bay member (Times Staff Writer 2006). Also that month, DFA Tracy did phone banking and canvassing to help Jerry McNerney beat Richard Pombo, and Jim Dean attended a two-day training event in Portland, Oregon (Winkelman 2006).

In June 2006, Jim Dean was quoted in the press criticizing Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Chairman Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) for saying that the DSCC would back Lieberman even if Lamont won the Connecticut Democratic primary (Duran 2006). That some month, DFA members in Temecula Valley put on a public forum about a proposed hydroelectric power plant (Press Enterprise 2006).

In July 2006, Jim Dean sent out an e-mail to DFA supporters updating them on the progress made in the Lamont campaign: “Three months ago, Joe Lieberman led Ned Lamont in the polls by more than 40 points. But you took a chance on Ned and thousands of DFA members around the country pitched in to help his insurgent campaign. The result? Two new polls show that Ned Lamont has surged into a narrow lead over Lieberman” (Pierce 2006). During that month, DFA’s fundraising for Lamont went from $70,000 (Buck 2006) to $80,000 (Pierce 2006). Also in July, about 25 DFA members in Temecula attended a meeting of the Board of Supervisors to ask for reforms to the electronic voting system (City News Service 2006). In addition, San Diego for Democracy put on a training session at DemocracyFest (U.S. Newswire 2006).

In August 2006, Ned Lamont headlined a fundraising event for DFA (Haigh 2006). Also that month, Jim Dean appeared at statewide organizing conference put on by Democracy for Missouri (Rosenbaum 2006), and Rep. Charlie Justice appeared at a DFA-Tampa Bay meeting to
discuss homeowner’s insurance (James 2006). Other DFA groups put on Iraq War discussion forums that month (Brubaker 2006).

In September 2006, Rep. Steve Nickol appeared at a DFA-sponsored property tax forum entitled “Funding Our Schools: The Property Tax Dilemma” (Berg 2006; Marroni 2006a, 2006b). Also this month, DFA members got involved with GOTV (get out the vote) efforts (Atkins 2006; Roll Call 2006).

Discussion/Conclusions

Historian Jeffrey Rubin writes: “Social movements offer a unique view of politics because they create new forms of organization and representation at the intersections of daily life and formal institutions. Social movements establish these new forms amidst and out of multiple cultures, economies, and political practices, often in ambiguous and contradictory ways, and the processes of their creation are deeply historical and cultural” (Rubin 2004: 106). In addition to considering the intersections between formal institutions and daily life, it is important to consider how technology intersects with these processes as well. As previously stated, Technology-Actor Network (TAN) theory “invoke[s] the idea that, rather than being seen as artifacts alone, technologies are best conceived of as interacting human, organizational, and artifactual entities and practices. Particular elements both constitute and are constituted by the networks in which they participate” (Hakken 1999: 23). When we consider the role of the Internet for an Internet-using SMO like DFA, we cannot consider the technology apart from the cultural and historical context in which it exists. In this chapter, I examined American democracy, the use of the Internet in electoral politics, and DFA itself from an historical perspective because the historical dimensions of power are interrelated to the cultural dimensions of power (Yelvington 1995).

A historical look at American democracy reveals a complex, changing system of power. American elections are ritual sociodramas; “Political ritual and political rhetoric in modern
cultural contexts are designed and organized events, created for mass consumption and orchestrated for quantitative effects. The process of manufacturing these sociodramas is nothing less than symbolic manipulation by design, playing on deeply held beliefs in the electorate” (McLeod 1999: 360). While elements of this symbolic manipulation could be found in previous centuries (e.g. the presidential elections of 1824 and 1828), it was only in the twentieth century that the modern public-relations industry developed to influence public opinion more systematically. After New Deal social programs were implemented, economic issues gave way to a variety of social issues that could not be as easily made into lasting coalitions and coherent platforms. It became often easier to make one’s opponent appear negatively than to find an effective message. Television increased the focus on the image of the individual candidate, as well as increased the amount of money required to run a competitive campaign by charging for campaign ads. Changes in campaign finance laws and gerrymandering made elections less competitive. The Christian right and large industries began favoring the Republican Party in the late twentieth century. These historical factors combine to create an election system where the two dominant parties collaborate with the public-relations industry to create mediated images of individual candidates and their opponents that target the heterogeneous cultural beliefs of voters. In this system, disseminating these images requires vast amounts of money, and “[a] candidate with no ads simply doesn’t exist” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 5). Since 1976, the presidential candidate with the most money has won (p. 6), and who has the most money gets decided in the “wealth primary” of rich contributors a year before any votes are cast (p. 4). Facing declining support of wealthy contributors, the entry of the Religious Right into the voting booth, as well as widespread cultural beliefs in individualism, distrust of government after Watergate, and the “Great Backlash,” the Democratic Party started losing more and more elections in the late twentieth century, triggering a crisis about the direction of the party.
It was within this context that Dean for America’s successes and failures become understandable. Under the system as it existed up to that point, Howard Dean’s lack of funding and his support of civil unions made him appear unelectable. However, Joe Trippi encouraged Internet usage that went beyond the “brochureware websites” of earlier campaigns, allowing new ways for members to contribute their time and ideas as well as their money. This created a social movement organization that provided Dean with enough funding to be competitive without making deals with large industries. DFA was successful in using the Internet to attract progressives distraught by Republican electoral victories and policies, and ensuring that online discussions did not take the place of offline activism. However, the level of enthusiasm among DFA supporters may have been counterproductive in some ways, such as producing overly-optimistic data during canvassing, and allocating campaign resources based upon this bad data. In addition, negative media coverage and attacks from Democratic rivals, PACs, and the DLC hurt his image in the Iowa primary, culminating in the scream incident that signaled the beginning of the end for Dean for America. DFA had shown how the exorbitant cost of running a successful election can be overcome through the Internet. It also shows, however, that overcoming the “money primary” still leaves the problems of an image-based, knowledge-averse society in which “issues [are] too crosscutting and too numerous for either party to combine them in a way that could easily satisfy a following” (Patterson 2002a). While 189,000 Meetup participants and 35,000 blog commenters (Carpenter 2004: 22) are impressive participation numbers for an SMO, changing electoral outcomes requires a plurality of votes—which, in turn, would require even greater changes to the electoral system than DFA’s already-impressive fundraising and organizing achievements.
Chapter 4: What are DFA’s Beliefs?

For social movements to achieve any sort of collective action, “they must…devise and put forth some kind of definition of their situation or beliefs about what is true, moral, and possible” (Lofland 1996: 99). What, then, are DFA’s beliefs about is true, moral, and possible?

A glimpse of Democracy for America’s beliefs can be seen in a handout I was given of “People-Powered Chants.” DFA Tampa Bay found out that Howard Dean was coming to their area for a fundraiser, so they put together an event to show support for him, which included a handout of chants to use. These chants included:

- I’m powered by Howard, I’m powered by Howard
- Tell me what Democracy looks like, THIS is what Democracy looks like! Tell me what Democracy sounds like, THIS is what Democracy sounds like!
- What do we want? CHANGE! When do we want it? NOW!
- Dean speaks for me! Dean speaks for me! Dean speaks for me!
- We want our country back! We want our country back!
- The doctor’s in the house!!! The doctor’s in the house!!
- Dean, Dean, the mean machine, Help us make our Democracy clean!

These statements show a sense of empowerment by Howard Dean, and a sense that they are working towards a revitalization of American Democracy, which has become “unclean.” Dean supporters believe that “Dean was willing to speak unpopular truths and would change the direction of country” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 2); 83% strongly
felt that Dean gave them hope that the country could be changed, and 69% felt Dean was the only candidate to stand up to Bush (p. 12).

**Prognosis, Diagnosis and Rationale for Change**

To qualify as an SMO, an organization must put forth some change-oriented beliefs to act upon. These change-oriented beliefs may be divided into three necessary components: a diagnosis of what problems they face, a prognosis of what the solutions to their problems are, and a rationale explaining why their involvement is required (Lofland 1996: 103).

Howard Dean’s beliefs are not easily pigeonholed as liberal or conservative. Despite his liberal reputation, Dean’s record during his time as governor of Vermont shows him to be a centrist; he adopts liberal positions on many social issues, but he is fiscally conservative (Rosenthal 2003; Sharma 2003). One journalist described Dean’s politics as follows: “He's too liberal for conservatives and too conservative for liberals. He supports gay and lesbian civil unions and gun rights. He instituted a form of socialized medicine in Vermont and supports the death penalty. He opposed American military involvement in Iraq but supported it in Kosovo and Afghanistan” (Hallett 2003; for more on Dean’s political views, see Rogak 2003). Dean himself does not try to deny his centrism, and even bases his diagnosis for change within it: “I have always felt comfortable in the middle; it’s where most reasonable solutions are found. One of the most troubling things about the Bush administration is its substitution of ideology for thought….The far left was guilty of this during the sixties. Now the far right, through the Bush administration, seeks to impose its vision on a middle-of-the-road America” (Dean 2003b: 18-19).

The content of Howard Dean’s writings reveals elements consistent with Wallace’s description of a revitalization movement:
a revitalization movement is defined as a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture…the persons involved in the process of revitalization must perceive their culture, or some major areas of it, as a system (whether accurately or not); they must feel that this cultural system is unsatisfactory; and they must innovate not mere discrete terms, but a new cultural system, specifying new relationships as well, in some cases…[Wallace 1956: 265]

Howard Dean writes about his prognosis thus: “Our cause is the Great American Restoration—the restoration of our ideals, our communities, and of our nation’s traditional role as a beacon of hope in the world” (Dean 2003: ix). He speaks of the post-World War II era as an ideal time, in which the war experience, GI Bill, Social Security, Medicare, and public education all “sent a message that America was one big community, and this bound people together” (Dean 2004a: 36-7). The “high point” of this era was Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty and Civil Rights act; Dean says that these both “expressed a true Democratic vision: that America was a country that would use its wealth and accumulated goodwill to better the lives of all its citizens” (Dean 2004a: 37).

However, this ideal period “soon became clouded with ugliness. The rapid changes of the 1960s fed their own immediate backlash, which was exploited, with great success, by Richard Nixon” (Dean 2004a: 37). Nixon “played the race card in every possible crass and crude way” (p. 38), thereby “ensuring the splitting up of America into two nations—black and white” (p. 38). Nixon was moderate in comparison to Reagan, however, who “used his persuasive charm to bring the extreme Right into mainstream American politics. The effect of this was to split asunder…everyone outside of the upper reaches of the upper middle class” (Dean 2004a: 39). Wealth was being redistributed towards the richest corporations and away from the middle class
And with this wealth came power, as well as “increasing disempowerment of those without the means to buy the ear of their government” (p. 40).

The Democrats, in Dean’s view, failed to provide a clear alternative. They, “just like the Republicans, emerged from the 1990s pretty much the captive of big money interests…While accepting generous corporate donations, they failed to build standards of corporate accountability or energetically go after corporate crime” (Dean 2004a: 43). And, by “using appeasement as a political strategy, [the Democrats] have solidified the Republican hold on power” (p. 77). Democrats had made themselves into “Republican-lites,” according to Dean.

Dean claims that while George W. Bush was “straightforward” and relatively-moderate by Texas standards, he his politics have radically shifted to the right since becoming president (Dean 2003: 176); “He’s pursued a radical agenda. He’s led us into an unnecessary and costly war and is taking the country off an economic cliff with a reckless $3 trillion tax cut program. Meanwhile, he’s cutting critical services” (Dean 2003: 106). He sees these tax cuts as “part of a master strategy to starve the core programs that have shaped our country’s safety net for sixty years” (Dean 2003: 108), and also a “[repudiation of] the notion that we might have collective responsibility for one another” (Dean 2004a: 44). And, in response, “ordinary people became demoralized. They stopped voting and checked out of politics, because they didn’t think the political system was about them anymore. They didn’t think their government was really here for them. To a large degree, they were right” (Dean 2004a: 44).

According to Dean, the Democrats have no one to blame but themselves for not standing up to Republicans (Dean 2003: 125-6, 176-7). By reforming the Democratic Party, however, people will reengage with the political system. Dean saw Dean for America as doing “nothing less than shifting the balance of power in politics back to the American people” (Dean 2003: 131). He writes: “I am tired of our country being divided by race, by economic status, by gender,
and by sexual orientation….There is so much that we can accomplish if we are united as one national community” (Dean 2003: 158).

To accomplish this, Dean suggests that what is needed is a new “politics of meaning” (Dean 2004a, chp. 4). He sees it as problematic that the “Republican noise machine” has consistently reframed terms used in political discourse to fit their views, resulting in “the mainstreaming of an anti-democratic, anti-pluralistic, openly theocratic agenda” (Dean 2004a: 92). He feels that exposing this “smoke-and-mirrors style of communication” (p. 93) used by Republicans while getting Democrats to adopt “a political program based on saying what we mean, doing what we say and bringing real change to the American public” (p. 93). Democrats, he says, do not need to conceal their values, which he identifies as “equality, fairness, opportunity for all, pluralism and freedom, and religious faith coexisting with the separation of church and state” (p. 93), because they “are the same basic values shared by the vast majority of Americans” (p. 93). At a tactical level, this means:

we have to be organized, and our organization has to be sustained. We can’t think just from election to election. We need to build a forward-thinking, long-term presence in the states, in grassroots organizations, in think tanks and foundations, on the Internet, and over airwaves so that our own smart and honest “noise machine” can plug into the conservations going on in the American electorate [Dean 2004a: 153-4]

Dean supporters seem to agree, although often with harsher descriptions of their political opposition. One online supporter said: “This country has been bullied and battered by the Neocon movement, and it's time to break the cycle of abuse. In order to do that, we need to learn to use the computer for organizing and coordinating a public alternative to the status of Corporate Serfdom we have been delegated and conditioned to accept. If we don't acknowledge this struggle for what it is, we have already lost” (Stevens 2004). Another wrote: “We are mostly Democrats,
but want to work outside of the Party so we can say and do things the Party can't. Don't forget. our system is a pluralist system, so until we have a Party free of multinational corporate lobbying and financing, the Democratic Party is the best we have. In fact, with the new DNC forming, we should articulate to its leaders that the Party has to begin weaning itself from corporate pimps and become a party FOR THE PEOPLE, again” (Finora 2004).

In addition to trying to create their own “noise machine,” DFA believes that the elections themselves are becoming suspect, as this chat excerpt shows:

8:21 PM [EagerRob_KY] your next thesis should be about stolen elections
8:22 PM [ncp] A dictatorship, I think. :)
8:22 PM [EagerRob_KY] exactly - and that's why we're where we are already

Howard Dean highlighted this issue by appearing in a documentary about Diebold’s voting machines, showing how easy it was to change the vote (Schell 2004).

In one case, a “Second Declaration of Independence” was even posted to a DFA forum:

A SECOND DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

When political parties succumb to corporate businesses; when the executive branch secretly organizes to desecrate our environment; when the Congress passes deceptive laws that enact the opposite of what is written; when the government takes away our civil rights, under the guise of making our country more secure; when the judiciary acquiesces to the indefinite confinement of any man, woman or child from any country on the planet, without charge and without an attorney, by the U.S. Government; the people themselves must organize to make the government become a constitutional democracy once more. From rural towns to smog-ridden cities, we, the people, rally to renew and maintain our Constitutional freedom; preserve the public commons; legally
enforce our environmental protection laws; halt the looting of our economy by
corrupt national and transnational corporations; prevent the continual increase in
military weaponry and eliminate the corporate control, by outwardly legal means,
of military spending; redress the balance between individual and family taxes and
corporate taxes; prohibit the Congress from incurring any increase in the
insurmountable national debt, now totaling more than $7 trillion dollars, which
our children and grandchildren cannot afford to pay; secure a U.S. Government -
not a corporate - Social Security System for all and a U.S. Government - not a
corporate - Medical Care System for all; preserve women's political, economic
and reproductive rights; protect our national and state old forests and renewable
forests, parks, wetlands, wilderness areas, waterways, wildlife refuges, shores
and coastal lands, and the plants and animals on these habitats; ensure that no
group of persons can be discriminated against; institute a federal voting system
by paper ballots and a vote counting process that is beyond the reach of partisan
state officials; scrupulously guard and keep the Constitutional separation of
religion and government; legislate an investment by taxation to enable every
person to study in public - not religious - preschool, primary, secondary and
higher education schools and universities and regulate the testing of students and
faculty; and guarantee that no man, woman or child on the planet can be
indefinitely confined, without charge and without an attorney, by the U.S.
Government, we make A Second Declaration of Independence - not to be merely
signed by political leaders, but to be rallied behind with economic boycotts by
the common people of these United States of America. [user 495995 2004]

This laundry list of grievances encapsulates the sorts of complaints one is likely to hear from
DFA groups and members across the country.
There is at least one bastion of the sort of community DFA seeks to rekindle from America’s past, or at least their cultural imagining of it. As Lofland (1996: 131) points out, some SMOs imbue particular localities with special cultural meaning. For DFA, Vermont qualifies as a symbolic place; it is, for instance, “known to SMO members” (p. 131) and “different from revered places in the culture at large” (p. 131). Dean writes: “I think whether people live in a blue state or a red state, most of us want to live in the kind of society that exists in Vermont—where people take care of one another and where both parties acknowledge that government has obligations to ordinary people. Most important, we recognize that we have obligations to one another” (Dean 2004a: 122). Dunnan writes: “[Dean] began with a vision of America as having a sense of community that survival through blustery winters necessitates in Vermont. When he discovered that wasn’t so, Dean created a tableau to spread out before voters: the idyllic community that he believes exists in Vermont. That vision, and his anti-war, anti-Bush stance, resonated with those who were paying attention early in the process” (Dunnnan 2004: 250). In his speeches on specific policies, Howard Dean often made frequent reference to “what we did in Vermont” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 285). On Blog for America, one commenter even considered moving there:

To all my Vermont blogger friends:

My husband and I have already decided that if we ever leave NM, Vermont is on the short list of places to live. It's only drawback is that it gets so darn cold in the winter! But, I'm beginning to think that a good LL Bean wardrobe might rectify that problem.

I've visited your state, and it is BE-YOO-TEE-FUL! And the more I learn about it, the more I like it. We may be going to Burlington in May for the marathon (hubby is the runner in the family), and maybe get a better feel for the area. [NM*Mom*for*Dean 2004]
This is not to say that Vermont is mentioned as the gold standard of community for local DFA groups; however, when Vermont is mentioned by DFA members, it will likely not be with a critical voice.

The Internet is also viewed by DFA as an integral part of the solution. Silver identifies four foci for critical cyberstudies: (1) explorations of online interactions; (2) discourses about online interactions; (3) factors that facilitate and inhibit access to online interactions; and (4) digital design issues (Silver 2000). Since beliefs about the Internet would fall under the second category, we might legitimately ask: What does DFA believe about the Internet? Howard Dean answers this question in his first book: “I believe that the Web is now proving to be a particularly valuable tool for people who care about their communities and who are engaged positively in the political process in the broadest sense. By its nature, the Internet is interactive, a place for discussion and debate and the free exchange of ideas and information” (Dean 2003: 117). Joe Trippi went even further, claiming that the Internet is “the only tool capable of returning Democracy to our system” (Trippi 2004: 189). A member of Blog for America wrote: “We like the internet because it isn't controlled by the GOP” (Charles*in*Montana 2005). In addition, Zephyr Teachout adds a distinction between the “Web” and the “Internet”: “Teachout…. seems to take pleasure in going low-tech. ‘There's the Internet, and there's the Web,’ she says. ‘The Internet is far more important than the Web.’ She's talking about unsexy stuff such as listservs and Yahoo! Groups. ‘Geeks don't like them, but grandmas do. They're essential,’ she says” (Cone 2003).

**Locus and Amount of Change**

SMO beliefs about change vary in where the locus of change lies and to what degree the social order needs to be changed. In other words, does the organization believe the entire social order needs to be scrapped, or will merely changing parts of it suffice to accomplish their goals?
Is the movement focused on change at the individual level, the local level, national level, global level, or even beyond (belief-system permitting) (Lofland 1996: 105)? Looking at the words Dean employs in his writings (Figures 6 and 7), nothing too radical is apparent. DFA’s beliefs are reform-oriented rather than revolutionary.

Figure 6: Concordance of Howard Dean's First Book on Amazon.com
(Amazon.com n.d.a) © Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates. All Rights Reserved.
As indicated right in their movement name, DFA is a movement for America. Its ultimate target is reform at a national level, but members see reforming the Democratic Party as the first step to achieving this goal. They are “highly critical of the Democratic Party in a number of areas. But they are not ready to give up on the party – rather, they want it to reflect, to a much greater degree, their own liberal and progressive positions” (p. 7). Their feelings in this area seem to reflect Dean’s own views: “I thought: Our people have to start acting like Democrats again” (Dean 2004a: 6, emphasis in original). Dean claims that he is from the “democratic wing
of the Democratic party.” The Republican wing of the Democratic party, according to him, is the Democratic Leadership Council (Dean 2004a: 64). Dean supporters seem to agree with this assessment; one called the DLC the “Democratic Losers Council” (trinite 2005).

DFA’s locus of change may be thought of as multi-step plan, where one change will help bring about the next change. This belief in their group acting as agents of change of sequentially-increasing magnitude can be seen in how supporters on Blog for America saw President Bush as their main opponent when other Democratic hopefuls still stood in the way; “After Dean’s unexpected online fundraising success to close the second quarter of 2003, references to the president took off. Flush with a sense that, as Joe Trippi said, they were making history, Dean bloggers were running against the incumbent well before Dean started to look like a contender” (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 20). This belief, while seemingly responsible for shifting their focus prematurely, also ensures that Dean supporters remain active in politics.

**Adversary versus Exemplary**

The beliefs of SMOs vary in how much they expect their members to be microcosms of the changes they seek to bring about (Lofland 1996: 106-7). Members may only be expected to enact change at the level of discourse, or SMOs may have “beliefs asserting that ‘the future is now’ and seeking to exemplify as well as advocate changes in the lives of SMO members” (p. 107).

Of the more radical “existential variations” in SMO beliefs listed by Lofland (1996, Chp. 5)—that is, ways in which SMO beliefs differ from those of mainstream society—DFA’s most notable variation is the exemplary character of DFA’s beliefs. DFA members do exemplify the changes they seek to bring about in several ways. First, they take Howard Dean’s message of “You have the power” to heart and remain politically involved. One Deaniac wrote on a DFA message board: “My frustration is as great as yours, but that won’t solve anything for anybody.
Taking positive constructive action is the only thing that will alter the stance of a deceived and delusional public” (Gruber 2004). Another wrote: “The lesson here is we need to take Gov. Dean's message and Take Back this Country. We can all form all kinds of groups, have meetings to form more groups, have a meeting to form a committee to see about forming another committee. It seems to never end. Forming meetings to have groups to form committees only does so much, you HAVE to get out of the offices, out of your comfy chair and hit the campaign trails!” (Watson 2004).

**Degree Totalistic**

There is variation in the degree to which SMO beliefs are: “1. explicitly formulated, 2. internally integrated with one another or systematized, 3. comprehensive in the scope of realities to which they refer, 4. applied with a sense of urgency and imperativeness that is accompanied by aroused affect and promulgated authoritatively, 5. intensely concentrated on and systematically integrated around certain central propositions or evaluations” (Lofland 1996: 107). In studying SMOs, we should ask whether they provide a clear, comprehensive framework that is internally consistent according to its own cultural logic, or if they are merely “outlooks” that are “vague, diffuse, subject to less pressure to be observed in action, and less accompanied by high emotional arousal or sense of urgency” (p. 108).

Is it safe to assume that Howard Dean’s values, as spelled out in his writings, are shared by local groups? To determine local group beliefs, I began with the listing of local DFA groups listed on Blog for America. I tried going to each site and looking for some sort of succinct statement of purpose and values, saving each as a text file. Altogether, I ended up with a directory of 152 text files. Using a simple Windows Explorer search, I determined that 132 of these 152 files contained the word “progressive.” By using Concordance (Watt 2004), I determined that the word “progressive” appears 183 times in these text documents. Other
common words include
“candidates” (127 times) and “grassroots” (121 times). Furthermore, when I performed a
collocation on the word “believe,” I found that standing up for one’s progressive beliefs is quite
commonplace. For example, one said: “We are committed to promoting candidates who tell the
truth about policy commitments and choices, and who stand up for what they believe.” Similar
wording was used in Howard Dean’s statement of purpose for Democracy for America, although
these groups’ willingness to use his words in their statement of purpose shows their commitment
to the cultural values he set forth. There were some variations in what issues the different groups
chose to emphasize, yet these visions were overwhelmingly complimentary, drawing upon the
same themes and issues. One eloquent example of a local group’s statement was Democracy for
Rutherford County (in Tennessee):

Mission Statement

The goal of Democracy for Rutherford County is to advocate and
promote progressive political, social and economic ideas, programs and
candidates on the local, state and national levels. We define progressive as
meaning advancing new ideas, creating broader opportunities for all and
furthering America's long, steady march towards a more inclusive and just
society. Our purpose, in short, is to further the basic principles of equality and
justice which we feel are so threatened today.

We believe that progressive ideals represent the highest moral values and
the best traditions of our country. These values include economic prosperity and
justice for all Americans, civil rights, women's rights, civil liberties, fiscal
responsibility, a strong national defense and preservation of our environment.
Fundamental to these values is our commitment to inclusion, non-discrimination
and diversity. We acknowledge the sacred nature of these ideals while strongly
supporting the Constitutional separation of government and established religion, as guaranteed in our cherished Bill of Rights. [Democracy for Rutherford County n.d.]

These values seem to match rather well with Dean’s, suggesting that there are not major discrepancies in the codified core beliefs of the local DFA groups and the founder of DFA.

It may be apparent by now that the writings of Howard Dean and the mission statements of local DFA groups are usually phrased as statements of principle, not as specific stances on more than a handful of political issues. This point has been noticed and debated at least once on Blog for America:

When I talk about politics, I talk about long-term change and social movements. I talk about our political culture and ways to alter it, which will give results REGARDLESS of which party wins the elections. [Bill from UW Madison 2004]

----------------------------

What is this "long term change and social movement." What SPECIFICALLY? I've asked this on the blog previously and all I got were soft-headed responses like "taking back America" and "changing the political culture" which basically doesn't mean anything at all. They are just hollow nice sounding slogans. Organizations have specific concrete goals. Things like: Getting more students of color into college or reducing poverty or providing legal services to refugees or getting the color purple the official color of the state of Arkansas.

And, quite frankly, winning at electoral politics does matter. A lot. This is about power, pure and simple. The right wingers have it - control of Congress, the White House and lot of the court system. And I want to take that power back by taking back control of the WH, taking back Democrat control of Congress and
putting more liberal judges on the bench. That's a concrete, achievable goal.

[David in Boston 2004]

----------------------------------

David, the goals for DFA are outlined in the "About DFA" section. Also, since different states (and even towns) have different needs, it makes sense to "get local" and use DFA goals as a guideline. [Judy 2004]

This last response is crucial. The omission of more than a handful of specific issue stances seems to be intentional on DFA’s part, as the sociocultural context of different locations “have different needs.” We can see another example of it in this DFA member’s online posting about support for third-party candidates:

I am a registered independent and a member of DFA. We are not affiliated with the Democratic party and we intend to support progressives, not necessarily Democrats.

I would say that all the DFA chapters are self directed and reflect the diversity of the local members. The degree that third party candidates are supported may vary. [Waddel 2004]

These seem to be examples of “glocalization”—that is, the “interpenetration of the global and local, resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas” (Ritzer 2003: 193). Ritzer proposes the term “grobalization” as closely-related social process to glocalization: “grobalization focuses on the imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations, and other entities and their desire—indeed, their need—to impose themselves on various geographic areas. Their main interest is in seeing their power, influence and (in some cases) profits grow… throughout the world” (Ritzer 2003: 194). We might then say that DFA’s grobalization process still leaves plenty of room for glocalization in the individual DFA groups. DC for Democracy and DFA-Tampa Bay would both agree on the importance of electing Democrats, and that those Democrats
not be “Republican-lites”; however, these two groups would each decide how to apply these principles to their local areas. As Jett and Välikangas (2004) note, “such a decentralized organization is locally connected and probably better able to anticipate political messages attractive to particular audiences” (p. 18).

Although I lack the data to perform the sorts of statistical evaluations of culture mentioned in Chapter 2, scholarly Meetup studies are informative in evaluating just how much cultural similarity or difference exists over time and by group. Comparing the October 2003 survey study by Williams and Gordon with the January 2004 survey study by Williams et. al, we find remarkable little variation in the average evaluations of candidates between the different DFA groups (Williams and Gordon 2003a: 21-22; Williams et. al 2004a: 27-28). This suggests different DFA groups have culturally coherent domains, “which show a high degree of consensus or homogeneity of knowledge, evaluation, or practice on the part of a population” (Caulkins and Hyatt 1999: 7). The greatest shift occurred with John Kerry, who dropped 0.5 on their 1-5 scale of evaluation. Williams (2003) also gives the results by group for the October 2003 survey study by venue; while she only gives brief descriptions of the results rather than providing the numeric data, this still shows some variation by locality. The DFA Meetup groups in Denver (CO), Norton (MA), and Tulsa (OK) all held favorable views of Ralph Nader, while Huntsville (AL) and Madison (WI) held unfavorable views of him. Not surprisingly, there was almost no variation in the groups when it came to holding strongly favorable views of Howard Dean and strongly unfavorable views of George Bush and Dick Cheney. This study also mentions what the most frequently mentioned political concerns are for each group; all 19 groups surveyed mentioned economic concerns, while 6 mentioned health care, 6 mentioned foreign relations, 4 mentioned the budget, and 4 mentioned war or Iraq. This frequent mentioning of the economy matches with the topics of BFA posts (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 10, Fig. 3; see Figure 8), although I found the low number of mentions of the Iraq War implausible due to its
incompatibility with other findings (e.g. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 3). These studies demonstrate the globalization and glocalization of DFA, where local groups share some commonalities in belief, while differing in others.

Figure 8: Issue Topics in Blog for America Posts
March 2003 to January 2004 (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 10). Reprinted by permission.

Substantive and Institutional Content

SMO researchers have historically classified SMO beliefs into certain categories of belief: liberalism, communism, socialism, anarchism, conservatism, and fascism (Lofland 1996: 116). DFA beliefs seem to fit best into the liberalism category, although there is a certain discomfort with using the word “liberal” among some:

5:05 PM [EagerRob_KY] seriously - the liberal lable is a huge problem
5:05 PM [Orlando] yeah, the word liberal is pretty much a lost cause
5:06 PM [EagerRob_KY] and what i see is - the "leberals" that the GOP have been "taught" to hate - are the framework of the GOP
Liberals let the word get too bastardized  

Whether or not they think the word has gotten “too bastardized,” most would not object to the ideals and issue stances behind it.

Despite Dean’s self-described centrism, Dean supporters tend to be more liberal than other Democrats.27 (For the views of Dean supporters on specific political issues, see Figures 8-12.) “Compared with Democrats in the general public, the Dean activists are much more liberal across a range of issues, more dissatisfied with President Bush and with the direction of the country. Their liberalism stands out even when compared with delegates to the 2004 Democratic convention… Roughly eight-in-ten Dean activists (82%) describe themselves as liberal, compared with 41% of the convention delegates and 27% of national Democrats” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 3), and 20% of people nationwide (Margolis 2003: 15).
### Ideology and Key Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dean Activists (%)</th>
<th>Convention Delegates (%)</th>
<th>All (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War in Iraq</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What to do now</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep troops in</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring troops home</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favor</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>48</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99^</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


**Ideology, Iraq, & gay marriage questions from Aug 2004.

Figure 9: DFA Ideology and Key Issues

### Most Important Issue in Decision to Support Dean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>War in Iraq</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiscal responsibility</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economy/jobs</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay/lesbian rights</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International trade</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents could select up to two issues.

Figure 10: Most Important Issues to DFA Members
### Dean Activists Diverge on National Security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dean activists</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Dems 1</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-emptive force justified?</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often/sometimes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/No answer</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

U.S. foreign policy should...

<table>
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<th>Strongly feel allied interests</th>
<th>78</th>
<th>49</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be based mostly on U.S. interests</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/No answer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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**Figure 11:** DFA Members on National Security Issues


### Dean Activists' Generation Gap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age group</th>
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<td>Wrong decision</td>
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What to do now

| Keep troops | 61 | 48 | 34 |
| Ering troops | 38 | 50 | 63 |
| DK/No answer | 1  | 2  | 2  |
|              | 100| 100| 100|

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<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
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**Figure 12:** DFA Members' Generation Gap

In addition, researchers have also identified a number of institutional realms in which SMO beliefs can operate: economic, political, religious, social class, ethnicity, gender, age, family/intimate relations, education, crime and justice, health and health care, media, military, natural environment, and built environment. Since Howard Dean was governor of Vermont, a presidential candidate, and the author of two books, he has made statements at one time or another dealing with most of these institutional realms. This does not mean that he or DFA members emphasize each equally; the war in Iraq, health care, and fiscal responsibility were the most commonly cited reasons for supporting Howard Dean (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 3). Initially, Dean’s anti-war position came to be so closely associated with his campaign that McClelland (2004) claimed “he could be seen to be part of a greater social movement, an anti-war movement” (p. 65). However, DFA’s commitment to modern American liberalism led Welch (2003) to fear that “the Dean campaign is running the risk of having too many concrete goals and desensitizing its support base to its requests” (p. 13).

**Aggregate Versus Adversary Frames**

Do SMO beliefs conceptualize their problems as being inclusively shared among all the world, humanity, and good citizens, or do they conceive of them in an “us-versus-them” fashion with identifiable adversaries? In the case of DFA, the latter is clearly the dominant framing, as one might expect from a group that seeks to influence elections in a two-party system. There is even a category of Blog For America posts called “Bush Outrages” whose content is self-evident. This attribution of blame is purposeful: “An injustice frame calls attention to a group of motivated human actors who carry some of the onus for bringing about harm and suffering. By defining a ‘they’ who are responsible and can change things, adversarial frames supply the target
for indignation in a way that aggregate frames cannot” (Gamson 1995: 13, quoted in Lofland 1996: 118).

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that BFA’s category is “Bush Outrages,” not “Republican Outrages” or “Conservative Outrages.” Within DFA’s beliefs, there does seem to be an implicit separation between the Republican leadership and the citizens who consider themselves Republican. Howard Dean spoke disapprovingly of how Richard Nixon’s appeal to prejudice divided the nation, thus framing the leadership as adversaries rather than supporters. Dean’s infamous comment about the need to reach out to Southern voters (“White folks in the South who drive pickup trucks with Confederate flag decals”—see Dean 2004a: 118-9; Jenkins 2006b: 471) is indicative of how DFA beliefs lend themselves to aggregate framing more easily when discussing Republican voters than Republican leadership. For instance, in a conversation on a DFA message board, one poster contended that adopting a pro-life position might help win Republican voters over, to which another responded: “Instead of setting the highest goal as winning an election, please say why you and your idea are worthy of consideration by all Americans” (Hilliard 2004, emphasis added). On that same message board, another person wrote: “Perhaps this will make us all more conscious of the fact that we participate in a cause with great power of numbers and embolden us to be more active in support of the cause of fairness toward all and toward objectives that will benefit all people” (user 474563 2004, emphasis added).

The change-oriented nature of SMO beliefs entails identification of a problem, and if adversarial frames are used, blame for this problem may be attributed to particular social entities. If an SMO holds particular individuals or groups responsible, what does their cultural logic then suggest is appropriate treatment of these social entities? SMOs may believe that “They’ have forfeited their right to dignity and respect—and sometimes even to life integrity rights—through their perpetration or complicity in injustice….Hence, it is quite possible for adversarial frames to
create new victims in the name of overcoming past injustice” (Gamson 1995: 14, quoted in Lofland 1996: 118).

Vilification does take place to some degree in DFA. At one meeting I attended, a map was brought out of local voting patterns, and the Republican areas were referred to as the “evil areas.” Online members expressed similar sentiments:

06/20/06 19:15:08 EagerRob_KY: we're in the good fight
06/20/06 19:15:12 ArizoNadia: so that lawfully and through the system we can burn the w house down
06/20/06 19:16:06 ArizoNadia: and take no prisoners
06/20/06 19:16:20 HoustonHeidi: well, I'm not for burning the building down, but stringing the regime up with the bedding would work for me.
06/20/06 19:17:04 HoustonHeidi: or even tying them up in it and setting the bedding on fire would work for me.

In addition, Dean For America’s fundraising efforts were accompanied by images of a baseball bat with the stated goal to “beat Bush” (e.g. Welch 2003: 13), the combination of which leaves open a violent interpretation. Obviously, these sorts of messages are not meant to be taken literally, but they do reveal the intense frustration DFA members feel towards Republicans. One DFA member said that when she canvasses in a heavily-Republican area, she breathes a sigh of relief when no one answers the door. However, the vilification does not extend to viewing Republicans as being entirely lacking in redeeming qualities. Some members described the frustration of dealing with Republican family members, who they presumably find redeeming qualities in elsewhere if not in politics. Another member described herself as a “Recovering Republican,” and once remarked at a meeting: “Oh my God, 99% of my neighborhood is stupid and ignorant like I was.” Yet another member said she wanted to work her precinct to “turn them
into the Democrats I know they really are.” The organizer of DFA-TB once described a need to “Bring our right wing brethren back to reality.”

The necessity of political involvement is further supported by beliefs in the negative consequences of Republican policy-making. “It is widely accepted that the future face of America—if present trends are maintained—will be unrecognizable to the modern day American. It will resemble one of the Central American countries, a so-called ‘banana republic’” (Williams 2005), one supporter writes. A local candidate, seeking DFA’s endorsement, claimed that she thought Bush will try to hold onto the presidency beyond 2008 if he can get away with it. These are two extreme examples that do not reflect the beliefs of all Dean supporters, but does illustrate the extreme end of the “deeply felt revulsion at the direction in which America was headed, both domestically, and abroad” (Dunnan 2004: 13) that is common among supporters.

Foundations for DFA Beliefs

Given that SMOs adhere to a particular set of cultural beliefs, we may ask why they have the beliefs they do rather than other possible beliefs. These beliefs often draw upon longstanding cultural discourses. For instance, like many political groups within the country, DFA will draw upon the Constitution to legitimate their political stances. In June 2006, when the NSA warrantless surveillance controversy was in the news, visitors to a DFA chat site were greeted with the following message: “The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause.”

In addition, SMOs rely upon the culture of the social segment they draw their membership from, both current and potential. Howard Dean was the most popular among the segment of the population Pew categorizes as Liberals (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005b), which they describe in the following way:
BASIC DESCRIPTION: This group has nearly doubled in proportion since 1999. Liberal Democrats now comprise the largest share of Democrats. They are the most opposed to an assertive foreign policy, the most secular, and take the most liberal views on social issues such as homosexuality, abortion, and censorship. They differ from other Democratic groups in that they are strongly pro-environment and pro-immigration.

DEFINING VALUES: Strongest preference for diplomacy over use of military force. Pro-choice, supportive of gay marriage and strongly favor environmental protection. Low participation in religious activities. Most sympathetic of any group to immigrants as well as labor unions, and most opposed to the anti-terrorism Patriot Act. [Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005c: 58]

In contrast, Howard Dean was least popular among the Enterprisers group:

BASIC DESCRIPTION: As in 1994 and 1999, this extremely partisan Republican group's politics are driven by a belief in the free enterprise system and social values that reflect a conservative agenda. Enterprisers are also the strongest backers of an assertive foreign policy, which includes nearly unanimous support for the war in Iraq and strong support for such anti-terrorism efforts as the Patriot Act.

DEFINING VALUES: Assertive on foreign policy and patriotic; anti-regulation and pro-business; very little support for government help to the poor; strong belief that individuals are responsible for their own well being. Conservative on social issues such as gay marriage, but not much more religious than the nation as a whole. Very satisfied with personal financial situation. [Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005c: 58]
Given the beliefs of Howard Dean as described earlier, it should come as little surprise why Liberals liked him and Enterprisers disliked him. In addition, Internet users may hold higher opinions of their ability to influence politics, with which DFA’s beliefs would fit well with, as I shall discuss in Chapter 7.

SMOs may use an idealized past to criticize the present and suggest a model for the future. As previously mentioned, Howard Dean proposed that DFA is created the “Great American Restoration.”

Since SMOs are the named organizations that are part of larger movements towards particular change oriented goals, multiple SMOs tend to form within the same larger movement, and they tend to “pursue closely related and mutually supportive goals” (Turner and Killian 1972, quoted in Lofland 1996:121-2). Which SMOs DFA clusters with is perhaps most clearly shown in an online membership survey, in which the staff of DFA provided members with the following options of which groups they are active in or receive e-mails from (also see Figure 13):

- DNC [Democratic National Committee]
- DCCC [Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee]
- DSCC [Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee]
- Local or State Democratic Party
- MoveOn
- Emilys List
- TrueMajority
- Union (AFL-CIO, SEIU etc)
- PurpleOcean
- WakeUp Wal-Mart
- Planned Parenthood
- NARAL
• LCV [League of Conservation Voters]
• Sierra Club
• Other

From this list, we can see that DFA is ideologically compatible with the Democratic Party, labor rights groups, pro-choice groups, and environmental groups. These are all positions consistent with modern American liberalism.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal media sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democracyforamerica.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political websites</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labor/environment sites</td>
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<td>Democrats.org</td>
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<td>Drugreport.com</td>
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Figure 13: Dean Supporters’ Web Activities

Collective Identity in Cultural Context

SMO cultures involve some sort of collective identity, defined as “the shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests, experiences, and solidarity” (Taylor and Whittier 1992: 105, quoted in Lofland 1996: 128). According to Gamson, collective identity “is manifested through the language and symbols by which it is publicly expressed….It is manifested in style of dress, language, and demeanor” (1992: 60, quoted in Lofland 1996: 128-9).

By what language and symbols do DFA members express group identity?

One way in which DFA members express collective identity is through references to Howard Dean as an authoritative source. The “people-powered chants” mentioned in the beginning of this chapter demonstrated the belief that Dean speaks for DFA members. Dean’s name is sometimes invoked to bolster the point that a member is trying to make. Here are some
examples that were used online: “The lesson here is we need to take Gov. Dean's message and Take Back this Country” (Watson 2004); “Only when we take Gov. Dean's message and make it our own, become involved in local politics, can we Take Back our Country” (Watson 2004); “To come back to a favorite theme of mine, whenever I hear people talking about looking for some direction for Burlington, I am reminded of Gov. Dean's line, 'The biggest lie that people like me tell people like you is that if you vote for me, I will solve all your problems. The truth is, YOU HAVE THE POWER’” (Murphy 2005); “There is nothing wrong with effecting CHANGE, both within and without the Democratic Party. Howard Dean references this in a recent interview” (Hickerson 2004). This language is not unique to the online environment; at a DFA Meetup, I have heard the phrase “Dean’s will” used. Another time, a member argued that working more closely with the county-level Democratic Party organization is not only a good idea, but it is what Howard Dean wants.

Looking at DFA’s collective identity through the lens of clothing choices is revealing. During the Perfect Storm, “all across the city of Des Moines you saw these bright orange Team Dean hats. It gave the impression of strong organization, high visibility, and, as far as the public perception, it looked as though he still had the moment, his organization was together” (John Mercurio, quoted in Dunnan 2004: 95-6). However, one person blames Dean’s loss on Iowa on reactions to the hats (Singel 2004). At a typical meeting of DFA-TB, only a few people will be found wearing DFA shirts. Other shirts I have seen included the names of local candidates and Jon Stewart ’08. When DFA-Tampa Bay was discussing participating in the Anysoldier.com project, they suggested taking pictures of themselves in DFA shirts packing presents, and sending them to the national DFA site, presumably to be published on Blog for America. In addition, when Howard Dean came to visit Tampa, members of DFA-TB met beforehand at a coffeehouse where someone brought a box of t-shirts that said “Howard Dean for America” with “www.deanforamerica.com” beneath it, despite the fact that DFA had entered its second
incarnation and the old website address no longer works. These shirts were given to members for free to wear while greeting Howard Dean. The Howard Dean for America shirt I received was too small, so I continued to wear my DFA-TB shirt at this event; but no one else I saw was wearing the local group shirt. When DFA was switching to DFA-Link from Meetup.com, DFA-TB encouraged its members to switch by offering free DFA-TB shirts to those who made the switch. Membership in DFA can also be visually declared by use of a DFA button on members’ shirts. In group photos from events posted on Meetup.com, it is not uncommon to see members posing with DFA signs. This suggests an ease in transitioning between various separate but related identities—past and present, national and local, DFA and DFA-supported candidate—in which the different identities are more actively asserted within particular contexts.

A dual-identity as DFA member and as a liberal, progressive, and/or Democrat were often expressed in ways that demonstrated a large degree of overlapping. One person said on a DFA message board: “For the New Year, lets all pledge we will join our local Democratic organizations, we will find people who are Deaniacs, or Progressives who want to do a part to Take Back this Country.” Similarly, in my interview with Erica, a member of DFA-TB, I asked about the beliefs of DFA and she answered me in terms of liberal/progressive beliefs:

NP: Okay. And, uh, I think I’ll get into that more in other questions so I’ll save that for now. What beliefs do you share in common with DFA?

EK: Pretty much all of them. I like to use the definition of progressive at this point rather than liberal, but it’s the idea that what you would be considering social liberal… pretty much would be stamped on my forehead….In terms specific issues like gay marriage or abortion rights. And I, there with my progressive, liberal points of view fit in perfectly here.

As the online post suggests, however, the terms are not completely interchangeable because DFA members see themselves as progressives “who want to do a part to Take Back this Country,”
implying that there are also progressives who are not willing to make such a commitment. Erica noted this difference as well in her only complaint about DFA-TB:

EK: They [DFA-TB] were getting a little too cozy with the DEC and too little focus on canvassing and things like that. I didn’t like that.

NP: Why didn’t you like them getting cozy with the DEC?

EK: I thought it was shifting our focus. We’d kind of be partnering instead of being independent as we’ve been.

NP: Oh, okay.

EK: And I like that.

NP: So you see a real value to DFA maintaining its independence?

EK: I think it’s a different… culture. It’s a little, um—It’s our own organization, as opposed to being part of theirs. And that’s what I like, is that grassroots thing. Less emphasis—Before—With that, it was more emphasis on canvassing, and I like our emphasis on other methods.

NP: So is it just a methodological difference, or is it a real values difference?

EK: Values difference.

NP: Really? What values do you think are different between DFA and the DEC?

EK: Oh God… um… (pause) A little more organizational, though they’re not. They’re bureaucratic.

NP: Bureaucratic?

EK: And we get more done.

While both are progressive, DFA is valued by Erica for “getting more done” instead of being “bureaucratic.”
In Chapter 2, the concepts of coherent and incoherent cultural domains were introduced. A Pew study (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a) provides some solid data upon which coherent and incoherent domains can be identified. Perhaps the most coherent domain is the war in Iraq, which an overwhelming 99% said was wrong (p. 2). Some other findings, in order of decreasing coherence, include: 91% in favor of gay marriage (p. 2), 90% saying Dean lost the Democratic nomination because of negative news coverage (p. 16), 88% saying that the liberal cause is better off if Kerry had won (p. 9), 83% strongly agreeing that Dean “gave me hope that we could change the country” (p. 12), 82% identifying as liberal (p. 2), 72% saying big donors are mostly helping progressive/liberal causes (p. 9), 67% saying they would like the Democratic Party to reflect more progressive/liberal positions (p. 7), 66% holding an unfavorable opinion of Ralph Nader (p. 10), 60% saying pre-emptive force is rarely justified (p. 4), 57% agreeing that a third party is needed (p. 10), 52% saying that American troops should be brought home from Iraq (p. 2), 51% saying the Democratic Party is doing an “only fair” job of standing up for minorities, poor, and working people (p. 7). These are just some of the results of the study, but they suggest that DFA has both coherent and incoherent cultural domains.

Jaeger and Selznick (1964, quoted in Lofland 1996: 129) write: “SMOs vary in terms of the number or proportion of their cultural items that are distinctive to it. At one extreme, the SMO elaborates a wide range of distinctive cultural items; at the other, participants are almost culturally indistinguishable from other members of society.” How culturally distinctive is DFA? As previously mentioned, “Roughly eight-in-ten Dean activists (82%) describe themselves as liberal, compared with 41% of the convention delegates and 27% of national Democrats” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 3), and only 20% of people nationwide (Margolis 2003: 15). On the war in Iraq, 99% of Dean activists saw it as wrong, compared with 68% of Democrats at that same time (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 2). On gay marriage, 91% of Dean activists favor it, while only 38% of all Democrats agree with
them (p. 2). DFA takes sides on issues that are perhaps more liberal than the majority of Americans, although the issues themselves are generally mainstream issues and their positions within the acceptable range of opinion.

At DFA-TB, there is a story that has been told and retold at the monthly meetings. Briefly, the story is that a family goes to a zoo, and they see an empty cage. Thinking that an animal must be hiding, they actively look around the cage trying to find it. The other zoo-goers, seeing the family looking so intently, also crowd around the cage and start looking. The storyteller explained that this is intended to show the principle of “Social Acceptance”—that is, that the active participation of the members can encourage others to participate as well. In one instance, this story was told to encourage more people to RSVP for the monthly meetings on DFA-Link so that other people could see that enough people were planning to attend the meetings to make it worth their time.

This belief in small actions resonating throughout society can be seen in other DFA narratives as well. DFA-TB staged a protest to raise awareness of the Downing Street Memos, which they claimed led to other groups protesting them as well. The group organizer said that in a “small way”, DFA-TB helped Bush’s approval rating plummet. He compared it to dropping a stone in a pond, creating ripples, which can eventually become a tidal wave.

**Discussion/Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have seen that DFA’s beliefs posit a “Great American Restoration” which bears similarity to Wallace’s concept of a revitalization movement. This belief system idealizes the period in American history between the end of WWII and the presidency of Richard Nixon, and seeks to restore something akin to it through grassroots effort and “real politics of meaning.” Their belief system appears mainstream, falling clearly within the ideology of progressivism/liberalism when looking at political issue-positions; where it differs significantly is
in beliefs about the efficacy and necessity of their activism efforts. To a DFA member, someone whose only effort to support the actualization of these liberal/progressive policies is voting is not doing enough. “You have the power” was not just a campaign slogan, but a summary of their political ethos.

When the presidential campaign of Howard Dean came to an end, it undermined the idea of “You have the power” for many members. Cognitive liberation, to use a sociological term, had been undone by the sequence of events that unfolded. Rather than this leading to the end of DFA as some predicted it would (e.g. Jett and Välikangas 2004), Democracy for America was formed. A comparison could perhaps be made here to Leon Festinger’s famous study on cognitive dissonance; the idea of “You have the power” had been dealt a painful blow, which disillusioned some but made others redouble their efforts to make it true.

In her study of the relationship between online and offline communities, Nip (2004) found that “the autonomy of the online community is contingent upon technology and a number of conditioning factors, the most important of which is the original purpose and intention behind creating the online space” (p. 410). In her study, an online and an offline queer/lesbian community were ostensibly connected, but found to have differing cultural beliefs between the two, leading to two semi-autonomous social networks. This has not happened with DFA, however. DFA’s beliefs include a necessity for grassroots involvement, and to voluntarily confine oneself to an online community would contradict this (see Figure 14). As pointed out earlier, culture is a part of structures and strategies rather than apart from them. DFA’s beliefs necessitate offline activism, and as a result of this cultural belief, there is no fundamental discontinuity between online and offline social contexts.
Kearney (1995) notes that culture is becoming deterritorialized; “Not only does deterritorialization obviate any notion of bounded cultures, but so does the constantly increasing volume and velocity of global transmission of information, images, simulacra, and stuff that is a diffusion of cultural traits gone wild, far beyond that imagined by the Boasians and creating a nightmare for contemporary cross-cultural correlational studies” (p. 557). For Boasians, perhaps this is so, but not for Neo-Boasians; Neo-Boasian theory sees cultures as “overlapping zones of trait distribution implying sequences of development and the radiation of influence from historically dominant centers” (Bashkow 2004: 446). DFA National functions as a culture center in which information and images are transmitted to local groups, mostly through the Internet. In this chapter, the globalization and glocalization of DFA beliefs was shown, where DFA groups would customize their belief systems according to their membership and localities, resulting in similar but slightly different belief configurations by group. Kearney claims that globalized and transnationalized “identities escape in part from an either-or classification and become defined by
a logic of ‘both-and-and’ in which the subject shares partial, overlapping identities with other similarly constituted decentered subjects that inhabit reticular social forms” (Kearney 1995: 558). This chapter demonstrated the sort of “both-and-and” overlapping identities Kearney refers to in showing how DFA members can have identities as Dean for America members, Democracy for America members, liberals/progressives, and Democrats. The Internet allows for the communicative flows that help to sustain DFA identities, both locally by coordinating Meetups, and nationally by maintaining connections with DFA National. These virtual and face-to-face interactions within a Technology-Actor-Network (TAN) reaffirm DFA beliefs by regularly providing activities where ones’ commitment to the belief system can be acted out.

Contrasting this study with my thesis research is revealing in terms of the relationship between beliefs and organization. In Falun Gong, Li Hongzhi is not only the founder, but also the sole spiritual authority. Because of his definitional power (Yelvington 1995), Li Hongzhi was able to define a particular Falun Gong site as a virtual community, and practitioners fulfilled this role (Porter 2003: 211-2). Howard Dean’s relationship to DFA members is of a very different nature, as it is based upon the idea of individual empowerment through political activism. During the Dean for America period, Blog for America members would freely critique Howard Dean’s message and strategy when they felt there was reason to—something that would be considered far more problematic for Falun Gong practitioners. Members obviously held a positive opinion of Howard Dean overall, otherwise they would not have chosen to be involved, but the belief in an “open source” campaign meant that everyone’s involvement was valuable and nothing was above constructive criticism. In the words of one DFA-TB member, “Dean has inspired a lot of people to think… Which is what I like to think that the power really rests within them [to do], to make these changes that need to be made in our country. So in that sense, he is an inspiration.” However, this same member pointed out that “a lot of the members that we have that come to our monthly meetings were not even involved when Howard Dean was… head of DFA.” Since
leaving DFA, Howard Dean’s brother Jim Dean has become the new head of DFA, although my research suggests that Jim Dean’s name is not used in the same way to endorse particular ideas and strategies. According to interviews with members, Jim Dean’s role is to continue what his brother started; one member said: “Howard Dean's brother Jim now runs DFA and continues to lead us in his brother's grassroots vision.” Another member, an obviously disgruntled one, still found Howard Dean inspirational despite recent grievances: “Howard is our guiding light, but Jim and DFA [headquarters] do nothing to help our group.” Howard Dean’s duties as DNC chair prevent him from being involved in DFA’s affairs, so his current role is mostly inspirational. For those who were involved since the Dean for America period, Howard Dean’s inspirational role is far more compelling, as it is based upon personal involvement rather than just mediated images. Unlike Li Hongzhi, Jim Dean cannot declare a single website—say, Blog for America—to be a virtual community that all DFA members should be attuned to. And, unlike his brother Howard, Jim Dean’s role is believed to be continuing the role Howard Dean began. He has a section on Blog for America called “Jim’s Posts,” but which is not in any way required reading for DFA members. The foundations of DFA’s beliefs laid down by Howard Dean encourage local political activism rather than anything reflecting genuflection to a central authority figure. Since new members tend to have less personalized, more mediated experiences of Howard Dean, Jim Dean’s role to continue the mission of DFA as laid out by his brother, and the focus has shifted more towards local elections, the decentralized organization resulting from DFA’s cultural beliefs is even greater under the Democracy for America period.
Chapter 5: The Role of the Internet in SMO Organization

Lofland (1996) lists five problems that SMOs must tackle in order to successfully maintain group cohesion. These are: “(1) an allocation of tasks in a division of labor, (2) ways of deciding what the tasks will be, (3) ways of deciding who will do what tasks, (4), the raising of resources that finance and otherwise make the tasks possible, (5) maintaining the interest and morale of people performing tasks” (Lofland 1996: 141). For DFA, the Internet is a factor in all these tasks, to varying degrees.

Individual-Organizational Members

The basic unit of membership within SMOs can be individuals or organizations. An example of the latter would be the Montgomery Improvement Association, which was a coalition of African-American churches in Montgomery, Alabama, that was instrumental in the founding of the civil rights movement (Lofland 1996: 141-2).

DFA is comprised of both individuals and organizations in the form of election campaigns and state-wide coalitions. Candidates or their proxies and local DFA groups will schedule events such as question-and-answer sessions at Meetups, and DFA members will decide on whether or not to ally themselves with the candidate and their campaign. In addition, the state-level DFA organizations are coalitions of local-level DFA organizations. For instance, the state-level group Democracy for Florida’s webpage on DFA-Link lists representatives from Tampa, Gainesville, Central Florida, Boynton Beach Area, Ocala, and Broward.
Formalization and Centralization

Formalization refers to the degree to which an SMO has an explicit scheme of organization with a clear division of labor. Centralization refers to the degree that SMO activities are devised and directed by group leadership (Lofland 1996: 142-4). To what degree is DFA formalized and centralized?

DFA does have some formal roles; as listed on its website, these include: Founder & Former Honorary Chair, Chair, Field/Political Director, Accountant, Communications Director, Deputy Field/Political Director, Volunteer/Intern Coordinator, Training Coordinator, Executive Director, Technology Director, Deputy Technology Director, Compliance Officer, and Deputy Finance Director. During the Democracy for America period, unpaid volunteers were sometimes informally referred to by the staff as “winterns” (Dunnan 2004: 39).

For state-level groups, the role of members is usually to represent their local-area DFA groups (see Democracy for Florida example above). At the local level, the number and types of formal roles vary. Democracy for America Miami-Dade lists their formal positions as follows: Student Director, Political Director, Secretary, Community Outreach Director, Web Director, Labor Director, Legislative Director, Press Secretary, Treasurer, and President. These are just a few of the formal roles that local groups may decide are necessary and useful.

In terms of centralization, Jett and Välrikangas (2004) described DFA as being “like an island of formal organization in a sea of autonomous volunteers” (p. 6), with DFA national in Burlington as the island. DFA national lacks direct control over local DFA groups, as this guide put out by DFA national demonstrates:

The suggestions in this guide are based on recent experiences and the wealth of information that has been shared among the committed grassroots activists, but also recognize that one-size-does-not-fit-all. In other words, your specific organizational goals and where you want to place your energy may differ from
others, and, for that reason, some of these suggestions may apply to you and others may not. *It’s up to you to decide how to best grow to the next level. DFA can try to help you achieve this, but we certainly cannot tell you what to do.*

[Democracy for America 2005b: 2, emphasis added]

This is the reason why formal roles vary between local DFA groups; the national group merely offers a template for local organizers to accept, modify, or reject as they choose. I found no discrepancy between DFA national’s claim in the guide and interviews with local members, as this interview with Barbara from DFA-TB shows:

NP: What role does Howard Dean, Jim Dean, and the DFA national headquarters in Burlington play in your local DFA group?

BM: They give us advice, they give us direction and programming, which we can choose, or not choose to do. They’ve given us training—candidate and campaign training that I’ve gone to, um, last year around this time. We went to a, uh, meeting to decide what direction we wanted to go in as a state.

NP: What group [had the meeting]?

BM: Democracy for Florida [the state-level group]. A few of us from DFA-Tampa Bay went there, talking about what direction and what’s important to the I-4 corridor… So I know many other DFA-ers around the state. We actually do meet and get together and discuss what’s important.

NP: So they’ve never tried to impose anything on you that you didn’t want them to?

BM: Well, they want us—they want—No, they don’t impose. They have asked [strong emphasis] us to do an Iraq War forum we want to do, but not enough time for it. And the whole purpose of that is to keep the dialogue about the war open. By doing that, it—you know—it’s an issue that voters are not happy with, so
they want to keep it out there. Um… We’re also involved in candidates and precinct work, but we don’t have time to host the forum that they want us to.

NP: Okay. But they don’t do anything to penalize you for that? You know, they don’t call you up and berate you, or cut off your funding or anything like that?

BM: No.

NP: No?

BM: Well, we’re—it’s a ground-up organization, it’s not a top-down organization, so it’s not about them funneling money to us. Umm—that—There is none of that. If there is any money to go anywhere, it’s to candidates.

Similarly, DFA’s Internet use is closer to what Meikle (2002) has called Version 1.0 Internet, where interactivity rather than transmission is the dominant model (recalling that Version 2.0, in his terminology, is the model preferred by businesses). “Dean online followers collaborate on organizing and perfecting the campaign, their ideas trickling up from the bottom rather than being superimposed from national headquarters” (Gilroy 2004). Some examples of this have already been mentioned, such as Gross starting the DFA blog, bringing back the baseball bat icon on the Dean website, and the push for Dean Meetup groups. A few more examples may be in order, however:

Chuck Henderson, a 50-year-old outdoor clothing manufacturer, sports a blue fleece vest embossed with "Dean for America."

More than a year ago, Henderson backed Kerry and contacted his campaign workers about making Kerry vests.

"We'll get back to you," they told him.

They never did.

When Dean started to interest him this year, Henderson asked his campaign staffers for permission to make Dean vests. If you think it's a good
idea, go for it, they said. To Henderson, that sums up Dean's campaign. [Smith 2003]

Here we can see that Dean supporters are allowed to develop their own tasks. It should also be noted that the campaign headquarters borrows from what these supporters have independently come up with:

Joe Rospars, a young staffer at Howard Dean's campaign headquarters, was trolling through some of the hundreds of unofficial "Dean for America" sites that have sprouted on the Internet when something caught his eye.

Posted on a Northern California Weblog called northbaydean.org, was a full-color poster advertising the "New Year for America" fund-raisers for Dean scheduled for Dec. 30.

With a few clicks of the mouse, the poster could be personalized with the name and address of any Dean supporter anywhere who wanted to host one of the parties. With a few clicks more, the personalized poster could be e-mailed to that supporter's list of friends and contacts.

And with just a few clicks more, in the cluttered cubicle he shares with fellow blog watchers, Rospars had created a link to the poster for the home page of DeanforAmerica.com, the main campaign Web site that is a portal to other innovative Dean campaign sites.

"We might have to contact a local site sometimes to get a version of a poster, or whatever, we can copy," Rospars said. "But normally we just snag it, say 'thanks' to whomever, and put it up. [Sawyer 2004]

Dean himself notes the significance and other examples of this approach: "People were meeting up in all kinds of innovative, efficient, technologically unforeseeable ways that none of us—myself least of all—would have been clever enough to invent. Through DeanLink.com, Dean
Wireless, and the GenDeanBlog. Through Dean Yahoo! Groups, almost a dozen in Oregon alone…” (Dean 2004a: 19). These “innovative, efficient, technologically unforeseeable ways” made Dean’s campaign distinctive; it may not be the first campaign to make use of the Internet, but it was the first campaign to the Internet in a way that encouraged supporters to become active participants, contributing more than just money.

However, there are some who claim that Dean for America was more hierarchical than many people thought it was. Dean wrote: “All we had to do, after we unleashed [grassroots members’] creativity, was weave the organizations into a central campaign that sometimes was more of a clearinghouse than it was a control-and-command organization” (Dean 2004a: 156). Some took issue with this process of “weaving” into the central campaign, however. Dunnan quotes Bill Trezevant, a Dean supporter from Washington State, as saying:

“[…] the Dean campaign’s appearance of meaningful participation provide[d] a unique opportunity [for ordinary people to get involved in a way other than voting] through the use of the Internet. ‘You Have the Power’ sent the clear message that personal political participation on an unprecedented scale was possible and, with each successive instance of collective action, the supporters believed they occupied a meaningful role in the campaign.

“The problem is that it was not true, except to the extent allowed by the select class at the top. In this regard, the select class was still operating under a top-down approach, with the appendage of an electronic ‘suggestion box.’ The campaign did not go far enough with a bottom up model and was eventually forced to admit its usage of the top down model and then succumb to the same.

“The result of this misapplication of models is that it caused unrecoverable problems amongst supporters. By creating the perception that the campaign was bottom up, supporters felt deceived post-Iowa and New
Hampshire, particularly after stories regarding the apparent overnight financial and campaign structural meltdown came to light highlighted by two events: 1. The departure of the campaign manager, and 2. the admission that the campaign had barely a fraction of the record amount of money it collected left in the bank to continue the campaign. [Dunnan 2004: 236]

The Dean campaign did not consult its membership on all decisions. One blogger claimed that “the actual informational and command structures everywhere that actual campaign staff was on the ground were quite clearly hierarchical and authoritarian;” while “the efforts of ad hoc volunteers were generally encouraged and supported,” “there naturally continued to be a very few key decisionmakers who could authorize the adoption of innovation and ideas” (National 2004). According to this blogger, about “2-3 months before Iowa, the grassroots began to notice, and complain about, a notable resistance and non-responsiveness to new inputs. The core decisionmaking group became overwhelmed by the sheer mass of information presented them and the multiple demands on their time and attention. I think that anyone in that central group would agree with the assessment that they became distracted from the task of accepting and processing feedback from the grassroots” (National 2004). This blogger’s criticism is that the campaign lacked “effective mechanisms to actively solicit and process membership ideas and opinions into usable information… beyond reading hundreds of blog comments” (National 2004).

As evident from National’s comment section, not everyone agrees with him, but clearly he is not alone: “One [Dean supporter], who goes by the name ‘wild_salmon,’ posted to the official blog after Trippi’s departure, ‘We have been saying it for over a month: You need new, better ads and you need to play them. We need more than pep talk -- we need info and answers!’” (Singel 2004).

It may seems contradictory that some accounts make DFA seem non-hierarchical while others claim just the opposite, but this contradiction can be resolved by taking into account
specific time periods and specific organizational practices. Early on in Dean for America, there were difficulties in convincing members that they were serious about being non-hierarchical:

While supporters are given suggestions for potential events, they are encouraged to take the initiative and come up with their own ideas. According to Teachout, one of the challenges the Dean Campaign has faced is convincing their supporters that they really mean it. To many campaigns a ceding of autonomy to the local groups is threatening. To Dean’s Campaign however, it is the precise opposite. One of Teachout’s most significant concern is the establishment of a more traditional hierarchical organizational structure. She talks of the initial effect a Dean Campaign official for New York had this summer, making people more inclined to defer to him for marching orders, which stymied the creative energy. After the official made it clear that his role was to encourage individual initiation of actions rather than dictate them, this problem was largely overcome. Yet this effect is widely seen according to Teachout with many in the areas with official representation exhibiting a sense of “oh, we might get in trouble” if they do something on their own. Therefore in many ways, encouraging group formation and self-organization for the Dean Campaign is less about providing them with the tools, and more about convincing them they have the freedom to act on their own. [Welch 2003: 15]

In addition, since Dean for America was described as “like an island of formal organization in a sea of autonomous volunteers” (Jett and Välikangas 2004: 6), this meant that volunteers were free to promote and organize for Dean as they saw fit—they could, for instance, post on Blog for America and create promotional materials without the involvement of DFA headquarters. This also meant, however, that DFA National determined which aspects of the campaign would be “open source” and which would not. Early on, there was some debate within the Dean campaign
about announcing their fundraising goals (Trippi 2004: 132), although by the summer of 2003, “just about everyone inside the campaign was a believer in the concept (if not always the ramifications) of an open source campaign” (Trippi 2004: 149). However, by September of 2003, discussion of their grassroots campaign tools like Meetups began to decline, and “[t] hose running the blog began to behave like they were on a high-stakes winning campaign by pressing hard for money, talking up polls and endorsements, and acting more like an ordinary campaign behind the trappings of innovation than an innovative campaign” (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 15; see Figure 15). Part of this problem, as noted above, was the time-consuming duties of the campaign may have left little time for staff to process the copious amounts of blog comments, but some of it was attributable to hierarchical decision-making. Tom Hughes, Executive Director for Democracy for America, admits that ignoring the grassroots during this time period was a mistake:

The beauty of the Dean campaign at its best was when our strategy and our tactics were in harmony with one another. When our strategy of involving everybody through the $100 Revolution and through the plebiscite on campaign finance. The decision to forego public financing. When we were at our strongest was when we were using a tactic of letting people invest themselves directly in the campaign, and in the democracy. When we were at our worst was when we were making decisions solely in Burlington, or solely on the campaign plane. And... We weren't honoring what the values and the desires of the people on the ground were. And what we found was when we made poor decisions at the top, the impact... reverberated more in our organization—[which] was built on trust and respect—than similar decisions made for different campaigns, which were built on the traditional top-down, hierarchy model, and command-and-control. Other campaigns were designed so that when the people at the top said "jump,"
you said “how high?” Our organization was built completely differently.

[Silberman 2005]

The period in late 2003 in which DFA ran a more conventional campaign also correlated with a flattening of membership growth (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 15).

![Figure 15: Number of Posts about Select Process Activities on Blog for America](image)

**Figure 15: Number of Posts about Select Process Activities on Blog for America**

During the Democracy for America period, the focus on local elections means that DFA National is less central to the organizing activities of local DFA groups. DFA National’s role now mostly consists of providing social software, initiatives, advice, and funding for candidates; in the words of one DFA National staff member,

> The Burlington headquarters of DFA exists to plan nationwide initiatives for all 793 local groups as well as individual members. DFA headquarters also supports local groups with their own projects. Headquarters staffers attend local events
whenever possible, teach at activist trainings given around the country, and offer materials and support to groups and individuals.

I have not heard complaints about DFA national’s advice and initiatives, although members did have their fair share of complaints about DFA’s software:

why do we log in each day? I am kinda not liking what has come down on this blog.

and I put a comment up to be made a post. does that actually do anything or is it just looked at by hq and not posted.

not very democratic. (linda b 2006)

The people running this blog DO NOT HAVE A CLUE! You cannot put new threads up every fifteen minutes. Everytime you put up a new thread, you lost people. THIS IS INSANE.

BBL

maybe (puddle 2006)

 Somehow the changes at HQ that have happened since the campaign seem to be of the top down variety that flies in the face of what made this blog the envy of the other campaigns. (jc 2006)

One DFA-TB member had minor complaints about the way DFA-National distributed funding: “I just wish they would concentrate on more in the swing states. They’re trying to concentrate evenly everywhere…and, Florida’s key, and I just—You know, there’s only one congressional candidate there that’s important right now, and that’s Ron Klein down in Florida.” Because of their beliefs, DFA members tend to be sensitive to instances in which DFA National does not take their opinions into consideration in these few areas in which they play a role in the affairs of local groups and members. During the course of my research, I found that it was much more common for Blog for America and DFA Chat users to voice complaints about the blog than it was for DC
for Democracy or DFA-Tampa Bay to have complaints about DFA National’s role in their local group, which is likely the result of DFA National’s software mediating far less of their social interactions.

**Member Absorption**

Absorption refers to “the number of activities in which…participants are jointly involved” (Etzioni 1961: 160, quoted in Lofland 1996: 144). Do SMO members typically work, live, and/or socialize together? Are they “engaging in familial relations” or “participating in occasions of thinking about how one is related to the world at large or ultimate reality” (Lofland 1996: 144)? How “absorbed” are DFA members?

The only members who are employed by DFA are at DFA National in Burlington; apart from this small group, the overwhelming majority of DFA members must economically provide for themselves through other means. According to Pew, more than two-thirds (68%) of DFA activists go online at work, 60% read a blog, and 13% regularly visit DemocracyforAmerica.com (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 23-24; see Figures 13 and 16). The Pew study does not make it explicit how common it is for DFA members to visit DFA websites at work, although these numbers suggest that it does occur. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is fairly common for those who access the Internet at work to participate in DFA activities while there; for instance, one wrote: “Hi there! A constant lurker logging on to let you know that there are still some of us out there. I review the threads nightly and check in during the day at lunch time or when I get a break at work” (lou-a-vul 2006).
Messages posted on Blog For America suggest several commonalities in the relationship between the activism of DFA members and their work activities. While many members access BFA at work, their activities are often limited by their workplace in three ways. First, some have commented that they would like to continue their activist roles while at work, but it would violate the policy of their workplace to do so:

- Golly, I'd LOVE to print [a DFA poster] out & hang it up at work but, unfortunately, I work for fascists. I was already told to remove all of my Dean paraphernalia from my desk area. It has been whispered that we will also be asked to remove any political buttons/stickers from our clothes & bags. I wear a Dean button on my hat & have a bumpersticker on my backpack (no car, LOL). Neither are visible during working hours. If anyone even hints to me to remove them, there will be Hell to pay. I am so sick & tired of having so few rights as a worker in this country. No boss should have the power to tell you wot you can & cannot wear/discuss - providing it does not interfere with anyone's work. This is America, not the USSR. I am so fed up!!! ;P [Palazzo 2003]
• I'm a federal employee and prohibited from wearing any Dean gear at work, too! The federal law is the Hatch Act which isn't quite as stringent as it used to be, but you still need to be aware of it. It applies to ALL partisan political activity - even activities for Bush. The original intent of the law was to prevent federal employees from using their position to influence partisan campaigns. [Pam in Seattle 2003]

• One of our Texas Dean supporters, Elsie Cook, handmakes jewelry. She has a special issue Dean Democratic donkey pin that she is selling for $10, with all proceeds going to the campaign. She will also custom-make sterling silver Dean donkey pins for $35….They would make great Christmas gifts, and are good to wear at work where a button would be *too overt*. [Torrey in Texas 2003, emphasis added]

Secondly, members are sometimes limited by the software or hardware available to them at work:

• It's official...BLOGGERS' BBQ to be held at our place in DC, September 24th post-march from 4pmish to whenever we feel like stopping...which may mean never...details will be posted on the Events site (*I'm at work now and can't enable cookies*) tonight! [Hypatia 2005, emphasis added]

• [regarding a new map feature on the DFA website:] I'm on an older MAC while at work and can't see the map, but was playing with it last night from home on my PC and it worked fine. [Andrea*in*Upstate*NY 2004]

• also, the email ballot seems to be linked to the IP of the computer you registered with - I registered at work and tried to vote at home, no go. But my vote went through OK at work this morning. [jp 2003]

• Great; I just wanted to make sure you received it. My spam filter at work is hinky; I never know what it will block. [Marasco 2004]

Third, members must make their job duties their first priority, giving them limited time to participate in online DFA activities and discussions:
• I have been swamped at work and not as on it as I usually am or should have been. Sorry. [ChrisNYC 2004a]

• A busy day (and week) ahead at work so this is going to be mostly a drive-by. [rich^kolker 2005]

• I'm at work, so I sorta bounce in and out when I can. [Barbara*in*Seattle 2005]

• Oscar, I'm at work and didn't have time to comment on your Kos diary, but I recommended it whole heartedly [donna*in*Evanston 2005]

• I'm trapped at work and can only do so much activism here. If I e-mail one more person today about the meetup or healthcare event, I might be brought in on harrassment charges.(J/K) [poemlessgirl 2004]

• Grrrrrr. My home computer won't let me into the Internets. I'm driving by on my break at work. So don't say anything interesting today in case I can't get back on. [donna*in*Evanston 2006]

• oops, vb. sorry, at work and trying to sneak in blogging [Barbara*in*Seattle 2006]

• I'm at work, and at the end of my lunch break. Just wanted to remind the blog that Louise Slaughter posted something in the wee hours of the morning that should be reposted. [fred from Or 2005]

• (Im back... will be around off and on - have a big "fire drill" going on at work, what timing!) [mataliandy 2004]

• Yeah, well I've been busy at work, but I do "lurk" pretty often. Glad it's all still here. [zilpha NY 2005]

• (sorry if this seems rushed, I'm at work and only have a few minutes to surf the blog throughout the day) [Kowgod (in Chicago) 2003]

However, DFA members have also used their workplaces for political discussions:
Anyway. I'm at work and this family of 6 comes in. I start chatting and they say they are from Springfield, VA (near Falls Church). I mentioned how I was going to be there for the Dean rally and she got sooo excited that she ran her husband over to listen to me speak…. So far, I've talked to about 50 tourists at work, and the vast majority are enthusiastic about [Dean] [Epoch 2003b]

- handed out [Dean] flyers to those who I strike up a conversation with at work and write the website down for them on cards, sticky pads, anything. [Epoch 2003a]

These messages show that DFA members generally would like to be politically active at work, but they are limited in what types and how much of activity they can perform in that setting by structural factors.

The social relationships between DFA members are mainly confined to achieving political goals. According to Pew, “[more] than two-thirds of activists (68%) said their involvement with the campaign was mostly about politics and the issues, rather than about building relationships with people with similar values. Although nearly three-in-ten (29%) said they were motivated by a mixture of both considerations, just 2% said it was mostly about forging relationships with people who shared their values” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 14). On public and community issues, 72% claimed to feel comfortable asking another activist for help, while only 15% said they felt comfortable asking other DFA members for help with personal problems such as medical emergencies (p. 14). Only 5% dated or considered dating another member, and less than 1% had married, engaged, or become a life partner to someone through the campaign (p. 14). However, they also note that the percentage who dated or would consider dating another member rises to 21% among the youngest members, defined as those between ages 15 – 22.

On the other hand, many DFA members still seemed comfortable describing their fellow members as friends, despite limiting their involvement mainly to political and community issues.
Barbara, a member of DFA-TB, said about her fellow members: “I consider many of them friends. I consider some of them my best friends.” Erica, another member of DFA-TB, explained the nature of her relationship with other members thusly:

**NP:** How would you describe your relationship with other DFA members? Would you consider any of them friends? Do you spend time with them outside of DFA activities?

**EK:** I haven’t, but they’re typically older than I am…. I think that has something to do with it. They’re older, they have families. I really like and respect them. I—I kind of think of them as colleagues. I adore being with them, but I’m not going to go to a movie just because it hasn’t happened. But when I’m with them, I really like them…. I feel that I’m part of the group… and I like that a lot.

**NP:** Do they come to your house parties?

**EK:** I haven’t had house parties. My apartment is the size of this room.

**NP:** Oh, okay. (chuckle) Have you gone to their house parties?

**EK:** I went to one. Um… Back in January. Wendy had one. It was an educational thing. It was great… People from different groups were there.

**NP:** Okay. So did it feel more like a friendly sort of thing, or more…like [one of the monthly Meetups]?  

**EK:** The house party was more friendly. It was a nice, casual environment. It was talking. It was—we did an exercise where we broke up into groups and made a video. You know, so it was fun….I mean, there was a little bit of addressing the group, but a lot of just networking and talking.

**NP:** Okay. So there wasn’t any of the awkwardness of, you know, them being a different age range than you?
EK: Well, there never is. I don’t feel that awkwardness…. It’s just not the people that I’d call up and say, you know, “Let’s hang out.” … But I enjoy sitting around, talking.

Interestingly, while Erica said she is not going to go to a movie with other members, activities promoted by DFA include screenings of documentaries by Robert Greenwald. Also, while house parties might suggest a gathering of friends, we can clearly see that the meetings were still goal-oriented at the same time as they were “more friendly.” An online survey respondent said: “other dfa members - some of my newest and closest friends, who else would I want to spend the 1st wed of each month with, who else would I want to ride around town putting candidate signs out with, who else would I want to approach strangers with to discuss politics? i mean, please, approaching someone in a parking lot, or knocking on their door, without a dfa backup would be very, very lonely.” This respondent claimed his or her fellow members as “closest friends,” yet the only shared activities mentioned were political activities.

In addition, physical contact was not uncommon in greetings at DFA-TB. I observed a member putting her hand on another’s shoulder, more than one kiss on the cheek, kissing another member’s hand, and hugging. While form, duration, and gender can modify the meaning of this behavior, this kind of physical contact typically denotes intimacy (Floyd 1999).

Scale, Form Diversity and Complexity

As previously noted, DFA has national, state, and local level groups. The state-level groups are typically coalitions of the local groups within the state. DFA-national is a Political Action Committee, while the organizational forms of the other groups vary.

SMOs do not decide the form of their organization in a vacuum. Those that step outside of the social boundaries set by the state and other dominant institutions may find themselves on the receiving end of direct forms of coercion (see Earl 2003). However, McCarthy et al. (1991)
point to “channeling,” a term for the “mechanisms which serve to narrow the form and content of collective action” (p. 47), as having a much greater role in shaping SMOs (p. 48).

Of all the forms of channeling mechanisms, they find that the most important “stem from IRS regulations on tax-exempt status….[which] serve as the keystone of an interlinked set of mechanisms” (p. 52). McCarthy et al. (1991) divide SMOs into four categories based on their formal relationship with the state: “(1) for-profit organizations, (2) partisan political organizations, (3) nonpartisan, not-for-profit organizations, and (4) more less organized groups not voluntarily registered with the state…. Each of these formal and legal designations is embedded in extensive legal precedent and administrative practice. Each is accorded a wide variety of privileges and associated responsibilities” (1991: 48). McCarthy et al. focus their analysis upon non-profit organizations and wrote before the passage of the BCRA, so the legal environment is different for DFA, but their main point that “channeling mechanisms…are among the variety of mechanisms which are seen to create structural isomorphism in organizations of all types” (p. 69) is well-taken. Taking this point a step further with DFA, we may ask what channeling mechanisms exist with PACs.

Simply defined, a political action committee (PAC) is a specific legal classification for an organization dedicated to promoting a political cause, such as influencing election outcomes or promoting legislation. The law places legal limits on how much a PAC can contribute to: each candidate per election cycle, each political party per year, and to another PAC per year. However, a PAC has no legal limits on how much they can spend on advertisements promoting their issues. There are two types of PACs, separate segregated funds (SSFs) and nonconnected committees (FEC n.d.b), of which DFA is the latter type (FEC 2005a). This means that “[u]nlike an SSF, a nonconnected committee [such as DFA] may solicit contributions from anyone in the general public who may lawfully make a contribution in connection with a federal election” (FEC 2005b: 1). This classification also carries many forms of channeling with it, such as: requiring that a
treasurer be selected with predefined duties (FEC 2005b: 3-4), a ban on including candidate names in the PAC name (p. 4), restrictions on mentioning candidates in fundraising communications (p. 10), and a number of contribution restrictions and recordkeeping requirements. A complete analysis of all pertinent laws concerning nonconnected committees is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is important to know that these channeling mechanisms exist to contextualize the form of organization that exists within DFA. Simply put, while DFA will pursue strategies in accordance to its own cultural logic, it does so within a legal framework not of its own choosing.

If the organizational form of local groups varies, we may then ask how to account for these variations. Given the aforementioned channeling factors, DFA national gives the following advice in their group guide:

In addition, there are legal considerations to be taken into account when deciding what structure is best suited for your goals. Because those considerations can vary widely, we have not attempted – nor do we intend – to provide any legal advice by virtue of this guide. However, we are more than happy to put you in touch with DFA’s counsel to assist you in navigating these complicated and often conflicting rules. [Democracy for America 2005b: 9]

This guide then goes on to ask that organizers should first “define your mission,” and then “Match your mission to the organization type,” giving five options: Volunteer group without a fundraising apparatus, Federal Political Action Committee (PAC), State Political Action Committee, IRS 527 non-profit political organization, 501(c)4 Civic Organization (Democracy for America 2005b: 9). Making the decision of which type of organization to be can be a problematic one for local DFA groups. During my time with DC for Democracy, someone told me that since their group is a PAC, there are specific guidelines about them supporting candidates, and the group organizer can go to jail if they are not followed. They said that
individual group members may support candidates, but the group cannot officially endorse them. DFA-Tampa Bay (DFA-TB) was classified as a voluntary organization when I first attended, which, according to members, means they have no legal standing and therefore cannot legally do fundraising. Because of this, they were considering becoming a state-level PAC. If they had changed their classification from a voluntary organization to a state-level PAC, this would have meant that someone would have to file reports with the state every 3 months. However, at least one member felt that this reclassification was a bad idea because there would be new legal restrictions on collaborations between DFA-TB and the Hillsborough County Democratic Executive Committee (HCDEC). They decided not to go through with this reclassification. This is another example of glocalization over grobalization; DFA national is content to let local DFA groups decide the legal classification that they feel would best accomplish their goals.

Frequencies and Magnitudes

Lofland (1996: 155) wrote that counting the number of SMOs in a particular area at a particular time might “[at] first glance… seem easy to do, but it is in fact often a major undertaking that is plagued with definitional quandaries and is quite laborious” (p. 155). In the decade since he wrote those words, the Internet has made the task considerably easier in the case of Internet-using SMOs. As of October 17, 2006, there are 862 DFA groups on DFA-Link. The Internet has provided information on the geographical distribution of donations (Figures 17-19), Meetups (Figures 19-22), and grassroots trainings (Figure 19). DFA-Link claims that there are DFA groups in 422 congressional districts (as of 10/17/06).

Magnitude refers to number of members and size of budget or income (Lofland 1996: 156). Again, the Internet has given us some good numbers to start with to address the magnitude of DFA. DFA-Link, as of October 17, 2006, lists 35,776 members. A brochure from DFA proclaims: “DFA contributed $1 million to 748 candidates throughout the United States – in 46
states – at every level of government.” Democracy for America has an annual budget of about $2 million (Wilgoren 2004), and as of January 1, 2006, it had $1,536,361.77 cash on hand, according to FEC filings.

**Figure 17: A map of financial contributions to Dean**
The darkest green represents $280,000 campaign contributions for that area (Fundrace 2003-2004). Image courtesy of Eyebeam: www.eyebeam.org

**Figure 18: Another map of Dean's financial contribution**
By county, using a different method of visual representation (Compas 2005). Reprinted by permission.

Figure 19: Democracy for America map of trainings, Meetups, and contributions. Scanned from brochure obtained at DFA national headquarters in Burlington. Reprinted by permission.

Figure 20: DFA Meetup Locations
(Meetup Inc. 2005)
Figure 21: Map of Total DFA Meetup Attendance By State
As of July 2003. Constructed by author using an original map image from www.theodora.com/maps and DFA meetup data from Boyan (2003). Key: Red = over 5,000; Orange = 1,001-5,000; Yellow = 501-1,000; Green = 201-500; Blue = 101-200; Purple = 0-100. Total attendance in all states = 64,490.

Figure 22: Map of the ratio of Total DFA Meetup Attendance to State Population
Meetup attendance by State, divided by State Population in thousands, as of July 2003. Constructed by author using an original map image from www.theodora.com/maps and DFA meetup data from Boyan (2003). Key: Red = over 100; Orange = 51-100; Yellow = 31-50; Green = 21-30; Blue = 11-20; Purple = 0-10.

**Financing**

Lofland writes: “SMO members commonly pay their own expenses of participating in SMO activities—activities that sometimes involve, for example, overnight travel to distant protest locations and, therefore, transport, meal, and lodging costs” (Lofland 1996: 165). At both DC for Democracy and DFA Tampa Bay, monthly Meetups were held in the back of restaurants; in both cases, group organizers encouraged members to buy food from the establishment so they will continue letting members meet there. This could perhaps be seen as gentle pressure to pay dues, albeit not enforced nor framed in that way by the group. In addition, DFA members must pay the cost of transportation to the event—usually gasoline in DFA-TB and Metrorail fare for DC for Democracy.

Some local DFA groups collect dues to finance their activities. As mentioned earlier, DFA national identifies five primary types of political advocacy groups that local DFA groups may become, depending on their mission and the law. One organizer wrote on a DFA message board: “We started a 501c4 nonprofit organization, and asked for annual membership dues of $25. (Many gave $100; others were comped in on the basis of need.) Eight months later, with more than 100 members, we're in decent shape financially” (Easton 2004). However, neither DC for Democracy nor DFA Tampa Bay asked me for annual membership dues during my time there.

A staffer at DFA National I interviewed told me: “Roughly a third of our incoming contributions are raised via email.” Using e-mail, DFA National has also been able to fund projects rapidly: “When Democracy for America sent out an e-mail in May asking for contributions for Lamont, it raised $70,000 in the first day” (Haigh 2006).
DFA national has a section of their website devoted to taking contributions. They accept donations in amounts ranging from $5 to $5,000, the maximum amount they are legally allowed to take as a PAC. They also encourage members to become a regular contributor by joining the DFA Trust: “The best way to support Democracy for America is through our Monthly Donor program. When you become a member of the DFA Trust, your credit card will automatically be charged the amount indicated above on the 17th of every month. Please check the box below to acknowledge that you are making a recurring contribution to Democracy for America. You may cancel at any time prior to the charging of your card. The first charge will be made immediately” (Democracy for America n.d.a). The website also sells DFA Night School DVDs for $30 each and Get Out The Vote (GOTV) stickers for $20-$55, depending on the number of pads.

Internet Advantages

As pointed out earlier, there are (at least) five types of contributions that can be made to social movements: 1. participation; 2. work; 3. lifestyle; 4. goods and services; 5. cash. A variety of quantitative datasets speak to these forms of participation within DFA, and they suggest interrelation between them. Figure 23 shows participation in terms of blog readership, while Tables 2 and 3 show the popularity of Dean’s website during the height of his campaign. Figure 24 shows Dean’s fundraising vis-à-vis other Democratic candidates. Figures 17 and 18 show cash contributions by county. Figures 20-22, 26, and 27 show participation in Meetup groups. Just by visually inspecting Figures 17, 18, and 20, a correlation between the two types of contributions seems obvious. Figure 28 shows that individual contributions really were responsible for financing the campaign, and Figure 29 further supports this by showing a correlation between the collection of e-mail addresses and fund-raising. Anecdotal evidence from newspaper articles suggest lifestyle sacrifices were made as well: “Willimon left behind a girlfriend in New York and his work as a playwright to join the Dean campaign” (Finney 2004);
“Canning, 20….put off going to college to work for Dean - something his parents frowned on, especially early on when Dean seemed like a huge long shot” (Finney 2004); “21-year-old Jake Honigman delayed his return to Cornell University” (Spencer 2004); “[a] woman in a wheelchair in Iowa who handed [Dean] a bag of fifty dollars in quarters that she’d saved from her monthly disability check” (Dean 2004a: 17); “[a] young woman at Penn State University who’d read about the campaign on the Internet, then sent us a check for a hundred dollars with a note that said, ‘I sold my bicycle for Democracy’” (Dean 2004a: 17-8). These are extreme examples and surely are not representative of all Dean supporters, but they do suggest that lifestyle sacrifices were made among the more enthusiastic supporters. Correlation does not equal causation, however, so it behooves us to examine what the connections exist between these five types of contribution, and what role the Internet plays in these connections.

![Blog Readership Growth](image)

**Figure 23: Graph of DFA blog readership, 2003-2004**
Table 2: Dean’s Website Traffic in December 2003
Reprinted from Nielsen/Netrating (Nielsen/Netrating 2004: 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Unique Audience (000)</th>
<th>Time Per Person (hh:mm:ss)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DeanforAmerica.com</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>0:08:38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GeorgeWBush.com</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>0:02:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unduplicated Audience</td>
<td>1,298</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Audience</td>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nielsen/NetRatings, December 2003

Table 3: DeanforAmerica.com even competes with non-candidate political sites
Reprinted from ClickZ Network (ClickZ Network 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Market Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The White House</td>
<td>10.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush in 30 Seconds</td>
<td>6.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Republic</td>
<td>5.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townhall.com</td>
<td>4.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoveOn</td>
<td>3.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean for America</td>
<td>2.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buzzflash.com</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiwar.com</td>
<td>2.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petition Online</td>
<td>2.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth Out</td>
<td>1.93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hitwise
Figure 24: Fundraising Comparison
Month-by-month fundraising comparison of Democratic candidates in the 2004 Presidential Election (Center For Responsive Politics n.d.a). Reprinted by permission.

Figure 25: Meetup Comparison
Number of Meetup Volunteers by Democratic Candidate as of August 2003 (LaMasters 2003; also see Teachout 2003a). Reprinted by permission.
Figure 26: Dean Meetups vis-à-vis other candidates
(Brayton 2004). Reprinted by permission.

Figure 27: Dean Meetup Trends
A feeling of connection with Howard Dean was fostered online through use of a blog and the use of Version 1.0 Internet interactivity (Meikle 2002) in general, thereby aiding interest and morale. Dean wrote: “People felt they were like me. They felt they knew me. They followed my progress around the country on the blog entries that my campaign aide Kate O’Connor updated every day. If she wrote that we were eating too much junk food, people would show up at events with home-cooked meals. If I had a cold, they’d show up with cold medicines. They worried about me. If I misspoke, they scolded me. On the blog, they addressed me as ‘Guv’”
(Dean 2004a: 14). We might see the use of cardboard cutouts as an offline extension of this feeling of connection to the “Guv”; a New Years party put on by a group of Dean supporters in 2003 featured belly dancing with a cardboard cutout of Dean holding a fundraising thermometer. Pictures from the event were posted online (Lydia 2003).

In addition to this connection to Dean, a sense of connection between the supporters was also created. Pew found that “[t]he Dean campaign formed the basis for an extensive – and enduring – social network. Fully 71% of the activists say they met someone in person or online through the campaign, and 45% still keep in touch with a campaign contact” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 5). Jett and Välikangas (2004) predicted that Dean’s “failure to win the nomination would be a dramatic event that would disrupt the campaign’s basis for organizing” (p. 10); while it was certainly a dramatic event and seems to have adversely affected membership numbers, they did not seem to anticipate that the social connections and shared cultural values could allow the organization to continue after a change of name and electoral focus. They correctly postulated that “increased efforts and involvement in the campaign fosters identification… that further binds supports to the ongoing campaign” (p. 9).

Blog For America (BFA) was certainly an instrumental part in creating a sense of community:

Almost half of the discussions were self-references invoking the online community, self-conscious comments about the experience of having an intimate connection to strangers on a blog. So strong was the phenomenon of blogging for a cause and so powerful was the experience of being connected to like-minded others that bloggers regularly used the blog to sort out, understand, and validate the intoxicating effects of the medium. Posts of this nature brimmed with references to the “grassroots” and the “netroots” and exhibited a sense of pride that stemmed from belonging to something important, echoing Governor Dean’s
signature phrase to his supporters, “You have the power.” [Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 16]

Jett and Välikangas’ characterization of DFA’s social network as weak ties that “cannot be relied upon beyond instrumental purposes such as information acquisition” (2004: 22) fails to recognize the deeply-felt nature of the connections that are possible with virtual communities, and the autonomous, glocalized organizational structure of DFA groups. A Dean supporter not only was likely to experience a sense of being a part of the DFA national community through Blog for America, but he or she was also likely to be a part of a local DFA group that regularly meets face-to-face.

DFA participation also seems to lead to a greater knowledge of politics. Kerbel and Bloom (2005) divided the posts on BFA into four categories: “Policy posts cover discussion of domestic and foreign policy issues as they relate to the presidential campaign. Process posts address the process of running for president and include discussions of the campaign horse race, political strategy, and tactical maneuvers. Media posts emphasize the role and importance of the medium in the campaign. Community posts discuss the blog community in particular and the Dean for America campaign community in general” (p. 9). While the policy posts were the least frequent of the four (see Figure 30), they still found that BFA’s “policy discussion was well rounded and contextualized in terms of Dean’s approach to foreign and domestic concerns, encompassing a wide range of topics that, if replicated in mainstream media, would go a long way to silencing critics who find political issue coverage lacking in sufficient attention or meaningful context” (p. 9). This political information, of course, is filtered and framed according to DFA’s culture.
By internalizing the beliefs of DFA and becoming a part of DFA’s social networks, political activism is strongly encouraged, which in turn would increase the resources of the SMO. Jett and Välikangas write: “The campaign life of a Dean supporter is divided into a continuing series of episodic and overlapping fundraisers and mobilization drives” (2004: 8). Blog for America contributed to this by framing issues in a way that encourages activism, unlike mainstream media. Mainstream media has a tendency to be self-referential in a way that “communicate[s] a studied coolness that [speaks] to the importance of the reporter at the expense of the viewer in a television-centered political system, whereas blog postings—even blog postings about blog postings—worked to energize readers for participation in the political process by assuring them that their work is meaningful and valuable and that they are not alone in their efforts” (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 4). Elections are a prime and relevant example of how
mainstream media coverage differs from BFA: “where mainstream media tend to find news in the strategic machinations of poll rankings, endorsements, debate outcomes, and the like, the Dean blog, owing to its interactive capabilities, was more fixed on engaging bloggers in tactical maneuvers such as writing letters to undecided voters, canvassing, and organizing campaign events” (p. 11). BFA was also fundamental in fundraising efforts (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 13-14). As mentioned in Chapter 2, culture was an important component of these financial transactions: “Giving money became a cathartic experience for bloggers who felt attached to the Dean campaign through their membership in the virtual community. Like a thermometer, the slugger’s bat turned red as fundraising amounts were posted on the blog, and as the red ink on the bat inched closer to the top, people would post tearful, emotional comments (sometimes echoed by the campaign staff) about how their collective efforts were going to restore responsible politics to America” (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 14).

Blog for America showed that offline participation could be successfully encouraged online. Kerbel and Bloom (2005) also found that “Five percent of process posts were devoted to recruiting people to attend meetups and discussing the experience (invariably positive) of attending a meetup event” (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 13), and that when a link to Meetup.com was placed on BFA, attendance at DFA Meetup groups increased significantly (p. 13).

DFA’s online presence may have led to increased greater membership. “The campaign… allows passive observers or spectators, in the hope that they will become active contributors,” writes Jett and Välikangas (2004: 16).

By assembling a large social network of diverse participants, more knowledge can be brought to bear on any particular problem (Jett and Välikangas 2004: 16). As noted earlier, Dean supporters are allowed to develop their own tasks to aid the campaign, and the campaign headquarters can borrow from what these supporters have independently come up with. This sharing of knowledge could be something as simple as sharing ideas for events to put on and
Dean-related computer images, but it can also take the form of open-source software development like Deanspace and ProjectDeanLight (Jett and Välikangas 2004: 6). In addition, DFA’s open organizing, “through its quality of self-organization, which implies self-interest and self selection…, may… be efficient in the sense that information leads to resource allocation much faster and more directly than is possible in a managerial decision making system” (Jett and Välikangas 2004: 19).

Finally, all this innovative Internet use resulted in media coverage. The media coverage did not happen immediately; media coverage only took off for DFA in the summer of 2003 when they had demonstrated the Internet’s ability to raise money. However, the media coverage quickly turned sour for Dean, and practically ground to a halt during the Democracy for America period. (Media reactions will be discussed at length in Chapter 9.)

Internet Problems

However, the use of the Internet also created some organization problems within Dean for America.

The first problem was resistance to Internet innovations. Joe Trippi noted that “Kate [O’Connor] and I shared an office throughout the campaign—where she made me feel welcome in those early days by marking a line with masking tape across the floor like an equator that I was never supposed to cross” (Trippi 2004: 85). He “could tell the people in the traditional campaign offices—like the political and field offices—were somewhat confused (and maybe a bit threatened) by the importance I put on the Web Team—these strange people, some of them just kids, hunched over laptops, headphones over their ears, tapping at computer keys, so that the room always sounded like there was a light rainstorm inside” (p. 93). When Trippi wanted to add innovations to Dean’s website, like a link to Meetup.com he was frustrated by the campaign’s reluctance to link outside websites (p. 85) and by delaying implementation until lawyers could...
“make sure there were no legal issues having to do with in-kind contributions” (p. 86). Trippi also had a difficult time getting Sarah Buxton, Dean’s scheduler, to allow Dean to attend a Meetup, because she saw them as a waste of time (p. 96-7). Despite the successes Trippi was achieving, Kate O’Connor felt that Trippi “was leading Dean off in some dangerous, populist crusade” (p. 162) and wanted to get rid of him by September 2003.

Also, their reliance on Internet fundraising made them vulnerable to Denial of Service (DOS) attacks by hackers; shutting down their site at a critical juncture could have hurt their campaign, which is exactly what happened to Kerry and Lieberman (p. 137-8). However, DFA’s use of a backup server prevented their site from staying down more than three minutes (p. 138). In addition, Federal Election Commission finance reporting rules were designed for small numbers of large contributions rather than large numbers of small contributions; because of DFA’s reliance on the latter, 20 DFA staff members “were nearly killed” trying to comply (p. 138).

Trolls—that is, people who post inflammatory messages for the purpose of disrupting conversations and upsetting participants—are another problem that DFA has had to deal with. During the Dean for America period, trolls sometimes would appeal to Dean supporters to switch to another candidate (Jett and Välikangas 2004: 8), sometimes by pretending to be a Dean supporter who became disillusioned in light of some new piece of information (p. 14). “When this occurs, a number of supporters on the blog will probe for inconsistencies in these accounts and sometimes the ‘disillusioned’ former supports are exposed… Occasionally, a regular visitor to BlogforAmerica reminds newcomers and less-frequent visitors of the history of a particular troll, so that the effect of a troll’s future visit can be minimized” (p. 14). One creative response by Dean supporters to combat trolling on BFA was to donate money to DFA each time a troll posted an inflammatory message, so that attempts to undermine the campaign would actually strengthen it (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 14). At the time that Jett and Välikangas (2004) were
writing, trolls “[did] not seem to succeed in imposing heavy costs or cause a need for formal
controls in the Dean campaign” (p. 14). However, since the time they wrote, the problem of trolls
seems to have worsened. One informant told me in an online interview how she thought Blog For
America has not dealt with them as effectively as she would have liked:

6:46 PM [HoustonHeidi] I have issues with how the blog is managed.
6:47 PM [HoustonHeidi] while I realize that even people who disagree with me
have the right to disagree, I don't think they should be given carte blanche to
condemn me for what I believe in and try to attack me verbally as a result.
6:50 PM [ncp] Heidi: Have the verbal assaults made you stop using the blog, or
use it less than you did before?
6:50 PM [HoustonHeidi] they've made me stop using the blog

HoustonHeidi is not alone in these feelings. Another person posted on Blog for America about
how the troll problem had gotten out of control:

This blog could be used for so much good. It used to be that way, but not any
more.

Instead it is now dominated by one Republican propaganda parrot and
everyone else posting comments to counter his misguided propaganda.

It is so ironic that the bloggers who most effectively counter Robert's
propaganda are consistently banned while Robert is allowed to blog away.

If the moderators don't do something about Robert very soon, they will
experience an even greater exodus from this blog to www.dailykos.com,
www.dnc.org, etc. [Robert Shmobert 2005; also see Figure 31]

Others have said:

7:51 PM [EagerRob_KY] DFA recently went through some censorship
moderating

210
7:51 PM [EagerRob_KY] monitoring
7:51 PM [ncp] Censorship monitoring? What happened?
7:51 PM [ArizoNadia] you can't expect total agreement with masses of people
7:52 PM [EagerRob_KY] some people were warned and given time out - I didn't blog much, wasn't keen on the change
7:52 PM [EagerRob_KY] or taking a chance - I think that's over now
7:53 PM [ArizoNadia] they have to take a position that prevents personal attacks
7:53 PM [HoustonHeidi] they don't have to ban people who disagree with Kolker.
7:53 PM [EagerRob_KY] they lost a lot of regulars, but looks like most are coming back
7:54 PM [EagerRob_KY] anyway - as a result, a shadow blog was created
7:54 PM [ArizoNadia] there are obviously some self indulgent assheads that only seek attention and don't care about issues or candidates
7:54 PM [ncp] Shadow blog? What's that?
7:54 PM [EagerRob_KY] (inspired by BushCo shadow govt :P
7:54 PM [EagerRob_KY] a home away from home
7:55 PM [ArizoNadia] my understanding is the shadow blog holds a lot of the same ideals of dfa but doesn't want the squids around
7:56 PM [HoustonHeidi] more like clams.

The first entry of this “Shadow Blog” explains its purpose thus

Just thinking it would be nice if someone could set up some sort of shadow blog where it could be safe to gather without the abuse. Fall, and the days getting shorter is rough for some people. The "back to school" transition is really hard
for some. And there are people with bigger stressors than that. We shouldn't have
to give up the community to avoid the abuse.

...anyway, looks like I'm going to give it a try. The "hang out in the old
thread and have civilized conversations" gets hard to do when threads get really
long. And actually impossible if I'm blogging on my Sidekick. [Renee in Ohio
2005]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Popular Blogs</th>
<th>Among...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent who ever read...</td>
<td>readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Daily Kos</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChangeforAmerica.com</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talkingpointsmemo.com</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonkette.com</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AndrewSullivan.com</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Eschaton.com</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>WashingtonMonthly.com</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Kausfiles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instapundit.com</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buzzmachine.com</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MatthewwGross.com</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 31: Examining Dean supporters' web activities

Community size is another issue that can potentially be a problem. Jett and Välikangas
write: “In many instances, open communities (physical and virtual) are unable to fulfill their
missions because they are unable to achieve a critical mass of participants” (2004: 3-4). On the
other hand, it can also be a problem when there are too many participants in the same (physical or
virtual) place. On Meetup.com’s message boards, one person described the reason for preferring
that message board over Blog for America:

I am the DFA Organizer for the Greater Lafayette, Indiana Meetup group and I
am thrilled to see this message board. I think it's great that we have a way to
share ideas and ideology among ourselves nationally. Far from blogs that become message boards that are impossible to follow a thread on, this is the perfect question and answer or discussion format. I look forward to spending a lot of time on this board with DFAer's from all over the U.S. and beyond. [Woolums 2004, emphasis added]

The Dunbar number predicts that 147.8 is the mean group size for humans based on cognitive capacity; maintaining groups of this size requires a significant amount of “social grooming” and usually only happens when necessary for survival, however, which is rarely the case online. Instead, some research indicates that online group sizes tend to cluster around certain numbers (Allen 2004, 2005, 2006). Allen hypothesizes “that the optimal size for active group members for creative and technical groups -- as opposed to exclusively survival-oriented groups, such as villages -- hovers somewhere between 25-80, but is best around 45-50” (Allen 2004). For example, he found from personal experience that “a forum would start to break down when it reached about 80 active contributors, requiring a forum split before continued growth could occur” (Allen 2004).

Jett and Välikangas (2004) claim that DFA is characterized by weak ties—that is, acquaintances rather than friendships—and this results in certain problems. Specifically, such groups have only a limited capacity for community-building, and “cannot be relied upon beyond instrumental purposes such as information acquisition” (Jett and Välikangas 2004: 22). They go on to argue that information acquisition is further limited by individuals needing to know who to ask within the group for specific information, and for those with expertise to feel their relationship with the group is reciprocal rather than one-sided (p. 22-23). They also contend that these weak ties represent “secondary priorities” that “can be easily ignored due to competing demands” (p. 23) or that can be abandoned due to shame following negative news coverage (p. 23). As noted in the previous section, Jett and Välikangas (2004) were wrong in their prediction
that the end of the 2004 election would mean the end of DFA because “[t]he Dean campaign
formed the basis for an extensive – and enduring – social network. Fully 71% of the activists say
they met someone in person or online through the campaign, and 45% still keep in touch with a
campaign contact” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 5). This finding by
Pew does mean that 55% of the people surveyed by Pew do not keep in touch with a campaign
contact, however, so we might conclude that Jett and Välikangas were at least correct about a
proportion of the social relationships being weak ties.

Another problem facing DFA is “structural holes” (Jett and Välikangas 2004: 24). Because Dean’s campaign was “like an island of formal organization in a sea of autonomous
volunteers” (p. 6), its membership was determined by who decided to participate. Those who
decided to participate were not, demographically speaking, representative of the nation as a
whole. As will be explained in the next chapter, there seems to be a correlation between the
digital divide (referring to access to and fluency with computer technology) and who participated
in the Dean campaign. Southern states were also underrepresented in the Dean campaign (Jett
and Välikangas 2004: 24). My own findings also suggest that there is a digital divide in terms of
age and software knowledge.

Jett and Välikangas (2004) identify the absence of feedback as yet another problem
facing DFA. They claim that the Dean campaign provided information of a general nature on the
campaign’s progress, but “volunteers…crave more – a sense of someone responding to their
worries and offering help when they feel overwhelmed” (p. 24). Furthermore, in the absence of
response from campaign headquarters regarding their concerns, gossip thrives (p. 25). Perhaps
this was more of a problem during the Dean for America period since the focus was on electing a
candidate at the national level, but during this new Democracy for America period, it seems less
of a concern since each local group is focused on the local elections in their own area.
Discussion/Conclusion

I opened this chapter by contending that the Internet helped DFA with the five problems of organizing. Again, they are: “(1) an allocation of tasks in a division of labor, (2) ways of deciding what the tasks will be, (3) ways of deciding who will do what tasks, (4), the raising of resources that finance and otherwise make the tasks possible, (5) maintaining the interest and morale of people performing tasks” (Lofland 1996: 141). By now, it should be clear that the Internet played a role in each aspect. Approximately 1,200 Meetup groups were able to self-organize during the Dean for America campaign. They were self-forming, self-selecting with their legal classification, and, at these groups, members would decide for themselves what tasks needed to be done. DFA-National would provide them with general advice and suggested projects, which they were free to follow or ignore. The Internet allowed members to devise their own projects and share them online. Many of DFA’s projects were the brainchild of grassroots members, not the campaign headquarters. The Internet helped DFA with the decision of assigning tasks to members by allowing members to decide for themselves which tasks they were best suited towards. These tasks, of course, were not determined in isolation; existing societal structures formed the sociocultural landscape in which DFA operated. Some tasks were decided by channeling—for instance, the tasks of preparing an FEC report by Dean for America would have resulted in a fine if not completed. Some tasks were reactions to media practices—for instance, the Dean Defense Forces. However, it was the Internet that helped members know about media coverage of Dean and organize Meetups in their local areas, and it was the Internet that allowed for so many donations that filing an FEC report on all of them became a labor-intensive task. In this way, the Internet had an indirect influence on many of the organizational problems which at first glance might appear unrelated. For instance, it seems likely that many of the people who donated through the mail rather than online were motivated by Howard Dean
seeming like a real contender for the presidency, which would not have been possible without the Internet.

As a result of these successes, both those directly related to the Internet and those merely enabled by the Internet, morale was maintained. Yet it was not simply the successes that helped to maintain morale, but also the social nature of the communication technologies used. Jett and Välikangas’ (2004) prediction that the end of the 2004 election would mean the end of DFA turned out not to be true, and I contend this is because of the social networks that were formed with shared beliefs. Members would form local groups in which they would call each other friends, along with subtle affirmations of friendship like physical contact. On Blog for America, “Almost half of the discussions were self-references invoking the online community, self-conscious comments about the experience of having an intimate connection to strangers on a blog” (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 16). Green and Pearson propose: “The use of multiple types of social software in communication presents a setting where ties can form” (2005: 7). In this chapter, we saw that DFA activities are able to fit into the different aspects of members’ busy lives; meetups only happen once a month, but e-mail and blogs can be checked at work.

While the Internet did bring numerous benefits to DFA, the implementation of the Internet as an integral part of DFA’s organization did not always run smoothly. These conflicts started in DFA National headquarters in Burlington early in the Dean campaign when Joe Trippi wanted to link to outside websites, have Howard Dean attend a Meetup, and make the Internet have a central role in the campaign in many other ways, and met with resistance from campaign staff who were more comfortable with traditional campaign methods. Once Trippi had won these battles and made the Internet integral to DFA, new organizational conflicts opened up. Members had to first be convinced that they were allowed to take the initiative in DFA activities. Relying on online fundraising made Dean for America particularly vulnerable to hackers shutting down their website. Numerous online donations meant that preparing DFA’s FEC report was a labor-
intensive process for campaign staff. BFA’s success as a virtual community made some members long for something smaller that was easier to follow a discussion on. BFA’s troll problem was initially met with debunking and creative responses like donating in honor of the troll; however, during the Democracy for America period, many BFA regulars grew tired of the constant trolling, as well as certain practices by campaign staff on the blog. In response, they created a “Shadow Blog” where they could control the blog policies. Cultural conflicts over Internet practices continue within DFA to this day, but had DFA been unwilling to face these conflicts by refusing to embrace Internet organizing, it would have been a far less effective organization.
Chapter 6: What are causes of DFA?

According to Piven and Cloward (1979), “protest movements do not arise during ordinary periods; they arise when large-scale changes undermine political stability” (p. 28). While Piven and Cloward were talking about poor people’s movements whose main goals were economic, the changes brought about during George W. Bush’s first term in office were motivating factors for both Dean and his supporters. The relevant question to ask here is: “what are the conditions under which SMOs come into existence?” (Lofland 1996: 99). Dean’s anger attracting a base of Internet-users alone would not be sufficient if he decided to use a Version 2.0 Internet model instead of DFA’s more interactive style of communication. As previously mentioned, his campaign started out with few resources, and this led to a greater willingness to try innovative tactics like blogs and meetups.

In this chapter, I am concerned both with the general conditions that create SMOs, and also with the conditions that led to DFA becoming an Internet-using SMO. To utilize the Internet in an attempt to achieve social change, particular social and historical conditions must be identified as problematic by a population with Internet access, and an organization must be formed around these beliefs. To analyze the causes of an Internet-using SMO like DFA, we should look first at the process of aggravation of the population that must occur for any SMO to form, and also at the reasons why the Internet was able to be utilized by the aggrieved population. Without certain sociocultural conditions enabling DFA to tap into perceptions of injustice by an Internet-savvy, politically-progressive population, blogs and Meetups could not have been used as successfully as they were by DFA.
Sociopolitical Conditions and Opportunities

In this section, I will address the relationship between conditions of the state and opportunities for SMOs to form. Relevant sociopolitical conditions include: the type of society under consideration; incongruencies between past and present definitions of state responsibilities, resulting in the potential for SMOs to frame state involvement as shirking duties or overstepping its proper bounds; and, finally, changes in the expected likelihood of repression.

Societies vary in the degree to which they are receptive/vulnerable to SMO activities (Lofland 1996: 183). Some social movement researchers have speculated that SMOs tend to thrive in societies that are neither consistently repressive nor fully democratic and participatory (p. 183); “SMOs may… be especially characteristic of quasi-democratic societies—societies in which there is some semblance of honoring democratic participation, but democracy has not been fully realized” (Lofland 1996: 183). In the United States, “political democracy is characterized by low voter turn-out, a powerful role of money in the political system, and widespread income, gender, and racial inequality” (Paley 2002: 470). Democracy for America recognizes that democracy “has not been fully realized” in the name itself.

“In penetrating citizen life, the state can be defined as responsible for citizen life. The more responsibility the state assumes, the greater the likelihood that citizens will demand that state lives up to its responsibilities” (Lofland 1996: 184). Between the time of the New Deal and Great Society to the time of Neoliberalism, American society underwent great change:

- social science discussions…. associate neoliberalism with a specific historical conjuncture in the 1970s and 1980s, delimited by the oil shocks, fiscal crises of states, perceived crises of welfare systems, declining productivity growth in many industrial countries, and the effects of collapsing world commodity prices on many non-industrial countries. This conjuncture is also marked by the
emergence of neoconservative, neoclassical and libertarian understandings of these crises. Finally, this historical moment encompasses certain model cases: Pinochet’s Chile under the influence of the “Chicago Boys”; the US and UK under Reagan and Thatcher; Latin America under the “Washington Consensus,” policies of structural adjustment; and post-socialist countries during the “transition” to a market economy. [Hoffman et al. 2006: 9]

While Hoffman et al. seek to problematize the assumption that “the history of liberalism and neoliberalism is one of fundamental continuity and coherence” (p. 10), there can be little doubt that the state has been abdicating the responsibilities it had under New Deal/Great Society policies, and, on the other hand, that the infusion of votes from the religious right since Reagan has led to government penetration into areas like abortion.

“The likelihood of SMOs is increased to the degree that the major dominant and hegemonic groups of a society begin to contest among themselves for the control of central institutions” (Lofland 1996: 188). Lofland gives some examples of events that can trigger regime crises: disastrous military ventures, the state’s inability or unwillingness to deliver on material/economic promises, and “[elites] embark[ing] on a bold program of initiatives that run counter to existing understandings about the bounds of elite action” (p. 189). The war in Iraq, health care, fiscal responsibility, and economy/jobs were all popular reasons for supporting Howard Dean (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 3), suggesting each of Lofland’s examples may have some applicability.

“[Dominant] groups may begin to relax their repression or controls over various segments of the population, or become simply unable any more to apply controls effectively” (Lofland 1996: 189). This was certainly not the case under the administration of George W. Bush. For example, traditional protesters have been restricted to “free speech zones” (Bovard 2003; Hightower 2004). The National Lawyers Guild documents a variety of other practices designed
to increase repression, concluding that “the Bush administration has used the threat of terrorist attacks to ratchet up a concerted drive to silence individuals who wish to voice opposition to policies of the administration” (Boghosian 2004: 94).

Aggrieved Membership: Perceptions and Cultures of Injustice

Once societal conditions are ripe for SMO formation, there must also be “cognitive liberation.” That is, members must culturally define the current societal conditions as being in need of change. DFA’s cultural definition of problematic American societal conditions was explained in Chapter 4; the causes that allowed these beliefs to resonate with an aggrieved population include: a feeling of political disempowerment, a Democratic Party that did not speak to these feelings of marginalization, increasing partisanship in American society, and crises that helped to crystallize discontent.

“By inequality, researchers mean unequal distribution of the valued things of life: physical wholeness; good health and health care; education; meaningful, powerful, safe, and highly paid work; power to influence economic and political affairs; wealth; pleasant natural and human-built environments; respectful and dignified treatment in everyday life” (Lofland 1996: 180). According to Lofland, inequalities can be economic, political or cultural in character (p. 182); as I have argued earlier, economic and political equalities are also cultural in character because culture provides the framework for interpreting economic and political matters. DFA members tend to be white, affluent, and well-educated (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 26), which does not fit the traditional profile of inequality. A Pew study found: “Dean supporters are much more satisfied with their finances: 69% rate their personal financial situation as good or excellent, compared with 58% of Kerry supporters and 51% of Gephardt voters” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2003b: 4).
However, when we view the “valued things in life” as political representation for their political views, then the inequality becomes apparent. Democrats had lost control of Congress and the presidency, and many Democrats who still held office had adopted centrist/moderate positions on political issues. Howard Dean’s famous “What I Want to Know” speech was as much an indictment of Democratic Party leadership as it was of the Bush administration for failing to represent these views (Dean 2003).

After September 11, Democracy Corps, a consulting group, described the DNC’s strategy as follows: “It is important to support the president and set a tone that lacks a sharp partisan quality” (Black 2001). This lack of a “sharp partisan quality” may have created what political process theorists have called a Political Opportunity Structure. Some of the earliest advice that Joe Trippi gave to Howard Dean reflected this:

[Howard Dean] and his aides were talking in hushed tones about how to deliver the usual Dean fare, health coverage for all Americans, when I spoke up

“Look,” I said. “You know what? I’ve been walking around, talking to these DNC members for a couple of days. You know what they really want? They’re waiting for someone to walk up to that podium and ask, ‘What the fuck is going on here? What the fuck happened to our party?’” [Trippi 2004: 66]

In contrast to those Democrats who were accommodating towards Republicans, Dean’s rhetoric targeted both Republicans and members of his own party:

His latest target is Washington, that regular punchbag of the provincial politician, which he, as an outsider, is going to purge. Even by the colourful standards of outsiders' oratory, his rhetoric was strong.

Congressmen were, he said, "going to be scurrying for shelter, just like a giant flashlight on a bunch of cockroaches".
Such talk will not go down well with the Democratic power brokers in DC - Dr Dean made no distinction between Republicans and his own party - but he has long made clear that he is relying on "people power" to propel his bid until, he hopes, the establishment has to acknowledge his strength and back him too. [Russell 2003]

According to a Pew survey, two-thirds of Dean supporters cited the Iraq war as their primary reason for joining the campaign (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 1), which many Democrats voted in favor of. By striving for an appearance of a unified nation after September 11, the Democrats may have alienated many of their supporters, and Dean’s labeling of them as “Republican-lite” (e.g. Peng 2004) may have tapped into this sentiment.

Kerbel and Bloom (2005) write: “These are passionate, partisan times, perfectly suited to a vehicle such as the Dean blog… It is hard to visualize today’s version of the blog sustaining itself during a less divisive or turbulent period. However, it is also difficult to imagine a more placid time supporting quasi-partisan vehicles such as Fox News… The emergence of Blog for America at this moment in history is not coincidental” (p. 24). This characterization of the United States as being in “partisan times” seems to be accurate. This partisanship can be seen in the blogosphere (Adamic and Glance 2005), book purchases (Krebs 2004, 2006), and news audiences (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2004c).

“One of the variables that stimulates or sharpens a sense of injustice… is the degree to which incidents occur that serve to dramatize, heighten, or focus otherwise unfocused or diffuse discontent” (Lofland 1996: 190). The contentious nature of the 2000 presidential election and the policies enacted in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks may have served as focusing crises for liberals/progressives, especially the Iraq War in 2003. Once potential members had discovered DFA’s Internet presence, they were fed a steady diet of focal points for their outrage. Blog For America contains a “Bush Outrages” section in which these sorts of
incidents are brought to the attention of Dean activists. Events in this section have included: blacklisting from Republican speaking events, establishing pro-life legal precedents, statements made by members of the Bush administration that (according to BFA and their cited sources) are wrong and deceptive, and negative statements made about Democrats by Republicans.

**Favorable Social Conditions for SMO Formation**

Given that societal conditions that are conducive to the aggravation of a population are present and events that lead potential members to define themselves as aggrieved have occurred, there must finally be favorable conditions for this aggrieved population to actually form an SMO. Also, given that SMOs—especially the Internet-using varieties—can be considered TANs, we must keep in mind that the necessary conditions will be both social and technological. Favorable conditions to DFA’s formation include: available leadership, some degree of preexisting organization, framing techniques in line with the aggrieved population, ways of contacting the aggrieved population, geographic proximity of the aggrieved population, places for the aggrieved population to meet, resources for the aggrieved population to use, and a lack of conflicting social obligations among potential members.

Since SMOs involve themselves in culturally-contentious matters, some motivation must be present for people to get involved initially, leading to the involvement of others (if successful). “Populations vary in the degree to which they contain people who are prepared to assume these tasks of leadership—of defining a situation quarrelsomely, suggesting action regarding it, and organizing concrete action in which others will participate” (Lofland 1996: 193). It is common for people who take on SMO leadership roles to have already shown leadership in some other sociocultural context (p. 193). As previously shown, Dean had experience as governor of Vermont and Trippi had experience in election politics and the IT field. Their leadership provided the initial spark for DFA.
DFA national had some preexisting organization, although it was quite small and would have to expand rapidly. Joe Trippi was recruited through persistent phone calls from Steve McMahon, a partner in his media firm, who was consulting with Howard Dean and wanted Trippi to get involved (Trippi 2004: 61-3). Trippi then had to be won over by Dean (p. 63-4). His description of DFA’s organization at that time was less than flattering: “a creaky, undermanned vessel like Dean for America” (p. 65); “Everyone was too green up there. The campaign was two years behind and falling further behind every day. No one was in charge, there was no organization, and the candidate didn’t seem likely to do anything about it” (p. 68); “[Dean] arrived in a national election with no national plan, no national team, no money, and next to no campaign experience” (p. 75). The existing organization consisted of “a cramped, 1,000-square foot second-story office above the dark Vermont Pub and Brewery. There were six people—seven if you counted the governor—working for Dean for America, most of whom had been longtime aides in the governor’s office” (p. 76).

However, Joe Trippi was able to tap into the preexisting Dean Meetups on Meetup.com—only 432 supporters nationwide at the time—to turn that “creaky, undermanned vessel” into a national organization (Trippi 2004: 83-87). Hindman speculates that “Without the Internet, Dean’s campaign would have attracted a smaller, less geographically diffuse, and proportionally more experienced group of volunteers” (2005: 175). Hindman cites large-scale surveys from 2000 and 2002 that show significant differences between the Internet-usage of liberals and conservatives: “Liberals seem to dominate the audience for politics online. Across a wide range of politically relevant activities, from gathering news online to visiting government Web sites, liberals outpace conservatives by a wide margin” (Hindman 2005: 179). From this, he concludes that “The online audience thus seems to have been predisposed towards Dean’s message” (p. 180), and that if these usage patterns were reversed, DFA would not have been nearly as successful (p. 180-1). We may then conceive of the widespread use of the Internet for
political purposes by liberals as another preexisting organization (or at least the beginnings of one) in addition to the half-dozen aides from Howard Dean’s governorship.

Another likely factor contributing to DFA’s Internet success was its choice to use blogs. The success of utilizing blogs has to do with another pattern in the landscape of the Internet at the time DFA emerged. In 2002, Meikle wrote:

> In the sense in which I used the terms, Version 1.0 offers change; Version 2.0 offers more of the same. Version 1.0 demands openness, possibility, debate; Version 2.0 offers one-way information flows and a single option presented as ‘choice’. Version 1.0 would try to bring the new space of virtual possibility into the world as we know it; Version 2.0 would take the world as we know it – politics-as-usual, the media-as-before, ever more shopping – and impose it upon cyberspace. Version 1.0 would open things up. Version 2.0 would nail them down. [Meikle 2002: 12-13]

> The idea is that when subscribers log on to check a sports result or book a plane ticket, they’ll allow themselves to be steered through a ‘channel’ of participating sites, with every step of the search exposing them to more ads. Portal sites hope will keep their home page set as the default and will never see the need to surf outside the portal’s lucrative, closed system. And it often works – AOL reportedly managed to contain its users within this fenced-off area for more than 80% of their time online, while one ratings company reports that in December 2001, eight of the top ten most visited sites in Australia were large commercial portals. [Meikle 2002: 10-11]

Lawson-Borders and Kirk write: “Perhaps one reason for the rise in blog participation was the decline of Internet interactivity in 2004” (2005: 555).
SMOs must face the “problem of aligning the idea of the SMO and its new actions with existing ways in which reality is conceived” (Lofland 1996: 196). During the beginning of Dean for America, Howard Dean’s speeches were the medium upon which the goals of DFA were framed to the public. Dean’s speeches and overall image were presented in a civic style that seemed genuine (discussed in Chapter 8), and successfully tapped into liberal outrage. As the Meetups and blogs grew in popularity, the job of framing DFA’s message was increasingly the work of the membership. Jim Dean took over Democracy for America, although he has not been nearly as visible of a figure as his brother Howard was. As Carpenter (2004) pointed out, DFA members were expected to help craft the message of the movement.

Framing has been aided by working with linguist George Lakoff. Exercises in framing have been encouraged at DFA meetups, and activists have shown themselves to be aware of framing at both a local and national level:

We also discussed letting people know about Dean through peace rallies.

However, since some see the rallies as anti-American, we suggested a low-key approach rather than having an official booth. We decided also that we should follow the lead of the campaign headquarters so that we can help keep his campaign on message.29

Once SMO leaders with organizations start reaching out to members with a message, leaders and members need places to meet, ways of contacting each other, and ways of disseminating information (Lofland 1996: 193). These resources must not merely be present, but also available for SMO use (p. 194). Blogs and Meetups served these purposes for DFA. DFA members have often described feeling like they are the only liberal/progressive/Democrat in their neighborhoods. By using these tools to create both nationally and locally-based TANs, even people who were not involved in politics could become easily involved.
“The integration variable has two referents: the degree or density of… [interpersonal ties with an aggrieved community] in a population taken as a whole versus the degree to which any given individual is integrated. In both cases, the greater the integration, the greater the likelihood of SMO formation” (Lofland 1996: 195). While 75%-85% of DFA members at Meetups claimed to have asked other people to join (Williams and Gordon 2003a: 4; Williams et al. 2004a: 6), 79% of all Dean activists sought out campaign involvement on their own (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 13), and only 22.7%-30.8% of Meetup-attending members claimed to have been invited by someone they knew (Williams and Gordon 2003a: 3; Williams et al. 2004a: 5).

An aggrieved individual who was invited to attend a DFA Meetup is more likely to become a member if he or she has a certain level of prosperity. “At the societal level, prosperity as a feature of social organization increases the availability of a wide range of resources that facilitate SMOs. Among these are such things as telephones, cheap document reproduction and—increasingly—access to computer and other electronic technology” (Lofland 1996: 185). Lacking Internet access, transportation, and disposable income (to eat out at monthly at Meetup venues, for instance) could be hindrances to DFA participation.

Dean supporters were found to be “far wealthier, better educated, more secular and much less ethnically diverse than other Democrats” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 2; see Figure 32). Appealing to this demographic brought Internet use along with it. This is not surprising since the digital divide can be found along many of these lines. Factors which have been found to be significant correlates of Internet use (and the absence of it) include: gender, race, class/income, education, age, employment status, geographic region, community size (rural, suburban, or urban), disability status, language skills, computer skills, and parental status (Lockard 1997: 227; Spooner 2001; Lenhart et al. 2003; Spooner 2003; Bell et al. 2004; Susannah Fox 2004; Fox 2005). According to a Pew report (Fox 2005), 68% of American adults
(137 million people) use the Internet while 32% (65 million people) do not. Furthermore, only 26% of Americans over 65 versus 84% between 18-29 go online; only 57% of African-Americans versus 70% of whites go online; only 29% of high-school dropouts versus 89% of college graduates go online; and finally, 60% of adults without children versus 83% of parents with minor children go online. In addition, one reporter found: “More than a quarter of those [Dean supporters] who have used the Internet to pledge to vote are concentrated in just three states - California, New York, and Washington - according to a running tally posted on a linked page” (Mooney 2003). This fits with what a Pew report found in terms of regional variation in Internet use: “The regions of the country with the highest rates of Internet penetration are along the Atlantic seaboard (New England with 66% of the adult population using the Internet and the Capital region with 64% using the Internet) as well as the Pacific seaboard (the Pacific Northwest with 68% online and California with 65% Internet penetration)” (Spooner 2003: ii).
This connection between DFA member demographics and digital divide demographics is further supported by comparing these demographics to which political ideologies hold favorable opinions of Howard Dean. Pew released a report that divides the American public into a nine-
category typology, and within those categories, reports the percentage that hold Very
Unfavorable, Somewhat Unfavorable, Somewhat Favorable, and Very Favorable opinions of him.
Among these categories, those within their Liberal category reported the most favorable opinions
of Dean (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005b). Pew goes on to report the
following information about Liberals:

WHO THEY ARE: Most (62%) identify themselves as liberal. Predominantly
white (83%), most highly educated group (49% have a college degree or more),
and youngest group after Bystanders. Least religious group in typology: 43%
report they seldom or never attend religious services; nearly a quarter (22%) are
seculars. More than one-third never married (36%). Largest group residing in
urban areas (42%) and in the western half the country (34%). Wealthiest
Democratic group (41% earn at least $75,000).

LIFESTYLE NOTES: Largest group to have been born (or whose
parents were born) outside of the U.S. or Canada (20%). Least likely to have a
gun in the home (23%) or attend bible study or prayer group meetings (13%).

2004 ELECTION: Bush 2%, Kerry 81%

MEDIA USE: Liberals are second only to Enterprisers in following news
about government and public affairs most of the time (60%). Liberals’ use of the
internet to get news is the highest among all groups (37%). [Pew Research
Center for the People and the Press 2005c: 58]

This profile fits very well with the previously-reported demographics of DFA members; like DFA
members, they are mostly white, educated, secular, affluent, and avid news readers, especially
using online sources. It also fits with the impressions formed by bloggers familiar with DFA:

Having visited the main site a few times, i found myself put off by the quality of
the postings. They are decidedly white(names, level of discourse and topic
material as indicative) in terms of locations and numbers. They are decidedly
from people who are motivated to use their large amount of free time to engage
one another in preaching to their choir. And yes there is a gender parity beyond
any expectation for such. But most of it is just Seinfeld yada yada, meet me in
my backyard sort of "how cool we are" rhetoric. I was/am disappointed
altogether. [Sabater 2005, Comment #3]

The “degree of geographic—or ‘ecological’—concentration, referring to the degree to
which people who might participate in an SMO live in physical proximity to one another and,
allied with this, are also homogeneous on other social characteristics (such as economic level,
language, religion, and culture)” (Lofland 1996: 185). Again, Dean supporters also tend to be
white, affluent, and secular (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 34).
English is the primary language of DFA; most DFA websites are in English, and while Dean’s
website was a good example of “[linking] to Spanish-language site prominently in persistent
navigation” (Garrett 2004: 18), the quality of the translation was not optimal (Sam in San Diego
2003). The very success of DFA Meetups suggests a certain degree of physical proximity.
However, not all DFA groups found it as easy to get members. One Dean for America Meetup
organizer in North Carolina demonstrated this in his plea for help from fellow organizers:

My support base here in Charlotte is quite thin. I was curious if some of the
members of this group can email me some ideas on how to raise awareness? My
email address is [removed]

So far I have posted on all the local forums, talked to everyone I know,
called the *very* few democratic groups in the area and even put the links in my
AIM profile. I love helping Dean, but my skills in just getting mass support is a
bit lacking. Any help is much appreciated. [Rosas 2003]
Similarly, Wendy from DFA-TB described differences between Miami and Tampa as affecting membership size and strategic options:

WT: I think the group in Miami is so much… I don’t want to say farther along than we are. They just have a really big group down there. So they—and they’ve done a lot more as far as citizen lobbying, and things like that, than our other groups around the state have done. So I think they wanted to take it, um—Some of those people wanted to take it to another level. Do you know their website, I think it’s Grassroots Miami, you can just see the difference. If you go on it, you can just see the difference, and see the kind of stuff they’re doing. They just have a much more active community down there. It’s a lot more progressive in Miami than here.

It should be pointed out that DFA groups are not necessarily geographically confined to the United States. These messages are from a Dean for America organizer in Tokyo:

I am the host and organizer of a growing group Tokyo For Dean in Japan. How do I become the official host and get all this support from HQ?

We are growing fast here and there are more than 50,000 americans in the Tokyo metro region. [Shannon 2003a]

Hi, I am host for Tokyo For Dean. We were unable to get our packet in the mail in time for our meetup and I have a group of about 20 folks that really want to write letters for Dean to NH voters.

Do any of you have extra names? We would really love to get about 60 names and address to write to. 3 per person.  [Shannon 2003b]

Anyway, as you know I am a super-dean supporter. Even the host of TOKYO FOR DEAN an expat group over here. We have 44 people signed up to meet at the sept. event on 9/3. Anyway in the middle of my birthday get away...
with chris we stayed glued to the laptop keeping on top of the SLEEPLESS SUMMER TOUR. which culminated a few hours ago with 10,000 people at 10pm on a tuesday night in Bryant Park NYC. Raised over 1,000,000 during the 4 day tour. Average donation 51S it was amazing to watch. 15,000 people in Seattle! [Shannon 2003c]

These messages are quite illuminating about the role of geographic concentration in overseas DFA groups. First, note that out of a community of 50,000 Americans in the area, Tokyo for Dean was able to raise only a few dozen members. In an overseas location with a smaller American population, the group would likely have been smaller. Second, the reliance on mail puts their group at a disadvantage, as shown by the fact they did not receive their Meetup packet in time for their group meeting. Third, these messages show that the Internet makes geographical concentration insignificant in terms of following the progress of DFA National.

“Being close together and similar… is more potent when it is reinforced by occurring in a population that already has a great many ways in which people are meeting together in preexisting or prior organization” (Lofland 1996: 186). In most cases, it is easier to turn existing organizations into SMOs than to start SMOs from scratch. Resources from existing organizations such as “meeting places, telephones, printing machinery, settled hierarchies, relations of knowing and trust, etc.” (p. 186) can save SMOs time and effort in establishing themselves. By the time Dean for America had collapsed, there were plenty of organizational resources left over to facilitate a relatively-smooth transition into Democracy for America. Software had already been created, social bonds had been forged, and routines of activism had been set in place. For example, while DFA eventually switched to using DFA-Link instead of Meetup.com, DFA-Link “Meetups” followed the same event format, and were still held on the first Wednesday of every month, allowing them to bypass negotiating an appropriate meeting time for everyone.
For people to join and actively participate in SMOs, there must also be a lack of preexisting, conflicting obligations to other social groups (Lofland 1996: 187). Barbara from DFA-TB presents an example of how familial obligations can interfere with participation in DFA:

**NP:** What do you feel you have learned, if anything, as a result of your participation in DFA?

**BM:** Um, I’ve learned that people can make a difference. An ordinary citizen can make a difference. I look around and see from two years ago, I didn’t know anybody in Tampa, politically, and now both candidates for governor know who I am. Um… Just by an ordinary citizen getting out there and doing some work and getting to know people, no matter where I go, people know who I am. And I know—I recognize faces wherever I go.

**NP:** Okay. Before that, did you feel like people couldn’t make a difference?

**BM:** It’s not that I didn’t think that, it’s that I was otherwise occupied with my—with my children, and doing what I thought I needed to do for my family. It was only when I saw what was happening to my country that I felt I needed to stop and jump in, because somebody dropped the ball and I needed to step in and pick it up.

As mentioned earlier, work can also impede participation in DFA activities. The examples provided earlier demonstrated how members wishing to participate in DFA activities while online had to make their work activities a higher priority; it should also be noted that work can interfere with non-Internet DFA activities as well. For example, one BFA member wrote: “I got busy at work and FORGOT about the oregon conference call with DFA” (Ruth in OR 2004); another wrote: “I can't go to meetup tonight :(…. stuck at work” (ChrisNYC 2004b) Other civic/political organizations may also constitute cross-cutting solidarities. On the other hand, each of these cross-cutting solidarities also has the potential to encourage DFA membership; it is possible for
one to be introduced or encouraged to participate in DFA by family members, coworkers, or fellow activists in other organizations.

What do we know about DFA member involvement in these social obligations? Does work, marriage, etc. tend to conflict with DFA involvement? Surveys have found that 50% of all Dean activists are married, while 49% are not (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 34). Among DFA members who attend meetups, a 2003 survey found 42.3% to be single, 41.3% married, 12.7% divorced or separated, and 3.7% widowed (Williams and Gordon 2003a: 28), and a 2004 survey found 27% single, 54% married, 10.4% divorced or separated, 1.9% widowed, and 6.6% partnered (Williams et al. 2004a: 32). In addition, only 15% of Dean activists attended church once a week or more (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 34), and only 16% were union households (p. 35). The employment status of Dean activists was 56% full-time, 17% part-time, 11% unemployed, and 15% retired (p. 35). Among Meetup-attending members, employment status in 2003 was: 55.2% employed and working full-time, 9.4% employed and working part-time, 5.4% temporarily laid off or unemployed, 13.2% retired, 1.8% homemaker, and 10.5% student (Williams and Gordon 2003a: 28). In 2004, the numbers were: 22.6% not currently employed, 6.1% student, and the remainder employed (Williams et al. 2004a: 30). These numbers do not suggest the presence or absence of marriage as being particularly strong facilitators or inhibitors of DFA participation. The percentage of DFA activists who are employed full-time is only 4% greater than the general public (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 34), again suggesting that employment status does not significantly affect DFA participation.

Discussion/Conclusions

SMOs are more likely to form under certain conditions. America’s quasi-democracy and changes in the degree/areas of state involvement in citizen’s lives were facilitating conditions,
while the more constrained opportunities for traditional protest may have helped channel DFA away from disruptive methods.

DFA member demographics do not lean towards disempowered social strata; however, its mostly white and affluent membership does feel politically disempowered. The Democratic Party’s general strategy of supporting the Bush administration post-September 11th led to those with liberal/progressive beliefs feeling that the Party did not speak for them, creating a political opportunity structure for Dean to use. By tapping into this, Dean upset the Democratic Party establishment, but tapped into a deep well of emotion among progressives.

This liberal/progressive demographic correlates quite well with digital divide demographics. Pew identified Liberals as closely following political news and the most likely of their nine political categories to use the Internet to get news (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005c: 58; also see Hindman 2005: 177-81). Shirky argues that the digital divide was insignificant in Howard Dean’s loss (Shirky 2005: 239), claiming that it was a cultural divide instead. He is correct that more and more Americans have some form of Internet access as time has progressed. However, the digital divide is more complicated than simply the presence or absence of Internet access (Barzilai-Nahon 2006); we should also take into account other usage patterns. For instance, in this case, people of differing political ideologies do not use the Internet in the same ways. Hindman (2005) writes: “The online audience… seems to have been predisposed towards Dean’s message. If the patterns of political Web use were reversed—if conservatives visited political sites far more than liberals—the Internet would clearly not have been such an asset for Dean. Dean would have raised less money online, recruited fewer volunteers, and attracted less positive press coverage of his online efforts” (p. 180-1).

To return to the theme of binary thinking about a “Computer Revolution” taking place (see Introduction chapter), this chapter found that the Internet was an important cause in the formation of DFA, but it was far from the only cause. Leadership, preexisting organization,
framing, methods of contacting the aggrieved population, and places to meet were all causal factors as well. Meetups required a geographic concentration of members, or people who could be persuaded to join. Virtual places allowed meetings to take place without physical proximity. However, both face-to-face and virtual meeting places tended to attract those with a certain level of prosperity. Without these conditions in place, DFA could not have happened, Internet or not.
Chapter 7: Why Do People Join DFA?

Dear friends and family,

It all started for me when I showed up one Wednesday evening at Back to the Grind, our local coffee/internet cafe. Downstairs there were lots of folks talking about Howard Dean's presidential campaign. I stayed after the meeting to help form Riverside's Dean for America Steering Committee, and my life has not been the same since.

Lots of bake sales, much money raised, even more conversations with anyone who would listen about the new direction our country needs to take. Several new friends. Getting rousted by the cops for holding Dean signs up over the local freeway overpass.

One presidential campaign derailed by the mass media. Sucking up and working for Kerry. Traveling to Phoenix with Marilyn to work the November 4th election. Listening to the radio on the long drive home that night. Finally, long lines and freezing weather in Ohio. Ken Blackwell, secretary of state in Ohio, helps Dubya steal the election.

The next sad night, listening to Howard on a conference call at Marci and James’, telling us to take the next day off, then get back to work. Telling us how to do it. Overcome the culture of failure gripping the Democratic Party. Denise figuring it out - we need to organize at the local precinct level. Mark Takano telling us to be delegates to the State Democratic Convention.
One American maverick elected Democratic National Committee chair, making DNC chair into a household word.

Attending the California Democratic Conventions with my Deaniac friends. More Democracy for America (DFA) meetings. Denise and Marci helping to revamp the fledgling Democrats of Greater Riverside (DGR). Learning precinct organization. Saturdays walking Marci and James’ precinct. Coffee and bagels, and then hitting the sidewalk for Andy Melendrez for Riverside's Ward 2 City Council seat. Another Saturday morning, Marc teaching folks precinct organization at my house.

An unexpected landslide victory for Andy, directly attributable to the work of DFA and DGR. Impressing the heck out of the previously existing Riverside Democratic Party people. Alienating the existing Riverside County Central Committee members. Tearing our hair out over the existing Democratic Party structure. Watching DGR members Sheila and Mickey get elected to the County Central Committee.

A card from my son Nathan, 10, at dinnertime yesterday. "Mom: Here's what you've worked for and it might happen - Dems 90%, Republicans 5%, Undecided 5%. [Lockwood n.d.]

Long before I embarked upon this research, I saw Howard Dean on C-SPAN and was impressed by his willingness to criticize Bush during a time when few Democrats were willing to do so. After investigating his stance on the issues vis-à-vis other Democrats, I found that Dennis Kucinich had positions more to my liking, but I thought his chances of being elected were little better than Ralph Nader’s chances were—that is to say, slim to none. I thought that Howard Dean’s positions were progressive enough to be a significant improvement over that of the Bush
administration, but not so far left that they would be unpalatable to moderate voters. I was also impressed with the idea of using the Internet for fundraising as a way of shifting financial dependency away from big businesses and toward citizens; it seemed to me that this was a good way of alleviating the conflict of interest that comes when a politician must pick between policies that help the business or policies that help the citizens. For these reasons, Howard Dean became my candidate of choice, and I decided to do my part to help by promoting him on a few online discussion forums that I was a participant in. However, I was quite busy with my schoolwork at the time, and my participation never extended to BFA or DFA Meetups. Should I consider myself someone who joined and then left, or was my participation insufficient for me to be called a joiner? How typical is my experience when compared to those whose involvement was much greater than mine?

**What Is Joined? What Is “Joining?”**

As pointed out earlier, there are at least five general ways that people can contribute to social movements: 1. participation; 2. work; 3. lifestyle; 4. goods and services; 5. cash. When we speak of “joining” an SMO, we must recognize that this could entail any or all of these contributions, or even just simply holding a sympathetic attitude towards the group (Lofland 1996: 202). Using individual and group-based definitions of who counts as a member may seem like an appealing solution at first glance. However, because of these differing types and levels of contributions, members may disagree with each other as to who qualifies as a member (p. 202-4). In addition, “many circumstances prompt self-proclaimed SMO speakers and members not to be candid about membership; both are prone to simple errors in such matters” (p. 204). Because of this, Lofland suggests a number of variables researchers may use as indicators of membership: frequency of participation in SMO activities, monetary donations, familiarity to other members,
power and influence over the SMO, and agreement or disagreement with SMO beliefs (1996: 204).

In this chapter, I am mainly concerned with those who more strongly fit into the indicators mentioned by Lofland. I am interested primarily in the people who had strong feelings about the mission of DFA (in either incarnation), and have formed enduring social ties to other members, online or offline (and often both). However, I would like to touch on the lowest levels of commitment to DFA first. Shirky (2005) has argued that Dean activists were never really successful at appealing to undecided voters. According to him, Dean’s early success in polls was more a reflection of dissatisfaction with George W. Bush, coupled with Dean’s visible criticism of the president; however, once the primaries were only weeks away, the majority of voters began paying closer attention to the candidates and many of them found other candidates to be more to their liking (p. 232). If he is correct, we may then say that the lowest level of participation in DFA was supporting Dean in early polls (see Polling Report 2005), and a slightly higher level of participation was maintaining that sympathetic attitude in the face of new information about other candidates and following through on voting for Howard Dean in the primaries.

Similarly, Shirky writes that “when Dean announced his desire to top the fundraising list, a lot of us gave him money, self included, as a vote for that method of fund raising, without that meaning anything about whether we’d vote for him” (Shirky 2005: 236). As pointed out in Chapter 2, money exists within a cultural context. Individuals may choose any number of possible interpretations due to the polysemic nature of political campaigns like Dean for America; simply knowing that a person contributed does not tell us whether they contributed because they like the idea of the Internet playing a greater role in election politics, or whether they found Dean’s anti-war message appealing.

When it comes to the main movement activities, Carpenter provides us not only with a good list of major activities, but numbers of participants within those activities:
Raised over $50M by over 300,000 individuals
Over 640,000 supporters on main mailing list
Over 189,000 participants in monthly Meetups
Over 700 grassroots websites in support
Over 1000 Yahoo! Groups and listservs
Over 35,000 blog commenters (Carpenter 2004: 22)

We might also add 940,000 visitors to BlogForAmerica.com to this list (Table 2).

What Are Experiences of Joining?

Experiences of joining may also vary between SMOs and between individuals within the SMO. Some variables one may wish to look at in capturing this variation, according to Lofland (1996: 204-5), include: 1. the degree of pressure to join; 2. the rapidity with which the decision to become a member is reached; 3. the degree of emotional arousal; 4. the content of the emotions involved; 5. the degree to which SMO beliefs are internalized. With this in mind, we should therefore ask how Dean supporters’ experiences of joining might be characterized.

How much pressure did members feel to join DFA? Keeping in mind that 79% of all Dean activists sought out campaign involvement on their own (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 13), that leaves only 21% who could potentially be pressured. In these cases, the pressure seems to be generally mild and of a friendly nature; one member said: “Well a little story to end this rather long posting. 3 weeks ago a friend suggested I come to a ‘Dean meetup’ out in NYC. ‘Who was Dean and what is a meetup?’, I asked. Well, since I respect this friend’s judgment on most things I showed up and was one of 15 people at NYC’s first Dean meetup.” Similarly, Helen from DFA-TB said:

NP: How and why did you come to join DFA?
HV: Because of Wendy.

NP: (Chuckle) Okay.

HV: Otherwise I would not have known about it.

NP: Okay. So what did Wendy do to get you to join?

HV: She just said, “You have to go to a meeting.”

NP: Okay. So she was already a friend of yours?

HV: Oh yes. I knew her mother…

On the other hand, some members may have applied more pressure than others:

06/20/06 17:23:36 ArizoNadia: well once I started supporting Dean I went to some meetups and then leaned on my friend who was in touch with the megabucks

06/20/06 17:24:32 ArizoNadia: and I just kept hammering him and nagging him to support Dean

However, most joined on their own, such as Erica, who said: “I got involved in politics finally in 2004. I came with Meetup to Democrat groups. Those kind of fizzled. I heard that DFA was better, and I joined it.” Some group organizers kept rosters of inactive people, and may have asked them to rejoin, also indicating some small amount of social pressure. It seems that people may ask friends, family, and even former acquaintances from DFA to join or rejoin, but the voluntary nature of DFA membership means that no real pressure can be brought to bear upon them to compel this other than the consequences of ignoring a friend’s suggestion to join, or ignoring their own feelings of a need for political involvement. The friend may be disappointed in their decision, and they may even be disappointed in their own decision, but these consequences are psychological in nature rather than material.
How rapidly was the decision to join DFA reached? In some cases, the decision to participate in activities like DFA meetups came slowly after trying other forms of participation first. Hamill wrote:

For an internet savvy person like myself I wonder why it took me so long. It's not like I haven't been working in electronic communities for nearly 20 years now. I've been contributing to the Dean campaign for several months now, listening to his speeches on line, haunting his Blog for America site and basically fascinated by what he seems to have started. [Hamill 2003]

One interviewee said:

06/20/06 18:16:18 EagerRob_KY: 6 - In the fall of 2002 I started following Howard Dean very early - before there was a website.

06/20/06 18:18:49 EagerRob_KY: I have a method - I listen and research each candidate for about 5-6 months - both sides... so by 2003, I was solidly on board

The person who attended the first Dean meetup in New York City reported that after that event, “In the course of the next few weeks I did a bit of research on the web, paid closer attention to the candidates on C-Span and ultimately quite respected what I saw in Howard Dean This encouraged me to keep tabs with the meetup group and pass the word onto a few friends.”31 For these people, a sense of being fully committed took weeks and months; for people, such commitment happens almost instantaneously. For example:

In April, Richard Hoefer attended his first Dean Meetup at Kelly's Mission Rock, a restaurant overlooking the San Francisco Bay, and he was immediately "blown away" by the candidate. Fewer than 150 people attended that night, and Dean was widely considered a long shot, but when he saw a videotape of Dean speaking, Hoefer says he thought, My God, that's him! At the time, Hoefer says, he'd been disappointed in most other Democrats -- but Dean's willingness to
attack Bush attracted him. "I knew then that I was going to bring every single
talent that I have to get this guy elected," he says. [Manjoo 2003: 3]

Another example:

Judy Goldstock of Howard, Colo., was among them, driving 13 miles to Salida
the first Wednesday of each month to feed a newfound appetite for activism. 'A
year ago I was desperate because all the Democratic candidates were boring,' she
says. 'Then I heard Howard Dean on TV and said, 'Oh my God, that's him!' My
next thought was, how do I get involved? What do we do?' She and a few friends
heard about Meetup.com, registered and suggested a meeting place. Seven people
showed up at Bongo Billy's restaurant for the first meeting, and they've been
meeting ever since. [Castrone 2004]

Even more examples:

Rospars, a Long Island native, graduated from George Washington University in
spring 2002 and spent a year teaching in Stockholm. He was home from Sweden
for a visit last summer and came to Burlington to hear Dean's announcement of
the presidential run.

"It was an amazing speech; it changed my whole life," said Rospars,
adding that he left his job in Sweden and a girlfriend to join the campaign full
time.

Bobby Clark of Oklahoma City was already on board. He had been
practicing law in Denver for six years, working with high-tech firms and
dabbling in local politics, when he heard Dean speak in late 2002.

"I knew in five minutes I had heard the person I wanted to support," said
Clark. [Sawyer 2004]
While it is tough to say with certainty which is more common, a slow or rapid decision to join DFA, we do have some indicators as to the overall degree of rapidity. The number of Meetups attended was shown by survey-based studies to have a significant positive impact on an individual’s campaign contributions, volunteering, candidate support, positive opinion of Meetup, feeling like part of the campaign, and likelihood to invite others to attend (Williams et. al 2004b: 8-11, 15; Williams and Gordon 2003b: 5-6; Williams and Gordon 2004: 4; Gordon and Williams 2004). One especially suggestive finding of these studies was that 43% of Meetup attendees felt like part of the campaign by their first meeting, and 75% felt like part of the campaign after attending more than three other Meetups (Williams 2004b: 10).

Evidence suggests the majority of DFA members were quite emotionally aroused when they decided to join: “I've come to the conclusion that with Dean it's not so much what he says as how he says it. He has personality and he has attitude. I can't say that any of the other candidates, with the possible exception of Dennis Kucinich. In many ways Dean is the Democratic Party's response to John McCain” (Hamill 2003). Describing the audience reaction to a March 2003 speech he gave, Dean said: “What had happened in that room had very little to do with me. I'd been the catalyst for an eruption of feeling that was much deeper, more power, and, I would learn, more widespread than anything I'd imagined” (Dean 2004a: 2). Margolis writes: “Expressing anti-Bush sentiments became almost an underground ritual. Couples in the safety of their living rooms, co-workers at lunch away from their (presumably) fierce pro-Bush colleagues, now and then strangers in a bar or airport catching signals from one another that they were…well, different” (Margolis 2003: 10). He describes these people as the “dissidents,” Democrats who vote in primaries, attend caucuses, and “did not simply ‘not-love’ Bush. They disliked him with an intensity that (usually) stopped just short of hate” (Margolis 2003: 9-10).

What emotions were DFA members feeling when they decided to join? “It was a low-burning fire of resentment and rage. All it needed was a simple spark in order to explode” (Dean
According to Dean, anger is what motivated him to run for president: “It started when I was reading something in the paper, one more thing the president did that made me furious….And I said to myself, 'Are you just going to sit here and get mad, or are you going to do something about it?’” (Reid 2003; also see Dean 2004a: 2-6). “Timothy Griffiths, 28, from Oakland, a law student at UC Berkeley, says, ‘There's a number of ingredients that come together to make the Deaniac….One is a real sense of outrage’” (Marinucci 2004). Dean claimed that after his speeches in Bryant Park and Seattle square, the emotional content changed: “It began to dawn on me that the people who came out to the rallies, who followed my campaign, often showing up at stop after stop in their state, weren’t angry or depressed anymore. They were energized. Proud. Excited and happy…. They were full of hope” (Dean 2004a: 18). Perhaps these feelings were added to the mix, but it does not appear that the anger ever really dissipated:

"I just feel that Bush didn't turn out the goods that were sold," Murphy says.  
"People have the right to be angry and Dean resonates with that feeling….  
"People are afraid to criticize the administration. The Democrats have been waiting for someone with backbone to stand up. He's the voice of dissent." ….

Murphy says he's never been involved in politics before, but Dean's emphasis on the power of the individual to change America affected him…. Murphy said he "felt liberated" when he heard Dean's message…. "Howard Dean is about empowering people, getting big money out of the government, counterbalancing the power of the party extremists," Murphy says. "It's invigorating to have that feeling again. It makes you feel patriotic." [Belasco 2003]

The positive emotions Dean identified do seem to be present: “Winchester, who last campaigned for Jimmy Carter in 1976, said of Dean, ‘He makes you proud to be a Democrat again, because he's able to explain core Democratic principles’” (Hallett 2003). The sources of anger seem to include the Bush administration, the Democrats who did not make a stand against Republicans,
the media, and corporations. The source of hope seemed to be a belief that they could stand up to these social entities and institute progressive changes.

While many people left DFA after Howard Dean’s loss in Iowa and withdrawal from the race, there was a resurgence of membership after George W. Bush won re-election in November 2004, as the Democratic loss was a very emotional event for DFA members. One person described the November 2004 DFA Meetup as being “like a funeral,” with the members feeling that the country had “lost its mind.” Pew found that after the 2004 election, 21% of Dean activists were unhappy and 78% were depressed (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 18). A comment on a DFA Meetup site read: “Even since meetup (Nov 3) several others have called/wrote to join after finding our website (www.unioncountyfordemocracy.org) and discovering that we have no intention of letting this second election theft go unchallenged” (Dusty 2006). The Pew study also found that 51% said Bush’s re-election would make them more politically active (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 18).

How internalized were DFA beliefs by joining members? There is actually some question as to how internalized the beliefs of DFA were by Howard Dean himself. Dean said to Joe Trippi: “I never thought it would go this far. I was going to raise my profile, shake up the Democratic Party. Help change the country. But I never thought this would happen…. I never thought I could actually win” (Trippi 2004: xiv). One colleague even claimed that Dean said: “The problem is, I’m now afraid I might win” (Dunnan 2004: 274). Jodi Wilgoren, a New York Times reporter, provides a bit more context on whether Dean wanted to and thought he could win: “I did not think the part about Dean not wanting to be president was true at all. If you spent five minutes with Dean, you’d know he desperately wanted to be president. When he set out, he didn’t think he would have anywhere near the shot he seems to have had. He never believed he could be president until quite late in the game” (Dunnan 2004: 306).
Among the membership, internalization of DFA’s beliefs varied. Lofland writes: “In many cases, there are discrepancies between believing and participating. Participating may precede believing and vice versa” (1996: 205). According to Williams and Gordon (2003b: 6-7; 2004: 6-7), there were three basic categories of reasons for liking and coming to DFA Meetups. First, there were people who were information-seekers, who wanted to know about the candidates, politics, and opportunities for involvement. Second, there were people who came for social interaction or community; “Many respondents wrote that they liked the camaraderie and casual, informal atmosphere of Meetups” (2003b: 6). Third, people came for empowerment and tasks; these people felt empowered and encouraged to be politically active through their Meetup participation. Those who are information-seekers are more likely to have discrepancies between participation and DFA’s beliefs. Here is an example where someone agrees with DFA’s criticisms of the Bush administration, but does not share their belief that the Democratic Party is the answer:

I'm asking about third parties & independents because I am a liberal independent who does not currently wish to join the Democratic Party but who does wish to work harder against the neocons. I attended my first DFA meeting (Denver chapter) this month to see if it is a place where I can contribute.

The last half hour of the meeting focused on very cryptic issues regarding precinct captains & block captains. It made the meeting seem like a recruiting effort for the Democratic Party.

So I was wondering if DFA would support someone like me who has progressive values if I were to run for office even though I am not a Democrat. If the answer is no, then I'm not sure that DFA is the right outlet for my strong desire to work hard against the neocons. And if the answer is no, then I'm
concerned that DFA might be alienating potential members who share the same values as Howard Dean, but not his party affiliation. [Jones 2004] This person has demonstrated similar discrepancies: “Personally, I've been disillusioned with meetup since I went to my first Dean meetup and they looked at me like I had six head when I told them I was a Nader supporter in 2000. Phooey to them. :p” (stegan 2005). Nader supporters and liberal independents are not alone in these experiences; former Bush supporters have had similar experiences: “Joe Dube, a struggling software engineer who soured on Bush after voting for him in 2000, leaves unsure. ‘I like his passion, but he's a little bit heavy on the anti-right wing rhetoric,ʼ he says. ‘That turns me off a littleʼ” (Smith 2003). In addition, some Democrats were undecided: “There were more people who were undecided or leaning between Dean and Clark at this meeting than the last. The pros and cons of each candidate were discussed at some length. I'm not sure we convinced any Clark supporters. A couple people left early figuring they had heard enough” (Hamill 2003). In addition, those who came with information-seeking purposes may be turned off by Meetups where the group pushes tasks on them:

As the meetup progressed, participants raised questions about the Dean candidacy. What is his stance on renewable fuel? Does he have a position on immigration? These questions were asked of no one in particular, but asked of the group itself. Some people were clearly more knowledgeable than others when it came to certain subjects, and so expertise was shared, questions passed around and answered, until some kind of satisfactory answer, gleamed from the many voices, presented itself. This was heartening, this eased my pessimism some. This was the fuzzy, warm democracy I envisioned when learning of Plymouth town-hall meetings in the 4th grade.
Eventually my friend and I slipped out of the meetup as participants began writing letters to undecided voters in New Hampshire. "This is so Amnesty International," my companion noted, not too kindly. "Yeah, the banality of democracy in action." [Obercian 2003]

Other Meetups, however, divided the group activities to accommodate these differences: “We also wrote letters to swing voters in Iowa. I wrote two letters to two women at the same address, so I wrote each differently and expressed my opinion that Dean was something truly different. About 80% of the attendees were at their first meetup. Those of us who had been to one before knew what to do and started working on our letters while the debates continued” (Hamill 2003).

**What is Membership?**

“SMO members almost always display considerable variation in the intensity—the extent—of their participation and in, moreover, the forms of participation—the kinds of things they do in the SMO” (Lofland 1996: 207). As mentioned in Chapter 5, the organization of DFA varies locally. DFA national provides suggestions as to how local DFA groups might want to organize themselves, but encourages them to decide for themselves what organizational form is best for them. Lofland also points out that “the membership can also be viewed in terms of its relation to the categories of hierarchy and stratification in the larger society” (Lofland 1996: 210); as mentioned in Chapter 6, DFA membership demographics seem to correlate quite well with digital divide characteristics.

Lofland also implores SMO researchers to ask: “What intersections might there be between internal SMO membership patterns and the wider, societal dimensions of stratification? For example, are all the formal leaders from particular categories of gender, age, ethnicity, and occupation while all the followers are from different such categories?” (p. 210). To discover the answer to this, I took a sample of 112 DFA Meetup organizers. Of these 112, 54 were female and
58 were male. There were 21 self-portraits provided in the profiles, 19 of which appeared to be of European ancestry. None of this suggests major divergence from the demographics of the membership more generally.

**Individual Backgrounds**

Few SMO researchers or studies have found biological factors to be useful in describing why people join SMOs, although two exceptions should be noted to this. First, joining SMOs may be related to an innate need in humans for group affiliation, although this is true of all social groups, not simply SMOs (Lofland 1996: 217). Second, Lofland suggests that the active leadership of SMOs tend to be unusual “in their level of sheer energy. Not infrequently, such leaders appear to need little sleep and are alert and physically active over long periods of time that their associates find exhausting and inexplicable….my hypothesis is that such SMO leaders are endowed with especially robust physical bodies and metabolisms” (Lofland 1996: 217-8).

While energy and metabolism were not part of my semi-structured interview questions, nor were they part of any other systematic study of DFA that I am aware of, there is some anecdotal evidence to be considered. Joe Trippi seeps to fit with Lofland’s hypothesis: “Like a lot of sick twists who practice politics as a career, before 2003, elections for me were always about the candidate. I would do anything for the candidate. I would work to the point of exhaustion,” he writes (Trippi 2004: xv). He also describes working for a presidential campaign as

unlike any other job on the planet. It’s a thankless job, an outrageously difficult job, the most emotionally draining, physically taxing, stress-creating job you can imagine, and when it’s done, it almost always ends in total, abject failure. Since 1968….sixty-one [losing Democratic candidates] have gone home broken, beaten, and exhausted. This is hard enough on the candidate, but for the staff—
working twenty-hour days with no days off, desperately trying to do the impossible, and dying with every misstep—it’s the psychological equivalent of self-mutilation [Trippi 2004: 15]

He adds, “You sleep on motel beds, or on couches or in cars, if you get any sleep at all” (p. 15). Describing his hard work on one particular Democratic presidential campaign, he wrote: “When it was over, I was empty. I had never been so tired in my life” (p. 22). His involvement with DFA resulted in a minor sleep-related revelation: “Wow, I guess you can fall asleep on your feet” (p. 157).

A person’s health can be a factor in DFA involvement. Trippi was dealing with diabetes (p. 45-7, 159, 161), which made him more reluctant to get involved with DFA, and made him worry that his continued involvement could have severe health consequences. He also cracked his ribs while working for DFA (p. 157-9), which also complicated his campaign involvement. One member of DFA-TB is in a wheelchair, which limits the type of activities she can be involved in, and usually requires the assistance of another member to take her to and from DFA events.

“Several researchers have measured the self-concept variable of personal efficacy, ‘the belief that one has the ability to make a difference, especially when coupled with low trust in the existing power structure’” (Lofland 1996: 221, quoting Snow and Oliver 1995: 578). As mentioned in Chapter 4, personal efficacy is a large part of DFA’s belief system. This belief was perhaps best encapsulated by the campaign slogan “You have the power.” DFA also encourages personal efficacy in members through what is called a “leadership ladder”:

Give people larger and larger and larger roles, especially as they keep coming back. They’re going to be doing, you know, another thing, and another thing, and another thing that’s even better, and even more important, now they’re coordinating the thing. Let your volunteers grow. Don’t just randomly, you
know—“There’s all these faceless volunteers that are called to come in, who knows what they’re doing and who knows if they’ll be back.” Um, it’s—“Oh hey, you were here phone-banking last time. Well, hey, I need some help really quick with training my volunteers—you know, this set of volunteers. You were such a great phone-banker. Could you help me do some training for the phone bankers?” And the person who’s now become a little bit more of a regular now feels more important now that they have another role. The other thing that’s completely free in a campaign? Titles. Give them out. “You are now the phone banking captain.” [Hasan 2005]

DFA drew much of its membership from Internet-users, and some research suggests Internet-users are high in personal efficacy. Ribeiro writes: “Children of both globalism and the computer age see themselves as creating a new world, a new situation, mediated by high technology, where access to the network is simultaneously a sort of postmodern liberation and an experience of a new democratic medium that empowers people to flood the world system with information, thereby checking the abuses of the powerful” (Ribeiro 1998: 331). Indeed, as previously mentioned, one person on BFA wrote: “We like the internet because it isn't controlled by the GOP” (Charles*in*Montana 2005). Similarly, Green and Pearson wrote: “Internet users are often believed to be ‘isolated geeks’ yet recent studies have found Internet users to be model citizens for the most part, having high levels of self-efficacy, the belief that one has the power to manage prospective situations, which in turn could be their belief that they can influence government officials and the political process” (Green and Pearson 2005: 5, citations removed).

Those who share the beliefs and attitudes of the SMO prior to encountering it are more likely to join. “Quite commonly such attitude/belief ‘prejoiners’ have been socialized to those values in their families and in larger cultural traditions of activism based in ethnic, national, and religious traditions” (Lofland 1996: 221). Lofland points out examples of researchers who draw
connections between parents’ values and SMO involvement by their children (1996: 22); I have found some anecdotal evidence of this for DFA as well. For instance, Erica from DFA-TB said to me:

NP: How come you just got involved in politics in 2004?
EK: Because I’m a moron.
NP: (laughs)
EK: Well, my parents met through a county campaign, so I knew I would eventually do it, and it was just finally I got motivated in 2004 to finally just do it.
NP: And your parents played a role in that? Or--
EK: Well, ironically, they met working on a campaign, and never in my lifetime did they work on campaigns until 2004.
NP: So… they sparked your interest and that’s how you found Meetup?
EK: [No.] It was actually separate. I got involved here, they got involved in Sarasota. Same time.
NP: Okay, so there’s… no connection, it’s just kind of you—
EK: Well, there is the history of the connection. It’s how I came to be. But, in terms of [unintelligible] now, me—I, separately from them, decided to get involved. But I think it’s because we have the same ideals that we chose to get involved at the same time.

“Researchers examining how people join religious SMOs have been impressed with the degree to which some and perhaps many such joiners are often quite consciously deliberate and active in their examination of alternative affiliations and their decisions about them” (Lofland 1996: 222). As pointed out earlier, 79% of Dean activists sought out the campaign on their own. Also, as pointed out in Chapter 4, DFA-TB members often demonstrated that they are active
seekers by trying out membership in DEC, but ultimately choosing DFA as a more worthwhile use of their time.

Howard Dean claims gives us a hint of what they were seeking:

I realized in New York, and in Portland and Seattle—in all the places where I’d get up to speak and face a sea of people stretching back as far as I could see—that if you had something to say, people would come out to listen. I realized that people were hungry to listen if they came across a politician who really had something to say.

I realized, too, that people were thrilled to find a politician who reminded them of themselves. [Dean 2003: 13]

Margolis (2003) points out that “Americans have always been drawn to a candidate who speaks his mind even if they disagree with what he is saying…. People like a candidate who is (or at least seems to be) authentically himself, not a creature of political professionals who warn their bosses to keep quiet until the results of the latest poll have been analyzed” (p. 11). This (seeming) authenticity can be seen in, for example, Dean’s use of the slang phrases like “[Bush] has a Jones for oil” (p. 12), which is not normally the way presidential candidates talk (p. 12).

**Individual Situations**

Some of the problems with Rational Choice theory were described back in Chapter 1. Lofland agrees, citing “definitional elasticity and tautology” (1996: 224) as being some of the major problems. However, he claims that “even acknowledging such problems, this approach’s demand that we inspect what actors get and what these benefits cost them can lead to much more complete and detailed understanding” (p. 224).

During the Dean for America period, supporters could receive miniature baseball bats with Howard Dean’s signature if they reached certain goals. At DFA-TB during the Democracy
for America period, DFA-TB t-shirts were used as an incentive for people to switch from Meetup.com to DFA-Link. However, there is only sparing usage of these sorts of incentives. Welch (2003) points out that this is partly because of administrative costs, but mainly because the campaign was “aiming to redefine the motivation for participation, making it less about what you tangibly get out of it, whether fun, new friends or a miniature bat, and more about affecting your self-perception. For many, the reward can be the sense of purpose that comes with participation” (p. 12). Rather than the rational choice (à la Mancur Olson) view of benefits, this kind of benefit may be described as purposive (Lofland 1996: 225).

SMO participants need not join for strictly utilitarian purposes. In the view of some SMO researchers, “joining’ has a decidedly experimental quality, a trying-it-out motif in which joiners act in SMO terms but do so in a tentative way and without embracing whatever the beliefs” (Lofland 1996: 226). Tindall (2002) provides an excellent example of where this is the case:

…ideological commitment to low-risk activism does not have to be high in order for individuals to participate. To provide a local example, in Victoria, there is a peace march every spring… The benefits of participating include getting some fresh air and a bit of exercise on a (usually) nice spring weekend day with a cast of colourful co-participants, and a feeling that one is part of a force that may exert some indirect pressure toward the goal of peace and disarmament. The cost is little more than giving up a few hours of one’s time. It is easy to conclude that even low amounts of social pressure (e.g., from acquaintances at work or school) would be enough to tip the cost/benefit ratio in the direction of participating.

[Tindall 2002:419]

Some examples of experimenters were the previously-described DFA Meetup attendees who were information-seekers. Joe Trippi describes an incident that happened on March 5, 2003,
at the Essex Lounge, which gives an example of DFA participation as experimentation. Word had gotten out that Howard Dean was going to attend at Meetup at that place and time, and Trippi found the block was packed with people. A New York City Police Department car pulled up, and Trippi was worried about people getting busted for loitering or a riot breaking out:

I walked up to the cop, trying to figure out what to say: Listen, this is either an Internet miracle, or something on the Internet gone hopelessly awry. I guess it sort of depends on how you look at it.

The cop was talking to the people in line and he turned when he saw me.

“Hello officer,” I said. I’m with Governor Howard Dean and I can explain—“

“Oh yeah,” he said. “I’ve been talking to these guys about him and I don’t know who he is, but do you think I could meet him?” [Trippi 2004: 98]

Incidents like this were not unique. During the Dean for America period, the campaign e-mailed 481 people in Austin, Texas, about an upcoming Dean rally; 200 of the 481 people met and decided to leaflet the entire Latino community in Austin and hand leaflets out at polling places, resulting in 3,200 people in attendance at the Dean rally (Dillon 2003: 193). Another example I found comes from a comment left on a DFA Meetup site: “before the meeting was over three young women there for dinner joined the group when they found out what we were there for. That really impressed me. I don't know who everyone was, but I trust that in time I will figure it out” (Anonymous group member 2004).

Similarly, people who are already members may be asked to join an event for reasons similar to what Tindall (2002) describes above. An e-mail sent to me by a DFA-TB member about an upcoming event described it in this way: “The REVOTE Rally will take place at 2 PM on Sunday, December 3, at Bayfront Park, 2 Marina Plaza, Sarasota, Florida. This is an invitation to all Kossacks living in Florida or anywhere in the country to defend voters' rights and our
democracy. Why not combine a trip to Sarasota for the REVOTE Rally with a vacation to our sunny paradise. The weather is gorgeous-temperatures in the 70's and beaches are beautiful. Come to Sarasota on Sunday and join us in demanding a REVOTE in FL-13” (E-mail correspondence, 12/2/06).

**Background Structural Variables**

People who have previously been members of SMOs or otherwise involved in activism are more likely to regard activism as effective and more likely to learn about SMO activities (Lofland 1996: 227-8). “Joining and prior activism themselves may be related in part because of self-concepts or identities developed in previous activism and because of skills and ‘know-how’ acquired that make a current joining more familiar and comfortable” (p. 228).

To a certain degree, the lack of prior political activism was a factor that worked against DFA. Howard Dean wrote in 2003: “The staff at Dean for America has been growing almost too quickly to manage. The stories of volunteers with no prior interest in politics showing up on the doorstep have become a cliché, but so many paid staffers did exactly that, starting out as unpaid volunteers” (Dean 2003: 116). However, most of them are Internet-savvy and have attitudes conducive to political involvement; “Many of Dean's online supporters appear to be people in their 30s and 40s, people who are familiar with the Internet, aren't skeptical of the political process, and haven't taken part in many political campaigns, said Marc Olsten, whose firm in Amherst, Mass., Summit Collaborative, has studied Internet participation” (Weiss 2003a).

Some of those in DFA leadership roles have relevant prior experiences, however. Nico Mele is one example:

The man in charge is Nicco Mele, 26, a self-described "techie since middle school" who hands out business cards with the Dean logo in the corner and "Nicco/Webmaster" in the center.
Mele, a foreign-service brat and graduate of the College of William & Mary, had done the same sort of work for Bill Gates, setting up Web operations for Gates' AIDS vaccine effort; before that, he worked for Common Cause. He joined Dean's campaign last March, after hearing Dean speak at a MeetUp.org [sic] meeting in New York. [Sawyer 2004]

Zephyr Teachout is another: “Teachout worked for then-Gov. Dean right out of college in 1994 but went on to become a lawyer. She left her job running a non-profit firm, the Fair Trial Initiative in South Carolina, to join the presidential campaign. This summer she took part in a 70-stop tour of the country to meet in person Dean supporters who had started participating in the campaign online” (Reston 2004).

Individuals who are already part of the social network of a person involved in an SMO are often easier for members to recruit than strangers (Lofland 1996: 228). This is true online as well; “For the most part, people do not use the Internet to interact with strangers; they e-mail people they already know or maintain weblogs for their friends, families, and associates to read” (Green and Pearson 2005: 2). As pointed out earlier, the majority of Dean activists were self-motivated in seeking out the campaign. However, recruiting through one’s social network was a common and encouraged practice in DFA. One Dean volunteer organizer said: “[E-mail is] what’s making this work. It’s people to people. It’s friend to friend, relative to relative….And if you don’t do e-mail, get a bunch of Vermont postcards and send them out” (Dillon 2003: 196).

House parties were one activity that really took advantage of preexisting contacts; Howard Dean writes: “During my campaign, we had…[a] fantastic opportunity to see a new sort of community building through our innovative system of house meetings…. Our house meetings draw together strangers with common interests and goals. Unlike traditional house parties, they weren’t primarily about politics. They were, simply put, about meeting” (Dean 2004a: 160).
Biographical Availability: Who Joins DFA Chat?

As previously noted (see Chapter 6), survey research suggests marriage and careers are not mutually exclusive with DFA membership. Variables such as these are part of biographical availability. Biographic availability refers not only to situational circumstances, but also to structural circumstances; it is the ways in which one’s circumstances permit or inhibit SMO participation. Since DFA is an SMO whose activities take place both online and offline, the biographic availability of members is not only a matter of their individual circumstances, but also of their location. The importance of location is revealed by a pattern that emerged from look at joining solely in terms of participation in DFA Chat website.

At this chat site, I interviewed several participants, and saw my first indication of the pattern during the interview:

06/20/06 18:08:58 HoustonHeidi: I haven't been able to make it to meetups; they are too far out of range for me to attend.

06/20/06 18:10:11 HoustonHeidi: for me it's either save money for the gas or save money for food.

Could the proximity to DFA Meetups play a major role in an individual’s decision of whether to attend them or spend time at the DFA chat site? After seeing more evidence along these lines, I decided to ask this question in a later chat session:

7:59 PM [ncp] I've got a question for eveyone. I saw that a DFA group in another area is having an election results get-together. What made everyone decide to come here tonight instead of being with your local DFA group?

8:00 PM [Orlando] ncp, our DFA group is pretty much deunct at this point

8:00 PM [Orlando] defunct

8:01 PM [ncp] What happened to it? Did everyone lose interest?
8:02 PM [Jenny from FL] My son and I always watch it together, if we aren't helping in a big campaign(…)

8:03 PM [ncp] Jenny Is your local group defunct like Orlando's, or do you just prefer the company of your family?

8:03 PM [Jenny from FL] well I moved from [a city in Florida], and now live in a VERY small town, only 600 people

8:05 PM [ncp] Jenny: Are there any DFA groups in nearby towns?

8:05 PM [Jenny from FL] No, everything is at least hours away

8:05 PM [Jenny from FL] but pleny of DEMS here

8:07 PM [ncp] Since Orlando says his group went defunct and you said that there aren't any DFA groups in your area, I'm now wondering if this place is the DFA group for people without DFA groups in their area. What do you think?

8:08 PM [Orlando] ncp, it is in a way

8:08 PM [Orlando] DFA went down after the 2004 election

8:10 PM [ncp] Orlando: What do you mean? Do you mean DFA membership declined after the 2004 election?

8:10 PM [Orlando] yes, I do, ncp

8:10 PM [Orlando] Now there are strongholds

8:10 PM [Orlando] Places where it is doing well

I find the existence of this online group for people without offline groups to be significant in terms of the Internet’s impact on SMOs. That is, the Internet may have an impact on what SMO researchers have described as *abeyance*: “During abeyance, movements sustain themselves but are less visible in interaction with authorities. At the same time, values, identity, and political vision can be sustained through internal structures that permit organizations to maintain a small, committed core of activists and focus on internally-oriented activities. Abeyance provides for
movement continuity and may sow the seeds of future mobilization” (Sawyers and Meyer 1999: 188). We can find evidence of abeyance in this statement by one of the DFA chat site members: “ArizoNadia: […] I would return to the meetups if it would help in an election.” A similar situation can also be found with DeanLink: “I just have to say another big THANK YOU to the campaign for DEANLINK. This is like an answer to my requests. For those of you pooh-poohing Deanlink, just know that for those of us stuck in rural America with tiny meetups where nobody shows up, this will be our chance to conect[t] with other Dean supporters” (Mr. Clubbs 2003).

**Recruitment Strategies**

Social movement researchers often divide recruitment into a contact phase and a cultivation phase. The contact phase is the strategy for initially establishing communication. There are four categories of ways to do this, according to Lofland: “1. recruitment efforts among strangers in public places by face-to-face means; 2. institutionalized, mass-communication mechanisms; 3. recruitment among strangers in private places by such means as door-to-door canvassing; 4. recruitment through members’ extramovement social networks” (Lofland 1996: 247, adapted from Snow et al. 1980: 795). The cultivation phase is where SMOs arouse people's interest to get them to become regular participants. There are three basic strategies of doing this, according to Lofland: 1. “Behavioral strategies stress concocting something that a now interested prospect will show up for or engage in [e.g. parties, loans, rides, jobs, etc.]” (p. 248); 2. “Cognitive strategies that feature formal efforts to explain SMOs belief system to prospective members” (p. 248); 3. Affective strategies that focus on the creation of new social relationships as the primary reason for joining (p. 248).

Shirky (2005) is critical of Dean for America’s recruitment strategies. Citing an article from the *Washington Post* about a Dean campaigner named James Moore, he characterizes DFA’s strategy as “Less about Howard Dean than about James Moore, less like a political
meeting than a support group, not so much about pushing Dean as they are about engaging people in conversation…” (p. 231). In movement research terminology, Shirky is claiming that DFA used affective strategies rather than cognitive strategies. The *Washington Post* article says: “The women ask Moore questions about Dean’s positions – on the war in Iraq, the Confederate flag, Medicare – but mostly they share their fears and worries. The atmosphere is less like a political meeting than a support group” (Hanna 2003, quoted in Shirky 2005: 230).

At a DFA training academy session, organizers were told:

> One of the best things you can do for your campaign—your volunteer base in your campaign, anyway—is to have socials. So after you’re done canvassing, you do a debrief and talk about—After you’re done, you know, phone banking, after you’re done, you know, whatever—‘Hey, let’s all go to a bar and grab a beer afterwards.’ The volunteers start getting to know the staff. The volunteers start getting to know each other. They’re committed not only to the campaign or the cause or whatever, but also to each other a little bit. They’re coming back not only because, you know, they really think [their opponents] have got to be stopped, but because, you know, Jack was there and he was telling us about his trip to the Bahamas the other day. [Hasan 2005]

This shows a combination of the cultivation phase strategies; those who are already cognitively committed are given a behavioral (“let’s all go to a bar”) reason and an affective reason (“they’re committed…to each other a little bit”). However, it should be noted that cognitive strategies receive far less emphasis (“you do a debrief”); presumably, those who volunteer to participate in DFA events are self-selecting based on their shared beliefs, and only need a little reaffirmation and clarification from organizers in this regard.


Discussion/Conclusion

Bellah et al write “we live in a society that encourages us to cut free from the past, to define our own selves, to choose the groups with which we wish to identify” (1985: 154). Many DFA members were socialized with liberal/progressive beliefs during their upbringing, making them likely to be sympathetic towards DFA before ever hearing about it. Previous political involvement helps, but is not necessary; one of the Dean campaign’s claims to fame is attracting people who had not been involved in politics previously, especially young people. Most members were self-selecting, although attempting to recruit from members’ social networks was (and still is) encouraged. Some members’ first experience of DFA was an epiphany; simply hearing Dean speak one was enough for them to want to get involved. Others took months of careful consideration and experimentation before committing themselves to DFA. Meetup attendees could be classified as information seekers, community seekers, and task seekers; those who stuck with Meetup tended to feel more committed to the campaign, and increase their involvement in other ways as a result. Anger towards Republicans and a sense of pride and purpose about their involvement were commonly shared emotions among DFA members who remained with the group.

Yet when Dean for America failed in the primaries, many members were lost. DFA tries to keep roster sheets with contact information to encourage the disillusioned to rejoin. Members also sometimes leave for other reasons. Barbara, a DFA-TB member, said that another member had a bad experience at the local Democratic Executive Committee (DEC), and her decision to pressure the other member to come back resulted in the member quitting both DFA-TB and the DEC. Bellah et al (1985) claim that freedom is “perhaps the most resonant, deeply held American value” (p. 23), and is held to mean “being left alone by others, not having people’s values, ideas, or styles of life forced upon one, being free of arbitrary authority in work, family, and political life” (p. 23). They go on to point out that if one’s entire social world is made up of
individuals with this sort of freedom, “each endowed with the right to be free of others demands, it becomes hard to forge bonds of attachment to, or cooperation with, other people, since such bonds would imply obligations that necessarily impinge on one’s freedom” (p. 23). DFA can e-mail and hope for participation, but it cannot compel participation. The Internet plays a role here in that e-mail is a cheap and easy way to recruit and ask former members to rejoin.

Given all this, what can we conclude about the viability of DFA’s membership?

Hillsborough County, FL has 262,740 registered Democrats (as of 3/2/07; Johnson 2007a). In 2006, 175,343 voted for Bill Nelson (DEM) for U.S. Senate and 128,375 voted for Jim Davis (DEM) for Governor (Johnson 2007b), suggesting that many registered Democrats do not consistently vote (or at least not consistently for Democratic candidates). When we look at the numbers of contributions for candidates popular with DFA-TB members, we see numbers like 1,396 (FEC n.d.c), 248 (Johnson 2007c), and 439 (Johnson 2007d). These numbers pale in comparison to the number of registered and actual Democratic voters, but they are still considerably larger than the number of participants in DFA-Tampa Bay. During my time at DFA-TB, the largest number of members in attendance at a single meeting that I personally witnessed was 49, although at the height of the Dean for America period, there were 132 Meetup RSVPs for one meeting (see Figure 33). These numbers are a reflection of informed politics—that is, going beyond the calculated advertising imagery designed for mass consumption—being an area of specialized knowledge that requires “prior possession of specific conceptual anchors and tools… critical for processing further information in that domain” (Ungar 2003: 333). At one DFA-TB meeting I attended early in my research, I asked who a particularly-despised Republican politician was, and received a shocked and appalled response at my ignorance of local politics, showing how being politically informed is the norm and how unaccustomed they were to dealing with political newcomers. In an interview, DFA-TB member Wendy Thompson described her impatience with her friends who are uninterested in politics:
I got an e-mail the other day that somebody forwarded to me from somebody else that said, “You know, I just don’t think that dropping literature at the door makes a difference, because why are the candidates waiting ‘til right now to tell us about themselves?” And I want to go: “What’s wrong with you people? We’ve been having candidate forums since last November. Why don’t you show up and learn about these candidates?” So lazy. And I don’t think we can have a democracy much longer, unless people start engaging, and actually caring about this stuff. So I don’t have a lot of patience with my other [non-DFA] friends right now. It’s really hard for me to bite my tongue and not say things (laughs) about their apathy, and their … ignorance, I guess is… the right word.

Yet as the numbers quoted above show, the people whom she would have to bite her tongue for are the majority. For those who have not already interested in and actively keeping up with politics, there seems little motivation to attend a DFA meeting. Even those people with an interest in politics, but more inclined to want to talk about politics rather than get involved in it, are likely to find DFA to be a mismatch for their desires. Unless DFA finds ways of getting people less politically-knowledgeable and/or involved than themselves to see the value of DFA membership, groups like DFA-TB will have a relatively small base of potential members to draw from, and membership growth will likely remain slow.
Figure 33: Attendance at DFA-Tampa Bay
Constructed by author using data from Meetup.com, DFAlink.com, and field notes. (compiled 12/7/06).
Chapter 8: What Are DFA’s Strategies?

In a sense, all SMO activities are strategic in that SMOs are comprised of human beings, and humans have motivations for the actions they undertake. To differentiate SMO strategies from the other six aspects of SMOs identified by Lofland, we should define strategies as the purposeful actions for achieving an SMO’s stated goals.

When looking at the 2004 presidential race as a whole, Gronbeck and Wiese (2005) find several distinct trends in campaign strategy:

we would suggest that six communication strategies and forms that took aim at individuals and their home lives marked the 2004 presidential election cycle: mail (for some) in unprecedented volume; digitally reproduced glossy and electronic pictures; phone-banked, automated phone calls; 527 groups using all of the name-generating and individual-targeting communication strategies used by candidates and parties; targeting visitations of voters at home; and armies of lawyers ready to poll watch and challenge provisional votes of particular people in particular polling places. [p. 525]

During the Dean For America period, many of the strategies used were often-traditional, offline election strategies, including: traditional fundraising events (Wildermuth 2003), speeches (Welch 2003; Branigan 2003; Smith 2003), musical performances (Leibovich 2003; Marinucci 2003c), television ads (Belasco 2003; Burke and Hutchinson 2003), posters (Moreno 2003), handing out political literature (Weiss 2004; Marinucci 2004; Connolly and Harris 2005), celebrity support
(Marinucci 2003a; Wilgoren 2003; Marinucci 2003c; R. Rodriguez 2004), DFA clothing (Garchik 2003), letter-writing (Weiss 2003a; Belasco 2003; St. Petersburg Times 2003; Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 2003; Sawyer 2004; Sacramento Bee 2004), activist training (Mooney 2003), using weddings and funerals for donations (Rocky Mountain News 2003; New York Times 2004; Dean 2004a: 19), vote pledges (C. Rodriguez 2004), and the Iowa "Perfect Storm" (Marinucci 2004; Tankersley 2004; Finney 2004; Cudahy and Gill 2004). Online strategies, which often had an offline component, included: blogs (Carpenter 2004: 18), meetups (Associated Press 2003a; Balz 2003; Marx 2003; Laverty 2003), online petitions (Carpener 2004: 8-9; Martin 2003), online fundraising (Carpener 2004: 8-9; Fergus 2003; Balz 2003; Weiss 2003a; Wilgoren 2003; Marinucci 2003c; Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 14-15), online primaries (Weiss 2003a), online voting about campaign strategies (Mooney 2003), online political participation pledges (Mooney 2003), online political video games (Bogost 2004: 12), and identity-specific Dean websites such as the Gen Dean website (Von Drehle 2004; Dean 2004a: 19). In addition, Dean admitted that maintaining his angry persona, even after his anger later became tempered by hope, had become a tactic (Dean 2004a: 22). Tactics used later during the Democracy for America period include: “DFA Training Camp” (weekend training in grassroots organizing), “DFA A-List” (a list of officially supported candidates), “Democracy Directory” (an online, nationwide listing of grassroots organizations to collaborate with), and “Driving Votes” (a political ridesharing tool).

Of all these tactics, four were especially popular in the Dean campaign: “organizing campaign events, arranging or reporting on activity at Dean ‘meetups,’ distributing Dean flyers or canvassing neighborhoods looking for Dean supporters, and writing letters to undecided voters…constituted the core tactics of the Dean campaign” (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 11). These strategies frequently appeared on BFA (p. 11).
The sort of tasks performed by Democracy for America groups can be seen, for example, in this proposed reorganization of DFA-TB into work groups that the group organizer sent through e-mail:

- Membership: Get new members; keep old; events; surveys; mailings
- Operations: Meeting facilities, etc.
- Programming: Activities/actions at meetings
- Outreach: Contact with other groups, clubs, associations, DFA chapters
- Candidate Support: ID, school, support, volunteer
- Legislative Liaison: Follow bills, lobby (Tallahassee, DC) office holders, citizen petitions
- Media/Public Affairs: Stories, publicity, visibility
- Rapid Response/Media: Media activism, coordination, group actions/calls/letters
- Election Reform: Monitor developments, lobby, coordinate action, find SOE candidate
- Service Project: Visibility/events
- Historian: Record (photos, info, dates) from activities
- Fundraising: Contact donor lists; get $$$ for forums, materials, trips to lobby, etc. [e-mail to DFA-Tampa Bay members, November 27, 2006]

Lofland writes: “SMOs taken holistically as the unit scale have been classified in terms of the most prominent kind of persuasive, advocacy activity they commonly engage in” (Lofland 1996: 264). According to this typology of SMOs, DFA would be politicians since they “undertake political electioneering and lobbying” (p. 264). However, Lofland notes that SMOs typically fit into more than one, and DFA can also be seen as protesters, as the Cheney protest quoted above shows. One more strategic posture that DFA fits is that of educators in that they “communicate facts and reasoning” (Lofland 1993a: 196, quoted in Lofland 1996: 264). One of the members of the DFA chat website told me: “the strategies i've seen is the recommendation of qualified
candidates with background information and fund raising.” A member of a DFA message board wrote:

I would suggest frequent meetings, in small groups, as often as practical, among DFA members, selecting topics that grab your fancy, doing some basic research…to make sure you've got the issues down clearly…then making short public presentations. Library evenings, for example, being sure to invite school age kids, can spark interest in the civic life of their country and their communities…..it would be a HUGE plus! [Gruber 2004]

And, as mentioned previously, one of the three types of DFA Meetup attendees were classified as information-seekers.

Looking at DFA’s strategic repertoire overall, four distinct themes emerge, each of which shapes DFA’s strategies:

1. The focus on political change through targeting elections
2. The importance of image within society
3. Local needs within communities; and, finally,
4. Existing TANs. Each theme will be examined in turn.

**Elections shape strategy**

*Main Objectives*

Some SMOs focus on changing either opinions or institutions. DFA focuses on changing both, as elections are a social practice designed to create and maintain connections between public opinion and state institutions. Howard Dean spelled out the main objectives of DFA in his book:
Being organized and empowering people is the first part of taking back the power to change the country and restore American democracy. But there are specific reforms we must make a very high priority before we can succeed.

*We need to restore the balance between corporate power and the ballot box.*

*We need to restore the balance between corporate rights and citizens’ rights.*

*We need to narrow the wealth gap to show people that capitalism works for them.*

*We need to always stand up against the politics of division and fear, whether we are progressive or conservative or in the middle*

*We need political institutions that people can believe in. And we need a media willing to perform their watchdog role and hold politicians accountable for telling the truth* [Dean 2004a: 176]

Throughout this last chapter of his second book, Dean italicizes four other goals he deems important: “We need campaign-finance reform” (p. 177), “We need more corporate accountability,” (p. 178), “We have to reempower labor” (p. 181), “We need to increase voter turnout” (p. 182). He also emphasizes two political propositions that provide the underpinnings of their strategic goals: “Voting is not enough” (p. 185), “Politicians can’t solve our problems for us” (p. 187). With such a diverse array of strategic goals, it is understandable why Welch (2003) speculated that “the Dean campaign is running the risk of having too many concrete goals and desensitizing its support base to its requests” (p. 13).
Frontal Assault or Attrition

Some SMOs go for quick, forceful victories, while others prefer a strategy of gradually wearing down opposition. DFA has elements of both in place. When elections are in temporal proximity, DFA promotes GOTV (Get Out The Vote) efforts. In periods where elections are relatively far in the future, DFA tends to focus on goals that are more gradual. As Wendy from DFA-TB notes, this shift in focus also corresponds with a shift in involvement from DFA National:

NP: How often do you… go along with what [DFA] National wants, versus throwing their agenda out the window?

WT: Well, I think much more so in the off year, when there is no election, we follow their agenda more because there it was a lot of issue-types of stuff we were working on, and this year it’s been more election-related, so we’re doing—you know, we had our own forums, which they suggested, which was a wonderful thing because it really helped connect all of us to the campaigns.

During the January 2006 DFA-TB meeting, items on the agenda included the AnySoldier project and the Blue Ribbon initiative, projects that were designed to influence public opinion about DFA and about Democratic/liberal/progressive politics more generally. During the October 2006 DFA-TB meeting, members were stuffing envelopes for candidates at the same time as a question-and-answer session with judicial candidates was taking place, both of which more directly tied to the more immediate goal of supporting candidates.

Enumeration as Strategy

During the Dean for America period, Joe Trippi set the tone in terms of quantitative emphasis:
…As I talked to our organizers, I just felt that something was missing. Some measure of enthusiasm or confidence. In a campaign, your best supporters called “ones”—those people who say they are definitely going to vote for your candidate, the people you can count on as sure votes. But when I asked our people on the group in Iowa how many ones they had in their precincts, they did the single thing that pisses me off more than anything else.

*I don’t know, about five hundred.*

“Don’t ever do that,” I said.

*Do what?*

In 1979, when I ran Jones County for Iowa, Tully, Ford, and Sasso made it abundantly clear to us Corn Stalkers that when they asked how many ones we had, we were never to give them a number ending in zero. A number ending in zero implied that we were estimating, which implied that we didn’t really have a handle on our precincts, which implied that we hadn’t worked hard enough, which implied that maybe we’d rather just be on a train steaming the hell out of Iowa. That day with Tully, Ford, and Sasso, I raised my hand cautiously. “Uh—what do I do if the number really does end in zero?”


Sure enough, Dunnan (2004) describes a “constant demand for new lists of voters to call or canvas” (p. 29) at Dean for America headquarters. Bill Trezevant, a Dean supporter, criticized this quantitative emphasis:

The Internet opened a door for people to “…now instantly ‘vote’ with their money. Nevertheless, the select class missed this point entirely inasmuch as they continued to operate under a top down campaign model. We focus in on the number of people who got involved in the Dean campaign primarily because it
fits within a top down campaign model. Much less time has been spent on how these people, once activated, actually participated outside of voting and giving money. [Dunnan 2004: 236]

There seemed to have been an effect on morale at the grassroots level as well. Dunnan quotes Garrett Bridgens, who worked for the Dean campaign, as saying:

“For some reason, I kind of have an odd feeling in my stomach when I start to think about what I did during the campaign. The job that was given to me was very tough. It wasn’t tough in terms of the hours that I put in, or the computer work that was demanded of us.

‘The thing that was tough was going out and meeting potential voters and trying to sell the campaign to them. We couldn’t care about any individual. The campaign wanted results. All the campaign cared about was numbers not who the people were.

At the end of every week I had to prepare a report that went all the way up to Joe Trippi. In this report, I had to state how many one-on-ones I had, how many house meetings I had, how many new one-on-ones came out of those house meetings, how many new house meetings came out of those house meetings. The job of the Regional Director was to make sure that the Area Organizers were bringing in solid numbers each week. So the Regional Director was constantly putting pressure on the Area Organizers, because he had pressure coming down on him. We, in turn, would go out and just worry about getting new one-on-ones and new house meetings.

“I don’t work like that. I care about people, but it wasn’t my job to care, my job was to get numbers and results. I hated that.” [Dunnan 2004: 262]
Bridgens goes on to say that he even made calls during the holidays because of this pressure, which “made [him] sick” (p. 262). According to Shirky (2005), this kind of pressure, coupled with a desire to believe that one’s campaign efforts are not a waste of time and effort, led Dean supports in Iowa to “have strong incentives not merely to misrepresent reality, but to actually misunderstand it” (p. 238).

On BFA, numbers were also used in a strategic fashion:

The blog was number happy, pointing to evidence of their swelling ranks as validation of their success and effectiveness and, in turn, as a validation of their community. Attention was given to the number of people who had endorsed the candidate, the number of people signed up to attend meetups, poll figures showing Dean surging, the number of posters downloaded from the Dean Web site, and of course fundraising numbers, all presented by the Dean Internet team in a manner that would appear to be a brazenly hard sell if not for the fact that Dean bloggers experienced it as exciting and fun. [Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 14-15]

This emphasis on numbers offered Dean supporters evidence of success. They are certainly not the first SMO to see advantages in quantification (Paley 2001).

This emphasis on quantification may have resulted in some disadvantage for DFA, however. At the DFA-Tampa Bay meetings, many members were quite troubled by the existence of two state-level DFA groups on DFAlink— one created by the existing grassroots networks, and one created solely online without any actual meetings taking place. This second group managed to attract approximately 1,200 members, and developed its own endorsement process. The members of DFA Tampa Bay felt that it was unfair that this group was giving out DFA endorsements that would appear to an outsider to be as legitimate as endorsements of their own; furthermore, they worried that DFA headquarters in Burlington may take the second group’s
candidate endorsements seriously on account of their membership numbers alone, despite their lack of shared cultural values and social activities.

The quantitative emphasis during the Dean for America period has not gone away during the Democracy for America period:

So you tell them the reason why you’re phone banking. “The reason why I need to tell you the best way you can phone bank…. The reason I need to do this is because we have to reach 10,000 people by next week, and you’re going to be talking to 150 of those people so this is your goal in the campaign. If we do that, then will have enough votes to win…” It’s like, “Oh, okay. This is why I’m calling through.” So when the end of the task comes—when the task is starting to get tedious or is starting to end, they’re not thinking about, “Oh my God… What time is it?…” They’re thinking about… how many more supporters they can get for the campaign. “How much closer am I to winning this campaign?” [Hasan 2005]

Like with the blog, DFA tries to frame numbers for members as evidence of progress in which they can take pride.

**Image shapes strategy**

*Overt and Covert Strategies*

Does DFA operate openly or in secret? In general, DFA operates openly, but there is some variation to be found, both between DFA groups and between DFA as a whole over different time periods.
In 1992, during his time as governor of Vermont, Howard Dean sealed up some documents relating to a questionable contracts with Canada’s Hydro-Quebec power generation plant, citing “executive privilege” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 289). A decade later, just before he left office as governor, he sealed his government records for 10 years; his two predecessors had also sealed their records, but only for six years (p. 301). When asked about this, he said: “Well, there are future political considerations….We didn’t want anything embarrassing appearing in the papers at a critical time in any future endeavor” (p. 301). This plan backfired, however, according to Trippi: “Well, it’s a critical time now [in December 2003], and his decision has come back to bite us in the ass, this candidate who promised a new, open style of democracy hiding more than eleven years’ worth of memos and files from the only major office he’s ever held” (Trippi 2004: xiii). Dunnan passes along some secondhand information about what could be considered damning about these records:

Tebbetts comments that “One of the things I’ve heard about the sealed documents that they don’t want to release is that there’s some of that colorful language in the margins. This first came up during the whole time of the ‘anger’ issue (during 2003), so they didn’t want that extra stuff. Someone was saying that it really wasn’t about policy, there wasn’t a smoking gun, but there was a lot of colorful language that was written in his hand that might have been embarrassing. But that was just some speculation from some folks who apparently had seen some of the stuff when they were on the fifth floor.” [Dunnan 2004: 63-4]

According to Trippi, the senior staff was begging Dean to release the records, which Dean was strangely reluctant to do despite claiming there was nothing in them, until he finally said “I would rather withdraw from the race than release those records” (2004: xiii).
During the Dean for America campaign, there was some degree of coventionness about certain things:

Hundreds of supporters showed up to greet him in a colorful setting -- Chi Chi's on Broadway, site of [San Francisco]'s first lesbian bar. And some important Silicon Valley rainmakers turned out to support his campaign: Steve Kirsch, who ranks as one of the nation's most deep-pocketed Democratic donors, and venture capitalist Joe Kraus.

It was the kind of intimate retail campaigning that makes for good coverage indeed, but Dean's campaign stubbornly barred TV and print reporters from attending.

So it didn't get covered at all. [Marinucci 2003b]

The article goes on to quote a GOP consultant as to why Dean may have made this decision: “I have to wonder if the Democratic candidates are afraid of being seen with liberal activists in San Francisco and Los Angeles . . . (because) that doesn't play well in Iowa and New Hampshire” (Marinucci 2003b).

In addition, DFA activists themselves sometimes planned activities that involved some degree of coventionness. For example, Dunnan describes posing as an undecided Democrat to plant questions that would call attention to unfavorable aspects of other candidates (Dunnan 2004: 135-140; 149-159). Also, some members of DFA-TB suggested calling up right-wing talk radio shows and pretending to be Republicans when talking to screeners, and then voicing their real opinions once they are on the air.

According to one blogger, the transition from Dean for America to Democracy for America meant that the degree of coventionness had to be changed:

The difficulty in transitioning DFA from a campaign to a permanent membership organization is instilling transparency and democracy into the core of the
organization. In essence, these are problems of institutional culture and purpose. A political campaign, by its very nature, must carefully control information and act from behind a screen of secrecy and misinformation. Decisions must be taken in close consultation with a small group of advisors and then transmitted confidentiality, if possible, down the chain of command. My fear is DFA will continue to operate like a political campaign, or like an organ of the party, even though circumstances and the nature of the new DFA do not warrant it. [National 2004]  

This entry was written right around the time the transition was being made. Was his concern justified? Has Democracy for America operated more openly? As previously mentioned, the first group organizer I approached wanted to keep the activities of his particular DFA group a secret, and did not welcome me in the role of researcher. Other DFA groups did not share his attitude, however. We may thus conclude that how overt or covert a DFA group is about their activities depends in part upon the group’s leadership.  

We may also further explore these questions about the openness of Democracy for America by asking what communicative flows exist within it, and what is required to be a party to them. Virtual communities can restrict access to non-members to varying degrees through requiring registration, application, password, invitation, financial contribution, or some combination of these. At first, Blog for America allowed anyone to post blog comments, although this changed after trolling (Carpenter 2004). Unregistered people may still read the replies, however. DFA-Link allows unregistered users to access certain features, like group profiles and group-posts on BFA, but not others like group polls or member profiles. DFA has also created many Yahoo! Groups, which vary in their restrictions. There are three membership settings on Yahoo! Groups: “Open (anyone can join);” “Restricted (you approve all requests for membership);” and “Closed (only invited members can join)” (see Yahoo! n.d.). At least one
DFA Yahoo! Group—the DFA Meetup Hosts groups—uses the Restricted option. This group is significant because it is mentioned in DFA’s group creation guide: “A Yahoo! Group or regional mailing list can be a great way to share best practices and organizing tips. Many states already have a Yahoo! Group or mailing list set up. If there isn’t one in your state, consider starting one. You can also touch base with Meetup hosts across the country at [the DFA Meetup Hosts groups]” (Democracy for America 2005b: 5). The DFA chat website requires registration to enter, but it has open registration. In general, most DFA sites are open to anyone willing to register.

In a letter to the editor, one person criticized a DFA member’s alleged attempt at deception:

It appears that for those who oppose Congressman Mark Kirk, mischaracterization and deceit are their modus operandi.

Mathew Lowry's July 17 Fence Post letter is another example.

Mr. Lowry states that he is an "independent-minded Democrat" who has "voted Republican almost as much as Democrat."

A Google search reveals that he chairs the Lake County Democracy for America chapter - a progressive liberal organization founded by Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean. Among the liberal candidates this organization supports is Vermont's Rep. Bernie Sanders, a self-described "democratic socialist." [Menis 2006]

What Mr. Menis demonstrated in his letter is how the opposition research (Cornfield 2004: 15; Trippi 2004: 41) that was once the specialty of campaign professionals is now easier than ever for the layperson to do, thanks to the Internet. Mathew Lowry—assuming Mr. Menis’s accusation is accurate—demonstrates how the Internet has made it easier for statements made in a particular audience context to move into contexts in which the speaker never intended. Websites like
Thesmokinggun.com have kept damaging information on politicians and celebrities (Cornfield 2004: 15), but a DFA member is not likely to appear on such a site. However, the combination of having an online presence, misrepresenting one’s political orientation in a letter to the editor, and political opponents with Internet access seems to have produced much the same effect in a local context. It would seem that an open online presence can be an impediment to attempts at covert strategies.

**Target, Force, Implementer Combinations**

SMO strategies may be characterized by their politeness, protest, or violence (Lofland 1996: 262). Similarly, “several authors have proposed persuasion, bargaining, and coercion as the most basic and logically exhaustive types of strategies” (Lofland 1996: 262). In which of these ways should DFA be characterized? Lofland lists electioneering as a form of polite strategy (p. 262), which is the staple of DFA’s strategic activities. However, DFA has not ruled out protest—that is, “ostentatious, dramatic, and ambiguously legal or illegal nonviolent efforts” (Lofland 1985, Ch. 12; 1993a, Ch., quoted in Lofland 1996: 262). For instance, this e-mail about a protest by another SMO was forwarded to DFA-TB members:

FCAN sponsors a sign waving to welcome Dick Cheney to Tampa! VP Dick Cheney comes to Tampa TOMORROW MORNING, Friday July 21, to raise $$$ for Mike Bilirakis' son Gus in his campaign to succeed his dad in Congress

[....] FCAN will provide yellow & black signs that read "Hands Off My Social Security" and "Fix Bush's Part D Disaster", courtesy of Americans United for Change.  [e-mail to DFA-Tampa Bay members, July 20, 2006]

In addition, I saw an incident in DC for Democracy in which a protest designed to shut down the DC government for a week was briefly considered in their struggle to get voting rights for DC. After proposing this, another member claimed that they would be accused of being “terrorists” if
they tried doing that. Then another member jumped in and said that civil disobedience only
works if there is a corresponding massive public relations campaign to go along with it. Without
this, she claimed that the public would form negative opinions of their group and the issue of DC
ing voting rights. She also mentioned a similar protest in which bicyclers rode in the street, slowing
down traffic, and they were arrested. In terms of tactical mechanisms, this incident shows DFA’s
consideration of both persuasion and coercion. Persuasion is “striv[ing] to make a target aware
of a condition and to appeal to her or his moral sensibilities and values as a basis on which to act
in ways the SMO wants” (Lofland 1996: 262), while coercion is a convincing threat of an
undesirable consequence for the target used to obtain an outcome desired by the SMO (p. 263).
DFA groups tend to stick to persuasion rather than coercion; this incident at DC for Democracy
was the only time I saw coercion being considered, and it was quickly rejected. When it comes to
interaction with candidates, facilitation, meaning “‘offering help to make it possible for the target
group to act in support’ of the SMO’s proposals” (Lofland 1996: 263, quoting Turner and Killian
1987: 298), is how DFA’s tactical mechanism could best be characterized. If DFA deems a
candidate worthy, they will offer their support to their campaign.

In addition, Lofland points out that the different combinations of three strategic variables
form certain strategic patterns; these variables are: the target of change, the amount of force
required, and who implements the change (p. 263-4). As mentioned in Chapter 4, DFA’s
immediate targets of change are the voting public and the Democratic Party, while they seek to
ultimately accomplish national and international change through this. The amount of force, as
described above, is nonviolent rather than coercive. And, as mentioned in Chapter 4, DFA’s
beliefs are exemplary—that is, they enact the type of political involvement they would like to see
in the public. SMOs with these combinations of strategic characteristics can be described as
educative or bargaining (Lofland 1996: 265). This typology does not seem as useful here as the
other theoretical tools Lofland provides because DFA seems to fall under several categories in the

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typology, depending on whether we look at their strategy of holding candidate forums, deciding on candidate endorsements, or protesting Cheney.

_Framing Issues_

“In what are by definition more sophisticated SMOs, framing is a topic of conscious and extensive strategizing,” Lofland writes (1996: 266). If this is the definition of a sophisticated SMO, then count DFA among the most sophisticated. DFA promotes books about framing by linguist George Lakoff, and has even done framing exercises at Meetups to give members practice. Lakoff, professor of cognitive linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley and founder of the progressive Rockridge Institute, deals largely with the importance of metaphors in human thinking in his work. In a webpage that has been also used as a handout at a DFA meeting, he writes: “A frame is a conceptual structure used in thinking. The word _elephant_ evokes a frame with an image of an elephant and certain knowledge: an elephant is a large animal (a mammal) with large floppy ears, a trunk that functions like both a nose and a hand, large stump-like legs, and so on” (Lakoff 2006). On a DFA message board, one member wrote: “George Lakoff’s DVD and his book for the January DFA Meet-ups will be incredible” (Watson 2004). Another member on that same message board demonstrated his or her use of framing in response to a message about religion:

It’s a great idea. You’re right about religious community filling a need.

But I wonder about the term “non-religious”. It’s accurate, but I’d rather not define a group as NOT something. Like George Lakoff says, “Don’t Think of an Elephant” (“We’re not religious”) isn’t the best way to create a positive reverse frame.

If it were my group, I’d call it a “Humanist Community” which even has a bit of poetic alliteration. To fundies, “humanist” is a dirty word, but to many
people it brings up thoughts of the best of human sentiments: caring, friendship, learning, etc. [Dina Johnson 2004]

DFA has also released their own materials advocating the use of framing (Dean 2004a: 90-3; Democracy for America 2006b).

One common framing practice is the *loss frame*. The loss frame defines the SMO as the guardian of something positive that is need of protection or rescue (Lofland 1996: 267). Howard Dean has invoked the loss frame in his writing, claiming democracy itself is in need of rescue:

In our system, power was placed in the hands of the people…. When government caters to the privileged few, democracy itself is undermined and the American people are no longer served. Our country now appeared to be moving further toward the direction our founders feared: the prospect of government of the corporation, by special interests, and for those who make the largest campaign contributions.

America was founded on the ethos that we are one community, and we are all in this together. Our current political leadership has broken down and degraded our sense of community, choosing instead to pursue policies that benefit only the individual or corporations that fund their campaigns. This is not what democracy is supposed to look like. [Dean 2003: 112-3]

Local groups have used the loss frame as well for their selected issues:

We have a responsibility to protect and preserve the natural environment, but is there anyplace natural left in San Francisco?

Yes! In the more than 200 parks managed by the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department, there are 31 areas that are remnants of San Francisco's original landscape. These unique and threatened natural areas contain rich and diverse plant and animal communities. The Natural Areas Program
(NAP) preserves, protects, and restores native habitat in cooperation with citizens and communities. [San Francisco for Democracy 2006]

DFA also sometimes helps members with their framing by providing ready-to-use examples. This is part of an e-mail I was sent about “Illegal Military Surveillance”:

Here is a sample letter you can use/edit for your own:

Dear Senator:

Please support Senator Leahy's efforts to investigate the illegal military surveillance of peaceful political groups that is taking place all around the country. Any intrusion into our Constitutional Rights weakens the very Democracy that our Military is sworn to defend.

This is an issue especially relevant in Florida, being that the military has already admitted to wrongly spying on various groups, here.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Noah Porter [e-mail to to author, December 1, 2006]

This sample letter came after a couple of links to the senators it was intended for, and even already contained my name at the end. By simply clicking on the link and copying-and-pasting the message, I was able to send a well-framed message to Senator Mel Martinez in just a few minutes.

Staid, Conventional Activities

One common nonviolent action taken by SMOs is media-management. Media-management strategies can be broadly divided into proactive, where the group actively courts favorable media coverage, and reactive, where the SMO responds to media messages about the movement or issue (Lofland 1996: 272).
Interestingly, Lofland points out: “The oft-mentioned irony about SMOs dealing with the media is that many SMOs that are fundamentally critical of how the media operate must nonetheless construct themselves in the media terms in order to use them” (Lofland 1996: 272). Howard Dean was often critical of the media (Dean 2003: 117; Dean 2004a: 88-9, Ch. 5), and his supporters generally share this view (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 15).

Letter-writing is one example of a proactive media-management strategy. Letters to the editor have been regularly used by DFA members in support of their group, their issues, and their candidates. An example of a DFA-TB member writing about the FCAT was mentioned earlier.

The Dean Defense Forces are an example of a reactive media strategy; “Dean supporters signed up to receive email alerts about public attacks on Dean and then could bombard the guilty parties with emails, phone calls, and letters-to-the-editor correcting the perceived misrepresentations” (Looney 2004: 53). For example, when Howard Dean appeared on Meet the Press on June 22, 2003, his “performance was generally reviewed as poor in the next day’s papers. This sent the ‘Dean Defense Forces’ into action against the offending journalists” (Dunnan 2004: 250). Staffers at the Dean for America campaign had similar efforts:

In October, I was told at the office that I should write letters to editors….The first assignment was to write a letter countering a column The Portsmouth Herald had run from a Hampton resident. He was complaining at the arrogance of the Dean people in putting up signs on their lawns so far before the primary. I wrote a letter that pointed out that America had a tradition of free speech, and suggested the documentation that had laid the foundation. [Dunnan 2004: 122]

Dean Defense Force made their last website update in January 2004, and their website is now down. While the Dean Defense Force may be defunct, local Democracy for America groups often define their own committees and strategies to react to mainstream media. DFA-Tampa Bay
has endorsed the idea of members joining the e-mail list for Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR), a progressive media watch group, and media activism opportunities are sometimes promoted at DFA-TB meetings and group e-mails.

Another common conventional activity of SMOs is educational activities. This can mean “gathering people together for the purpose of listening to a speaker or panel or otherwise simply discussing a topic” (Lofland 1996: 273), as well as “appearing on radio or television programs; doing radio or television series; writing and publishing op-ed pieces; informational tabling in public places and at auspicious gatherings of other groups; putting out newsletters or newspapers; writing, publishing, and distributing leaflets, brochures, and pamphlets; producing and distributing video programs and books” (p. 273). Appearing in the media has already been mentioned; DFA groups have engaged in many of these other activities as well. A few examples are in order. First, we have a forum on tax issues:

A state representative, a school superintendent and a Democratic party spokesman walk into a theology school.

It's not the beginning of a lame joke, but an attempt to explain a complicated issue and shed some light on property-tax fairness from three different viewpoints.

Rep. Steven Nickol, R-Hanover; Upper Adams School District Superintendent Eric Eshbach; and Abraham Amoros, director of communications for the Pennsylvania Democratic party, addressed about 40 people at the Gettysburg Area Democracy for America's property-tax forum Wednesday at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg. [Marroni 2006a]

Second, we have a forum on the war issue:

"We have all been here before."
The lyrics are a haunting refrain from a folk song Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young performed during the Vietnam War era called "Déjà Vu."

And it was the theme of a meeting Thursday night organized by Passaic County Democracy for America, a new chapter of a national grassroots political action group challenging the war in Iraq.

More than 60 people met at a union hall on Broad Street to discuss the U.S. military's involvement in Iraq against the backdrop of memories of the Vietnam War. Those attending opposed America's role in Iraq.

Michael Sebetich, 63, of Hawthorne, shared his experience serving as a non-combatant in medical-service support in Saigon. [Brubaker 2006]

Third, DFA does candidate forums:

More than 150 Democratic activists turned out for a Democracy for America candidate forum Friday night in Largo featuring Democratic gubernatorial candidates Jim Davis and Rod Smith. They saw something unusual: Democratic rivals trying to avoid a circular firing squad.

U.S. Rep. Davis is taking heat for supporting the Patriot Act and missing a key vote extending it, while state Sen. Smith says he opposed the original Patriot Act as infringing too much on civil liberties. But when a heckler started yelling at Davis for his Patriot Act position, Smith jumped into the fray and won roaring applause. [Smith et al. 2006]

Fourth, DFA has helped promote political documentaries:

A documentary about the Texas criminal investigation that led to the indictment of Representative Tom DeLay, the former House majority leader, on campaign fund-raising charges is being put to use by Mr. DeLay's political opponents in an attempt to unseat him.
The film, "The Big Buy: How Tom DeLay Stole Congress," will be distributed this spring by the Hollywood producer and liberal provocateur Robert Greenwald, whose last release was a scathing attack on Wal-Mart sponsored by a variety of labor unions and other groups critical of the retailing giant.

A host of liberal organizations in Texas and nationwide, including People for the American Way, Democracy for America and the Pacifica radio station in Houston, are expected to sponsor the film's release. It will not follow a traditional theatrical rollout but will instead open in a few cities before being made widely available on DVD, as was the Wal-Mart movie, Mr. Greenwald said in an interview. [Halbfinger 2006]

These are but a few examples of DFA’s use of educational activities. Interestingly, some DFA members have proposed making changes to the educational system itself. On a DFA message board, one person wrote: “Here in Indianapolis, we've discussed finding a way to work with Social Studies and Government teachers in our school systems, so I'm in the process of trying to determine what we'd need to do if we were going to offer some kind of enrichment program on grassroots democracy to the schools.” Also, when DC for Democracy had a brainstorming session about strategies for obtaining DC voting rights, one person proposed encouraging DC schools to only buy textbooks that address DC voting rights.

“As one component of an SMO’s strategy, research refers to finding information on one’s issues or targets that supports the SMO’s demands” (Lofland 1996: 273-4). DFA activists are heavy news consumers (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: Ch. 3), so members are likely to have some knowledge about a politician or political issue before it arises as a group-defined strategic goal. One member of a DFA message board wrote:

Like you, I am "all over" the Internet and progressive talk radio almost continuously. My frustration is as great as yours, but that won't solve anything
for anybody. Taking positive constructive action is the only thing that will alter the stance of a deceived and delusional public.

Most of us are either pretty well schooled in the truth of our public matters....or we're learning very fast. Sharing what we are learning and what we know with others who have open minds, especially school kids, is critical.....and mixing it up with Republicans/Neocons/Anybody Else is critical, if we are to succeed at returning control of this country to we, the people.

I would suggest frequent meetings, in small groups, as often as practical, among DFA members, selecting topics that grab your fancy, doing some basic research....to make sure you've got the issues down clearly....then making short public presentations. Library evenings, for example, being sure to invite school age kids, can spark interest in the civic life of their country and their communities.....it would be a HUGE plus! [Gruber 2004]

DFA groups tend not to create their own research reports as a think tank would. Instead, members learn about issues on their own, learn about the research of others through the various DFA activities they participate in.

And, of course, politicking is a major conventional strategy used by DFA. “Its two main forms are election campaigning for or against candidates and other items on ballots and lobbying of officeholders regarding their votes on legislative or administrative…decisions” (Lofland 1996: 274). The former is much more common than the latter within DFA.

*Dramaturgie Dimensions*

Scripting “refers to the development of a set of directions that define the scene, identity actors, and outline expected behavior” (Benford and Hunt 1992, adapted in Lofland 1996: 276). Scripts are built upon SMO “frames;” once the SMO has established a cultural framework of
understanding about a problem, they develop scripts for guidance in activities related to that problem. DFA materials about framing also encourage scripting, as can be seen in the electronic document “DFA Night School: Framing the Election” (Democracy for America 2006b). After explaining the concept of framing (p. 5-7), the document attempts to boil down the progressive and conservative views to a few basic items (p. 10-11). It highlights the concept of “Bi-conceptuals”:

- People can embrace an issue from either a conservative or progressive worldview — depending on how it’s been framed for them.
- Bi-conceptual = Persuadable. It’s our job to build a progressive frame for these people.
- Target persuadable voters in this election. We’ll turn identified conservative voters to our side by shifting the national dialogue in the longer term.

[Democracy for America 2006b: 12]

In reaching out to these persuadable people, the document suggests that DFA members should “replace” rather than “settle for conservative frames” (p. 13). It then gives the examples of “tax relief” (p. 8) and the Iraq war/occupation (p. 14) for members to begin thinking about developing scripts to apply the concept of framing. Scripting in a more literal sense was discussed in a DFA training speech:

So who has gone to a campaign volunteer activity… And how many people were given, if you were canvassing, a clipboard and told to head out the door? Or how many people were given a script and a list and told to call—call through and identify people supporting [unintelligible]? Right. There’s no training there. You might know how to do it. It doesn’t matter. You should still be retrained into it because it keeps all the data you get uniform—standard. Everyone is doing things the same way. Everyone is, you know, doing their best calls right
away and throughout the night instead of warming up, using names. Whatever warming up you’re doing using live names is burning through the list… You want to do a couple role-plays—a couple practices. I think it’s important to train every volunteer, every time they come in. [Hasan 2005]

Here, literal scripts of what to say are discussed, and are framed as inadequate by themselves without practice exercises based upon them.

As noted in Chapter 3, Sheldon Ungar claims that we are living in a knowledge-averse society, where more specialized training is needed to understand specific areas of knowledge, and strategies of sifting through knowledge are employed to make large amounts of information manageable. Recognizing this, DFA encourages members and candidates seeking endorsement to be concise in various ways. This recommendation has been codified in what DFA-TB members have called the 27-9-3 method, defined on one of their handouts as follows: “You have 27 words in 9 seconds to make 3 simple points.” I found further evidence of this emphasis on brevity in how candidates seeking endorsement at a DFA meeting were quizzed on whether they could appeal to uninformed voters in limited time. While part of the reason for this emphasis on brevity was probably to keep the meetings themselves on schedule, it was clearly important to DFA members that candidates could answer questions concisely. At one meeting, candidates were given a thirty-second hourglass that they were expected to flip over each time they answered a question. At another meeting, candidates were asked to pretend that the group organizer was a “politically ignorant” who just stepped into an elevator with them, and that they had thirty seconds to sell themselves to the person before the elevator reached its destination.

In addition to being brief, it is also important to be “Smart, Witty,” according to a DFA handout entitled “Letters to the Editor.” The handout explains: “Citing a fact is typically a good thing; it establishes credibility. Stating an opinion in a clever way is an even bigger bonus.”
Staging “refers to appropriating, managing, and directing materials, audiences and performing regions” (Benford and Hunt 1992, adapted in Lofland 1996: 276). Here is an example of staging in DFA:

Willimon zips around the auditorium of the school several dozen times, fixing little things around the room. He straightens a “Dean for America” sign hanging on the lectern in front of the stage. He tapes down TV cables so people don’t trip over them. He arranges chairs so the crowd will look big.

Gore arrives around 8:15 p.m., and Willimon fades into the background.

Workers such as Willimon are all but invisible to the general public. In fact, they hardly ever come in direct contact with the candidate they are working for at all. Yet their work is very much visible in nearly every photo or TV clip of every candidate.

The huge American flag hanging behind a candidate at a speech was hung by people such as Willimon.

The news photograph of a candidate flipping pancakes to a supporter was arranged by careful placement of both the griddle and risers where photographers stood to shoot the event. The crowd of cheering supporters waving signs as a candidate steps off a bus was “built” by workers such as Willimon, who sent out e-mails, fliers and made phone calls to supporters several days before the candidate rolled into town. [Finney 2004]

Similarly, another news article said: “Dean rallies and meetings that once spilled out on surrounding streets, suddenly had to conceal rows of empty seats” (Cornwell 2004). This sort of staging was not just a response to the campaign’s decline; it was also used during its heyday:

Ben LaBolt was the 23-year-old regional director for the Seacoast in the Dean campaign. A foreign policy major and theater minor from Middlebury College,
Ben had been in politics since he started leafleting for a candidate when he was 6. Ben’s theater background was evident when Dean appeared at events on the Seacoast, with carefully chosen speakers to introduce the Governor, music to rev up the crowd, and visuals projects on screens before the Governor would appear from behind the curtain. [Dunnan 2004: 134]

Staging still exists during the Democracy for America period. At a DFA training session, the speaker said: “There should be smiles in the offices. There’s no need for unnecessary campaign drama. That’s actually not fun. What I like to do is to make everything look fun, so: busy walls. There’s colors on the walls over here. There’s a thermometer of... how many ones [strong supporters] you collected or how many positive voter responses we have. So it’s always a little bit of fun. It looks like just a little touch of kindergarten, too” (Hasan 2005).

There are dramaturgic staging elements to DFA’s Internet presence as well, especially when it came to where links were placed upon their websites. Joe Trippi describes a costly error in this regard, where members who voted to opt out of public funding for the campaign were directed to a web page that thanked them for voting; “The problem was that the web team had put the donation request at the bottom of the page. So people read the Thank You part of the page and missed the donation part, which they only saw if they scrolled down” (Trippi 2004: 171).

Similarly, Zephyr Teachout wrote: “Every time the Meetup icon dropped below the top part of the screen, our Meetup growth dropped in half” (Teachout 2004). It is a mistake to think that the placement of virtual objects is inconsequential.

Dramaturgic Ingratiation

Dramaturgic ingratiation is “the process of strategically attempting to gain the favor or blessing of others by conducting and presenting oneself in a manner that projects an image that is reflective of fitting in and deferential regard for certain values, traditions, and properties
perceived to be important to those whose favor is being courted” (Snow 1979: 30, quoted in Lofland 1996: 277).

At DFA meetings, symbiotic relationships are formed between candidates and activists. DFA members want to support candidates that share their values, and are willing to pursue policies based upon those shared values. Candidates are looking for help in winning elections, usually through monetary donations and volunteer hours working phone banks and canvassing. Through this process of dialogue, DFA activists are informing themselves about the political process to a far greater degree than their fellow non-activist citizen. DFA members are aware of this discrepancy in cultural capital, and try to adjust their strategies to appeal to these outsiders. One of the local group organizers made the following pessimistic comment at a meeting: “Gimmicks are how you get elected…. It seems like gimmicks work on people who devote only five minute to informing themselves before an election.” It would logically follow from this statement that most people make minimal effort to inform themselves before elections, at least in the view of this DFA organizer.

**Personal Bearing**

We may also examine SMO strategy at the “relatively microscopic level of personal bearing, demeanor, tenor, general appearance, and sensibility of the concrete people executing a strategy” (Lofland 1996: 278). Frank provides an example of how a mismatch is possible between the claims-making style used by a speaker and those expected by an audience:

...at the second annual Darwin, Design, and Democracy Symposium… Modeled after an academic conference, the keynote speeches and panel discussions all aimed to publicize the much ballyhooed theory of Intelligent Design…. an Intelligent Design theorist…lectured monotonously on the faked evidence supposedly used by evolutionists, and heads began to nod. To everyone’s relief,
the speaker finally yielded the stage to the Mutations, "three fine Christian ladies" in pink dresses who strutted and whirled like an early-sixties girl group and proceed to sing "Overwhelming Evidence," a ditty set to the pulsing beat of "Ain’t No Mountain High Enough." Comically assuming the voice of the arrogant science establishment, the women pretend-derided the audience, singing that "the truth is what we say" and that, as professional scientists, "we don’t have to listen to you!" The audience had plainly been bored by the preceding recitation of science’s errors, but this lighthearted bit of presecuto-tainment hit exactly the right note, and sent everyone home with a smile on his or her face. [Frank 2004: 213-4]

Dean’s personal bearing and claims-making style best fit what Ibarra and Ktsuse describe as the civic style: “The civic style [has] what we might call ‘the look of being unpolished.’ [It] is based on being ‘honest,’ ‘sincere,’ ‘upright,’ ‘understylized.’ … To appear too well organized or ‘too slick’ is to be part of an ‘interest group.’ [It trades] off an ideal of the ‘common, decent folk’” (Lofland 1996: 279). “The taste for the ordinary can be seen as a reaction to the glut of glamour media images with which we are all constantly bombarded, and reality genres are, at least in part, bound up in this,” Barcan (2002) writes. Dean was not the first to attempt such an image, of course. For instance, “During the New Hampshire campaign, a video-opportunity was engineered by the campaign for the media in which George Bush donned a baseball cap, worked a forklift, and then took a ride in a semi-trailer cab, thus demonstrating his metaphorical empathy with the working people of America” (McLeod 1991: 33). Similarly, the Clinton/Gore campaign held bus tours, which were successful because “[v]irtually no one in the United States rides the bus unless they cannot afford to drive a car or buy a plane ticket; by riding the bus throughout the Midwest, Clinton and Gore managed to identify themselves with the economic woes of the country” (McLeod 1999: 363).
Howard Dean presents this civic style image in a number of ways. In describing his background, he mentions having a job pouring concrete (Dean 2003: 21) and enjoying hamburgers (p. 32), for instance. He demonstrates frugality by driving instead of flying (p. 68) and wearing a cheap suit (Dean 2004a: 2). He describes his speaking style as “talk[ing] as simply and directly to people as possible” (Dean 2003: 121), rather than using preparation, obfuscation, and equivocation (also see Dean 2003: 120-1, 128; Trippi 2004: 63, 66-7, 163; Dean 2004a: 90-3; Margolis 2003: 11-2; Welch 2003: 11-2; Dunnan 2004: 71, 74). Using this image carried certain advantages, such as allowing supporters to overlook Dean’s statements that they found offensive:

The buzz throughout the meeting was on Dean's comment two days earlier that "White folks in the South who drive pickup trucks with Confederate flag decals in the back ought to be voting with us and not them, because their kids don't have health insurance either and their kids need better schools, too."

Several people, including many die hard Dean supporters found his remarks offensive. I thought it was a poor choice of words. What Dean was saying was that for Democrats to win, Democrats had to be more inclusive, and that includes bringing in under the tent people who lean Republican. This makes a lot of sense: many people who vote Republican in the south are Wal-mart workers and live from paycheck to paycheck with no or little benefits. Health insurance is something they cannot afford. Dean's rivals of course jumped up and down on the remark and tried to imply Dean is a racist, which he isn't. It was just a stupid remark. Dean can do that on occasion. I sometimes wish he were as careful with his choice of words as Bill Clinton. On the other hand Bill Clinton usually seemed stage managed; Dean comes across as someone who genuinely says what he believes. It is that personality and energy, I pointed out, that is
largely responsible for his popularity. He's not part of the buffed and pampered Washington elite. [Hamill 2003]

However, this image also left him vulnerable to information that did not fit with his image, such as the sealing of government records: “We can survive a lot of things, but we can’t survive having people see him as just another double-talking politician. The Dean for America campaign is the antithesis of that…a grassroots, reform candidacy breaking all the old rules and making people believe in politics again” (Trippi 2004: xiii).

As noted in Chapter 3, the prominent role images play in society mean that neglecting how one is presented in images to invite unfavorable interpretations. Despite this civic style image, there were some strategic elements to what images of Howard Dean were disseminated. Shapiro describes Howard Dean looking at a photo of himself on a DFA flier and complaining: “This picture makes me look like Dick Cheney. Like I have Bell’s palsy” (Shapiro 2003: 2).

This civic style was also a part of Blog for America:

Howard and I and the rest of the campaign staffers also delivered messages on the blog, and everyone quickly developed his or her own voice and style. Among the most popular and singular voices was that of Kate O’Connor, whose funny, folksy dispatches from the road were delivered in a tone make for blogging…. Unlike corporate communications or the mechanized signature of candidates on most official campaign’s correspondence, you knew there was a real person on the other end of Kate’s blogs.

It was something I required of every campaign correspondence, that it be written by someone real, and that it be an authentic piece of communication. People are sick of getting a form letter from their congressman that starts: “I want to personally inform you, Mr. Joseph M. Trippi of St. Michael’s, Maryland, about a key piece of legislation that blah, blah, blah….” These people are not
They know the letter was written by a junior staffer staring at a press release and that the blue signature at the bottom was stamped by a machine. [Trippi 2004: 142-3]

In addition, at a DFA training session, three reasons were given for losing membership: no fun, no love, and no growth. Concerning the first one, the speaker said: “No fun. A campaign has to be fun. Of course, you know people aren’t there just for the fun. People are there because they believe in x-candidate, y-candidate, or z-issue, or whatever. But they have a good time when they’re there. It can’t be all dour and sour, and nobody looks like they’re having any fun, and nobody really wants to be there. You want it to be something nice. You want it to be something that they’re kind of looking forward to coming back to.” (Hasan 2005).

DFA also attempts to be selective about who will represent their endorsed campaigns. At a DFA training session, organizers are instructed to deal with people who are “weird and kooky”—defined as people who “[give] you multiple flyers,” “can’t stop talking to you,” or are wearing inappropriate clothes—by “divert[ing] them to another part of the campaign” (Hasan 2005). This is because “the volunteer, to the person at the door or on the phone, is the campaign. That’s probably the contact the campaign is making—only contact directly the campaign is making with the individual. Don’t let it be someone you wouldn’t want representing the campaign” (Hasan 2005).

Local Needs shape Strategy
Local Amelioration Strategies

SMOs seeking to “ameliorate some fairly specific, proximate, and localized social condition” (Lofland 1996: 269) tend to rely on public education, direct service, and structural change as general strategies (p. 269). We can see some of each in DFA.

“Public education involves attempts to bring social conditions to wide audiences while attempting to convince those audiences to take some action” (McCarthy and Wolfson, in press, quoted in Lofland 1996: 269). Often, the attempt comes in the form of candidate forums, and the action they are attempting to convince the audience to take is to vote a particular way. Letters to the editor are another popular form of public education. At a DFA-TB meeting, one person was applauded for writing a letter to the editor in a local paper about the Florida's Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

“[Direct service] involves providing direct aid to the victims of the social conditions” (McCarthy and Wolfson, in press, quoted in Lofland 1996: 269). A prime example of DFA using direct service is Dean Corps:

Dean Corps is based on AmeriCorps. Members devote their time, energy, and labor to community service. Dean Corps began in Iowa, intending to fill the vacuum left by the Bush administration’s underfunding of AmeriCorps, which hit Iowa particularly hard. Dean Corps has been active in the unemployed community in Iowa, and it is also doing environmental outreach and developing programs to help ensure that the needs of seniors are met.

The first Dean Corps even I participated in was at the Johnson County Crisis Center in Iowa City. We bagged groceries for unemployed Iowans who were having difficulty making ends meet. After the event, Dean Corps volunteers collected more than 320 pounds of donated food to replenish the stocks. [Dean 2003: 135; also see Trippi 2004: 148; Welch 2003: 14]
This idea did not stay localized: “Joe Trippi, Dean's national campaign manager, said the idea has spread over the Internet to Dean's operations and supporters in other states, and ‘thousands’ of volunteers in those places are taking up some local civic project in addition to their campaign work for Dean” (Yepsen 2003). Dean Corps is still active today (for example, see San Francisco for Democracy 2006), but now usually goes by the name DFA Corps. Direct service activities happen outside the context of Dean Corps/DFA Corps as well; one e-mail I received from a DFA-TB member read:

Our friend… is having a get-together this coming Monday evening, December 4th, from 6 to 8pm at her home in Westchase and she wanted me to spread the word. [This friend] has a non-profit organization called "Seniors on First" that purchases and delivers new items to residents of nursing homes in the area.

If you would like to participate, go to [her] house on Monday and take your gifts—[she] suggests robes, slippers, housecoats, sweatsuits, etc. At the party, you will wrap the gifts while enjoying lovely appetizers. It's a wonderful idea and an easy, fun way to brighten the lives of nursing home residents. [e-mail to author, December 2, 2006]

“Movement leaders may directly pursue structural change by attempting to change laws, authorities, and/or regimes” (McCarthy and Wolfson, in press, quoted in Lofland 1996: 269). DC for Democracy provides a good example of a DFA project to change a law; one of the main goals of this DFA group was obtaining voting rights for Washington DC. When DC for Democracy had a question-and-answer session with candidates they were considering supporting, one of the first questions they were asked concerned their stance on voting rights for DC, suggesting they were more likely to support candidates who would help DC for Democracy achieve this goal. DC for Democracy also had guest speakers to discuss the issue, and devoted a large part one of the meetings I attended to discussing possible strategies for achieving this goal, including forming a
527-group to counterattack politicians who interfere with their plan, writing letters to the editor about the issue, and even shutting down the city government was briefly considered (and quickly rejected, as described above).

**Existing TANs Shape Strategy**

*Strategic Dilemmas*

We can think about SMO situations as “one of a complex field of forces and possibilities in which all the strategic choices have not only benefits but significant costs as well. No matter what is done, it incurs significant disadvantages along with whatever advantages may come” (Lofland 1996: 282). As we saw in Chapter 5, channeling plays a major role in shaping the strategic dilemma a DFA group faces in deciding how to legally classify itself. Certain legal classifications carry with them various restrictions on fundraising, endorsement, and record-keeping, for example.

One major strategic dilemma faced by Dean for America was the decision of whether to opt out of public financing. Joe Trippi explains this strategic dilemma:

No Democrat running for president had ever opted out of public campaign financing.

The reason for this is fairly obvious. The way our labyrinthine campaign finance laws have worked since 1976, a candidate can get matching funds if he raises a certain amount of money—but then he is restricted from spending more than that amount in any given state. So while matching funds can double a poorly funded candidate’s base, taking the matching money means the candidate can’t go over the cap. But Republicans have proven so adept at raising those
$1,000 and $2,000 checks from the wealthiest Americans (who benefits most from high-end tax cuts and pro-business policies) that they can raise two, three, four times the cap, while Democrats (relying on much smaller donations from its middle-class, working constituency) haven’t been able to afford to forego the matching funds. [Trippi 2004: 166]

Later in his book, Trippi explains that “some people inside the campaign worried that opting out of public funding sent the wrong message, betraying our populist roots and our candidate’s commitment to campaign finance reform… So we decided this would be another good test of our open-source campaign. We’d put the question out to our supporters. We’d hold an online referendum” (Trippi 2004: 170). They voted to opt out.

Tactical Interaction

We can think about SMOs as “a probing and flexible creature that is responsive to target reactions and innovative in continuously (or at least periodically) revising its strategies as a function of target reactions” (Lofland 1996: 282).

Through my participation observation, I observed time and time again how participation in DFA meetings allows for the sharing of strategy. Individuals who may share similar cultural beliefs to DFA on political issues but who are not participants in DFA would likely find it difficult to discover the avenues of political participation that DFA offers on their own. Even those motivated to do so would be limited by their own knowledge and imagination; as a group, Democracy for America provides a pooling of ideas that members are able to draw from. As a result, DFA becomes greater than the sum of its parts, each member’s political knowledge and repertoire benefiting from group discussions.

For example, during a DFA-Tampa Bay meeting I attended, one member mentioned that she had decided that their group should cooperate with AnySoldier.com, a website devoted to
provided military members with basic items such as toiletries and entertainment. She saw this as a useful opportunity for public relations. Another member then pointed out that he has social capital which could allow the group to set up a table at a nearby mall. The group then debated what the best time to try for a table was; some believed that getting a table during the holidays would ensure that the malls were packed with people who would see them, while others pointed out that it would be more difficult to get a table for that very reason, and their message could be diluted by the presence of many other groups trying to promote themselves as well. The strategy for this project was formulated through dialogue; it surely would not have taken the form it did without group input shaping it.

Democracy for America meetings not only seek to do these sorts of group projects, but also help individual members realize strategies that can be pursued on their own. One example comes from a PowerPoint Presentation given at a DFA-Tampa Bay meeting entitled “Amplify Your Voice: Countering the right-wing noise machine in 30 minutes a week,” which gave six “easy actions” for members to pursue:

1. Calling Congress
2. Media Monitoring Sites
3. Letters to the Editor
4. Letters to National Media
5. Talk Radio
6. Avoiding Stores and Products

Each one of these six strategies was followed up by a slide with useful information about that particular strategy. For the first one, it was pointed out that “1-877-SOBuSOB reaches ALL Senators and Representatives.” This humorous mnemonic device potentially made calling congress easier by not only providing the number, but providing a way to remember it without looking it up. The media monitoring sites mentioned in the second one were FAIR.org and
MediaMatters.org; the slide encourages members to sign up for e-mail alerts on “media bias,” and then respond to alerts by e-mailing the network, show, or paper. The third one encourages DFA members to keep a list of addresses handy to write to local papers, and recommends getting background information from RawStory.com. The fourth one recommends obtaining links to national media outlets from FAIR.org, and then copying and pasting letters to send several at once. The rest continue these patterns of obtaining information about issues from existing sources, being as time-efficient as possible, and making one’s voice heard in whatever outlets are available. The PowerPoint Presentation finally concludes with a slide entitled “Advanced Methods,” listing eight:

1. Paper letter or visit to Senator/Rep (local)
2. Leadership role in DFA
3. Donate money to an office-holder
4. Local media activism – Ex. Talk Radio
5. Attend a rally, vigil, or march
6. LTE’s [letters to the editor] with writers and submitters
7. Mass mailings or phone banks
8. Share this information with your friends

Many of these “advanced methods” are more time-consuming than the “easy actions.”

What seems clear from these strategies is that DFA strategy freely weaves in and out of online and offline contexts as the need arises. They even weave in and out of DFA for their strategic inspiration; in addition to the AnySoldier.com project mentioned above, I have heard members say that they are subscribed to JohnKerry.com and MoveOn.org’s e-mail lists because they provide them with calls to action and background research. Their strategies are oriented towards discovering opportunities to make their voices heard in the public sphere, and ultimately elect candidates who they believe will speak with their voice. The goal is not to use the Internet
to create a “self-congratulatory echo chamber” (Cudahy and Gill 2004). Rather, the Internet is merely a part of DFA’s overall strategy that incorporates all available forms of media to influence public opinion and election outcomes.

**Causes and Limiting Factors of Strategic Repertoires**

How does the strategic repertoire of an SMO come to take the form that it does? There are several relevant elements to consider. One element is the “standards of rights and justice in the population… govern[ing] the acceptability of the components of various possible types of collective action” (Tilly 1978: 156-58, quoted and adapted in Lofland 1996: 284). A blogger pointed out the danger of DFA ignoring this in their transition to Democracy for America:

Thus, I conclude that in order for DFA to transition to a permanent grassroots organization significant changes to the management culture and, likely, the personnel will be required if DFA is to survive. The grassroots will not tolerate non-transparent or non-democratic decisionmaking in the long term. Many of the most influential and capable members of the grassroots are already moving toward forming their own groups to directly implement their goals. It is not necessarily a bad thing, but it removes from DFA the energies and interest of some very effective people. DFA must retain and cultivate leadership and initiative within the membership to remain effective. [National 2004]

In addition, some members of DFA-TB were unhappy with the group’s attempts to work with the HCDEC, feeling that the latter was an ineffectual organization that embodied the very things DFA sought to reform in the Democratic Party.

Another element is how “the daily routines of the population… affects the ease with which one or another of the possible forms of action can actually be carried one” (Tilly 1978: 156-58, quoted and adapted in Lofland 1996: 284). As mentioned in Chapter 6, the transition
from Dean for America to Democracy for America was aided by having several organizational routines in place, such as the use of Meetups. At a more local level, I observed an incident at DC for Democracy in which one member chided the rest of the group for poor attendance at an event, to which another member pointed out that the event was held on a weekday, implying that many members had busy schedules and the first member’s expectations were unrealistic for this reason. For this reason, DFA’s guide for group organizers suggests: “Do not spam. Limit yourself to two e-mails per week” (Democracy for America 2005b: 8).

One element, “the accumulated experience with prior collective action… includes both the contender’s own successes or failures and the contender’s observations of other similar groups” (Tilly 1978: 156-58, quoted and adapted in Lofland 1996: 284). Both of these are applicable. Howard Dean’s overall strategy for Democracy for America was inspired by conservative organizers:

Mr Dean sees the grassroots work of Republican groups such as the Christian Coalition as an instructive model. Starting in the late 1960s, the right began organising communities and in a broad, intensive way. No fight was deemed too trivial, no constituency too marginal. Then, the conservatives used churches and business clubs as their networks, just as the Dean people have the internet. "The longest journey starts with a single step," Mr Dean said. "Sooner or later what happened to the Republicans in 1994 when they took Congress for the first time in a generation is going to happen to us." [Gumbel 2004]33

To achieve this goal, many of the tactics used in Dean for America have transferred to Democracy for America. For instance, Blog for America continues, while considerably smaller than it once was (see Figures 34-36), still exists as a virtual community. Also, Meetup.com continued to be used for a time by Democracy for America.34
Figure 34: DFA Website Pageviews
(Alexa 2006)

Figure 35: DFA Website Pageviews
(Alexa 2006)
Factors Affecting Strategic Options


Mobilization resources includes tangible resources like money and space, as well as intangible resources like time, commitment, and specialized expertise that people can contribute (Lofland 1996: 287). Some of these issues have already been touched on in previous discussions about the time limitations of members and DFA’s remarkable fundraising.

Expertise is an issue that has proved to be particularly significant in DFA. Howard Dean himself had experience as governor of Vermont, but according to Joe Trippi, this did not give him expertise on running for president:
In fact, in my opinion he became one of the greatest governors in the country’s history, and as such, was never seriously challenged in an election, never had to spend more than a million bucks getting reelected. This was great for Governor Dean in the 1990s, but not so good for Candidate Dean in 2003, who had never run a serious race—the equivalent of a 200 meter dash—let alone the marathon of a presidential campaign. And so he arrived in a national election with no national plan, no national team, no money, and next to no campaign experience—seriously, there were freshman members of Congress who had more tough races under their belts. [Trippi 2004: 75]

Trippi also points: “Throughout 2002, while the other campaigns were slow-dancing with the top political operatives in the country, hoping to secure their services for the 2004 run, Dean held back, trying to conserve money and assuming the top guns wouldn’t come sign on with such a long shot anyway” (p. 77). He points out that a few actually did sign on, however (p. 77).

Realizing how limited their resources were, the Dean for America campaign staff determined decentralizing was the only option (p. 81-82). Trippi’s vast Internet experience was a major asset in pursuing this strategy; he had been an advocate for the Internet changing politics since 184 (p. 84). Howard Dean, on the other hand, “was a self-described ‘technophobe’ who didn’t have cable TV, didn’t like to use a cell phone, and had only been using e-mail since 2001” (Trippi 2004: 85); without Trippi’s expertise, the Dean for America campaign would undoubtedly had turned out very differently. Trippi ensured the growth of computer-literate staff by using Internet experience as a major criterion in DFA’s hiring practices (p. 89-90).

By decentralizing, Dean for America grew its membership rapidly, and with it came the expertise the membership brought with them (Trippi 2004: 118). Blog for America provided “ideas, feedback, support, money—everything a campaign needs to live” (p. 141); “We may have grown to a staff of thirty or so by March, but there was no way a staff of thirty could match the
brainpower of 22,000 engaged Americans, all sharing ideas and urging others to join the cause,” Trippi writes (2004: 88). DFA, “through its quality of self-organization, which implies self-interest and self selection…, may… be efficient in the sense that information leads to resource allocation much faster and more directly than is possible in a managerial decision making system” (Jett and Välikangas 2004: 19). This sharing of knowledge contributed to a variety of innovative grassroots projects by members. However, the sharing of knowledge was constrained by existing expertise, time, and by social networks. Shirky (2005) sarcastically pointed out an example where the sharing of knowledge was ultimately ineffective: “Here’s a catchy phrase: ‘Design, Create, Produce to Elect Governor Howard Dean for President.’ That’s the slogan atop DeanMediaTeam.com; can you spot the error? (and we’ll let the fact that Dean is not currently Governor slide.)” (Shirky 2005: 235). Dean similarly pointed out that the grassroots “did occasionally get way out there and do things that turned out to be problems (for example, you can’t call the president of the United States a fascist)” (Dean 2004a: 156-7). Lebkowsky (2005) pointed out another example of this: “There was no way to handle standard voterfiles in the original Deanspace implementation, because the Deanspace team lacked campaign experience and didn’t know that voterfiles would be essential to campaign organizers. By the time a voterfile module was available, it was too late for the first primaries” (Lebkowsky 2005: 307). Dunnan provides yet another example when he describes preparing to plant damaging questions at a Clark event:

Ben showed me five possible questions that had been generated by someone in the Manchester office. He asked me if I wanted to take the top one, which was supposed to be the most important.

The difficulty was that the question was worded in such a way that it allowed for a ready escape and non-answer by Clark. Having taught English, I was surprised that the person who generated the question, which was supposed to
be asked exactly as written, couldn’t see this. Once again, I found myself thinking that the youth and inexperience of the paid staff was detrimental to the campaign. [Dunnan 2004: 135]

These failures should not overshadow the many successful grassroots projects that DFA developed, however, such as Dean Corps.

Online fundraising vendors have been very influential on Internet fundraising (Stein and Kenyon 2004: 74). “Internet consulting firms such as Donordigital, Beaconfire Consulting, and The e Organization have developed specialties in online fundraising and Internet marketing. A familiar refrain is that there are too few of them, their fees are high, and their waiting lists for clients are long” (p. 74). By assembling a tech-savvy team at Dean for America, the campaign was able to deal with technical issues themselves, putting them at an advantage when dealing with issues like server crashes (Trippi 2004: 123, 137-8).

Strategic Implications of DFA’s Website

Steve Fox (2004) identified five aspects that comprise the cultural construction of virtual communities: “(1) the technology that enables entrance into the community, (2) the content and representation (e.g. in text and graphics) that help create the structure and form of the imagined community, (3) the history of the users (e.g. through logs or daily postings), (4) the intertextuality of context (such as links in text to other graphics or text), and (5) the communication/interaction among individuals” (2004: 53). How did these five elements combine to create the imagined community of Blog for America?

What sort of technology-actor network (Hakken 1999: 23-4; Hakken 2003: 329) was used to enable entrance to the imagined/virtual community? The software used includes CMS Convio and Bricolage (Carpenter 2004: 11). This software was implemented by a web team of 25 people during Dean for America at a cost of $1 million (Carpenter 2004: 23). The web team was split
into two groups, “the web side and the blog side” (Trippi 2004: 93). Members of this web team sometimes had tense relationships with each other and the rest of the campaign staff (Dunnan 2004: 215, 225; Trippi 2004: 85, 162).

What content and representation created the structure of this imagined community? As discussed in Chapter 3, candidate websites have typically been “brochureware.” DeanforAmerica.com contained some elements of brochureware, but did not limit itself to this style of representation (Cornfield 2004: xii-xiii; Murray 2004: 3). Besides brochureware features such as a candidate biography, DeanforAmerica.com linked Blog for America and Meetup (analyzed below), making both sites part of the DFA web network. In analyzing deanforamerica.com alone, Garrett writes:

The collapsing persistent navigation is a good way to handle the large number of options available on the site. The design consistency breaks down in a few areas; some pages, such as the weblog and Project Commons, lack the persistent navigation altogether. Color and typography are largely consistent, though clutter in the right sidebar detracts from some pages. The contribution form provides a clear overview of the process, but the Join the Dean Campaign form is a little chaotic. [Garrett 2004: 9]

Garrett notes that: Deanforamerica.com’s pages consistently give users the opportunity to subscribe to the e-mail list, there is a flash-based calendar, the candidate biography is based on Dean’s record, issue positions are provided, new content is consistently added, and many ways to get more involved with the campaign are provided (p. 9). Dean’s website was listed by Garrett as a good example of the following general recommendations for website best practices:

- “Link to Spanish-language site prominently in persistent navigation” (p. 18)
- “Organize issues in no more than two levels of hierarchy” (p. 18)
- “Avoid using names of policy initiatives in navigation” (p. 18)
“Use short noun phrases like ‘Domestic Security,’ instead of verb phrases like ‘Protecting the Homeland,’ for titles and links to issue pages” (p. 18)

“Link issues pages to text or video of related speeches or public statements and the candidate’s record on this issue” (p. 18)

“Use a first-person voice on issue pages” (p. 18)

“Make campaign news the centerpiece of the home page” (p. 19)

“Link to a small number — three to five — of the most recent weblog posts on the home page” (p. 19)

“Provide a one-step process to sign up for the general newsletter on the home page” (p. 19)

“Link to campaign news and media coverage in the weblog” (p. 19)

“Require only an email address and zip code to subscribe to the general newsletter” (p. 19)

“Tool for supporters to write or call undecided voters” (p. 20)

“Highlight sections for [involved voters] in persistent navigation” (p. 20)

“Provide a small number of specific calls to action — e.g., write letters to Iowa, contribute, subscribe to newsletter — prominently on the home page” (p. 20)

“Show accepted methods of contribution — credit card, PayPal, mail or fax” (p. 20)

“Either keep the contribution form to a single page (Kerry) or indicate the steps involved on each page of the process. (Dean, Lieberman)” (p. 20)

“Provide concrete goals and hourly status updates for fundraising drives” (p. 20)

Overall, however, he rated deanforamerica.com as only “Satisfactory” (p. 3). Specific criticisms of Deanforamerica.com include:

“The video area seems to have technical difficulties” (p. 9)

“…users need some way to see just the next few days [of the flash calendar tool] without having to load the entire calendar” (p. 9)

“Speeches…are inconsistently date stamped” (p. 9)
“No centralized list of endorsements is available” (p. 9)

“Tools for finding local events and fellow supporters … could benefit from some design polish” (p. 9)

“most of these sidebars [on candidate websites, including Dean’s] don’t have an apparent strategy behind them—they seem to have become a dumping grounds for a wide array of site features” (p. 23)

What is the user history for Deanforamerica.com? Unlike the more interactive sites on DFA’s web community, Deanforamerica is not a website specifically for direct online user interaction, although it does provide links to such sites, and even reproduces the content of the most recent Blog for America entries, as noted above. It is more like a brochure and portal than a place of social interaction.

Clearly, intertextuality is one of Deanforamerica.com’s salient features. While the Dean campaign was initially reluctant to link to outside sites (Trippi 2004: 85-6), they later began freely linking to outside sites without vetting their content (Carpenter 2004: 19). Besides BFA Meetup, and other DFA webtools, DFA linked to many independent DFA sites, such as “Punks for Dean” (Carpenter 2004). These 700 independent DFA sites (Carpenter 2004: 22) would also link back to DeanforAmerica.com; pre-made banner graphics were provided for this task, as well as tools for the less technically-savvy to set up such sites in the first place (Looney 2004: 54).

Other liberal/progressive sites would link to, or at least mention, DFA’s web community as well; Matt Gross was instructed to start a question and answer thread on SmirkingChimp.com, for instance (Dunnan 2004: 31). In addition, recognizing that the boundaries between the online and offline worlds are blurred and porous (Fletcher 1999), we may also look to the offline references to DFA’s online community. Trippi notes that after Howard Dean witnessed the number of people that Meetup.com had assembled in March 2003, he no longer forgot to mention it in his speeches (2004: 98). The mainstream media started covering the DFA web community in mid-
2003 (as will be discussed in Chapter 9). Also, DFA members would direct people to DFA’s web community to avoid prolonged political discussions (Dunnan 2004: 49).

What communication/interaction among individuals was present? Again, Deanforamerica.com was more of a brochure and portal than a site of social interaction itself, although TAN theory tells us that we should consider technology and people as part of the same network of interaction. Viewed in this light, we might ask about the relationship that DFA members formed with Deanforamerica.com’s technology. Welch (2003) writes: “It is illustrative that 10% of the visitors the DeanforAmerica website go to the Photos section of the site, while 10% also go to the Action oriented sections of the site, and only 6% go to the Blog. This clearly indicates a desire to actually see this man” (p. 12).

One option that the Dean for America website offered visitors for establishing a relationship with the technology was setting deanforamerica.com as the user’s homepage (Sey and Castells 2004: 373). A person’s selection of a default homepage is one way that he or she can use online activity to redefine identity. Not everyone necessarily selects their default homepage for this reason, but it is a likely motivation for intentionally inserting a particular website’s information into one’s Web-browsing routine. A similar process to what I am proposing was found by Mahmood (2001), who did ethnographic research with Islamic women who did not come from devout families, but sought to live their lives more in accord with Islamic doctrine. Achieving piety “entailed the inculcation of entire dispositions through a simultaneous training of the body, emotions, and reason as sites of discipline until the religious virtues acquired the status of embodied habits” (p. 212). In her conversations with these women, she found that their actions such as being shy and wearing a veil made them feel hypocritical or untruthful at first, but then they came to the realization that their actions were intended to create an internal state rather than announce its existence. They are “the critical markers, as well as the ineluctable means by which one trains oneself to be pious.... at stake in this conceptualization of veiling as a
disciplined practice...is an entire conceptualization of the role of the body in the making of the self in which the outward behavior of the body constitutes both the potentiality, as well as the means, through which an interiority is realized” (p. 214). There are some similar findings for cyberspace, where someone's online activity serves as a script for remapping their identity. Turkle's (1995) research on MUDs discovered “slippages--places where persona and self merge, places where the multiple personae join to comprise what the individual thinks of as his or her authentic self” (p. 185-6). For example, one woman told her: “I was born in the South and I was taught that girls didn't speak up to disagree with men” (p. 221), but her experiences on MUDs “enabl[ed] her to reach a state of mind where she is better able to speak up for herself in her marriage” (p. 221). Might it be possible that other people—DFA members, in this case—have chosen a default homepage to achieve the “inculcation of entire dispositions through a simultaneous training of the body, emotions, and reason”? (Mahmood 2001: 212)?

Strategic Implications of Blog for America

Blog for America started as the Call to Action blog. While this original incarnation was described by Trippi as “the ugliest, messiest, unfriendliest site you’ve ever seen” (Trippi 2004: 89), Trippi also describes how when Blog for America was finally ready to replace it, “we came to the shocking realization that we’d all grown strangely attached to it. It had been there from the beginning, loyal and true, like that twenty-year-old gimpy, blind dog that you keep around even though you know the most humane thing would be to just put it down” (p. 89). This way of imagining the blog is significant from a CEM approach since “[o]ne of the goals of CEM must be to enable an individual to more closely probe the characteristics of the physical, virtual, and imagined” (Steve Fox 2004: 51, emphasis added). Blog for America, on the other hand, was imagined by Trippi as “the nerve center of the campaign” (p. 141). One commenter on BFA
wrote: “Anyway, this is a tea party. That's a good metaphor. Let's sip our tea and get along!” (Indy Steve 2006a).

Going back to Fox’s CEM-framework for virtual communities, we might start by asking: What technology enabled entrance to this virtual community? As pointed out in previous chapters, those on the wrong side of the digital divide would have a tough time being participants in BFA. For those on the right side of the digital divide, the computing technology used did not seem to make much of an impact on the use of BFA, although as pointed out in Chapter 5, some members access BFA at work with different computer hardware and software than they have at home, sometimes limiting what content they are able to access. At DFA headquarters in Burlington during the Dean for America period, Dean used Windows while his technical staff used Macintoshes (Limoncelli 2004). The software used for BFA included Blogger and Movable Type (Carpenter 2004: 12).

What was the “structure and form of the imagined community,” as created by HTML and image files, on BFA? Like most blogs, BFA was divided into three columns. The left column had links and calendars. This section, known as a blogroll, had 394 websites (Carpenter 2004: 19). The right column had the fund-raising bat during the Dean for America period. The center column contained the posts (Trippi 2004: 142), which comprised the virtual community’s history.

How can these daily postings be characterized? Because of the structure of the blog, there is no fundamental discontinuity between “the communication/interaction among individuals” and “the history of the users” (aspects 3 and 5); the most recent thread is the one where discussions take place, and the older threads instantly become an historical record. Like most blogs, posts and comments are separated, but only by a single click on the comments link for each post. Being an effective blogger is a skill that must be learned; Howard Dean’s first blog post sounded so stiff that some readers suspected it was a ghostwriter rather than Dean (Trippi 2004: 143). As discussed previously, DFA bloggers used a civic style of writing with distinct
voices. BFA readers came to know the different staff members from their posts. Trippi describes the daily postings on Blog for America as follows:

An average day in the Dean blogosphere reflected all the energy of the campaign. On Blog for America, Mat might write about a news story critical of the governor, and hundreds of people would post comments about it, everything from deeply researched rebuttals to “Hang in there!” to discomfortingly plausible conspiracy theories about the media, or responses from other candidates. Kate might weigh in from the road with pictures of the governor eating apple pie at a campaign event, and fifty people would post comments, everything from “Save me a slice!” to recipes for sour cream-raisin-green apple pie. People would randomly offer strategic advice, improvements on software and… poetry [Trippi 2004: 145]

Jett and Välikangas 2004 provide a similar description:

On this forum, public comments sometimes address the headline and topics posted by staff, but frequently the comments are two-way communications between visitors. Most visitors are supporters who use the site as a public commons. They share what they are doing to support their candidate and record their perspectives of the current political climate and events in the country. They also exchange information, including excerpts from articles published online plus links to their sources. Supporters also use the site to give immediate feedback to the campaign. [Jett and Välikangas 2004: 7]

BFA gave the campaign ideas which were actually used. Trippi said: “I can’t count the number of times we turned to the blog for help” (Trippi 2004: 146). Ideas implemented by headquarters from BFA include modifying Dean’s stump speech (Trippi 2004: 146) and the Cheney Challenge (p. 148), while idea like Dean Corps were organized independently on BFA (Trippi 2004: 148).
Stone notes: “When ideas, slogans, activities and events were put into action from people’s comments on the blog, Dean supporters knew that they had a very real part in the campaign” (Stone 2004: 174). BFA received new posts by staffers (and occasionally guest bloggers), as well as comments on these posts, very frequently during the Dean for America period (Carpenter 2004: 18, 22; Looney 2004: 54; Stone 2004: 174; Jett and Välikangas 2004: 8; Cornfield 2004: xiii; also see Figures 23, 37); this “constantly updated blog enables people to live the story as it dynamically unfolds, providing supporters with not only the latest information, but a means to feel connected to it” (Welch 2004: 11-12; also see Looney 2004: 54). In addition, “the official campaign dealt with the overflow of enquiries by encouraging people to visit the blog for answers from other users” (Sey and Castells 2004: 374), thus giving users the opportunity to speak for the campaign and free up the workload of DFA staff.

![Figure 37: Total Number of Posts on Blog for America](image)

March 2003 to January 2004 (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 8). Reprinted by permission.

Kerbel and Bloom (2005) have examined Blog for America’s communicative practices more systematically than the preceding accounts. They find that the discourse is “self-affirming
and self-confident” (p. 3). They categorize the blog posts as policy posts (issue discussions), process posts (campaign contest), media posts (campaign contest media coverage), and community posts (virtual community discussions). Many of these topics were similar to topics of mainstream media coverage, but differed in framing and intent (p. 4). “Blog for America postings are a portal to an entirely different world, where people feel engaged in politics and policy, are motivated to take action in the name of a political cause, and believe those actions will make a difference” (Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 5). Donating money came to be heavily imbued with cultural meaning and emotion:

Bloggers would post comments about how headquarters should “put up a bat,” begging the campaign to ask them for money. When the campaign responded—sometimes with a breathless post that “a bat is coming”—ordinary citizens would empty their pockets in an exhilarating quest to meet and exceed the goal. Giving money became a cathartic experience for bloggers who felt attached to the Dean campaign through their membership in the virtual community. Like a thermometer, the slugger’s bat turned red as fundraising amounts were posted on the blog, and as the red ink on the bat inched closer to the top, people would post tearful, emotional comments (sometimes echoed by the campaign staff) about how their collective efforts were going to restore responsible politics to America. Officials at every other campaign scratched their heads in wonder at the Deaniacs who demanded that headquarters ask for more of their money. [Kerbel and Bloom 2005: 14]

However, they also note that the membership peaked in August 2003 (p. 7), and “it may not be a coincidence that the Dean blog trended toward a more conventional form of politics at the same time that membership growth in the campaign had flattened out” (p. 15). Similarly, one blogger noted that: “At a certain point, I would place it at 2-3 months before Iowa, the grassroots began to
notice, and complain about, a notable resistance and non-responsiveness to any new inputs” (National 2004).

Blog for America has changed somewhat since the Dean for America period, however. Traffic has slowed considerably during the Democracy for America period (see Figures 34-36). Part of this is attributable to a decline in membership numbers overall; the greater focus on local elections may also have made Blog for America, with its national-level readership, less relevant. In addition, trolling continues to create a social atmosphere that many find unpleasant, as these comments on a BFA thread asking users to grade DFA reveal:

- “This is a public forum, and for it to become a brawl of malice and slander isn't worthy of any of us. Do we get angry, exercised, snarky? Yes, of course, but we are responsible for what we say, and on a public forum we also have responsibility for the level of civility of discourse.” [Pat in Colorado 2006]
- “Having a nice day?! DFA gets A's and B's from me, except for the blog. Until they moderate it and provide a civil environment for discussion, grade will not rise above a D. (….) It is NOT censorship to require members to post in a respectful way. Also, the problems with the blog should have been fixed by now (launching right before the election was not bright, IMO). We all can do that, with minor slips, can't we?” [Indy Steve 2006b]
- “Freedom doesn't mean doing or saying anything you want. It has limits, Fred. And all blogs need moderation to keep it from denigrating into harassment and name-calling and driving everyone away.” [Indy Steve 2006c]
- “BFA has the worst monitoring of any blogs I am on. Which is why a certain person here has been banned from all the others one but can still come here leaving the fecal matter.” [FiReFoX! 2006]

As described in Chapter 5, trolling during the Dean for America period was controlled through a combination of staff moderation and the creative responses of DFA members. With the reduction
in membership on BFA, however, the ratio of culturally-similar contributing members to trolls seems to have dropped to a level where troll comments are now a significant proportion of BFA’s comments.

In terms of intertextuality, BFA linked to many other sites, such as the aforementioned Blogroll links. Beyond that, Trippi describes how other progressive blogs like Daily Kos, Atrios, and Talking Points Memo were taken seriously; they “listened to their advice and had Governor Dean do e-mail interviews with them when they asked” (Trippi 2004: 146). In addition, BFA linked to Meetup.com, and together they formed the “nexus of the Dean for America community” (Jett and Välikangas 2004: 6). BFA and Meetup work together to enable mobilization and “instill a sense of ownership among supporters” (Sey and Castells 2004: 373-4).

Strategic Implications of Meetups

Zephyr Teachout said in an interview: “Joe Trippi said to me, ‘If you could just get 100,000 people on Meetup.com then we can win the election’” (McCullagh 2004). This statement is a reflection both of DFA’s belief that the Internet was a communication medium of change, and the aforementioned emphasis on quantitative results. It also explains why the 100,000th Dean Meetup member was brought in as a guest blogger on BFA (Trippi 2004: 142).

A news article on Meetup explains the basic process: “How are Meetup venues picked? Participants vote on where the local Meetup will be. The service offers three possible local spots, and then chapter members vote on the location they prefer. After voting closes, members get e-mail announcing the winning venue and reminding them to confirm their attendance or send their regrets” (Salisbury and Hanstad 2003). This process of choosing Meetup locations is problematic in certain ways for DFA. First, the way Meetup chooses which locations are available for voting is that interested businesses pay a fee to be listed (Shaw 2004; Tedeschi 2004), which limits a
group’s easily-available options. A disgruntled blogger (not a DFA member to my knowledge) provides a colorful example of this problem:

the "possible" venues offered by meetup.com *suck*.

c'mon, we live in san francisco, and our options are: a starbucks in novato? cafe cocomo (yeah, i'm not a huge salsa fan -- whattya going to do?)? FUCKING JACK IN THE BOX?

i thought venue voting would permit users to nominate a number of places and then decide among them -- at least, that's what one would assume from "we never force you to meet at a particular venue".

i guess there's always a catch.

i, for one, am now incredibly disappointed by what looked like a fun and workable website. [fishfucker 2002]

Second, DFA members have complained about the way the choice is made between the three listed Meetup venues:

Last, is anyone else running into this problem: voting for meetup venues is decided real late in the process. New people - or people who have never even attended - come in and vote for a place that the experienced, planning folks know to be inferior or even unworkable. I like the democratic nature of meetup.com, but when we hope to plan and host for an event that will have 200 people, we can't afford to have it go to a place that is, in reality too small, or doesn't have a helpful layout, or all the technology we need for everything we want to do. Any help? [Don 2003]

Third, “Meetup.com’s software does not handle geography well. Their functional areas are divided by zip code, with inevitable problems in areas where zip codes don’t match with political and geographical boundaries. Massachusetts has ongoing difficulties because Martha’s Vineyard
and Nantucket (offshore islands) are in the same Meetup area as Cape Cod (on the mainland), and hence they compete for votes for the same Meetup venues despite being inaccessible to one another” (William and Gordon 2004: 9). Fourth, Meetup decided when to split up a group, which created planning problems for some DFA groups:

I don't know whether I need guidance, advice or commiseration. In our LA group, we had been planning for a good large meeting at a non-commercial venue we had found, also a good opportunity for publicity.

First they split us into three groups, which almost made sense, and we were going to get together to be sure that each group was properly organized, and we were also sending out to all places the massage that we had a good quiet venue.

Today I sign on and find that we now have SIX venues. No chance of one large publicity-magnet meeting, and also a hell of a lot more work to supply and organize. Is this happenning everywhere (large groups like SF, NY, Boston, DC, Seattle, etc)? Should we just accept what the Lords of Meetup have handed us -- by popular demand, as they say? Have we been defeated by democracy or by MeetUps deals with bars around town? [Foote 2003]

Fifth, Meetup.com has not been responsive to DFA organizer’s requests for change:

Through the latter half of 2003 and into early 2004 I coordinated meetups in much of Massachusetts and helped a lot of our hosts get through the hurdles of using meetup.com. I spoke to meetup.com frequently, and interceded on behalf of meetup hosts who needed help. I and many other people made suggestions to meetup.com, both directly and through the meetup group at DfA (Michael Silberman, Alex, etc.), but they never implemented most of what we asked for, even some very simple things. I also advocated for DfA to abandon meetup.com
and set up a better meeting planning tool that they controlled, but I understood why they didn't want to do that in the heat of the campaign just as primaries were coming up. [Inbar 2004]

Sixth, one “big point of frustration for many organizers” was that Meetup only provided “access to a tool where you can email the list and ask people to contact you back” instead of “the ability to collect and use the real email addresses of their group members” (Liloia 2005).

The locations at which DFA Meetups are held have strategic implications. For instance, Starbucks has been a popular location, and some people have reported that Starbucks have harassed people about taking pictures in their store (Greenstein 2003; Doctorow 2003a, 2003b, 2003c), which could make it difficult to post photographs from the events on local group sites on Meetup.com or DFAlink.com. However, this policy has not been consistently applied; one blogger reports that a Starbucks employee took a picture of a DFA Meetup for them (Klau 2003).

In addition, some have reported that the venue affected their ability to fundraise:

A house party is a private location, in a person's home. Donations can be accepted there with the occupant's permission.

Meet Ups are a bit fuzzy because you may or may not have such permission from the venue owner. Some venues will not have a problem with you collecting donations for the campaign, selling items, or even giving things away. Other venues, restaurants, may tell you not to do any of those things. This was are problem at the last Minneapolis Meet Up.

Knowing our venues wishes, we approached the campaign about bringing campaign donation forms and passing them out. We also wanted to include envelopes and were willing to buy those and use a ink stamper to label them correctly. We knew we could not include postage due to FEC rules. We were told no. I hope that has changed. [Tempel 2003]
As a Meetup location, Starbucks influences the demographics of attendance. Coffee itself is a product imbued with cultural meanings which becomes strategically significant when a coffeehouse is the site of a DFA Meetup. While widely-available meanings attached to coffee include sociality (Sherry 1995: 361), distinct styles of coffee are targeted towards specific age and class demographics (Roseberry 1996). Similarly, according to a study of Starbucks, “The structures of common difference that emanate from Starbucks’ success correspond to the characteristics of third-places…. Third-places are public spaces that exist between the formality and seriousness of the work sphere and the privacy and familial intimacy of the domestic sphere. Third-places are conducive to informal conversations, forging casual friendships and they are spaces where patrons can imbibe a comforting sense of community, camaraderie, and social connection” (Thompson and Arsel n.d.: 11). However, the study also found: “participants who have middle class and upper middle class backgrounds find Starbucks’ upscale corporate ambiance to be a comfortable setting because they are fundamentally at home in this socio-cultural milieu” (p. 35). In addition, the price of coffee at places like Starbucks may help explain why DFA Meetups have tended to attract white and affluent members (Associated Press 2003b; Hamill 2003; Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a).

Noise can also affect Meetups. “A few weeks ago, I walked into a Dean Meetup only to turn around and walk right back out again. I wasn't interested in joining a group of elderly strangers shouting over a coffee shop jazz quartet” (Liloia 2003).

In addition, the politics of members may influence which businesses they prefer to visit. For instance, some members prefer locally-owned venues over places like Starbucks (e.g. Gross 2003, Comment 20; also see Thompson and Arsel n.d.: 23-7). Also, the idea of “buying blue”—that is, shopping at businesses who donate to Democrats rather than Republicans—has been brought up at least once at DFA meetings I attended. Starbucks, to continue with this example, not only fits with the conservative Backlash’s idea of the “latte libel” (Frank 2004: 16-17), but
also makes political donations exclusively to the Democratic Party (BuyBlue.org 2006) and has featured quotes on its cups by a roster of writers described as “overwhelmingly liberal” (Tapper 2007).

Strategic Implications of DFA Web Tools

In addition to DFA’s main website, Blog for America, and Meetup, DFA made use of a variety of other social software and web tools. These included: Deanlink, Deanspace, Get Local, HowardDean.tv, Project Deanlight, Yahoo! Groups, and e-mail listservs.

One pattern that emerges when we examine DFA’s use of these tools is that they typically emerge in response to an existing inadequacy in the TAN. Meetup’s problems (discussed above) gave rise to Get Local (Trippi 2004: 139) because Get Local offered a more flexible way of organizing events than Meetup offered. Yahoo! Groups were supported by the Dean campaign because they are user-friendly for the less technically-savvy (Rice 2004: 42). However, there were concerns about relying on commercial software like Yahoo! (Hynes 2005: 314), leading to the creation of Deanspace, which “was an attempt to create a complete web-based social networking toolkit” (Lebkowsky 2005: 296). Deanspace and Deanlink, DFA’s version of Friendster (Trippi 2004: 139), were both responses to the fragmented communications taking place among over 500 different listservs (Welch 2003: 14). Deanlink also aided in finding supporters for Get Local events (Rice 2004: 35). HowardDean.tv was an attempt by the campaign to create their own version of reality television (Trippi 2004: 109-110) to address people’s desire to see the candidate (Welch 2003: 12).

The software available to an organization is a limiting factor on what sort of TAN can be formed (e.g. Stein and Kenyon 2004: 74). DFA’s tech-savvy Internet team, as well as it’s often equally tech-savvy members, were able to bypass these limitations by developing their own software. Without this knowledge, Dean for America would likely have been confined to the
limitations of Meetup, Yahoo!, and listservs rather than developing Get Local, Deanlink, and Deanspace. Deanlink and Get Local were both internally programmed (Carpenter 2004: 12; Trippi 2004: 86). Get Local was also open source (Trippi 2004: 139), and benefited from feedback and programming from Blog for America members (p. 117). Deanspace was open source as well (Looney 2004: 55; Jett and Välikangas 2004: 6; Lebkowsky 2005; Rice 2004: 36-7; Hynes 2005), building upon Drupal (Lebkowsky 2005: 297, 306; Hynes 2005: 312-3, 318). HowardDean.tv was created “using cool technology from Waveexpress, a company [Joe Trippi] had once consulted with” (Trippi 2004: 109).

DFA-Link is a combination of many of these tools:

"Too many cooks."

The other way in which we had outgrown our blogging software was on the back-end. There were a lot of IT "cooks" working in the "stew" of technology that ran Dean for America. Lots of unimaginably talented programmers made cool tools for Dean supporters; however, not all of the tools could talk to one another (share data). Some tools duplicated existing systems and some of our wish list features were missing.

Democracy for America is a whole different kind of organization than Dean for America. It made sense that we shouldn't be using hand-me-down software tools that didn't quite fit. [Liloia 2005]

Meetup.com began charging more for their services, spurring DFA to encourage its members to switch over to DFA-Link. The switch did require effort from members:

There are many exciting developments since the 2004 election. We have moved away from the online organizing tool called "Meetup.com" and we are now organizing groups through DFA Link. This new tool --- free for DFA leaders --- will help us move away from Meetup.com and their new fee based system once
and for all. But it takes a little effort on our parts. We, as DFA leaders, need to go to DFA Link and set up our groups and events. We, as participants, we also need to go DFA Link to sign up with our respective groups and also unsubscribe from Meetup.com. (That is, if you ever want to stop getting those automated emails! :-)) [Ginny 2005]

DFA-Link allows members to create profiles (similar to Friendster and Deanlink), group webpages (similar to Yahoo! Groups and Deanspace), and find events (similar to Meetup and Get Local).

It is notable that DFA-Link, like all new software, requires users to learn how to use it. DFA-Link, with its wide array of options, can be especially bewildering for some members at first:

It took me the longest time to figure out what to do with DFA-Link once I was there. The basic idea: Use the search tool by entering your zip code and looking for groups, events, campaigns, or people. Once you find a group, event, or campaign that interests you, sign yourself up. Once you find a person, you can send them a message through DFA-Link without ever knowing their email address or sharing yours. [Garchik 2006]

Digital divide issues associated with age and computer skills come into play here. Pew Internet found that:

Wired seniors are less likely than internet users under the age of 65 to have tried a wide range of online activities, possibly because they are not in the market for as many types of information as younger users who might be doing schoolwork, trolling for dates, or scanning employment listings online. In addition, researchers at Fidelity Investments have identified "cautious clicking" as a behavior trait of many older internet users who may share a sense that one false
move on the Web could land them in unknown or unsafe territory. [Fox 2006: 2-3]

In addition, “Fully 94% of wired seniors have sent or received email. But fewer use instant messaging to keep in touch with friends and family – 28% of wired seniors have IM’d, compared to 39% of all Internet users” (Susannah Fox 2004: 5). These patterns also hold up in my fieldwork. The following is an excerpt from my interview with Helen, one of the oldest members at DFA-TB:

NP: Do you go to DFA Internet sites? If so, how often?
HV: I really do not because I am computer illiterate… So I have just learned how to use the computer a little bit, and I’m afraid to go to the next--next step… So I asked someone who could teach me a little bit more about… Because I would love to get on some of these big hot buzzes and things like that.
NP: Okay. So nobody has offered to teach you…
HV: No.
NP: Have you asked anybody to teach you…
HV: Sort of.
NP: Who have you asked?
HV: [Names another person.]
NP: Okay. And they haven’t really taken the time—
HV: They just don’t have the time to do it.
NP: Do you ever feel out of the loop because you don’t participate in… Internet [activities]?
HV: Sort of. But… my computer that I can use, I can only use from 9:00 to 4:30. Sometimes only until 4. So it’s very hard for people to [unintelligible] or schedule around 11 or 10.
NP: How do you feel out of the loop because you don’t participate in… Internet [activities]?

HV: Because I would like to voice my opinion on [unintelligible].

NP: Is it harder for you to find out about events? Or… get the background information on what’s going on?

HV: No, most of the people send me e-mails. I just don’t write them back.

NP: Okay, so you know how to use e-mail at least, right?

HV: I know how to… read them. I don’t know how to send them back.

NP: ….So you don’t go to say, Blog for America or DFA-Link?

HV: No.

In another incident, an older man at a DFA-TB meeting had printed out a message from his Yahoo! E-mail account, describing himself as “not computer literate,” and adding: “I’m doing good just to download this.” In addition, one older woman at DFA-TB’s January 2007 meeting told the group that her political new year’s resolution is to learn how to become a blogger.

Internet-using older Americans are already accustomed to using e-mail, and may find learning to use DFA-Link to be a more difficult transition to make than younger Americans who are more familiar with similar services like blogs, Myspace, and Facebook.

In addition, those who were willing to give DFA-Link a try ran often ran into problems with it. Quite likely because DFA-Link was unveiled sooner than it was expected to be in response to Meetup’s policy changes, (Liloia 2005), DFA-Link had some bugs at first. Members of DFA-TB described various problems when attempting to use DFA-Link, causing them to continue using their Yahoo! Group instead of making the switch; this decision, in turn, lead to the conflict with the Internet-only Florida DFA group.
**Discussion/Conclusion**

DFA’s core strategic focus is influencing election outcomes as a means of achieving progressive policy reforms. There are many means used towards this end, but influencing election outcomes is the desired outcome of a diverse array of activities that includes everything from putting up blue ribbons for “visibility” to phoning for endorsed candidates. This focus on elections has ramifications. Piven and Cloward (1979) found that “ordinarily, defiance is first expressed in the voting booth simply because, whether defiant or not, people have been socialized within a political culture that defines voting as the mechanism through which political change can and should properly occur” (p. 15). “Accordingly, one of the first signs of popular discontent in the contemporary United States is usually a sharp shift in traditional voting patterns” (p. 16). Politicians detecting these signs of popular discontent may attempt to “placate the defecting groups, usually at this stage with conciliatory pronouncements” (p. 17). The intended result of this is to reduce discontent to non-threatening levels and channel protest back into the electoral process. Similarly, Pratt (1998) concludes a collection of essays on Latin American social movements by pointing out that with only a single exception, “party politics remain part of the problem, not the solution” (p. 433). Given all this, assuming that DFA is effective as an organization at all, by placing such a strong emphasis on elections, are they changing the political system significantly, or just changing the names and faces in political offices? Piven and Cloward’s review of the unemployed workers’ movement, the industrial workers’ movement, the civil rights movement, and the welfare rights movement led them to conclude that “it is usually when unrest among the lower classes breaks out of the confines of electoral procedures that the poor may have some influence” (p. 15). Similarly, sociologist William Gamson compared 53 randomly-selected American SMOs between the years 1800 and 1945, and found that disruptive tactics were more likely to achieve success (Lofland 1996: 290-4). Might we then conclude that the focus on influencing elections is a fundamental flaw in DFA’s strategy?
Assuming that DFA would be better off using more direct protest may be a hasty conclusion. It was mentioned in this chapter that DC for Democracy had briefly considered attempting to disrupt the function of Washington DC’s city government, but this idea was quickly abandoned because of the negative media reaction they anticipated. Was this a realistic assessment or a missed opportunity? Piven and Cloward note that “[i]f the disruptive group has little political leverage in its own right… it will either be ignored or repressed…. Repression is more likely to be employed when central institutions are affected” (1979: 27). Given that DC is where the federal government is also located, repression seems likely. They also write: “unless insurgent groups are virtually of outcast status, permitting leaders of the regime to mobilize popular hatred against them, politically unstable conditions make the use of force risky, since the reactions of other aroused groups cannot be safely predicted” (p. 29). Sociologist Jack Goldstone reexamined Gamson’s aforementioned study, and found that the successful groups were not evenly distributed over the range of years Gamson looked at, but instead clustered into six periods of “broad crises” (Lofland 1996: 301). There was no broad crisis equivalent to the Great Depression during the time that DC for Democracy considered this idea, there was no “politically unstable conditions [to] make the use of force risky” (Piven and Cloward 1979: 27), and disrupting the operation of the capitol was not likely to be ignored.

Would DC for Democracy be “virtually of outcast status” (p. 27) in this situation, or would they have public support? Mainstream media would play a central role in how this sort of disruptive protest would be framed to the public, or even whether the public would hear about it at all. DeLuca and Peeples (2002) write: “Citizens who want to appear on the public screen, who want to act on the stage of participatory democracy, face three major conditions that both constrain and enable their actions: 1) private ownership/monopoly of the public screen, 2) Infotainment conventions that filter what counts as news, and 3) the need to communicate in the discourse of images” (2002: 136). Looking at the events that unfolding during the 1999 WTO
protest compared, they find that while some participants fumed about how a violent few sullied the message of a peaceful majority, “the symbolic violence generated extensive media coverage and an airing of the issues” (p. 140). They note that there was a World Bank/International Monetary Fund meeting that was also protested but without violence, resulting in little media coverage (p. 140). We may therefore conclude that the media outcome of DC for Democracy’s disruptive protest, had they gone through with it, would likely have depended on whether their protest event fit the three major conditions for it be considered newsworthy. As was the case with the WTO protest, images of police violence would likely satisfy these conditions, although non-violent means might also be possible in creating media-friendly images with “infotainment” value (Haugerud 2004).

In either case, members would have to be willing to risk repression by participating in such an event, and it is doubtful that many DFA members would be willing to do this. DFA’s mostly affluent membership would likely put their careers at risk, for starters; those with families who depend on their income would be putting even more at risk. Furthermore, there is no sense of obligation to the group to compel participation in every project that comes along; whenever a project is announced to DFA members, the announcement is like a sales pitch for the time and effort of members, and their participation is decided on an individual basis. If the project to disrupt the DC government had not been aborted in its nascence stage, it seems likely that few (if any) members would have chosen to attend, and the attempt would have been vetoed by the rest of the group through a lack of interest. Barbara from DFA-TB has said on more than one occasion that the key to having a successful DFA event is that the event “should be 80% fun, 20% work.” Chances are that any event that carries a strong risk of arrest and state repression would fall below this “80% fun” threshold that are the norm among DFA members. Demographically and culturally, DFA and disruptive/violent protest are a mismatch.
One strategic aspect of DFA discussed in this chapter was the quantitative focus in tension with more humanistic views of strategy. Joe Trippi may have been unusual for thinking that a certain number of Meetup members would result in victory, but only for his unusual emphasis on Internet technologies, not for his desire for quantitative results. Dean for America was a presidential campaign, and as such, it was shaped by cultural-historical trajectory of American elections. Elections are a part of the states’ “political arithmetic”—that is, statistical knowledge about a population where “[i]ndividuals become an object of concern to the extent they are relevant to the state’s strength” (Kanaaneh 2002: 24). Census practices create reified social entities, ignoring ambiguities through classification into exclusive categories (p. 25-6). These practices then exert definitional power over citizens, classifying them into an income brackets, a race/ethnicity, a gender, and as residents of a country, a state, a county, a congressional district, and so on. Thus, it is not unusual for political analysts to talk about Californian voters, black voters, or women voters as though they were (at least relatively) monolithic entities, and for groups to form along these lines of demarcation (e.g. the League of Women Voters of California). Even those who criticize the categories are still usually constrained by them; Paley (2001) notes that a Chilean health SMO would have liked to use theater to explain their community problems to officials, but only quantitative results would be seen as “professional” and thus taken seriously. As we will see in the next chapter, it was only when DFA proved itself financially that mainstream media began considering Howard Dean a serious presidential contender. Elections may be described as a series of political arithmetic practices designed to confer legitimacy upon the transfer of political positions to particular individuals (or legitimacy for the same individual keeping his or her political position). Joe Trippi’s campaign strategy was an extension of the cultural logic of elections; numbers of Dean for America members came to mean numbers of volunteers working to create more supporters. Supporters were given numbers from one to five, based on their perceived probability of
supporting Dean. The pressure to obtain as many “ones” as possible led to dissatisfaction from members, and a temptation to misinterpret the level of support as “ones” to please campaign staff and ones’ own need for believing that one’s efforts matter. The political arithmetic of elections themselves seems to inspire political arithmetic in the attempts to influence them. Yet at the same time, we see within DFA certain signs of striving against the dehumanizing feeling of this focus on political arithmetic. Dean’s speaking style and way of presenting himself evoked for many a sense of honesty, rather than slickness. Trippi described Blog for America entries being more akin to personal letters than form letters. DFA Meetups typically begin with introductions and, as shown in Chapter 5, longtime members often think of each other as friends. This tension between influencing a system based in political arithmetic, yet preventing the disillusionment and emotional fatigue that comes with a strong complete focus on working to influence elections explains why Barbara from DFA-TB claimed that DFA events should be “should be 80% fun, 20% work.”
Reactions may be defined as “the space- and time-proximate ways in which outsiders take action with regard to an SMO” (Lofland 1996: 305). In other words, effects (which are covered in the next chapter) may be differentiated from reactions by how close in space and time the “strategies of outsiders” (p. 306) are in relation to the SMO in question. The reactions of SMOs to their own strategic efforts are differentiated by Lofland from the strategic reactions of outsiders to the SMO (p. 306); the latter is the subject of this chapter.

“A reaction is a reactor’s pattern of action to an SMO. A reactor, on the other hand is some extra-SMO person, organization, category of actors, or other ‘grouping’ doing the reacting” (Lofland 1996: 306-7). Drawing upon the SMO literature, Lofland suggests some general categories of reactors that researchers may use: ruling elites, dissident elites, media, similar SMOs, Counter-SMOs, and the public (p. 307).36

Given that researchers have limited time and resources, focusing on either reactions or reactors is often done to the exclusion of the other (Lofland 1996: 308-9). Researchers may also wish to focus on “the interaction between an SMO and its several reactors” (Lofland 1996: 309). I am using this interaction-focused approach, as it fits best with the cultural politics approach. This is because cultural politics “are… enacted when movements intervene in policy debates, attempt to resignify dominant cultural interpretations of politics, or challenge prevailing political practices” (Alvarez et. al 1998: 6). Cultural politics are “enactive and relational” (p. 7), and therefore focusing on the interaction between an SMO and reactors is the best approach to
understanding “the process enacted when sets of social actors shaped by, and embodying, different cultural meanings and practices come into conflict with each other” (p. 7). While which “[m]arginal sites, such as local communities and social movements, [can] come to be seen as emergent centers of innovation and alternative worlds” (Escobar 1998: 54), DFA’s enactment of cultural politics meant that they were but a single site for framing candidates and events. However, “[a]s they circulate through the network, truths are transformed and re-inscribed into other knowledge-power constellations. They are alternatively resisted, subverted, or recreated to serve other ends” (Escobar 1998: 56). Given this, examining the role of the Internet means looking DFA’s interactions with different social entities, and the ways that cultural politics were enacted in these interactions. This includes both cultural meanings about the Internet (i.e. what role it should play in electoral politics) and cultural meanings in which truths circulated through DFA’s social networks were in conflict with those circulated by elites, mainstream media institutions, and others.

**Ruling and Dissident Elites**

The generic category of ruling elites includes “policymaking and associated strata targeted by an SMO in an effort to achieve or resist social change or otherwise to promote an insurgent reality” (Lofland 1996: 307). The generic category of dissident elites includes “elite strata who doubt the wisdom of the actions of the ruling elites regarding an SMO and who support the SMO in some fashion” (Lofland 1996: 307).

Dean’s campaign was not viewed favorably by many in the Democratic Party leadership. “After twenty years of watering down the Democrats’ message to play to the center, the party leadership was scared to death of a Dean candidacy. Senator Evan Bayh, chairman of the Democratic Leadership Council released a statement that read: ‘It is our belief that the Democratic Party has an important choice to make. Do we want to vent or do we want to
govern?—The administration is being run by the far right. The Democratic Party is in danger of being taken over by the far left” (Trippi 2004: 175-6). Similarly, Al From, chief executive officer of the DLC, said: “I personally believe it will be hard for any Democrat who didn’t support the war, particularly someone not strong on the military, to win the White House in 2004” (Margolis 2003: 19). Privately, the DLC was calling DFA an “aberration” (Dunnan 2004: 174-5) and regularly attacked Dean on their mailing list (p. 301). The Dean campaign also grew to expect a lack of support from the DNC, and the relationship between them was filled with hostility and suspicion (p. 176). In addition, Bill Clinton said: “Howard Dean… forfeited his right to run for president when he signed the civil unions bill. He can’t win” (Dean 2004a: 114).

“For at least the last three decades, the talk and style of Washington have been dominated by a permanent corps of successful political operatives, lobbyists and journalists” (Margolis 2003: 13). Even though the media will be treated separately below, this connection should be noted. Weatherford (1993) wrote: “In 1990 when the editors of Spy magazine decided to make a diagram of the American political universe, they did not place the President of the United States at the center, nor the leaders of Congress, nor the richest person in the country, nor the strongest lobbyists. They selected radio and television reporter Cokie Roberts who serves as a political reporter for ABC News as well as for National Public Radio” (p. 36). Cokie Roberts social connections included being the daughter of a congresswoman and a House Majority Leader, and marrying the senior editor of U.S. News & World Report (p. 36). In recent years, Tony Snow has left Fox News for a job at the Bush Whitehouse. These are but a few of the connections between the ruling elite and the media. Dean’s criticism of the media and prominent Democrats did not endear them to him (Margolis 2003: 13-14). Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle was angry about Howard Dean’s speech to the DNC, for instance, and Dean wondered if he should called to apologize; Joe Trippi responded: “Governor…if you do that, you might as well put him on your
speed dial. Because you’re going to be calling him every day of this campaign” (Trippi 2004: 120).

Al Gore endorsed Howard Dean, which lead to other Democrats going on the offensive (Trippi 2004: 176; Dean 2004a: 132). Senator Bill Bradley, Gore’s opponent in the 2000 primaries, also endorsed Dean, which “made it look as if the Democratic establishment was unifying behind this former Vermont governor, who had been a nonentity in the nation’s mind just a year earlier” (Dunnan 2004: 19). On the other hand, some have claimed that the endorsement of establishment elites undermines Dean’s message of challenging the establishment (Dunnan 2004: 79, 173). Gore and Bradley may have been dissident elites through their actions, but perceived by members as ruling elites.

**Other Democratic Candidate’s Campaigns**

Trippi describes some of the earliest reactions to Howard Dean by the other candidates as shock:

We talked in the car and I gave [Dean] a few ideas, how to move some things around, change the structure [of his speeches] a little bit to differentiate himself from Gephardt. That same day, at the Linn County event, Dean got up first, and this time he blew the roof off the place. Gephardt and Kerry were both at this event, the first time all three had been in the same place at the same time. I looked over at Gephardt and Kerry, and it was just what I’d thought. They both had *Oh shit* looks on their faces. I knew what Gephardt was thinking: Where was that guy this morning?

In this environment where your patriotism could be questioned just for disagreeing, here was the former governor of a tiny state saying: *Wait a minute.* *We don’t have the evidence to go to war.* I watched as Gephardt and Kerry at
there slack jawed, their mouths open. The looks on their faces said, *He’s out of his mind*. [Trippi 2004: 63]

The other candidates initially questioned Dean’s organizing methods as well as his message:

“Dean staffers laugh that some of the rival campaigns originally dismissed the Meetups as barroom scenes from *Star Wars*. But Trippi realized its potential for political organizing” (Dillon 2003: 195).

As to be expected in a primary, as Dean showed himself to be a serious contender, the other Democratic presidential campaigns attacked the Dean campaign (Trippi 2004: 176). By the end of summer in 2003, the Dean campaign had more than $10 million, which Trippi used to run TV ads in early primary states, pressing his rivals to reconsider the timing of their TV ads, and setting the pace for them more generally (Dillon 2003: 191-2; Dunnan 2004: 14). John Kerry’s campaign was one of the first to go on the offensive against Dean (see below), but it was the Al Gore endorsement that really made the other candidates attack Dean (Trippi 2004: 176; Limoncelli 2004). In the words of Reverend Jess Jackson, “the other eight bludgeoned [Dean] into submission” (Dunnan 2004: 14; also see p. 84, 94, 96-8, 120, 189-90; Trippi 2004: 181-4).

Dean also describes the attacks on his campaign by other Democrats as unusually vicious, starting out as harsh rhetoric and culminating in a secret Political Action Committee that spent $1 million in attack ads (Dean 2004a: 23-4). The attacks back and forth between the Dean and Gephardt campaigns were especially damaging (Dunnan 2004: 17-18, 94, 96-8, 172; Trippi 2004: 181-4).

The other candidates also began imitating elements of the Dean campaign once DFA had paved the way for them (see Figure 38). John Kerry copied the Dean campaign’s use of the fundraising bat by creating a fundraising “hammer” (Trippi 2004: 189). Other Democratic candidates have adopted more combative rhetoric because of Dean (Russell 2003). In addition, Dean’s “decision to forgo public campaign financing and avoid spending caps has forced Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry to do the same” (Smith 2003). Also, other campaigns have also
adopted more Internet 1.0 (Meikle 2002) strategies in response to Dean; “Dean's self-evident success compelled the competing presidential campaigns of Sen. John Kerry, retired Gen. Wesley Clark, Sen. John Edwards and others, to develop similar Internet tools to attract thousands of volunteers, raise millions of dollars and initiate comparable Internet-based efforts” (Cudahy and Gill 2004). For instance, Clark’s campaign website began emulating many aspects of Dean’s website, such as a youth-oriented webpage and a downloadable flier promoting meetups (Von Drehle 2004). This emulation has sometimes backfired on them, however: “The Internet has been a mixed blessing for Clark; when his campaign made some early stumbles, some supporters expressed their frustration in online rants that were picked up by news media” (Weiss 2003b). In addition, the other candidates adopted Meetup groups, but there was a price to pay for being late: “When candidates embrace Meetup early, it can draw a significant number of attendees into the campaign… Meetup still draws late adopting candidates’ attendees into the campaign, but at a lower level of return… and on a slower turn around time” (Williams and Gordon 2004: 5). There also seems to have been a price to pay for being late to the blogs: “With few comments [on the blogs of other Democratic candidates], vibrant discussions seldom took place and it was not uncommon to find someone on the Dean Blog announcing, ‘I’m a Kerry supporter, but I’m hanging out here because nothing ever happens on the Kerry Blog’” (Iozzi 2004: 20).
Figure 38: Comparing Democrats Web Activities
A Pew study finds only slight differences between Dean supporters’ online activities and other Democrats by December 2003/January 2004. Constructed by author from Pew Internet and American Life Project data (Pew Internet 2004: 9).

After Dean withdrew from the race, he supported John Kerry. When he announced this on Blog For America, however, he acknowledged that many DFA members would not like it:

I don't want to give any of you a heart attack, but I plan to formally endorse John Kerry on Thursday, along with all 34 Congress people who endorsed me during the campaign.

One of the goals of the campaign was to send George Bush back to Texas, and the only person with a chance of doing that is John Kerry. I have spoken with him on numerous occasions. He is committed to universal health care, he has an excellent environmental record, and for that and many other reasons, he is a far better choice for president than the current resident of the
White House who apparently (as revealed on Sixty Minutes over the weekend) ignored warnings of the potential of a terrorist attack before 9/11 in addition to costing us 2.3 million jobs!

In any case, I encourage you to support Sen. Kerry, but if you are not ready to do so, I hope you'll put lots of energy into the other two goals: reforming the Democratic Party to nurture its recent backbone transplant, and making the grassroots stronger to get progressive voices on every school board, county commission, City Council, etc. in the country. Many thanks for all you do!!

[Dean 2004d]

One commenter’s reacted to this post by saying: “~gasp~ ack. sputter... We still love ya Gov. and we will trust your judgement.” According to a Pew study, this comment was representative of DFA’s reaction overall: “After Dean’s campaign ended, his activist supporters overwhelmingly – if somewhat unenthusiastically – turned to John Kerry” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 16). Their opinion of the Kerry campaign seemed to remain lukewarm throughout the 2004 election; at one DFA meeting I attended, someone said that Kerry only focused on the areas that already had a preponderance of Democrats, and ended up insulting the local Democrats. The local Democrats wanted to have stickers and yard signs to give out, and the Kerry people told them that they “don’t deal in chum.” However, many DFA members also mentioned that they still remain on the John Kerry mailing list for the information and opportunities for activism it provides.

Media

The generic category of media includes “the means of mass communication, including television, newspapers, magazines, books, videotapes” (Lofland 1996: 307). The Internet is also
a medium of mass communication, but it has some decidedly different characteristics. Here we are concerned with the mainstream media.

Mainstream news media, as previously mentioned, often had a rather negative reaction to DFA (Center for Media and Public Affairs 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d; Dean 2004a: 13, 14, 22; also see Figures 4, 39-41). Some of this is perhaps partially the fault of Howard Dean himself; Dean admits having a negative view of the media (Dean 2004a: 14, 125; Dunnan 2004: 112)\(^3\), and one reporter said: “He was a good newsmaker. But, from the very beginning, there were various dynamics working that created a kind of formal press conference interaction, rather than a more conversational one. We were at a constant struggle to get more access to him and to have more conversational interactions, to be able to watch him do more things, to be able to get more press availability” (Dunnan 2004: 25; also see p. 29). Reporter Walter Shapiro said: “Howard Dean was never warm and cuddly. To some extent, particularly in the early going, the press cuts more slack for candidates who are warm and cuddly, who are accessible, and who care about them” (Dunnan 2004: 26). Part of this lack of “warmth” and “cuddliness” includes Howard Dean’s general tendency to react harshly to questions he dislikes (Dunnan 2004: 26-7; Margolis 2003: 25). Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia’s Center for Politics, says: “I talk with a lot of reporters, and they don’t like Dean. I can’t tell you… how many of them of them said to me, ‘I can’t stand him, he’s really an asshole, he’s nasty to me, he growled at my cameraman” (Dunnan 2004: 113). Given this tense relationship, we can then perhaps understand why “[w]hen Dean left his Milwaukee headquarters in mid-April [2004], he received a T-shirt from the reporters who had been with his campaign for the entire ride. The shirt mockingly read ‘Establishment Media: We have the Power’” (Duannan 2004: 270).
Figure 39: CMPA's Study of Late-Night Television Humor
Constructed by author from CMPA data (Center for Media and Public Affairs 2004d).

Dean and Electable/Electability
In the NY Times, WA Post, LA Times, and USA Today

Figure 40: Electability Theme in Press Coverage
The press and Dean’s supporters often had a rocky relationship as well. Reporter Jodi Wilgoren had a blog called “The Wilgoren Watch” created in response to her perceived negative reporting on Dean (Dunnan 2004: 126; also see p. 306). In the last chapter, the Dean Defense Forces (DDF) were discussed as a strategy. The media reaction to the DDF was not necessarily favorable:

When Defense Forces members see a media report they consider inaccurate, they bombard the reporter or producer with critical e-mails. The technique hasn’t endeared itself to those on the receiving end.

After Dotty Lynch, CBS’s senior political editor, criticized Dean’s foreign policy in her Web column, Political Points, she found herself under fire from the Defense Forces.

“They were all rather insulting: ‘Why don’t you do your research?’” Lynch told Howard Kurtz, the media columnist for the Washington Post. “When anything’s orchestrated, you sort of smell a rat.” [Dillon 2003: 202]
Similarly, Dunnan wrote: “I spoke with a New York Times political reporter who felt the Deaniac response to his coverage of a particular event bordered on harassment. As a result, he would not allow his name to be used for attribution” (Dunnan 2004: 121). In addition, “The New York Post ran a column on January 5 [2004] by a retired Army officer in which he compared Dean to Hitler, Goebbels, Lenin, Trotsky and Brezhnev…. The reason for this fusillade? Dean and his legions of darkness ‘restrict the free speech of others’ by attacking their critics on the Internet” (Dunnan 2004: 123).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, members would use letters to the editor to promote Dean or respond to criticism. Newspapers sometimes responded by publishing the letter much later than the criticism it addressed (Dunnan 2004: 122), or, especially in the case of national newspapers, not publish the letter at all (p. 123).

Dunnan describes purposely manipulating the media: “One of my regular gambits to draw people in would be to divest myself of Dean paraphernalia and post as an undecided voter. This usually had an effect similar to throwing a steamship round of beef into a pool of ravenous sharks” (Dunnan 2004: 120).

Trippi writes: “From January to June 1 [2003] I couldn’t get the media to cover what was happening in our campaign” (2004: 111; also see Figure 42). The Kerry campaign issued a press release attacking Howard Dean for a statement he made, however, which changed this (Trippi 2004: 111; also see Figure 43). Trippi describes back-and-forth press releases between himself and Chris Lehane from the Kerry campaign, finally ending with Trippi making a joke: “In a response to Chris Lehane’s response to Joe Trippi’s response to Chris Lehane’s response to Joe Trippi’s response to Chris Lehane’s statement, Joe Trippi says, ‘Who the hell is Chris Lehane?’” (Trippi 2004: 112). Trippi goes on to say: “The press laughed and Lehane (thank God) didn’t respond” (p. 112).
Figure 42: Press Coverage of Howard Dean by Month
 Constructed by author from Lexis-Nexis search data (performed 12/3/06).

Figure 43: Dean Press Coverage by Month in Major Newspapers
During the end of June 2003, Howard Dean did an interview with Tim Russert. According to Trippi, Russert’s interview with prospective candidates is considered so important that politicians refer to it as “the Russert Primary” (Trippi 2004: 126). Howard Dean’s son had been arrested for breaking into a country club and stealing beer, and Dean responded putting campaigning on hold and flying home to deal with the issue (p. 126). While Trippi respected his decision on a personal level, he said it also meant that it left them with two unpalatable options: either withdraw from the “Russert Primary” or go ahead with it and letting it go badly (p. 126-7). The campaign chose the latter, and Dean was lambasted by the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* for his debate performance (p. 127; Dillon 2003: 190). Trippi expected this to end the Dean for America campaign initially, but was amazed to find the online response to be very supportive rather than demoralized (Trippi 2004: 127-8; Dillon 2003: 190). This may have led to what George Stephanopoulos observed: “for a long time [Dean] felt that having the contentious relationship [with the media] was working for him politically. They believed that whenever he had an aggressive interview, his supporters would watch it and give more money” (Dunnan 2004: 117).

Part of this support included record-fundraising (Trippi 2004: 128-134). “In all, we had 59,000 supporters at that point, contributing an average of $112, a groundswell of average Americans that even the media couldn’t ignore anymore. They swarmed our headquarters as the fund-raising story got out. Some reporters accused us of sandbagging—posting a low goal so that it looked amazing when we topped it. The only problem with that theory was this: It was amazing” (p. 134). According to Trippi, it was not until the fundraising that DFA attracted serious media attention because unlike measures like Meetup.com attendance figures and blog links, money was “a concept they could grasp” (p. 136; also see Welch 2003: 15-16). It would seem that DFA expanded the repertoire of concepts the press could grasp, however; by the summer of 2003, reporters were finally beginning to view the Internet’s role in election politics as
newsworthy (Trippi 2004: 149-50; also see Figure 44). Reporter Jodi Wilgoren said: “I think the press covering Dean really loved covering him, because it was such an interesting story. The campaign was the most interesting around, and it was more interesting than most in history, and we loved that” (Dunnan 2004: 25). Trippi wrote that by October 2003, “We were ahead in fundraising, ahead in national polls, ahead in Iowa and New Hampshire. The media was practically handing us the nomination” (Trippi 2004: 171).

The media coverage of the Dean campaign also questioned the wisdom of Dean’s nomination, however. Margolis describes a reporter from BBC who, in July 2003, asked: “Can a liberal former governor of Vermont, a supporter of gay marriage, threaten to capture the Democratic nomination?” (Margolis 2003: 6). Dean’s “adversaries [were] the Democratic Party… establishment, and the aggressive but sometimes petty national political press corps. The obstacles they have placed in his path are the perception of him as ‘liberal’ and therefore likely to be crushed by Bush… and the suggestion that he ‘flip-flops,’ changes his position on some issues” (p. 13; also see Figures 40 & 41). When Howard Dean came to be considered the frontrunner, the press corps saw it as their obligation to “put him through the ringer that every
future nominee goes through” (Trippi 2004: 178, italics removed). And, “All along, the media had blithely referred to some odd strand of conventional wisdom that Howard Dean was too intense to be president. In two feature stories over the summer, the Washington Post had described him as: abrasive, flinty, cranky, arrogant, disrespectful, yelling, hollering, fiery, red-faced, hotheaded, testy, short-fused, angry, worked up, and fired up. Those last weeks before the Iowa Caucuses, the media was on the lookout for that one story: the testy insurgent not yet ready to lead, cracking under the pressure” (Trippi 2004: 178; also see Dean 2004a: 125-6). Dunnan notes that “By December [2003], the media coverage of Dean had seemed to shift from premature anointment to increasingly critical” (Dunnan 2004: 119). On December 9, 2003, Ted Koppel moderated a candidate debate in which he asked the candidates to raise their hands if they thought Howard Dean had a chance of beating George W. Bush (Dunnan 2004: 69). This sort of negative press began to damage the campaign: “Intense media scrutiny, far before the first votes would be cast, had started tarnishing a once-golden image. Poll numbers would stay level or begin to drop off in December. The rate at which people signed on to Dean’s Internet Express was declining” (Dunnan 2004: 43). In early 2004, Dean began refusing to talk to the press because of negative coverage; in response, reporters refused to board his campaign bus until Dean agreed to talk to them (Dunnan 2004: 112). Also, Dean’s advisors threatened to expel the producer of ABC News from his campaign plane if ABC ran a story about a Vermont state trooper who Dean once praised and had allegedly abused his spouse (Dunnan 2004: 112-3).

In January 2004, the infamous “scream” happened. In Chapter 3, it was noted that one of the changes in media coverage of elections during the twentieth century was a shift in focus away from policy issues and towards the candidate and their personality, which helps explains the historical context of the “scream.” Afterwards, “[a]ll the cable news channels repeated the ‘scream’ every hour on the hour for two straight days. Ostensibly objective news anchors and
reporters called it ‘bizarre,’ ‘scary,’ and ‘rabid’” (Trippi 2004: 187-8; also see Dean 2004a: 142-4). Trippi goes on to say:

After killing us in this way, it was laughable to read in newspapers and see on television the severe pronouncements about the way we lost Iowa. Caught off guard by Howard Dean’s rise, the traditional media seemed to take great pleasure in his campaign’s freefall (which, in turned, helped speed its descent.) The conventional wisdom among many reporters was that Dean for America was an Internet bubble bursting before the campaign. That it could translate its online success into real-world votes was just another over-hyped technology start-up.

[Trippi 2004: 188]

Dean would become the butt of many jokes on television in the immediate aftermath (see Figure 39). Most Dean supporters blamed the mainstream media for Dean’s downfall (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 15), while most of the public blamed Dean himself (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2004a: 10).

By the time that Dean for America had transitioned to Democracy for America in March 2004, media coverage of Howard Dean and DFA dropped off considerably (Figures 42 & 45), and bloggers mentioned Dean far less frequently as well (Figure 46). Without a presidential race to be involved in, it became rare for major papers to deem Democracy for America newsworthy. *Time* magazine selected a list of 100 “influentials” in April 2004, and the “complete absence of Howard Dean’s name anywhere in the same issue, in a magazine which had featured him on the cover so prominently—and so early—seemed to signify that Time had assigned Dean an unmarked political grave” (Dunnan 2004: 259). DFA did receive some national attention for endorsing Ned Lamont over Joseph Lieberman, although it paled in comparison to the attention they received in January 2004.
Figure 45: DFA Press Coverage by Month
Constructed by author from Lexis-Nexis search data (performed 12/3/06).

Figure 46: Blogosphere Coverage of Political Figures
Similar SMOs

The generic category of similar SMOs includes “SMOs in the same or different social movement whose beliefs and actions create the presumption of possible mutual support, aid, alliance, or coalition in one or more ways” (Lofland 1996: 307). Being similar can lead to conflict (Lofland 1996: 327-8), especially for similar SMOs that are in competition for the same limited resources (p. 378). However, cultural conflicts between similar SMOs can also occur without these sorts of conflicts over resources.

MoveOn.org started in response to the issue of impeaching Bill Clinton, claiming that Clinton should be censured and then the nation should move on. On June 24-25, 2003, they held an online primary in which Howard Dean won: “MoveOn sent an email to all the members in its database asking them to participate in an online, non-binding version of the Democratic primary. The primary attracted 317,647 voters and garnered a great deal of media attention” (Looney 2004: 53). Joe Trippi asked DFA members on Blog for America to register at Meetup to participate in the vote, and one comment in response suggests there may have been some cultural politics enacted by these two similar SMOs: “I sincerely wish that the Dean Campaign will not alienate other MoveOn members by presenting a picture of a ‘hostile take over’ of a distinguished movement for the purpose of stuffing the ballot box. I have heard some of these comments already from other MoveOn members that are bit more left leaning than us Deanheads” (Shue 2003).

Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity (2004) wrote: “Some of Dean’s opponents complained that MoveOn.org dispatched one of its top staffers to Dean headquarters in the weeks prior to the primary, but that information was lost in the headlines that Dean had won the group’s
“Early on, we had gotten some guidance from MoveOn.org, a pioneer in using the Net to raise money and awareness for political causes…. MoveOn didn’t support the Dean campaign, offering its help to all nine of the Democratic Party contenders. But we were the only ones who accepted the offer. And so Zack Exley from MoveOn came over to show us what had worked for them” (Trippi 2004: 117).

There was also a “scandal” involving Markos Moulitsas Zúniga from Daily Kos, Jerome Armstrong from MyDD.com, and Zephyr Teachout from DFA. Teachout had written in a defunct blog that Zúniga and Armstrong had been paid as consultants “largely in order to ensure that they said positive things about Dean” (Armstrong and Zúniga 2006: 115). Trippi and Gross both refuted this claim. However, conservative columnist Armstrong Williams had recently been paid $240,000 to promote Bush’s “No Child Left Behind,” and conservative media outlets were portraying the two as morally equivalent (2006: 115-6). “What was a real scandal of Bush and the Republicans using taxpayer money for propaganda was turned within one day into a story about how ‘everybody does it’” (2006: 117).

Democracy for America is also considered an ally of The Media Consortium. The Media Consortium is an alliance of liberal/progressive media outlets including The Nation, LinkTV, MotherJones, and Air America, which seek to promote progressive issues in the larger media landscape (Clark and Van Slyke 2006b). In their chart of “The Emerging Progressive Media Network” (see Figure 47), Democracy for America is classified as “Newsmakers: Policymakers and Supporting Organizations.” The role of Newsmakers, according to the chart, is: “Message shapers work to frame arguments and articulate progressive values. Media liaisons and PR professionals connect experts, activists and pundits with a wider audience” (Clark and Van Slyke 2006a). Sharing this category with DFA are the following organizations: Act Blue, Center for Policy Alternatives Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Progressive Caucus, Democratic
National Committee, Emily's List, Progressive Democrats of America, Progressive Majority, Young Democrats of America, and Progressive States Network.

Figure 47: Progressive Media Network
Democracy for America fits in this chart as “Newsmakers: Policymakers and Supporting Organizations” (Clark and Van Slyke 2006a). Reprinted by permission.

Viewing these connections more broadly, it appears that the dominant two-party system in the United States is structuring the network of alliances between political organizations like DFA:

Whatever these [527] groups accomplished, they did not undermine the role of political parties. Party leaders encouraged their formation, longtime party operatives composed their staffs, partisan interest groups lent them assistance and partisan donors contributed their funds. The 527 groups generally pursued strategies compatible with party goals, whether America Coming Together’s
mobilization of Democratic-leaning voters or the Swift Boat Vet’s criticism of John Kerry’s Vietnam record. In the case of the Swift Boat Vets, they spread their message, to a great extent, through the “new partisan press,” e.g. Fox News, talk radio, conservative bloggers. The Swift Boat Vets were able to shape public opinion even when the mainstream media were ignoring them. The 527 groups were not competing with the parties; they were nodes within the broader party networks. [Skinner 2005: 1]

In his study of political demonstrations in Ireland and Boston, Santino found that “the protesters on both sides—left and right—share the same repertoire of public symbols and actions; that is, they draw upon a shared style” (Santino 1999: 515). Similarly, given that conservatives have long established a conservative media network allied with the Republican Party (Skinner 2005: 5; Alterman 2003), the aforementioned Emerging Progressive Media Network may represent a shared style between the two party networks.

Counter-SMOs (CSMOs)

The generic category of CSMOs includes “citizen forces mobilized expressly to counter a particular SMO or movement more broadly” (Lofland 1996: 307).

Political Action Committees attacked Dean for America (Trippi 2004: 176-7). The Club for Growth, for instance, put up the infamous “left-wing freak show” television ad (Trippi 2004: 175-6). In addition, “Mysterious political action committees like Americans for Jobs, Health Care and Progressive Values appeared at the last minute, attacking us with ads that had Dean in bed with the NRA, Newt Gingrich, and George Bush” (Trippi 2004: 176-7).

Viewing conservatives as a CSMO against liberalism/progressivism broadly, we can include DFA being derogatorily called “the Howard Dean Show” by conservative bloggers
(Danger 2005), and non-DFA Democrats crashing a DFA meeting to stack their vote against a candidate local DFA members were planning to support (Derby 2005).

**Public Reactions**

The generic category of the public includes “the mass of the spectator public whose positive or negative opinions are often objects of contest between SMOs and other interaction patterns” (Lofland 1996: 307). Figure 5 was constructing using multiple national polls from PollingReport.com. It suggests that in early 2003, the public had no strong opinion or no knowledge of Howard Dean. A Pew report from January 2003 supports this: “Just one-in-four Americans are familiar enough with Howard Dean to express an opinion about the former Vermont governor, and views are split among those who did (13% favorable, 12% unfavorable)” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2003a). As the year progressed, the number who had no knowledge or no strong opinion of Dean dropped (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2004b: 13), and both positive and negative opinions of him both grew. In December 2003, public opinion of Dean became more favorable. It dropped in January 2004, and then rose again in February 2004. For comparison, American Research Group did candidate preference polls in New Hampshire (see Figures 48 & 49), which showed noticeable spikes for Dean in March 2003, September 2003, and December 2003, and a sharp drop around January 21-23, 2004. These numbers seem to correspond with the rise of DFA Meetups, the increase in media coverage of Dean, Al Gore’s endorsement of Dean, and the infamous “scream” speech. Another Pew poll (see Figure 50) conducted from November to December 2003 found that Dean’s support in Iowa and New Hampshire was above the national average, while his support in South Carolina was below the national average. This Pew study also found that “Dean tends to run stronger among those who place a greater priority on defeating Bush than on nominating a candidate who agrees with them on the issues” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press
2003b: 2). This seems to support Shirky’s (2005) claim that early polling support for Dean may have reflected a desire for “anybody but Bush” and Dean’s visibility in the media rather than actual support for his issue positions, personality, or social movement organization.

Figure 48: NH Democratic Candidate Preferences
New Hampshire Democratic Presidential Preference Polls

Figure 49: NH Democratic Candidate Preferences
These polls are suggestive and necessary for looking at culture on a state and national level for reasons described in Chapter 2, but they are limited. Assuming their methodology was sound and produced representative results, these results tell us exactly when Americans had favorable or unfavorable opinions of Howard Dean, but they do not tell us which Americans (e.g.
race/ethnicity, gender, class, religion, etc.) held these opinions, nor do they tell us exactly what the opinion was they chose to label as “favorable,” “unfavorable,” and so on. Figure 51 provides us with some categories from a Pew study which, while still operating in broad categories that are no substitute for ethnography, are still more culturally nuanced than the aforementioned opinion polls.

Figure 51: Opinions of Dean by Pew's Political Typology
The most negative reactions (considering all four categories) to Howard Dean by far are the Enterprisers. Their conservative, free market-oriented beliefs were described in Chapter 4. Enterprisers are mostly white, male, affluent, over the age of 30, and watch Fox News.

The second most negative reaction comes from the Social Conservatives. They are: “Predominantly white (91%), female (58%) and the oldest of all groups (average age is 52; 47% are 50 or older); nearly half live in the South. Most (53%) attend church weekly; 43% are white evangelical Protestants (double the national average of 21%)” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005c: 54). Their defining values are:

- Conservative on social issues ranging from gay marriage to abortion. Support an assertive foreign policy and oppose government aid for the needy, believing people need to make it on their own. Strongly worried about impact of immigrants on American society. More middle-of-the-road on economic and domestic policies, expressing some skepticism about business power and profits, and some support for government regulation to protect the environment. While not significantly better-off than the rest of the nation, most express strong feelings of financial satisfaction and security. [p. 54]

Social Conservatives also commonly watch Fox News.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Liberals were the most supportive of Howard Dean. These people are: “Predominantly white (83%), most highly educated group (49% have a college degree or more), and youngest group after Bystanders. Least religious group in typology: 43% report they seldom or never attend religious services; nearly a quarter (22%) are seculars. More than one-third never married (36%). Largest group residing in urban areas (42%) and in the western half the country (34%). Wealthiest Democratic group (41% earn at least $75,000)” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005c: 58).
The Conservative Democrat group had the second most positive views of Dean, although it should be noted that “Liberals are the only group in which a majority (60%) expresses a favorable opinion of Dean” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005c: 30), so it is a somewhat distant second. Pew describes this group as follows: “Religious orientation and conservative views set this group apart from other Democratic-leaning groups on many social and political issues. Conservative Democrats' views are moderate with respect to key policy issues such as foreign policy, regulation of the environment and the role of government in providing a social safety net. Their neutrality on assistance to the poor is linked, at least in part, to their belief in personal responsibility” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005c: 59).

Demographically, this group is: “Older women and blacks make up a sizeable proportion of this group (27% and 30%, respectively). Somewhat less educated and poorer than the nation overall. Allegiance to the Democratic party is quite strong (51% describe themselves as ‘strong’ Democrats) but fully 85% describe themselves as either conservative or moderate ideologically” (p. 59).

The other five groups, Disadvantaged Democrats, Bystanders, Disaffecteds, Upbeats, and Pro-Government Conservatives, tend to hold opinions somewhere between these two extremes. Pew gives the following basic descriptions and demographics for these groups:

- Pro-Government Conservatives stand out for their strong religious faith and conservative views on many moral issues. They also express broad support for a social safety net, which sets them apart from other GOP groups. Pro-Government Conservatives are skeptical about the effectiveness of the marketplace, favoring government regulation to protect the public interest and government assistance for the needy. They supported George W. Bush by roughly five-to-one. [….]Predominately female (62%) and relatively young; highest percentage of minority members of any Republican-leaning group (10% black, 12% Hispanic). Most (59%) have no more than a high school diploma. Poorer than other
Republican groups; nearly half (49%) have household incomes of less than $30,000 (about on par with Disadvantaged Democrats). Nearly half (47%) are parents of children living at home; 42% live in the South. [Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005c: 55]

- Upbeats express positive views about the economy, government and society. Satisfied with their own financial situation and the direction the nation is heading, these voters support George W. Bush's leadership in economic matters more than on moral or foreign policy issues. Combining highly favorable views of government with equally positive views of business and the marketplace, Upbeats believe that success is in people's own hands, and that businesses make a positive contribution to society. This group also has a very favorable view of immigrants. […] Relatively young (26% are under 30) and well-educated, Upbeats are among the wealthiest typology groups (39% have household incomes of $75,000 or more). The highest proportion of Catholics (30%) and white mainline Protestants (28%) of all groups, although fewer than half (46%) attend church weekly. Mostly white (87%), suburban, and married, they are evenly split between men and women. [Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005c: 56]

- Disaffecteds are deeply cynical about government and unsatisfied with both their own economic situation and the overall state of the nation. Under heavy financial pressure personally, this group is deeply concerned about immigration and environmental policies, particularly to the extent that they affect jobs. Alienated from politics, Disaffecteds have little interest in keeping up with news about politics and government, and few participated in the last election. […] Less educated (70% have attended no college, compared with 49% nationwide) and predominantly male (57%). While a majority (60%) leans Republican, three-in-ten are strict independents, triple the national rate. Disaffecteds live in
all parts of the country, though somewhat more are from rural and suburban areas than urban. [Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005c: 57]

- [Bystanders] choose not to participate in or pay attention to politics, or are not eligible to do so (non-citizens). […] Young (39% are under age 30, average age is 37). Lowest education (24% have not finished high school). Less religious than any group other than Liberals (26% attend church weekly). Largely concentrated in the South and West, relatively few in the East and Midwest. One-in-five are Hispanic. [Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005c: 61]

- Least financially secure of all the groups, [Disadvantaged Democrats] are very anti-business, and strong supporters of government efforts to help the needy. Minorities account for a significant proportion of this group; nearly a third (32%) are black, roughly the same proportion as among Conservative Democrats. Levels of disapproval of George W. Bush job performance (91%) and candidate choice in 2004 (82% for Kerry) are comparable to those among Liberals. […] Low average incomes (32% below $20,000 in household income); most (77%) often can't make ends meet. Six-in-ten are female. Three-in-ten (32%) are black and 14% are Hispanic. Not very well educated, 67% have at most a high-school degree. Nearly half (47%) are parents of children living at home. [Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005c: 60]

Of these groups, excluding Bystanders due to their political apathy, and confining ourselves to just favorability towards Howard Dean rather than all four categories of responses (p. 30), the order from most to least is: Disadvantaged Democrats (32%), Upbeats (27%), Disaffecteds (19%), and then Pro-Government Conservatives (13%).

Now we have a better idea of who found Howard Dean appealing and who did not, but we still do not know exactly why. Dean was perceived by the public as liberal (see Figure 52), which suggests that those who also consider themselves liberal would support him, although this
is just scratching the surface. We might make a more educated guess based on Dean’s political views and the political views of these 9 categories. Table 4 compares statements made by Dean in his well-known “What I Want to Know” speech with the political views of the 9 categories identified by Pew. From this, we might, for example, speculate that comments like “I don’t want to listen to the fundamentalist preachers anymore!” (Dean 2003c) hurt his standing with Conservative Democrats, only 18% of which held unfavorable views of the Christian conservative movement. However, keep in mind that another Pew study found low levels of awareness about some basic facts about dean (Figure 53), so we cannot assume that opinions of Howard Dean were arrived at through a careful consideration of all his issue-positions. While it would be better to examine the actual meaning-making processes used if possible, unfortunately, examining this in a thorough, systematic way is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, I would like to highlight just a few of the many ways that Howard Dean has been interpreted to show the diversity of these meaning-making processes. These excerpts come from a Google Blog search:

- Howard Dean is a smart man saying things the Republicans didn't say. Democrats are decent people preparing to do positive things for their constituents, including those that voted against them, that Republicans wouldn't do….. The Republicans, of course, denounced everything Dr. Dean said by returning to rhetoric and fearmongering. "WAR ON TERROR, WAR ON TERROR!" Jeezuus H. Keeriiiste! I am sick to fuckin' death of hearing that shit you LYING sons and daughters of bitches! [bu$meriKa 2006]

- Here is the video of DNC Chairman Howard Dean explaining why he won’t debate RNC Chairman Ken Mehlman....We all know that liberals are chickens. Heck, they can’t even stay the course in Iraq. [McCain 2006]
• James Carville is a total wanker- he hates Dean and his "people powered" politics. He is part of the political elite and doesn't like people outside of the beltway thinking that they have a role. [Paida 2006]

• Howard Dean is the chairman of the Democratic National Committee. While not suffering from self-inflicted aneurisysms regarding the Iowa Caucus, Dean is slandering Republican politicians. Aside from being a Communist, and an unshowered Vermontean hippy-king, all Howard Dean has done since being nominated to the Chair of the DNC has been to sling unsubstantiated shit-patties at the Republican Party and its politicians. Though Dean defends the innocence of Osama Bin Laden he repeatedly declares the guilt of Karl Rove, and despite the recent admonition of Rove, Dean has continued to do so. [Murray 2006]

• Sometimes really older men turn me on, a lot. Like Howard Dean is mean-looking and so hot, I just want him to lay me over his lap and have him spank me and then fuck me hard. [Group Hug n.d.]

To give an example outside of the blogosphere, Howard Dean spoke at the business college at Whittemore School in early 2003, and according to one attendant, he spoke in a way that seemed arrogant and out of touch with their discipline (Dunnan 2004: 26-7). As should be abundantly clear from these examples, the meaning-making that individuals engage in can stray far beyond what is captured in the constrained limits of expression allowed in opinion polls. I include Table 4 not to reify these categories and dismiss multivocality, but because it takes us a step closer to multivocality than opinion polls. Chapter 2 could serve as a guideline to anyone wishing to expand on our knowledge of the public’s reactions to Dean.
Figure 52: Dean perceived as Liberal

Figure 53: Awareness of Dean Campaign Events
A study finds low levels of political awareness about Dean. Constructed by author from Pew Internet and American Life Project data (Pew Internet 2004: 5).
Table 4: Comparison of Dean’s political views
Comparing political views expressed in one of Howard Dean’s most notable speeches with the views of Pew’s political typology groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Typology Group</th>
<th>Favorable view of Dean</th>
<th>War in Iraq was the wrong decision</th>
<th>Favor Gay Marriage</th>
<th>Unfavorable Views of the Christian Conservative Movement</th>
<th>Favor Gov’t Health Insurance for All, Even if Taxes Increase</th>
<th>Higher Priority – Reducing the Deficit over Cutting Taxes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberals</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Democrats</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantaged Democrats</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upheats</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaffecteds</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Government Conservatives</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Conservatives</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprisers</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relevant quote from Howard Dean (March 15, 2003)

“As Paul Wellstone said-- as Sheila Kuehl said when she endorsed me-- I am Howard Dean, and I’m here to represent the Democratic wing of the Democratic Party.”

“What I want to know is what in the world so many Democrats are doing supporting the President's unilateral intervention in Iraq.”

“Three years ago next month I signed a bill into law called the Civil Unions bill, which gives gay and lesbian Vermonters the same rights I have: visitations for their significant other in the hospital, inheritance rights, and insurance rights. Vermont clearly is a place where every American is equal in the eyes of the law.”

“I don't want to listen to the fundamentalist preachers anymore!”

“What I want to know is why the Democrats in Congress aren't standing up for us, joining every other industrialized country on the face of the Earth in providing health insurance for every man, woman and child in America.”

“What I want to know is what in the world so many Democrats are doing supporting tax cuts, which have bankrupted this country and given us the largest deficit in the history of the United States?”

Sources: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2005c: 30, 49, 35, 39, 40, 41); Dean 2003c

Because of the caucus system, one segment of the public’s reaction to Dean bears special consideration, however, as it largely determined the course that DFA took. Iowans may have
reacted negatively to Dean (Dunnan 2004: 101), setting in motion the events that led to the transition to Democracy for America. Dunnan quotes a *Washington Post* article which claims some Iowans “feel that the Deaniacs, Dean’s campaign workers, were too insular, inexperienced, and inward-looking to be persuasive in the complex Iowa caucus system, and to them, foreign Iowa culture… (T)he blogs of a number of ordinary Iowa and New Hampshire voters …. said clearly they were annoyed and turned-off by overly-aggressive Dean supporters” (Dunnan 2004: 131). Matt Stoller, a member of the Draft Clark movement and producer of a blogging radio show, “blames Dean’s loss in Iowa on obnoxious supporters wearing signature orange Dean hats” (Singel 2004).

The public’s reaction to Howard Dean and DFA on the Internet have varied. The most negative forms of responses are arguably hackers and trolls, which were discussed in Chapter 5. Dean for America was attacked by hackers, which they were particularly vulnerable to, given that a large proportion of their funding that came from online donations (Trippi 2004: 137). However, when they were finally attacked, they had already used their technical expertise to make preparations to minimize the damage: “Our site was down for three minutes. Nicco immediately switched us over to our backup server and we hardly missed a beat” (p. 138). The Dean campaign also had to deal with trolls. For instance, “[o]ne guy would cut and paste the words Dean Sucks, and then drop 400 pages of this shit on the blog, Dean Sucks over and over. It would go on for pages, a long string of Dean Sucks, so that no one else could post” (Trippi 2004: 147). The campaign responded by removing the troll entries, and the members would respond in creative ways like donating whenever a troll posts (p. 147; Carpenter 2004). However, we should we should keep these sorts of negative responses in perspective:

Um, well, in fact, we did have to do a lot of damage control to a certain extent.

We wanted everyone who was …doing something positive for the campaign to be heard, but we also wanted to make sure that the doors were slightly barred, so
that people who were just--just saboteurs weren't actually getting on. Um, one of the things we did eventually in the campaign was to--On the blog, we would--There were trolls. There were people who would post completely random stuff onto the blog. And we tried everything. We tried banning IPs. And then one time we had a mass--fairly coordinated--not a fairly coordinated attack, but I would assume a script kiddy or something--a kid with a script or something--um, where the person who was launching the attack rotating IPs and changing his--his or her information that was being placed on the blog, so we couldn't really get at it at that point. And at that point, we ended up instituting comment registration for the blog. Um, but for most the time that we were running the campaign, we didn't have to take drastic actions to be able to keep people away. This campaign was about inviting people in, and people seemed to respect that, and people seemed to--seemed to understand what we were doing, and not screw with us for the sake of screwing with us most of the time. [Carpenter 2004, emphasis added]

More positive reactions include supporters of the other candidates coming to Blog for America to have discussions, as mentioned above, and making a financial contribution to DFA as an endorsement of their Internet usage, as mentioned in Chapter 7.

Looking at other blogs, we can see that the Dean “Scream” resulted in a spike of activity within the blogosphere around February 1, 2003 (see Figure 54). Adamic and Glance (2005) studied the blogging activities of liberals and conservatives, and included the number of blog mentions of Howard Dean. He does not include his numeric data in the chart reproduced in Figure 54, but from doing some calculations based on the number of pixels in each category, I estimate that Howard Dean received 95 mentions by liberal blogs and 131 mentions by conservative blogs from August 29, 2004 to November 15, 2004. Adamic and Glance also provides an explanation for why conservative blogs mentioned Howard Dean more than liberal
blogs: “These statistics indicate that our A-list political bloggers, like mainstream journalists (and like most of us) support their positions by criticizing those of the political figures they dislike” (Adamic and Glance 2005: 12). From December 2005 to December 2006, Democracy for America received blog mentions in the tens (see Figure 55), while Howard Dean received blog mentions in the hundreds during that same period (see Figure 56).

Figure 54: “Blogosphere” Posting Volume Chart
(Sifry 2005). Notice the “Dean Scream” incident resulted in a surge of activity. Reprinted by permission.
Figure 55: DFA Blogosphere Mentions
from December 2005 to December 2006 (Technorati.com, accessed 12/7/06). Reprinted by permission.

Figure 56: Howard Dean Blogosphere Mentions
From December 2005 to December 2006 (Technorati.com, accessed 12/7/06). Reprinted by permission.
Family

The Dean for America campaign has been described as “quixotic,” “preposterous,” and “the silliest thing I’ve ever heard” by none other than Howard Dean’s own mother (Trippi 2004: 75). “Dean also remains close to his brother William, a businessman who converted from Republican to Democrat in May 2003 to support his brother’s campaign” (Margolis 2003b: 214). Of course, Howard Dean’s other brother, Jim Dean, went on to lead DFA after Howard Dean became DNC chairman.

Howard Dean’s wife Judy “wanted almost no part of this running for president business. She was a serious, well-respected physician and I admired the fact that Judy didn’t feel the need to play the doting first-lady part just because everyone else said she should” (Trippi 2004: 158; also see Gram 2003: 182; Dunnan 2004: 144). While the spouse of a candidate can be politically useful in the media, Howard Dean did not want his campaign to interfere with the lives of his family members (p. 158-9). “The ironic (and sad) thing was that here was the most loving, real family I’d ever seen in politics—behaving the way people should behave—and the press wanted to know what was wrong with them. Reporters were so used to candidates’ Stepford families that packaged, posed campaign domesticity that they missed the real thing when it was right in front of them” (p. 159; also see Dunnan 2004: 125). Dean supporters responded to this kind of reporting on Dean’s wife in their characteristic fashion: “The [New York] Times coverage of Judith Steinberg brought a backlash substantial enough that it published six letters to the editor objecting to the spotlight on her” (Dunnan 2004: 125).

Corporate Reactions

As pointed out in Chapter 1, the state need not be the target of SMOs, especially under Neoliberal policies where the state cedes responsibilities to private industry.
William Finkel, the Outreach Manager at Meetup.com, describes how the relationship with DFA started:

“In early 2003, I launched topics for Dean, Edwards, and Kerry. I had been looking for topics that would appeal to people and I noticed that all three of them had online representation through blogs.

“Dean’s was a little bit more vibrant, but all of them had people getting on board. So I started the topics, and I had reached out to the blogs, and reached out to the campaigns. Dean supporters snatched it right up, through a weblog called myduediligence. I had been trying to reach Trippi, and the person who ran that blog talked with Trippi on a fairly regular basis, and he puts us in touch.”

[Dunnan 2004: 221-2]

Trippi elaborates:

I had come across the fledgling Meetup by accident, when I was trolling around Internet web sites and blogs. One night, months earlier, I had visited a blog called MyDD.com and read a posting by a guy named Jerome Armstrong, who was commenting on the early presidential campaign season and specifically, an idiotic quote he’d read from some know-it-all political hack: me.

I fired back, “Hey Jerome. It’s Trippi…” and defended myself. Pretty soon I was reading Jerome’s blog regularly, and occasionally commenting on my own stupidity. Then, in January, right before I went up to Burlington, Jerome wrote in his blog about a web site called Meetup.com where, he said, some Howard Dean supporters were using the Internet to get together in a handful of cities. [Trippi 2004: 83]

Trippi then visited Meetup.com, and found 432 registered supporters—not a large number, but more than the other Democratic candidates who seemed at the time to be in a much better
position to win in the primaries. Trippi put a link to Meetup.com on Dean’s website despite the initial reluctance of some in the campaign, and then number of supporters shot up to 2,700 (Trippi 2004: 84-7).

Meetup.com was forced to react to DFA’s unexpected success. Trippi writes:

The Meetup guys were dying.

The idea behind Scott Heiferman’s and Matt Meeker’s web site was beautiful in its simplicity: Gather people interested in some topic—say Irish Setters—schedule a meeting time—say, the second Thursday of every month—and then find venues in the cities with enough people for a meeting. If there were twenty people, maybe a Starbucks would work; fifty people might bump it up to a TGI Friday’s.

They had developed a system based on human nature and prior experience to tell them that if forty vampires signed up for the February meetup, maybe thirty-two would really show, and so they had gotten very good at matching up the group to the perfect place.

And then along came the Dean campaign.

We hadn’t really paid attention to the January and February Meetups, but as the March events approached, we could feel the stirrings of this… thing all over the campaign and we were doing everything we could to feed it. With the Meetup link on our web site, all of a sudden in the days before the event the numbers were increasing by the hour.

Based on the February numbers and the people signing up, the Meetup guys had booked Starbucks coffee houses in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York for the Dean for America meeting. It was rapidly becoming clear that Starbucks wasn’t big enough to hold the fifty or sixty people who were saying
they were interested in getting together to talk about the candidacy of Howard
Dean.

So a week before the March 5, Meetup, the people in Meetup.com’s New
York offices were scrambling to find bigger quarters. As soon as they found
someplace big enough to hold fifty or sixty people, suddenly the number would
jump to one hundred. And they’d be scrambling again. In New York, by
Monday morning, two days before the event, three hundred people had signed
up. By now they had gone through four venues in New York, from a twenty-
person place to a fifty-person place, to a hundred-person place, to a two-hundred-
fifty-person place. And now they were wondering if they needed a five-hundred-
person place. [Trippi 2004: 95-6]

Trippi sent out an e-mail to supporters the day before the March 5, 2003 Meetup in New York
saying that Howard Dean would try to attend (Trippi 2004: 97). This likely contributed not only
to attendance at that particular Meetup event, but also gave legitimacy to Meetup as a tool for
grassroots organizing. Around the country that day, there were 79 DFA Meetups in 14 cities
(Dodson and Hammersley 2003).

The problem of finding appropriate venues grew worse as DFA’s membership using
Meetup.com grew to 100,000 (Trippi 2004: 138-9); “as the numbers got bigger, most of the
Meetup venues that could handle three or four hundred people turned out to be nightclubs. Yet
many of our supporters were nineteen or twenty and couldn’t get into bars. (And did we really
want our strongest supports getting all liquored up, anyway?” (p. 139). DFA responded by
developing a set of software tools called GetLocal, which were designed to help Dean supporters
get around the limitations of Meetup.com in organizing events (p. 139).

In talking about Howard Dean’s campaign, Meetup’s Vice President of Communication
both acknowledges that there was “a symbiotic relationship” with Howard Dean’s campaign that

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“help put [Meetup] on the map,” while downplaying DFA’s contribution saying “we’ll take it,” suggesting reluctance or reservations. He further stated that: “We’ll keep an eye on… [the political scene], but we know that our bread and butter groups are groups like the stay-at-home moms, the knitters, -the Elvis fans” (Jeff Daniels 2004). It seems odd that DFA could put Meetup on the map, yet not be considered a “bread and butter group,” especially in light of many reports of non-political Meetups failing to achieve a critical mass of participation to be viable (e.g. Daniel 2004; Hefler 2004). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Meetup was also not responsive to DFA member’s suggestions to improve the service to better fit their needs. The final demonstration of disrespect towards DFA came when Meetup eventually changed their business model, resulting in DFA switching to DFA-Link prematurely (also discussed in the previous chapter).

It has been established that media coverage of Dean for America has become negative before the infamous scream incident. Factors affecting media coverage were listed in Chapter 2; the previously-described hostile relationship between DFA and reporters, Dean’s “gaffes,” and media worker’s views of themselves as obligated to challenge the frontrunner are perhaps sufficient causes to explain this negativity. However, it has also been suggested that Howard Dean’s critique of media consolidation may have caused media corporations to undermine him to protect their interests (Draper 2005). More evidence is needed to claim this with certainty. Available evidence suggests that News Corp. was the most likely to be guilty of this, given that Fox News played the “scream” more than other media outlets (Dunnan 2004: 102), and Fox News has a history of using company memos for partisan political purposes (Greenwald 2004).

Reactions to DFA after it became Democracy for America include: an invitation by the band Foo Fighters to accompany them on tour (Schou 2005), partnering with Wake-Up Wal-Mart and being accused of “Maliciously targeting one company” by Wal-Mart for it (Anderson 2005),
Discussion/Conclusions

While it may seem unlikely given how vastly different the contexts are, I see similarities between the reactions of the ruling elites in this study of DFA and my previous study of Falun Gong (Porter 2003). Both started out with a small number of supporters, but grew rapidly in part due to a message that resonated with them (p. 77). Both pursued the growth of their organization in a way that offended the larger organization they were a part of (p. 80-81). Both had passionate members who organized protests of negative media coverage (p. 84). Both were able to defy expectations about the life course of their organization by ruling elites by creating a decentralized form of organization utilizing the Internet (p. 78-80, 209, 219-221). Both were able to gain the support of dissident elites (p. 342). And, the response to the offending success of the upstart organization by ruling elites included a media smear campaign (p. 68-70). In sociological terms, we might then say that utilization of the Internet can be a political opportunity structure, especially in cases where elites have cultural expectations about the allocation of structural power (Yelvington 1995: 16) which do not take into account the organizational possibilities afforded by the Internet. Sey and Castells write: “It is not unusual for old models of political communication to linger while politicians get used to, and find effective ways to work with, emerging methods” (2004: 368). In the case of Falun Gong, Chinese laws about organizational activities were well established, but laws concerning the Internet had emerged piecemeal (Porter 2003: 183), allowing Falun Gong to thrive through word-of-mouth, Internet, and the Chinese book publishing market, even after losing the legal sanction of China’s official qigong organization. Dean for America was not taken seriously by other presidential contenders or the mainstream media until Internet successes translated into financial success, which then produced a flurry of activity by secret Political Action Committees, rival candidates, and the DLC to make sure that Dean’s campaign failed.
As pointed out in Chapter 1, an anthropological approach to social movements recognizes that “today’s movements are seen not only as political struggles in pursuit of socio-economic goals but also, and essentially, as cultural struggles” (Escobar 1992: 397). DFA challenged many of the cultural practice of the media: their treatment of Internet successes as unnewsworthy, their definition of events like the “Russert Primary” as making or breaking a candidate, and their expectation that potential first ladies must put their lives on hold to play a certain role. Yet DFA could not prevent their own image from being challenged with the idea of an angry, “too liberal” candidate who was “unelectable” and unfit to govern. Most social encounters with Howard Dean were mediated by the mainstream media: Dean appeared in newspapers, radio and television to most citizens rather than on DFA websites or at speech events. The framing of Dean for America was therefore heavily influenced by media practices. A variety of social entities, well aware of the media’s power, use strategies tailored to media practices; waving confederate flags and pretending to be an undecided voter are a few examples.

Escobar (1992) asks: “How do social actors contribute to create new cultural models through the construction of collective identities as a means of self-affirmation? To problematize everyday life involves a collective act of creation, a collective signification, a culture. Reflection on everyday life thus has to be located at the intersection of micro-processes of articulation of meaning through practices, on the one hand, and macro-processes of domination, on the other” (p. 404). Similar to what happened to John McCain during the 2000 Republican primaries, many of the attacks on Dean were traceable to Democratic Party elites, most notably the DLC. The DLC itself is a reflection of macro-level processes of capitalism; it is an organization dedicated to the proposition that a centrist, business-friendly Democratic Party is the only viable option for winning elections. It asserts this view through its everyday practices of e-mails and press releases, criticizing the return to a progressive Democratic Party that Dean represents. For his
Democratic rivals, Dean represented competition in the electoral process, an event whose numeric-based cultural logic was discussed in the previous chapter.

Sey and Castells (2004) write: “by changing the direction and content of the flow of information through use of the Internet, the range of political actors is broadened, new avenues of collective mobilization may appear, and a different format of debate may take place, transforming the political scene that had been framed by one-way communication systems of the mass media era” (p. 364-5). While a transformation seems to have taken place, a revolution has not. Iozzi (2004) points out: “Dean’s collapse in the Iowa caucuses points out that integrated management of all the levels of media is crucial to winning campaigns. Dean clearly won the contest for most effective use of micro and middle media—e-mail, blogs, website, Meetup—but did little to combat mass media images that he was angry, impulsive, and unable to beat Bush” (p. 21). By the time the ‘scream’ had taken place, an unflattering narrative that had been developing for months, and the ‘scream’ had given the narrative a sound byte and prima facie credibility.

“Media politics has its own language and rules: simplification of the message, image-making, the personalization of politics, and story-telling and character assassination as a means of promoting or demoting political candidates” (Sey and Castells 2004: 375-6). The ‘scream’ fit these criteria all too well, and, unfortunately for DFA, little else that they did afterwards would. This need for “integrated media management of all the levels of media,” as Iozzi puts it, is due to certain trends in contemporary media: “at the same moment that cyberspace displaces some traditional information and cultural gatekeepers, there is also an unprecedented concentration of power within old media. A widening of the discursive environment coexists within a narrowing of the range of information being transmitted by the most readily available media channels” (Jenkins 2006: 211).

SMOs are part of larger networks in which processes of cultural politics occur. Conflicts of meaning occur because “[a]s they circulate through the network, truths are transformed and re-
inscribed into other knowledge-power constellations. They are alternatively resisted, subverted, or recreated to serve other ends” (Escobar 1998: 56). No matter how successful an SMO like DFA is in framing knowledge/events to its own membership, it still has to contend with a media and political environment that is busily trying to reframe the SMO’s asserted truths. This discrepancy in accepted truths was seen, for example, in the way DFA blamed the mainstream media for Dean’s failure to win the Democratic nomination, (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 15), while most of the public thought Dean had only himself to blame (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2004a: 10). Ultimately, the mainstream was successful in defining DFA as marginal outside of the narrow segment of the public attuned to DFA’s circulated truths. Yet, as we will see in the next chapter, some of the truths DFA asserted had a sociocultural impact that competing social actors could not quell.
Chapter 10: The Impact of DFA

According to one study, policy changes are achieved by SMOs and political parties no more than half of the time (Burstein and Linton 2002); however, policy changes are only one of many possible effects that SMOs may have. Drawing upon the social movement literature in sociology, John Lofland’s list of possible effects includes: A. Changes in governments, laws, policies, policy systems; B. Winning acceptance; C. New or enlarged movement establishment; D. New items of mainstream culture; E. Shifts in norms, cultural images and symbols; F. Changes in the interaction order; G. The shape of strata structures; H. Cultural clarification and reaffirmation; I. Entertainment and spectacle; J. Violence and tyranny; K. Scholarly trade; and, finally, L. Models for later SMOs (Lofland 1996: 347-52).

Recalling Howard Dean’s four stated goals for Democracy for America (Dean 2004b), we might ask: Has belief in the possibility of liberal grassroots political change become more prevalent? Has participation in liberal grassroots organizations increased? Have DFA-targeted right wing and special interest objectives been impeded? Have any progressive policies been enacted because of DFA? Have politicians become more forthcoming? Have any candidates been elected due to the help of DFA? According to Howard Dean, some of these goals have been reached:

Democracy for America has accomplished more and grown faster than I ever imagined. You raised millions of dollars for good candidates, helped shape the national debate, and started hundreds of strong grassroots groups all over the country… Most importantly, you have created a new model for political action.
You have shown that ordinary people organizing locally have the power to make a real impact nationally. People have noticed -- now other organizations look to the success of our model as a blueprint for building a lasting Democratic majority. [Howard Dean 2005]

These claims are hard to verify empirically, though newspaper and blog accounts do give some anecdotal evidence of DFA’s effects on the political landscape, including: providing endorsed candidates with funding, volunteers, and promotion (Chapa 2005; Centazzo 2005; McDonough 2005; Robinson 2005; Graff 2004a; Democracy for America 2005a), endorsed candidates winning or at least receiving significantly more votes than in previous elections (Democracy for America 2005a; Hackett 2005; Stein 2005),\(^4\) organizing against conservative legislation and for progressive legislation (Halstead 2005; Hearn 2005), helping protesters with transportation (Danger 2005; Press Association 2005), and organizing public discussion forums on political issues (McWilliam 2005; Leader OnLine 2005a; Leader OnLine 2005b).

**New or Enlarged Movement Establishment**

While many SMOs “go out of business… a great many persist and form a new kind of *movement establishment*. It may be smaller than at the peak of the movement surge, but it is nonetheless a larger, stable ‘movement’ presence than before the surge” (Lofland 1996: 348). Dean for America led to Democracy for America, so this was the case with DFA. If they can claim no other effect, they can at least proclaim that there is life after Howard Dean. This alone is more than some gave them credit for (e.g. Jett and Välikangas 2004: 10; Lockard 2005). Also, this is noteworthy because even if they were found to be politically ineffective at this historical juncture, their continued existence would offer the possibility of achieving greater effectiveness in the future.
Changes in Government, Laws, Policies, Policy Systems

“While varying in frequency, some SMOs have indisputably played major roles in changes of governmental systems (as in revolutions), the downfall of particular ruling elites within governments, and the adoption of laws and policies desired by a movement” (Lofland 1996: 348).

What can be said about DFA’s influence on the outcome of elections? The obvious place to start in answering this question is to look at election outcomes for candidates which DFA has endorsed. The Dean Dozen 2004 election results (see Table 5) had 58 loses and 33 wins. The offices won during this election were: Circuit Judge (1), Constable (1), District Court Judge (1), County Commissioner (1), State Assembly (2), Governor (2), Mayor (2), Soil and Water District (1), State House (10), State Representative (4), State Senate (3), Superior Court Justice (1), Supervisor of Elections (1), Township Clerk (1), US House (1), US Senate (1). The 2006 DFA-List results (see Table 6) had less wins, but a better ratio of wins to losses: 31 wins and 23 losses. These 31 wins were for the following positions: Commissioner of the Metro. Water Reclamation (1), Governor (1), County School Board (1), City Council (2), Secretary of State (4), State House (9), State Senate (5), State Treasurer (1), U.S. House (3), U.S. Senate (4).

Table 5: The Dean Dozen 2004 Election Results
Reprinted from Democracy for America (2005a), modified to fill in missing cells.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>OFFICE</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
<th>WIN</th>
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<td>Anita Kelly</td>
<td>Circuit Judge</td>
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<td>STATE</td>
<td>PERCENTAGE</td>
<td>WIN</td>
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<td>State House</td>
<td>HI</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pono Chong</td>
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<td>HI</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<td>John Drury</td>
<td>State Senate</td>
<td>IA</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greg Stevens</td>
<td>Iowa House</td>
<td>IA</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<td>Nicole LeFavour</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>IA</td>
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<td>Barack Obama</td>
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<td>IA</td>
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<td>US Senate</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jon Jennings</td>
<td>US House</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Melina Fox</td>
<td>US Congress</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Patrick McCormick</td>
<td>County council</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nate Hogan</td>
<td>State Senate</td>
<td>KS</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missy Taylor</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>KS</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurston Cromwell</td>
<td>State Senate</td>
<td>KS</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia Woodward</td>
<td>State Senate</td>
<td>KY</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Straus</td>
<td>State Rep</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Murphy</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica Palacios-Boyce</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>OFFICE</td>
<td>STATE</td>
<td>PERCENTAGE</td>
<td>WIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan Hope</td>
<td>Township Clerk</td>
<td>MI</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Donigan</td>
<td>State rep</td>
<td>MI</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patti Fritz</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>MN</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Farmer</td>
<td>US Senate</td>
<td>MO</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
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<td>Maria Chappelle-Nadal</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>MO</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Schweitzer</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>MT</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debra Sasser</td>
<td>District Court Judge</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Boseman</td>
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<td>NC</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
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<td>Patsy Keever</td>
<td>US House</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKim Mitchell</td>
<td>State Senate</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Fran Egbers</td>
<td>State House</td>
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<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Lynch</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steve Brozak</td>
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<td>Amy Vasquez</td>
<td>US House</td>
<td>NJ</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<td>Herb Conaway</td>
<td>US House</td>
<td>NJ</td>
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<td>Anne Wolfe</td>
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<td>41%</td>
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<td>Nelson Thompson</td>
<td>County Freeholder</td>
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<td>Richard Romero</td>
<td>US Congress</td>
<td>NM</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Jonathan Bing</td>
<td>State Assembly</td>
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<td>74%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Jimmy Dahroug</td>
<td>State Senate</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samara &quot;Sam&quot; Barend</td>
<td>U.S. House</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>OFFICE</td>
<td>STATE</td>
<td>PERCENTAGE</td>
<td>WIN</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg Harris</td>
<td>US House</td>
<td>OH</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Jeff Seemann</td>
<td>US House</td>
<td>OH</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge William O'Neilly</td>
<td>Supreme Court Justice</td>
<td>OH</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>Mary Jo Kilroy</td>
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<td>Peter Buckley</td>
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<td>OR</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Potter</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allyson Schwartz</td>
<td>US House</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>56%</td>
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<td>Lois Herr</td>
<td>US House</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Lois Murphy</td>
<td>US House</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Ginny Schrader</td>
<td>US House</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ken Campbell</td>
<td>State House</td>
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<td>34%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlie Smith</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Van Os</td>
<td>State Supreme Court</td>
<td>TX</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katy Hubener</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>TX</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Morrison</td>
<td>US House</td>
<td>TX</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May Walker</td>
<td>Constable</td>
<td>TX</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Corroon</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>UT</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>James Socas</td>
<td>U.S. Congress</td>
<td>VA</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Al Weed</td>
<td>US House</td>
<td>VA</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane Kitchel</td>
<td>State Senate</td>
<td>VT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Clavelle</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>VT</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jessica Falker</td>
<td>VT House of Reps.</td>
<td>VT</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>OFFICE</td>
<td>STATE</td>
<td>PERCENTAGE</td>
<td>WIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tami Green</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Ruderman</td>
<td>Secretary of State</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malinda Miles</td>
<td>County Council</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>No</td>
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</table>

Table 6: 2006 DFA-List Results  
Reprinted from Democracy for America (n.d.b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jerry McNerney</td>
<td>U.S. House</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francine Busby</td>
<td>U.S. House</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debra Bowen</td>
<td>Secretary of State</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy Chavez</td>
<td>Mayor of San Jose</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ned Lamont</td>
<td>U.S. Senate</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Markell</td>
<td>State Treasurer</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Randolph</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>FL</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April Griffin</td>
<td>Hillsborough Co. School Board</td>
<td>FL</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dee Haigler</td>
<td>State Senate</td>
<td>GA</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elesha Gayman</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>IA</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise O'Brien</td>
<td>Secretary of Agriculture</td>
<td>IA</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Cegelis</td>
<td>U.S. House</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debra Shore</td>
<td>Commissioner of the Metro. Water Reclamation District, Cook Co.</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valeri Haughton</td>
<td>Monroe Co. Circuit Court Judge</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy Shir</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>KY</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deval Patrick</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy Meisner</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>MI</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebekah Warren</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>MI</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Ritchie</td>
<td>Secretary of State</td>
<td>MN</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Smith</td>
<td>State Senate</td>
<td>MO</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Chappelle-Nadal</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>MO</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genevieve Frank</td>
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<td>MO</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Frame</td>
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<td>MO</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon Tester</td>
<td>U.S. Senate</td>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Roseman</td>
<td>State Senate</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ty Harrell</td>
<td>State House</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Glenshaw</td>
<td>Grafton County Commissioner</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Stender</td>
<td>U.S. House</td>
<td>NJ</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Rice Jr.</td>
<td>Newark City Council</td>
<td>NJ</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dina Titus</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>NV</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirsten Gillibrand</td>
<td>U.S. House</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherrod Brown</td>
<td>U.S. Senate</td>
<td>OH</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity found that “the average amount of cold cash raised by an incumbent seeking reelection to the U.S. Senate in 2002 was nearly $5.7 million; the average amount for a U.S. House of Representatives incumbent to stay on the job was almost $900,000” (2004: 75). According to Jimmy Carter, one of the major problems with the American electoral system is not every qualified candidate is guaranteed equal access to mainstream media news (p. 477). Some have expressed the hope that the Internet may help reverse this trend. Four DFA candidates for the House of Representatives won, and all four spent more than $900,000. Five U.S. Senate candidates were endorsed by DFA, and of those, two spent above $5.7 million and three spent below $5.7 million. Comparing the amount of campaign spending by the DFA-endorsed congressional candidate vis-à-vis their opponent, the candidates who were most outspent by their opponent yet still won were: Jon Tester (2006, Senate, MT) and Jerry
McNerney (2006, House, CA). In both of these cases, the Republican candidates were involved in scandals involving Jack Abramoff, suggesting that DFA’s support alone is not sufficient to overcome vast differences in spending. E.J. Ford, an anthropologist who did his fieldwork with Mary Mulhern, a local candidate in Tampa, Fl., supported by DFA but who still did not win, agreed with this assessment:

Resources was a huge factor for our campaign. We couldn’t get our message out on any kind of a large scale. The contact that we had with DFA folks was, generally positive, but we never felt like that group was really a body that could act as a “force multiplier” for our campaign. I mean, in traditional machine politics, one guy who is the leader of a social club, labor union, or chamber of commerce can turn to the membership and get a block of votes to turn out. The Democrats don’t have that capability, either at the DFA or HCDEC level. [e-mail to author, December 6, 2006]

In one high-profile example of a DFA sponsorship, Democracy for America has sponsored Ned Lamont over Joseph Lieberman in the 2006 Connecticut Democratic primary. By of 7/25/06, DFA had raised $79,376.67 from 1938 contributors for Ned Lamont (Democracy for America 2006a); while this is a respectable accomplishment, Joseph Lieberman has spent $5 million and still has $4.2 million in the bank (Hamsher 2005). Despite Lieberman’s immense financial advantage, Lamont still overtook Lieberman in early polls (Cillizza 2006) and eventually beat Lieberman in the Democratic primary, though it is not clear how much responsibility DFA can claim for this. However, Lieberman claimed victory in the end by running as an independent.

There is one more candidate to be considered: Howard Dean himself. While he did not win the presidency, he did manage to become DNC Chairman, which was a struggle. John Kerry wanted Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack to take the position, and Democratic Party leaders agreed.
Democratic activists objected, backing Howard Dean instead, and Vilsack bowed out of the race. Internet activists, including Joe Trippi, began digging up dirt on the other candidates for DNC Chairman and attending DNC meetings. Dean, for his part, tried to reassure the establishment Democrats that he was a good choice. In the end, the pressure exerted by these activists led to a unanimous victory for Dean (Armstrong and Moulitsas Zúniga 2006: 148-51). According to Armstrong and Moulitsas Zúniga, the victory was “a message to the D.C. establishment that they no longer had total control over the direction of the Democratic Party” (p. 151).

**Winning Acceptance**

“Even if many of the specific laws or policies are not achieved, the issues raised by the SMO/movement can come to be more or less permanently ‘on the agenda’” (Lofland 1996: 348).

One of DFA’s biggest accomplishments was winning acceptance for the Internet. As McClelland describes,

> Through its broad reach, cellular structure and exponential growth rate, Dean’s campaign used basic, relatively cheap and accessible Internet tools to maximize return on investment and create a prototype for future campaigns not only in politics but for all social movements that rely on fundraising. Dean’s campaign was a successful model for recognizing and treating the Internet as a strategic mobilizing tool; for actively recruiting and cultivating an online constituency; and for leveraging volunteers as fundraisers. [McClelland 2004: 66]

A journalist from the *Toronto Star* wrote: “While Dean did not survive the primaries, his Internet campaign innovations did. The two biggest stories of the 2004 online campaign are directly traceable to the Dean campaign: peer-to-peer event planning, and online fundraising” (Samuel 2004). Keefe (2004) notes that “Dean for America added a new word to the campaign lexicon – ‘blog’ – as both a noun and a verb.” John Kerry and John Edwards both created blogs after
Howard Dean did (Singel 2004). DFA also demonstrated the fundraising potential of the Internet:

Carol Darr, who was general counsel to the National Democratic Committee in 1992 and later worked in the Clinton administration’s Commerce Department, sees Dean’s use of the Internet as a sea change that has the potential to radically reform presidential politics

“I think the Internet in this election has transformed everything,” she says.

For decades, she continues, campaigns were fueled by wealthy donors – limited for the past three decades to $1,000 contributions per person – who demand access and influence for their money.

“No one thought you could do it any other way,” she says. “And Howard Dean is showing that there is another way to do it.” [Dillon 2003: 199-200]

This is significant because “as campaign managers grew more interested in raising funds from special interests and corporations than in grassroots organizing, the public lost its voice in American political parties and gradually withdrew from participation” (Looney 2004: 49); however, “the increasing ability of the Internet to raise money from grassroots supporters could wrestle some power back from moneyed interests for ordinary citizens” (p. 50). There is some evidence that arguably demonstrates what Looney claimed could happen is happening:

“Information technology professionals and new media managers have risen to prominence in the hierarchy of campaigns, often reporting directly to the campaign manager, and new media spending by campaigns is rising every election cycle, constantly taking a slice out of the mass media ad budget” (Geidner 2006: 93).
McClelland writes: “Dean raised the profile of the anti-war movement and gave political legitimacy to the voices of an increasing number of American voters who disagreed with the invasion of Iraq. Dean forced the Iraq War onto the agenda” (2004: 66). This is particularly significant because Cornfield (2004) previously found, based on his research in late 2003, that “the Internet cannot be associated with any shuffling of the issues on the national public affairs agenda” (p. 5).

Model for Later SMOs

Because “people’s conceptions of what is owed them and how they can act are in part framed by their knowledge of previous movements[, s]uch previous moments of asserting what is just and acting in an SMO can enter the consciousness of a wide variety of other people who use those episodes as models for their own new SMO” (Lofland 1996: 353).

DFA also “gave a stiff spine to a lot of Democrats” (Borger 2004). Dunnan quoted Howard Shapiro as saying: “A leading Democratic consultant put it like this: ‘In one way or another, all the candidates are still using some version of the rhetoric that Bill Clinton introduced in 1992. The exception is Howard Dean, who has a very blunt, apolitical way of speaking. Dean has found fresh language and a new way of talking about things that, at least, is different’” (Dunnan 2004: 71). Trippi writes: “we ran point for a pack of frightened candidates, saying all the things they were afraid to say, framing the debate, practically writing the party’s message. We taught the Democrats how to be the opposition party. We showed them that Bush was vulnerable…. By summer, the Democratic presidential campaign was being waged on our terms, using our language” (2004: 188-9). As noted earlier, criticism of the Iraq War was a major shift in Democratic rhetoric. However, the sudden shift in rhetoric about the war did not go unnoticed by Republicans like Dick Cheney:
The problem we have is that, if you look at [John Kerry’s] record, he doesn't display the qualities of somebody who has conviction.

…we've seen a situation in which, first, they voted to commit the troops, to send them to war, John Edwards and John Kerry, then they came back and when the question was whether or not you provide them with the resources they needed -- body armor, spare parts, ammunition -- they voted against it.

I couldn't figure out why that happened initially. And then I looked and figured out that what was happening was Howard Dean was making major progress in the Democratic primaries, running away with the primaries based on an anti-war record. So they, in effect, decided they would cast an anti-war vote and they voted against the troops.

Now if they couldn't stand up to the pressures that Howard Dean represented, how can we expect them to stand up to al Qaeda? [CNN.com 2004]

**Cultural Clarification and Reaffirmation**

Ideas need to be reaffirmed over generations; “the meaning and value of beliefs and practices grow dim and uncertain over time as people with the original animating experiences die off and are replaced by their progeny, who do not have those experiences” (Lofland 1996: 351). Relevant to this discussion is the reaffirmation of the value of democratic participation; voting has declined overall in the United States, but it has declined for young voters more quickly than the overall population (Murray 2004: 33-4). There has been much speculation as to why this is, “rang[ing] from the overtly negative, such as the idea that youth are simply lazy, to the tactically driven, such as the idea that with all the movement that happens in the lives of young people it is difficult to know how and where to vote. Much of the discussion centers around the idea that
youth just do not see how being active the electoral process, as an individual activist or voter, has any direct affect on their day-to-day lives” (Murray 2004: 34; also see Talbott and Talbott n.d.).

Much has been made of DFA involving young people in politics, sometimes praising its positive effect on American democracy (e.g. Murray 2004), and sometimes “caricatur[izing] young Dean supporters as pierced, vegan weirdos” (Trippi 2004: 87). According to Trippi, the people who showed up in Vermont to support Dean for America were “kids mostly (2004: 87) who were drawn by Dean’s criticism of the Iraq War (2004: 87), wanted to make a difference politically but felt shut out of the political process (2004: 105), and were drawn in “because someone was finally taking the time to reach out to them where they lived” (2004: 88). Murray agreed with this assessment: “What… seemed unique about the use of the Internet by the Dean campaign was its implicit outreach to young voters. Dean seemed the appropriate candidate, and his media seemed the appropriate method” (Murray 2004: 4). Was DFA as effective at drawing in the younger generation as claimed? If so, will this have any lasting effect on their level of political involvement?

Trippi claims that there were Generation Dean and student Dean groups for over 900 colleges and high schools (Trippi 2004: 141), while an article in The Nation claimed the youth membership was higher: “Generation Dean… peaked at 23,479 members with 1,133 chapters nationwide, more than twice the number of College Democrats groups. Moreover, an unprecedented quarter of Dean's 300,000 individual donors were under 30” (Kamenetz 2004). Despite this, the Generation Dean Blog “rarely received more than ten comments for each posting” (Rice 2004: 12). According to Pew, Dean supporters are “not so young”: 18% are under 30, 26% are 39-44, 42% are 45-64, and 14% 65 or older (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 1). However, the study also found that “the image of younger Deaniacs as political newcomers has been borne out” (2005a: 2); “More than four-in-ten Dean activists (42%) – and 66% of those under 30 – said this was their first political campaign” (2005a: 13). Similarly,
Kerbel and Bloom point out that many of BFA regular users during the Dean campaign “acknowledged on the blog that they had never before engaged in political action” (2005: 5). In addition, Williams, Weinberg and Gordon compared the demographics of first-time Meetup attenders against those who had attended four or more times, and found that “[w]hat distinguishes those who have attended more than three times is a stronger Democratic party affiliation, and a significantly higher average age. This finding contrasts with one of the Dean campaign claims, namely that his candidacy attracted younger voters in the process. If they did, they are not the age group that embraced Meetup as repeat attenders” (Williams et. al 2004b: 13). On the other hand, when they compared the demographics of those who were campaign activists first against those who were Meetup activists first, their findings indicated that

...those who became active through the vehicle of Meetup were not as strongly Democratic and were significantly younger than those who were campaign activists first. This is perhaps a more direct test of the Dean campaign’s claims that it engaged younger and more marginal citizens in the process, which the data support. In other words, Meetups are a means to recruit young voters and independent voters, which constitute important constituencies that are difficult to reach through traditional campaigning. [Williams et. al 2004b: 13]

As might be expected from the overall decline in membership in the transition to Democracy for America, the number of Generation DFA groups on DFA-Link is not as large as the numbers cited above by Trippi under Dean for America. A search on DFA-Link (1/4/07) found 46 Generation DFA groups. Assuming the membership list for each group is mutually exclusive – a reasonable assumption, given that most are associated with a particular location – adding up the membership numbers gives us a total of 1,262 members of Generation DFA. Also, given that the number of members registered on DFA-Link is 38,027, Generation DFA members constitute only about 3.32% of DFA-Link members overall. These figures fit with my
experiences at DC for Democracy and DFA-TB. Asking people’s ages was not part of my interview protocol, but it was uncommon to see people in their teens and twenties at these groups. (I would say that DC fared slightly better than Tampa Bay in this regard.) Members of DFA-TB acknowledged the need to attract younger people to their group, and they were not alone; on the Westchester Democracy for America Meetup Group webpage, someone commented: “We need to get more young people involved” (Justin 2005).

This evidence suggests that younger DFA members were not as large a part of the Dean campaign as commonly thought, but still constituted a large number of young people. In addition, those who came were very likely to be new to politics; however, it also suggests they often did not stick with DFA over time. Assuming this is true, where did the young people go? One possibility is that they left when Joe Trippi left since “Trippi became a messiah to young people” (Dunnan 2004: 214). At the time that Dean for America was coming to an end, many of the heavily-involved members of Generation Dean planned to continue their political activism (Kamenetz 2004), though as the aforementioned DFA-Link numbers showed, their political involvement was not representative of young DFA members overall, or at least that young people’s political involvement did not involve DFA anymore. It also seems possible that the reasons some younger members were involved could be affected by having fewer young people in attendance with them:

On this stormy first Wednesday in June, the Essex is humid with a Howard Dean "meet-up" in progress, where Dean supporters of varying levels of commitment talk politics, sign mailing lists and try to get laid.

"I’m not sure what I expected," says a Dean button-wearing guy named Ken. "I thought I’d see if there were any cute girls here. You know, schmooze and talk lefty politics." [Zaitchik 2003]
Members such as this may be disappointed if they were to come to a DFA-TB and see its mostly middle-aged membership. However, since age is an important marker of identity, younger members may feel more comfortable in social settings with people closer to their own age. In addition, the format of the meetings may require some modification to appeal to a younger demographic. Regarding a 2005 Amherst Democrats/UMass Democrats joint meeting, one DFA member wrote:

I got there late, so the speechifying was already on. I would have liked to have heard more from the UMASS students there - maybe 5 young people left during the speech, which I found very interesting, but then, I'm a 40-year-old politics fan. Maybe there was a go-around at the beginning that I missed, but my concern is to pull college-age folks into the group and make them feel welcome, find out what they already know about the 2000 and 2004 elections, make it real for them. I'm a grad student at UMASS and a TA, and I can see the glazed expressions that mean it's time to put the chairs in a circle and have a discussion and STOP lecturing! [Small 2005]

In addition, one person suggested: “I also believe that music is one of the best methods to unite young people, and my band will play ANY Dean fundraiser” (funk777 2006). A BFA post recounted an incident that seemed to bear this out:

Questioning Authority: SWMO DFA thought they had a great idea when they joined organizers a the 'Rock the Vote: Save the Music' event to help register young voters. The event was a success in that many young, new voters were registered, but something else happened that is even more notable. There is a local initiative to outlaw people under 21 from entering establishments where 60% or more of the sales is alcohol. At the Rock the Vote event, organizers moved everyone to a local bar as a demonstration that those between 18-20 can
be proven trustworthy in a drinking establishment where their favorite bands are playing. The move proved ingenious as the issue has now mobilized hundreds of young people to get active and fight the initiative that prevents them from partying in a safe environment. SWMO organizers received many articles in the press as well as radio interviews about the issue and event. Campaigning after the event, I guess, the Greene County Deputy Sheriff told a group of eighth graders that the SWMO DFA organizer 'was a very bad influence.' The event has brought major attention to the issue and more young people than ever will be getting to the polls in Springfield this year. [Reiter 2006]

This suggests “the idea that youth just do not see how being active the electoral process, as an individual activist or voter, has any direct affect on their day-to-day lives” (Murray 2004: 34) is a plausible one.

Entertainment and Spectacle

“SMOs sometimes function as just one more form of spectacle, dramatic entertainment, or amusement” (Lofland 1996: 351). Howard Dean’s infamous “scream” has entered societal consciousness, providing fodder for jokes (see Figure 39). Many of these jokes are made by conservatives to mock Dean, although those on the left have made kindhearted jokes about the “scream” as well. For instance, this joke was made on The Daily Show, during John Stewart’s interview with Dean on November 8, 2006:

Stewart: All right. Democrats won big yesterday.

       Satellite Seat of Heat: [A Jon Stewart feature he does to his guests]

You're excited today, is there some sort of noise that you could think of, maybe a vocalization...

       [Laughter]
Stewart: ...that would convey your excitement over your victory, and go ahead and make that noise, and I promise I won't replay it.

Dean: [laughing] Would it be something like, "Boo-yah"!

Stewart: Booyah! Well done, my friend! Booyah indeed, congratulations... [Dean 2006]

Scholarly Trade

SMOs can change the concepts of academia. Green and Pearson (2005) claim that "uneasiness... exists among academicians from multiple disciplines over the fear that society’s fascination with all-things Internet is harming the way in which humans have relationships, develop community, build and strengthen ties in our social networks, and simply live" (p. 1). DFA’s successful use of Meetup means that “Meetup, or any meetup-like process, will now, arguably, be a key element in future presidential nomination processes and campaign strategies” (Williams et. al. 2004b: 3). Putnam wrote in 2000 that “The Internet is a powerful tool for the transmission of information among physically distant people” (Putnam 2000: 172); DFA’s popularization of Meetup has at least provided a powerful example of how the Internet can also be used to get Internet users within the same geographic area meeting face-to-face.

In addition, Hindman notes: “If Dean’s success can be repeated on a wide scale, political scientists would have to reexamine much of what they think they know about the relationship between money and politics: the demographics and political views of those who give money, how donations are solicited, the clarity with which money communicates preferred policies, and ultimately the extent of the rightward preference distortion political fundraising induces in American politics” (Hindman 2005: 187).
Discussion/Conclusions

Democracy for America’s main goal is to get socially progressive, fiscally responsible Democrats elected to office in all levels of government. It is generally believed that this will result in the candidate bringing about the policy changes they seek once in office, and eventually bring about the “Great American Restoration.” However, this assumption is not entirely unproblematic. As noted earlier, Lamont lost to Lieberman. However, even if DFA’s efforts had been successful and Ned Lamont became a Connecticut senator, would Lamont have been able to accomplish the progressive policies that DFA expected him to? Lamont would have entered the sociocultural system of the U.S. congress, with all its existing power relations. As a freshman senator, Lamont could have found himself subject to “hazing” if he defied the existing system (Weatherford 1985: 32-35). He would have been expected to remain silent while senators with more seniority are speaking (p. 36). It would have been quite some time until he would be able to seriously exert influence on the political process, as the “seniority system in Congress operates as a delaying mechanism that postpones the complete effect of an election for anywhere from ten to twenty years” (Weatherford 1985: 38). Reaching this stage is by no means assured (p. 85). During his time in congress, he would have to assemble his own “clan” (chp. 3), deal with bureaucrats (chp. 5) and lobbies (chp. 6), and otherwise make the correct strategic decisions to at least preserve his own office, if not accomplish anything else. Could Lamont make it this far without compromising the principles he espoused that endeared him to groups like DFA? It seems more likely that Lamont would either confirm to the existing political system while trying to promote a public image to appeal to his constituents, or he would find himself unable to exercise power within the system. This is all speculative, of course, because Lamont still lost despite DFA’s best efforts.

The idea of candidates like Lamont achieving DFA’s goals while in office seems more plausible if more candidates that share DFA’s goals are elected to congress simultaneously. This
is where the real challenge to achieving DFA’s goals lie. As noted in previous chapters, DFA has faced internal problems such as overly-optimistic beliefs about their prospects for winning, trolls creating an unpleasant atmosphere on Blog for America, and conflict over which DFA groups have the right to give endorsements. These problems seem minor compared to the problem of winning elections, which requires convincing a majority of voters to want to vote for their candidate, then are able to vote for their selected candidate, and finally that the votes are actually counted. Can the Internet be used to accomplish this? I will leave this question aside for now, and pick it up in the conclusion chapter.
Chapter 11: Conclusion

Summary of Findings

I will now return to the question with which I started: How should the Internet’s impact upon politics be best described and interpreted? After studying DFA, I have come to realize an important limitation in generalizing from DFA to other Internet-using SMOs. DFA’s beliefs lead them to target the American electoral process for achieving social change, and their culture is shaped by the acceptance of this practice. Elections are sociodramas that draw upon a symbolic mythology that is heavily intertwined with existing social cleavages, including race, gender, class, creed, and political ideology. The American electoral system is plurality-based rather than consensus-based, leading to political arithmetic, where official legitimacy only requires fulfillment of the existing system of political calculus—generally, 50% plus one vote, to use a phrase from DFA’s training materials. George Bush Sr. effectively utilized the infamous Willie Horton commercials, despite their racist overtones, because the cultural logic of American elections dictated that it was important to have sufficient numbers to win; the consensus of African-Americans counted only in terms of votes lost or gained overall. DFA serves as a critique of this system to the extent that Republican politicians have achieved their necessary plurality by appealing to particular social segments at the expense of those who consider themselves to be liberal/progressive. However, this critique is limited to changing the numbers rather than changing the equation of political arithmetic. At one DFA-TB meeting, someone described how they participated in a voter registration drive, but promptly ended the event when they realized they were signing up more Republicans than Democrats. This shows how the
political arithmetic of plurality-based elections shapes their activities; the question of what effect a particular activity will ultimately have on election outcomes seems to serve a guiding role in evaluating whether it is worth doing.

The political arithmetic of the electoral system imprints itself upon DFA’s strategies; numbers of activists matter because more activists mean more activities, and more activities means more opportunities to influence voters to vote for DFA-endorsed candidates. Numbers are therefore an indicator of strength, and the Internet is another opportunity for numeric strength to be demonstrated. Candidates will mention the number of supporters on their e-mail lists to convince local DFA groups that they are worth supporting, DFA members are encouraged to RSVP for DFA meetings on DFA-Link to encourage others to attend, and DFA-National holds DFA-Link membership drives, explaining that “we need to grow the DFA-Link community so we have the shoe leather to contact voters and get out the vote for candidates that share our values” (Warsaw 2006). DFA’s Internet use, therefore, has picked up a quantitative focus by targeting elections; an Internet-using SMO that targets a different aspect of society for change, especially one where numbers of people are not in a role of such primacy, would be likely to use the Internet quite differently.

When I began this multi-sited ethnographic project, I had envisioned Blog for America being one site in which a significant portion of my time would be spent. My expectation was based upon its extensive use during the Dean for America period. However, BFA turned out to be of considerably diminished importance during the Democracy for America period. I attribute this to several factors, including: a decline in membership following the disappointing loss of Howard Dean; a greater focus on local rather than national politics making a national-level blog less relevant; and lax moderation allowing trolling to a degree many DFA members find unacceptable, which in turn led to a member-created “Shadow Blog” that drew some participants away from BFA in favor of its friendlier social environment. In addition, many members of
DFA-TB have chosen to do their blogging at DailyKos instead of BFA because DailyKos has become a far more popular blog. Because DFA identities coexist with progressive/liberal and Democratic identities for DFA members, it is relatively unproblematic for DFA members to share virtual spaces (and their time) with other people who share their coexisting identities. Even many of the most-involved DFA members would also be on liberal/progressive mailing lists like JohnKerry.com or MoveOn.org; the congruent values of these other organizations meant they offer DFA members further opportunities for activism that would further their own goals. It seems that having culturally-similar SMOs offering similar online services to DFA means that DFA members have the option of participating in both, or even forsaking the DFA option if the similar SMO’s option looks more attractive. The main incompatibility between DFA and other liberal/progressive/Democratic organizations are those who fail to live up to DFA’s belief in the necessity of activism, such as DFA-TB’s unfavorable attitudes toward the HCDEC. This belief also makes it rare for DFA members to confine themselves to online activities without being political involved offline. Beyond this need for activism, DFA members feel free to dabble in involvement with other progressive organizations rather freely.

This maintenance of techno-social ties with ideological compatible SMOs does perhaps help to prevent insular attitudes and promote the sharing of ideas between SMOs; however, it is also symptomatic of a larger problem of DFA’s organizational disunity. During one DFA-TB meeting, the group organizer could not remember the correct URL for DFA-national’s main website. Due to Meetup.com’s sudden shift in business model, DFA-Link was promoted as an alternative before the bugs could be removed, resulting in DFA-TB continuing to use Yahoo! Groups. This, in turn, led to the conflict with the Internet-only DFA group, who assumed the lack of a state-wide DFA group for Florida on DFA-Link meant they were free to assume that role for themselves. DFA-TB members were unhappy to see an Internet-only group “handing out endorsements like candy,” in the words of one member, to candidates all over the entire state,
including ones on DFA-TB’s “turf.” I found that DC for Democracy and Democracy for Virginia were very careful to respect each other’s spheres of influence, and would not do political activities in the other group’s location without obtaining their permission first. Disunity therefore led to conflict between DFA groups. The effects of disunity are not always this overt, however; on two separate occasions, I made use of DFA-TB’s DFA-Link group, once for a blog entry and once for a movie event; both times, I received little to no response, leading me to wonder whether my activities were culturally inappropriate, or perhaps even unread. In either case, I did not feel encouraged to participate further. One member of DFA-TB creates a “Democratically Minded Calendar” for each monthly meeting, detailing what events are taking place in the coming month that members might be interested in attending. While DFA-Link has a feature to list events, these events go unlisted on the group website. Although an electronic copy of the Calendar is generally sent out via e-mail to the DFA-Link group’s members, events often come up on short notice, and are announced to a core group of members. DFA’s disunity, therefore, means that there is no central place to find if a particular DFA group exists, nor is there a central place to find a complete, constantly-updated list of DFA events. DFA-Link could provide such a place, but has not yet lived up to its potential.

Why has DFA-Link not lived up to its potential as a unifying force thus far? During the Dean for America period, many of the innovative software tools developed by DFA addressed existing needs, but were unable to communicate with each other. Democracy for America has recently taken an important step towards integrating their virtual community by making Blog for America and DFA-Link share a single user database, and having local group blogs appear on Blog for America (at least, for those who select the “Browse All” option rather than just view DFA-National’s entries on the front page). However, many DFA members have already devised daily routines that do not include DFA’s online tools. It has become routine for DFA-TB members to discuss upcoming events through e-mail rather than through DFA-Link. Those in
leadership positions of DFA-TB, following the lead of DFA-National’s membership drive for DFA-Link, have encouraged members to RSVP for DFA-TB’s monthly meetings, and occasionally participate in a poll. They have not, however, actively encouraged members to upload pictures, respond to blog entries, or keep upcoming events listed there. During one meeting, members were asked to raise their hands if they had signed up for DFA-Link; only about half of them had. Part of the problem may also be the older demographics of Democracy for America; at least two older members described their expertise as being limited to e-mail.

In addition, those who have made the effort to utilize DFA-Link have reported bugs in the software, which seem to stem from it being unveiled earlier than planned. As it was Meetup.com’s decision to charge more money for their services that was responsible for this decision, DFA-Link’s instability and resulting disunity were largely a product of depending on an external service whose institutional purpose was not the same as their own. Internet-using SMOs should carefully consider their use of such services, as they may find themselves scrambling to find a replacement when circumstances beyond their control disrupt their established Technology Actor Network (TAN).

However, DFA has, in a way, achieved a certain unity in their disunity. As Steve Fox (2004) points out, both physical and virtual communities are, in part, imagined communities. They converge with some other DFA members for monthly Meetups and online interactions, and imagine themselves as part of a larger DFA community. This imagined communion/internalized identity continues to be enacted in areas of member’s lives beyond the social events with other members. Waiting in line at a concert or talking to friends and family members become opportunities for political proselytizing. A free moment at work can become an opportunity to participate in Blog for America (or, perhaps more likely nowadays, Daily Kos). When members meet in person, they often continue conversations from e-mail that preceded the encounter, or will direct members to online interactions to continue conversations and activities after a meeting.
Through internalized identities as part of an imagined community, supplemented by (admittedly somewhat fragmented) online communication, DFA membership is tailored to fit the busy lives of working, media-consuming political activists.

A diverse, cross-disciplinary selection of theoretical insights were combined throughout this study. This study has benefited tremendously from Lofland’s *Social Movement Organizations* (1996), in which he attempts to synthesize a wide array of sociological writings on social movements into a well-organized set of research questions. Anthropologists would do well to combine their SMO literature, with its careful attention to ethnographic detail and long history of non-Western movement studies, into equivalent works. The TAN and CEM models were also found to be helpful in the conceptualization of DFA as an Internet-using SMO. These models do not view technology or social entities to be determinative, but rather consider the networks of relationships between them. In the case of DFA, the Internet technologies combined with a segment of the population who was mostly tech-savvy, outraged at the Bush administration, self-describing progressives/liberals. At the same time, the policies of the Bush administration, along with the failure of the Democratic Party to establish itself as credible opposition, created a political opportunity structure that Howard Dean was able to utilize in creating the DFA TAN.

Explaining an Internet-using SMO therefore entails linking the people, organizations, artifacts, practices, and imagined community in conjunction with each other and with the larger sociocultural context in which the SMO exists. When we look at the people involved, we find that DFA mostly attracted white, secular, affluent, people with liberal political ideologies because these were the most aggrieved by the Bush administration and Republicans in general. Digital Divide issues further shaped the demographics of DFA, as members patterns reflected patterns in the Digital Divide overall. In addition, minority Internet users sometimes found that the names, locations, and concerns of DFA’s virtual community reflected whiteness rather than inclusiveness, keeping the demographic characteristics relatively unchanged over time. The
virtual spaces and physical spaces were alike in this regard; locations like Starbucks, a common location for DFA Meetups, were often associated with white, middle-class patrons. They spoke of $20 training events as being a trifling amount to spend. Organizers in areas with low membership in the Democratic Party, liberal/progressive organizations, or even people with compatible ideologies found it difficult to achieve a critical mass of membership to sustain a local DFA group. In terms of practices, DFA-Link failed to live up to its potential as a unifying force for the reasons described above. To explain why Dean for America progressed as it did, we must call attention to a number of factors identified by the TAN and CEM models, as well as John Lofland’s thorough sociological literature review; these factors include: a pluralistic electoral system that encourages exploiting existing social divisions, a politically-aggrieved Liberal segment of the population, a Democratic party that favored nonpartisanship following the 9/11 attacks, a Vermont politician willing to run for president but with few resources (necessitating the use of unconventional methods to have any chance of winning), a campaign manager with IT experience and a semi-Utopian view of the Internet, a message of “You Have the Power to take your country back” that resonated with the politically-aggrieved Liberals, sufficient saturation and development of Internet technologies for tools like blogs and Meetups to be available for implementation and useful to members, a view of the Internet as fundamentally better than mainstream media to encourage its continued use, and an organizational form founded upon the idea of open source software applied to politics that encouraged members to be self-involved rather than take orders. These factors are all important in explaining DFA’s sociocultural and historical progression.

In addition to the Lofland (1996) and the TAN and CEM theoretical models, I also found the Cultural Politics model to be a useful device for studying SMOs. Alvarez et. al (1998) writes: “Our working definition of cultural politics is enactive and relational. We interpret cultural politics as the process enacted when sets of social actors shaped by, and embodying, different
cultural meaning and practices come into conflict with each other” (p. 7). Recall the definition of culture I arrived at in Chapter 2: A shared system of ideas and related practices, historically developed through power-mediated interactions, the learning of which is minimally constrained by biology but mostly acquired through interaction with one’s physical, social, and psychological environment, which serve to pattern ongoing thoughts and behaviors, thereby adding some degree of stability and coherence to one’s sense of self and social interactions. Also recalling the six levels at which culture be analyzed at (also described in Chapter 2), this means that cultural politics can be analyzed at these same six levels. At each level, “movements deploy alternative conceptions of woman, nature, race, economy, democracy, or citizenship that unsettle dominant meanings” (p. 7), thereby enacting cultural politics. From the most micro to macro levels of cultural analysis, meaning-practices are enacted frequently with an element of conflict. Cultural politics looks towards the “actual or potential stakes and political strategies of particular social actors” (p. 6). Struggles exist at the individual level in DFA to see oneself as a member, a political activist, a blogger, or other politically-relevant identity. At the group level, members struggle to define their DFA groups; DFA members engage in struggles with each other about endorsements of particular candidates, alliances with other Democratic/progressive/liberal organizations, and so on. Groups can struggle with each other as well, such as when the Internet-only group sought to endorse candidates who were in DFA-TB’s “territory.” At the national level, struggles exist as well. As DFA national lays out guiding principles only, allowing local groups to define their issues, activities, and candidates, glocalization process are allowed to flourish. DFA is Technology-Actor Network of Technology-Actor Networks; it is a small national headquarters, whose small employee base, operating budget, technological tools maintain ties with hundreds of local DFA groups around the nation. It is not uncommon for members to voice their dissatisfaction at DFA national’s decisions, especially when they seem contrary to the “open source,” non-hierarchical model of decision-making members have come to
value. Of course, while these intra-movement conflicts entail cultural politics, cultural politics is also enacted between the SMO and other social organizations. “Every society is marked by a dominant political culture…. we define political culture as the particular social construction in every society that of what counts as ‘political’… In this way, political culture is the domain of practices and institutions, carved out of the totality of social reality, that historically comes to be considered as properly political” (p. 8). In the pursuit of their strategic goals, DFA engages with a variety of other institutions and practices through cultural politics. Among the institutions DFA has been shaped by include: MoveOn.org, Daily Kos, the Democratic Party, and mainstream media institutions.

The relationship between the mainstream media and the Internet has been an area of some academic speculation, and one to which this study speaks. A synergy between the Internet and other forms of media is apparent in DFA. Jenkins (2006) provides a useful concept for exploring this phenomenon he calls “convergence culture.” Under convergence culture, content flows through different channels in different forms (p. 11) across old and new media, with corporate media and bottom-up, consumer-driven new media coexisting (p. 17-18). This relationship is sometimes complimentary and sometimes conflict-laden (p. 18); he cautions us: “Don’t expect the uncertainties surrounding convergence to be resolved anytime soon. We are entering an era of prolonged transition and transformation in the way the media operates” (p. 24). In this dissertation, I add another description of “what this process looks like from… [a] localized [perspective]” (p. 12). During the 2004 election, BFA and the blogs of other Democratic candidates were occasionally sources of information for reporters. Dean for America formed the Dean Defense Forces to target mainstream media coverage they found to be unfair. Blog for America would link to mainstream media stories on a regular basis, and inform readers of politically-relevant upcoming television events. The DFA chat website often consisted of members commenting on political television shows in real time. On Democracy for America’s
main website, a DFA Night School DVD can be purchased online instructing members how to influence the mainstream media. DFA-TB sent an e-mail to group members when they discovered Howard Dean would be visiting Tampa; the event they put on to welcome him led to interviews with reporters from the *Tampa Tribune* and WMNF Radio, a local progressive community radio station. Letter to the editor tools are also provided online. In sum, we can identify a few distinct patterns emerging in this relationship between old and new forms of media through DFA that may be suggestive of larger patterns of convergence: First, it enables Internet-using SMOs to collectively know about particular news stories and hold group discussions concerning them online. Second, it allows such SMOs to quickly react to the news reporting practices of old media. Third, the Internet offers a means of teaching SMO members about effective practices to influence the media, both short-term through sample LTEs and long-term through online sales of training DVDs. Fourth, the Internet can be used by SMOs to coordinate events that can garner media coverage. Fifth, Internet usage can provide easy information to reporters wishing to know the inside workings of an SMO.

The complexity of convergence culture, as well as many of the other findings I have noted, are well-illustrated by the following incident. It started with Tom DeLay’s involvement in political scandal: “A Texas grand jury indicted House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Tex.)… on a charge of criminally conspiring with two political associates to inject illegal corporate contributions into 2002 state elections that helped the Republican Party reorder the congressional map in Texas and cement its control of the House in Washington” (Smith 2005). In April 2006, under pressure from his fellow Republicans, DeLay announced he would withdraw from the general election. Jim Dean responded to DeLay’s announcement with a post on Blog for America entitled “Tom DeLay is a Chicken”:

Tom DeLay announced he's quitting Congress today because he's afraid of losing his seat to a Democrat.
Democracy for America has dogged DeLay for years. With TV commercials and billboards, at rallies and online, DFA has been on the front lines of the battle to clean up Congress. But we didn't think DeLay would "cut and run" like he did.

If he did nothing wrong—as he claims—then Tom DeLay shouldn't be afraid of a re-election campaign in a district he drew for himself. But he is quitting by mid-June.

Let's help send Tom DeLay the rubber chicken award he so richly deserves….

For every $50 Democracy for America raises today, we'll send Tom DeLay an authentic rubber chicken for his mantle. It'll be our goodbye present.

[Jim Dean 2006]

Democracy for Houston went to Tom DeLay’s office in Sugarland, Texas, to deliver the rubber chickens that DFA-national had collected, as well as a poster with quotes from DFA members about DeLay. The poster included the cover of an issue of Texas Monthly magazine with Tom DeLay’s picture and a headline of: “Don’t Let The Door Hit You.” While walking in the building, one member said: “I just hope we don’t get arrested.” The Democracy for Houston members looked at the building directory, figured out they were looking for room 118, and continued down the hallway. At the door, a man with a striped shirt answered the door. “We’re here to deliver some items for Mr. DeLay,” one of the Democracy for Houston members said. The DeLay employee was given a large rubber chicken first, then the poster with explanation, and finally a bag of small rubber chickens; his speech had the uncertain, struggling quality of everyday conversation rather than a rehearsed, polished performance we are accustomed to seeing on television. “If you’d like to share these with the congressman,” the Democracy for Houston member said. “I’ll let him know,” the employee replied; “We can’t accept the gifts, obviously.
We don’t know how much value they have, with house rules. But we can take the poster.” The employee then takes the poster and hands back the large yellow rubber chicken. On the way out, a female Democracy for Houston member asks the cameraman if he got the preceding event on tape, which he confirms. After adding credits with an inflatable hammer that has “gone limp” and a link to DFA-Link, the footage is then uploaded to YouTube (Zipp 2006a). A link to this YouTube video then appears on a Blog for America post (Liloia 2006). This BFA post received 142 comments. Some served as political commentary: “let me seen he can take thousands from lobbyists but can't take a rubber chicken cause it is considered a ‘gift’. funny” (lindab 2006). Other commenters provided another layer of complexity to the convergence: “How much is it gonna cost to get it on the MSM?” (MonicaSmith 2006), said one. Another wrote:

…I found this rubber chicken video not that funny.

For starters, what's with the dressing-down untucked shirt of the main presenter, paper-glued/stapled onto a poster board messages, the snickering from the other presenters ? IMO it didn't look professional at all and I thought that the Tom Delay staffer who answered the door acted professionally.

IMO I'd be embarrassed to see this video get out onto the MSM. [rdorgan 2006]

Yet another commenter combined political commentary with criticism of BFA’s trolling problem: “Thanks to Democracy for Houston for a fantastic laugh. Funny about bullies like Tom Delay...and Blog Bullies too...when confronted and called to account, they just chicken out. Just like that yellow chicken!” (ElaineinRoanokeVA 2006). I was not able to find any coverage of this event on Lexis-Nexis, suggesting the mainstream media did not cover it. On YouTube, where it potentially could have been viewed by a more diverse audience, it only received 963 views and 3 comments (as of 1/5/07). There were some blog entries about the event besides the BFA post, including an entry on the Democracy for Houston DFA-Link blog (McNutt 2006), an
entry by a participating member of Democracy for Houston (Zipp 2006b), an entry on the blog of Democracy for Metro Detroit (2006), and an entry on a user blog hosted by DemocraticUnderground.com (WestHoustonDem 2006). None of these blogs appear to reach an especially large audience.

This event shows the coalescence of many of the themes touched on throughout this dissertation. Tom DeLay’s situation would not have been possible without the Republicans rise to power after the Carter administration, aided by corporate financing, conservative Christian backing, and gerrymandering (Chapter 3). Republican domination resulted in the discontent that gave rise to DFA (Chapters 6 and 7). DFA’s liberal/progressive beliefs, which include the necessity of activism (Chapter 4), led to their involvement with Tom DeLay. DFA-national collaborated with Democracy for Houston, working together as partners rather than hierarchically, with DFA-national doing online fundraising through Blog for America to pay for the chickens and Democracy for Houston doing the delivery (Chapter 5). Their strategy was shaped a desire to influence elections and to create unfavorable images of their opponents, and was debated by members (Chapter 8). The debate took place on Blog for America, which included a reference to their ongoing trolling problem (Chapters 5 and 8). Convergence took place in a number of ways, including mainstream media’s initial coverage of Tom DeLay leading to BFA’s posts on the scandal, BFA’s coverage including a plea for money to create the media spectacle of delivering rubber chickens, the inclusion of a magazine cover in their spectacle, the use of YouTube to distribute the video and BFA to publicize it, and the ensuing discussion on BFA of how and whether they should pursue a strategy of getting the mainstream media to cover the video. Doubts included whether the video looked professional, showing both the more limited pool of expertise Democracy for America has to draw upon in devising their strategies (Chapter 8) and the importance of images in American society (Chapter 3). Ultimately, like most
of DFA’s activities in the post-Howard Dean era, no mainstream media coverage was forthcoming (Chapter 9).

**Social Movements and Classification**

Is DFA genuinely a social movement organization? As previously noted, Snow et al (2004) found that most definitions of social movements “are based on three or more of the following axes: collective or joint action; change-oriented goals or claims; some extra- or non-institutional collective action; some degree of organization; and some degree of temporal continuity” (p. 6). By now, it should be clear that DFA fits most of these criteria; hundreds of thousands of participants sought to “take back the country” by organizing online and offline. The only part that may still appear problematic with this classification is the “extra- or non-institutional” aspect, which, as Burstein (1998) pointed out, is not a meaningful distinction. He argues convincingly that this distinction has been made because of an academic division of labor rather than theoretical strength, with sociology claiming “social movements” and political science claiming “interest groups” as their own. Interest groups and SMOs both want change (or want to prevent change), so their goals are not a workable distinction between them (p. 42). Attempts to distinguish between the two based on the level of power imbalance raises problematic issues about operationalizing power (p. 45). If SMOs are said to represent “outsiders,” then the researcher must find a way to support this insider-outsider dichotomy, and the SMO probably should no longer be considered an SMO if they start to succeed, even if all other social aspects remain essentially the same (p. 42). Citing tactics as the distinguishing feature, with one using “disruptive” tactics, such as boycotts and sit-ins, while the other does not, fails because the “highly conventional” tactics usually attributed to interest groups often have disruptive consequences while tactics attributed to SMOs are “often… orderly and predictable” (p. 43). Moreover, there is shared tactical repertoire between groups labeled as SMOs and interest groups.
There is “no fundamental discontinuity” between interest groups and SMOs, so it makes no sense to say that DFA was one or the other. For instance, as pointed out in Chapter 8, DC for Democracy briefly considered more “disruptive” tactics to achieve their goal of DC statehood, and rejected the idea because of its perceived ineffectiveness in their situation, not because of any academic classification.

Parties are a third type of group considered distinct by social scientists, and even Burstein admits that there is a meaningful distinction to be made here. The distinction between SMOs / interest groups and political parties is the latter’s “control of access to office” (1998: 47). Parties participate in a very public arena filled with regulations and constraints that SMOs / interest groups do not face (p. 47). We may therefore conclude that DFA could be considered a party when it was still Dean For America based on this criteria; after all, Dean’s goal (at least, one major goal) was to become president, and this meant that DFA had to deal with the existing regulations and constraints (e.g. the caucus process, FEC filings, etc.). However, Burstein also notes: “When political parties exist, most people are likely to find it least costly to express their interests through the parties; only when parties fail them are people likely to think about establishing alternative organizations” (1998: 49). As I have noted, Dean and his supporters felt that the Democratic Party had let them down, and created a different form of organization to challenge them. The unusually-strong response by his own party to attack Dean (Dean 2004a: 23-4) and the persistently-negative media coverage (Center for Media and Public Affairs 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d; Dean 2004a: 13, 14, 22; also see Figures 4, 39) seem to suggest the applicability of using an SMO frame of reference even while competing for public office. Are these responses really fundamentally different than the “Political Opportunity Structures” that political process theorists speak of? This picture is complicated even further when we consider that many SMOs/interest groups are “not competing with the parties; they [are] nodes within the broader party networks” (Skinner 2005: 1). Rather than focusing on coming up with better
distinctions between interest groups, SMOs, and parties, Burstein (1998) suggests that our “central focus must be democratic politics” (p. 51); “If government is affected by many factors (and we have every reason to believe that it is) then it makes little sense to conduct what amounts to a series of bivariate studies” (p. 51).

What Does DFA Mean for Democracy?

One of the issues facing American society is social fragmentation. Bellah et al. refer to lifestyle enclaves:

A term used in contrast to community… A lifestyle enclave is formed by people who share some feature of private life. Members of a lifestyle enclave express their identity through shared patterns of appearance, consumption, and leisure activities, which often serve to differentiate them sharply from those with other lifestyles. They are not interdependent, do not act politically, and do not share a history. If these things begin to appear, the enclave is on the way to becoming a community. Many of what are called communities in America are mixtures of communities in our strong sense and lifestyle enclaves. [Bellah et al. 1985: 335]

In addition, “those with other lifestyles… are not necessarily despised. They may be willingly tolerated. But they are irrelevant or even invisible in terms of one’s own lifestyle enclave” (1985: 72). One member of DFA-TB expressed frustration at how she was unable to convince her friends to become politically involved; she said she rarely finds the time to engage in social activities with these friends now that her free time is devoted to Democracy for America.

Putnam’s view of social capital distinguishes between bridging and bonding forms (2000: 22). Bonding social capital are “inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups” (2000: 22), while bridging social capital is “outward looking and encompass[es] people across diverse social cleavages” (2000: 22). We should therefore ask what
are the characteristics of DFA internally, and the social ties that exist with other segments of society.

*Deliberative Dialogue*, as the name suggests, is the union between the concepts of deliberation and dialogue:

The process of *dialogue*, as it is usually understood, can bring many benefits to civic life—an orientation toward constructive communication, the dispelling of stereotypes, honesty in relying ideas, and the intention to listen to and understand the other. A related process, *deliberation*, brings a different benefit—the use of critical thinking and reasoned argument as a way for citizens to make decisions on public policy. [McCoy and Scully 2002: 117]

This concept is a useful framework for examining DFA in terms of the aforementioned concerns about social fragmentation, because in addition to the qualities of the talk itself, McCoy and Scully also point out that deliberative dialogue should “be structured so that the conversation can have an impact on public life” (2002: 118). It is based upon an ideal of democracy “in which there are ongoing, structured opportunities for everyone to meet as citizens, across different backgrounds and affiliations, and not just as members of a group with similar interests and ideas” (p. 119). They elaborate the concept with a list of 10 elements important to achieving deliberative dialogue:

1. Encourage multiple forms of speech and communication to ensure that all kinds of people have a real voice. (p. 120)

2. Make listening as important as speaking. (p. 121)

3. Connect personal experience with public issues. (p. 121)

4. Build trust and create a foundation for working relationships. (p. 122)

5. Explore a range of views about the nature of the issue. (p. 123)

6. Encourage analysis and reasoned argument. (p. 124)
7. Help people develop public judgment and create common ground for action. (p. 124)
8. Provide a way for people to see themselves as actors and to be actors. (p. 125)
9. Connect to government, policymaking, and governance. (p. 126)
10. Create ongoing processes, not isolated events. (p. 128)

When looking at DFA through the lens of deliberative dialogue, it shines in some ways and comes up short in others. Some of the ways it does well include building a foundation of trust for working relationships, providing ways for people to see themselves as a part of the political process rather than apart from it, and creating ongoing processes rather than isolated events.

DFA-TB has had mixed success at connecting to government and policymaking. “A common practice in public talk processes is to ask participants to report the results of their deliberation to elected officials. Yet if the process does not include a way to establish trust and mutuality between citizens and government, it will fall short of helping them work together more effectively” (McCoy and Scully 2002: 126). The level of trust and mutuality between DFA and politicians, both actual and aspiring, seems largely correlated with political party and ideology.

Skinner (2005) notes that 527 groups are “nodes within the broader party networks” (p. 1), and that “[p]ersonnel move between groups in the same party network” (p. 4). DFA-TB has had the opportunity to meet, question, and work with a variety of Democratic candidates; they have succeeded at mixing government and policymaking in these cases. However, because the American electoral system is pluralistic and partisan, DFA-TB’s input is neither sought nor offered to Republicans—at least, not in a straightforward form. When DFA-TB’s supported candidate Phyllis Busansky lost to Gus Bilirakis, one of DFA-TB’s members started a blog called “Gus Watch” to gather opposition research on Bilirakis for the next election. Opposition research, letters to the editor, and other forms of ensuring the Republican loses in the next election is the manner in which DFA-TB offers their input to Republicans. The level of partisanship present within American society means that Gus Bilirakis does not need DFA-TB’s
support so long as he maintains at least a slim majority of voters, and would likely draw the ire of conservative activists if he were to reach out to a group like DFA-TB. Given this situation, it makes sense that DFA-TB focuses their energy on unseating Bilirakis rather than attempting dialogue with him. The same set of conditions leads to the same outcome on the other side of the political aisle; a Democratic politician allied with DFA-TB described at one meeting how he received a barrage of 3,500 e-mails in support of Terri’s Law, leading him to think that his view on Terri Schiavo may have cost him his career. However, he later found out that the e-mails were part of a coordinated effort by a conservative political group and not a representative sample of opinion among his constituents. This conservative group had clearly decided to create a misleading impression rather than attempt a dialogue with him about his concerns.

Besides limited success at establishing any kind of mutual, trusting relationship with conservative politicians, DFA has also had limited success at connecting their views and actions to policymaking because of social conditions being increasingly determined by market forces rather than by government. DFA-TB’s organizer once mentioned that because he was troubled by “how nasty and right-wing talk radio is,” he decided to talk to radio station owners about his concerns. For his efforts, he only got a “pat on the head”; some of them told him that they voted for John Kerry in the 2004 election, but they feel their hands by what is profitable rather than what they might personally prefer. The organizer’s conclusion from this experience is that DFA-TB should work towards building a case for progressive talk radio as a business decision rather than in terms of diversity of opinion and the public good. Like in electoral politics, numbers are key rather than consensus, although in this case, the numbers have a dollar sign in front of them.

One major shortcoming in terms of deliberative dialogue is the lack of diversity among DFA members, a problem they acknowledge themselves and would like to see remedied. DFA is primarily secular, white, and affluent. It seems quite possible that making certain changes may encourage greater diversity within DFA in terms of age, class, and race/ethnicity. However,
McCoy and Scully point out that “No single organization or institution acting on its own can mobilize the whole community” (2002: 129). DFA’s sociocultural system has been shaped by its constituency, and reaching out to other organizations and social networks must be done with consideration of the existing constituencies values. Deliberative dialogue could still be achieved if structured opportunities for fruitful conversations with other organizations (that is, TANs with different lifestyle enclaves, bonding social capital, etc.). Throughout the course of my research, I found that DFA interacts with other groups with liberal/progressive/Democratic values and aims (e.g. MoveOn.org) frequently, though rarely has working with unions and black churches been mentioned, and never has working with conservative groups been given consideration. In fact, one DFA-TB member mentioned that when one of their members began arguing in favor of the Iraq War, she and other members of the group began arguing so vehemently against it that the person never came to another DFA-TB meeting. While it may be tempting to fault DFA-TB for making this individual feel unwelcome, DFA-TB functions as a place where liberals/progressives outraged at conservative ideologies and policies can feel listened to in a group of their ideological peers.

Listening could be improved at DFA meetings. One problem that I observed at both DC for Democracy and DFA-TB is sticking to schedule; McCoy and Scully note that “people find it easier to listen when they do not have to jockey for an opportunity to stand in front of large numbers of people and get all their ideas out in one fell swoop” (2002: 121). For example, at DFA-TB’s January 2007 meeting, the organizer opened by going around the group and asking each member to give a “political new years resolution,” an idea provided by DFA national. This was an opportunity to be listened to, although a very structured one; DFA national and the organizer had provided the topic, ensuring that those who had not made a “political new years resolution”—in other words, those without an existing history of progressive political activism—could not provide a contribution to the group activity that would be as valued as long-time
activists. Also, the schedule handed out at the beginning of the meeting had structured what would be a reasonable amount of time. After going around the room, each person using approximately a minute to speak, a woman with a noticeable accent began talking about her life, discussing her Russian background, being the first woman in her chosen career in the American city she worked in, and all the various ways in which she saw Americans as being “prehistoric.” She expressed, for instance, her shock at how casually Americans can step over homeless people when walking down city streets. The group organizer seemed torn between wanting this new person to feel welcome, but wanting to stop her from continuing to throw the schedule off-track. The woman acknowledged that she had a tendency to talk for a long time, which brought a whispered joke and audible laughter from other members, leaving open the interpretation that it was at the Russian woman’s expense even if it was not. The next person to speak opened his remarks by promising, “I’ll keep it real brief,” seemingly a veiled criticism of the Russian woman’s verbosity. He quickly breaks his promise; speaking at length about a local election that he would like members to get involved in, he talks about how much money the candidate’s opponent has raised, the importance of the race for Democrats, how the race is winnable with their help, and so on. The group organizer jumps in, saying: “To cut to the chase, people can contact you [to get involved]”; he apparently felt it was necessary to “cut to the chase” because of the speaker’s failure to “keep it real brief.”

This incident shows that personal experience is not always valued at DFA meetings; for it to be valued, it must fit with the topic defined by the organizer, it must remain brief, and it must be congruent with DFA’s liberal/progressive, activist beliefs. McCoy and Scully point out that “all too often public engagement processes ask people to leap into a discussion of policy options without giving them adequate opportunity to reflect on the relevance of the issue to their own personal experience. If you hope you engage people, you need to ‘begin where they are’ by helping them address public concerns in their own language and on their own terms” (McCoy and
It is understandable that DFA organizers would want to reaffirm the value of political activism by setting such topics, and it is also understandable that they would want to avoid members monopolizing the limited time in which the group has to meet. However, in doing so, they may be failing to connect personal experience with public issues. “Grounding the discussion in personal experience makes it easier for people who are not accustomed to talking about politics in public to participate fully. It sends the message that everyone’s perspective is equally important” (McCoy and Scully 2002: 122). I contend that listening could be improved if ground rules about time use could be established, and if DFA-Link were made into a vibrant virtual community where ideas and experiences that could not be fully expressed at the meetings could result on online dialogues.

Could online dialogues on virtual communities fulfill this role of helping achieve deliberative dialogue? Debates about the idea of “virtual community” have continued ever since Howard Rheingold popularized the term in 1993 (Silver 2000). The contention that various forms of media are creating or destroying communities has plenty of precedent; nineteenth century romance novels were once claimed to be destroying community because “young women were spending too much time in the unhealthy, solitary company of cheap novels” (Bird 2003: 55-6), while television was once claimed to create community because viewers could “stay at home, watch community meetings, [and] vote on-screen” (Lockard 1997: 226). Similar debates to these have emerged as to whether virtual communities can truly be considered community or not. Lockard writes: “What Rheingold et al. really offer is the vision of cyberspace immateriality as a lifestyle choice. Yet materiality has been the historic bedrock of individual/community relations, and it is difficult to accept the notion that advanced communications represent an evolutionary flying leap into immaterial communities, a domain hitherto reserved for promises of divine reward” (1997: 225). This argument is now somewhat dated, as Internet tools that aid face-to-face meetings (such as Meetup.com) have become increasingly commonplace. In
addition, Bird (2003: 58-85) shows that online communications are not necessarily anonymous, ungoverned, or emotionless, contrary to what some critics have said. If this can happen with Internet-only virtual communities, it should not be surprising to find it present where virtual community is combined with offline meetings, as is the case with DFA.

Let’s examine DFA’s virtual community in terms of the salient questions listed in Table 1. Do members really desire to participate in DFA virtual communities? Participation in DFA can be viewed as a lifestyle enclave in that it provides “an appropriate form of collective support in an otherwise radically individualizing society” (Bellah et al. 1985: 73); similarly, DFA virtual communities provide collective support for those seeking a social network based around progressive activism. DFA’s virtual communities are places where members can learn something; Blog for America, for instance, offers political information and dialogue that are often lacking from mainstream media (Kerbel and Bloom 2005). Are DFA’s virtual communities enjoyable places to spend time in? This tends to vary by virtual community; members of DFA Chat and the “Shadow Blog” seemed to enjoy their virtual communities, while Blog for America and many DFA-Link groups are troubled by trolling and neglect. Discussions often cite their sources with a link on DFA virtual communities, although academic citation practices are not required. The appropriate level of tolerance for arguments is a major source of disagreement on Blog for America, while rarely occurs on DFA Chat or DFA-Link. These virtual communities are ongoing rather than momentary. Viewpoints that generally fit with conceptions of liberal/progressive values are accepted, while conservative viewpoints will result in challenges. Their virtual communities are almost always moderated in some fashion. Entry to these virtual communities generally only requires registration. Anonymity can be achieved to some degree by providing the minimal amount of information necessary for registration, although on DFA-Link, members frequently create more complete user profiles. Whether a particular locality is served depends on whether the group is national, state, or local; in a sense, even the national-level
groups serve a locality since the group is Democracy for America. State-level and local-level groups have the added advantage of offline meetings. DFA’s virtual communities definitely focus on a particular topic—namely, electing socially progressive, fiscally responsible candidates to office. Given these characteristics, it seems that old criticisms of virtual communities as anonymous, emotionless, ungoverned, and in conflict with “real” communities are inapplicable. These virtual communities tend to promote enduring social networks and civic engagement.

The nature of virtual communities has implications for Habermas’ concept of the public sphere, a concept which “suggests an arena of exchange” (Poster 1997: 206). The public sphere serves as a useful entry point to discussions on the connections between virtual community and democracy by asking the question: “where is the public sphere, where is the place citizens interact to form opinions in relation to which public policy must be attuned?” (Poster 1997: 207). The concept of the public sphere has been criticized on a number of grounds, including its “logocentric” privileging of rationality over emotion (Poster 1997: 207), failing to adequately address changing notions of public and private (p. 208-9), and for its “phonocentric” privileging of embodied voices over disembodied voices and text (Deluca and Peeples 2002: 129-30).

Perhaps most importantly, if the public sphere is “a domain of uncoerced conversation oriented toward pragmatic accord” (p. 207), then the prominence of corporate news media makes the public sphere problematic (p. 207), even though some opportunities still exist to have one’s message heard within it (DeLuca and Peeplees 2002: 136). Virtual communities could conceivably provide an alternative arena of exchange and “serve as organizing centers for political discussion and action” (Poster 1997: 207); Poster argues that the Internet aids democratization “because the acts of discourse are not limited to one-way address” (1997: 211).

DFA seems to provide an example of virtual community functioning as “an arena of exchange,” though it also illustrates the difficulties and limitations of virtual community acting as public sphere. Even if all other aspects are ideal facilitators of fruitful political discourse (that is,
assuming the problems of trolling, neglect, etc. are overcome), as long as the digital divide exist along the lines previously described (race, class, age, etc.) and civic involvement remains a lifestyle enclave participated in by few, virtual communities (and their offline counterparts) by themselves cannot be considered an inclusive public sphere. While DFA is closer to the Internet 1.0 ideal of interactivity (Meikle 2002), its membership is still predominantly white and affluent, and held together by shared liberal/progressive ideologies. DFA’s attempts to include more of the public in the public sphere revealed another deficiency in applying the public sphere concept, at least within the United States. A Pew study found remarkably little knowledge among the public about the Dean campaign (see Figure 53), and Dean activists found it rather difficult to educate the public about their candidate:

> When she tries to gauge people's preference in candidates, they respond with answers that reveal how little they've paid attention.

> 'They say, 'I like this candidate better because he's nice,'' Wold said. Or because a candidate 'looks presidential.'

> 'You start talking about issues, and they blank out,' she said. [Cindy Rodriguez 2004]

This communication failure seems to reflect what a Pew study found: “In many respects, Dean activists resemble other political activists on the left and right. They are more interested and engaged in politics, more ideological, and better educated than the average citizen or their fellow partisans” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2005a: 2). And, on the other side of the equation, it also seems to reflect what Chomsky (2005) wrote about elections: “For many years, election campaigns here have been run by the public relations industry and each time it’s with increasing sophistication. Quite naturally, the industry uses the same technique to sell candidates that it uses to sell toothpaste or lifestyle drugs. The point is to undermine markets by projecting imagery to delude and suppress information—and similarly, to undermine democracy
by the same method” (Chomsky 2005). Perhaps there is something to be said for retaining some
degree of “logocentrism” in our concept of the public sphere after all, despite the aforementioned
criticisms.

Characterizing our society as an “information era” as some have done may reveal that an
abundance of information is available at our fingertips, but conceals that more knowledge is
needed to decipher increasingly-specialized knowledge, strategies of knowledge sifting and
information packets are employed, and informing oneself may not be culturally valued (Ungar
2003). Since images are readily available and central to the way people process information, they
are often employed as part of the information packets that are disseminated from organizations
seeking to persuade the public. Similarly, in reaching out to the public, DFA emphasizes framing
and brevity over depth and nuance—in their own words, “gimmicks”—so that they can appeal to
“people who devote only five minute to informing themselves before an election.”

On both sides of the political spectrum, there are groups like DFA combining online and
offline activism (e.g. MoveOn.org on the left, FreeRepublic.com on the right). Are we witnessing
“cyberbalkanization”, and if so, is DFA perpetuating this, or are they utilizing deliberative
dialogue to overcome it? One study of liberal and conservative blogs found that “91% of the
links originating within either the conservative or liberal communities stay within that
community” (Adamic and Glance 2005: 4). Anecdotal evidence from a journalist who invited a
liberal blogger and a conservative blogger to meet in person may illustrate the difficulty in
achieving deliberative dialogue: “You get the feeling they could go on…forever, argument
spawning argument in a free-form improvisation, the way jazz artists can trade riff for riff all
evening. If you suspend your desire to reach some resolution, you can, perhaps, admire this
dexterity of the human brain, the ability to assemble the jigsaw pieces of reality into any number
of completed pictures” (Von Drehle 2005: 28). Even within the larger party networks,
cooperation can be problematic. Rebeiro (1998) found that while the Internet can make alliances
between political organizations with compatible goals easier, it can also create a similar problem to what Von Drehle described in doing so: “To the extent that this flexibility permits pragmatic and heterodox alliances that prove to be effective in many circumstances, it is also responsible for a certain ideological and political fuzziness that may result in endless debates about tactics, strategic initiatives, and appropriate discourse” (Ribeiro 1998: 335).

As described in Chapter 8, at one event, DFA-TB members chanted: “Tell me what Democracy looks like, THIS is what Democracy looks like!” So what does Democracy for America’s democracy look like? Apparently, it looks like passionate progressives who tend towards particular demographics—mostly white, affluent, secular, and older nowadays than in the Dean for America days. They are aware of this and would like to attract more diversity, but have thus far been unable to. These progressives are well-connected to other groups within the Democratic party network (Skinner 2005), forming the “emerging progressive media network” (see Chapter 9). This network is not without its tensions, as the Lieberman-Lamont primary illustrated. They make frequent efforts to get the public more politically involved, though membership growth has been slow. They have their counterparts on the right, with their own network of connections between the Republican Party, conservative media outlets, and activist groups. Both sides operate under the cultural logic of a pluralistic election system, seeking to manipulate public opinion with “gimmicks” rather creating systematic deliberative dialogue. The anthropological literature on democracy reveals “contemporary democracies as enacting forms of power—perhaps less directly repressive than military dictatorships, but nonetheless falling short of democratic ideals” (Paley 2002: 471). In the United States, “political democracy is characterized by low voter turn-out, a powerful role of money in the political system, and widespread income, gender, and racial inequality” (p. 470). In these ways, American democracy still looks the same. Yet DFA’s demonstration of what “democracy looks like” does show some signs of promise. They have shown the Internet’s potential to fundraise, allowing Howard Dean
to become frontrunner when he seemed destined to fail by all traditional measures. In doing so, DFA showed that relying on many small donations instead of a few large donations is a viable method of financing a campaign. This method worked by involving 300,000 (Carpenter 2004: 22) middle-class Americans in the “wealth primary”; in previous presidential elections, the wealth primary was described as “the private referendum held the year before any votes are cast anywhere, in which thousands of the richest Americans—one-tenth of 1 percent of the population—make the maximum allowable campaign contribution” (Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity 2004: 4). They have shown that Internet is still “a tremendous tool for information, understanding, organizing, and communication” (Chomsky and Barsamian 2001: 137), and that the business world, despite their intentions, have not been able to “turn it into something else… [which would] be a very serious blow to freedom and democracy” (2001: 137). DFA has shown what elements can aid and impede other virtual communities seeking to replicate their success; these elements are not just a matter of configuring software, but of finding ways to integrate new communication technologies into social networks. In pointing out the discrepancy between our ideals of democracy what Democracy for America looks like, we should not ignore these accomplishments, which, if successfully built upon by DFA and other SMOs, could potentially lead to greater citizen involvement at all levels of the Democratic process.

Discussion: An Anthropological Approach

Wilson and Peterson argue that “anthropology is uniquely suited for the study of socioculturally situated online communication within a rapidly changing context. Anthropological methodologies enable the investigation of cross-cultural, multi-leveled, multi-sited phenomenon; emerging constructions of individual and collective identity; and the culturally embedded nature of emerging communicative and social practices” (Wilson and Peterson 2002: 450). While “uniquely suited” seems perhaps too strongly worded, this dissertation has suggest
that an anthropological approach bring something useful to the table for Internet studies, social movement studies, and their intersection. This is not to suggest that approaches commonly used by other disciplines are inferior, nor do I suggest that research in other disciplines always lacks the qualities Wilson and Peterson identify as anthropological. Instead, I am making a much more modest suggestion that an anthropological approach consistently places these research emphases that can enrich interdisciplinary debates on these topics.

An anthropological approach to Internet-using SMOs recognizes the value of grounding theory in concrete actors, situations, and experiences. Cases were shown where the analysis of DFA without this ethnographic grounding led scholars to wrongly conclude that the end of the Dean campaign would mean the end of DFA. It recognizes that “[i]nter-networked computers are cultural products that exist in the social and political worlds within which they were developed, and they are not exempt from the rules and norms of those worlds” (Wilson and Peterson 2002: 462). At the same time, it also recognizes that neither are the social and political worlds in which Internet-using SMOs exist exempt from the cultural politics they enact to challenge dominant cultural truths. An anthropological approach looks at the meaning-making processes involved at the intersection of politics, communication technologies, and everyday life. It is a clarion call to keep theory—including theories of democracy, virtual community, and “computer revolution”—firmly embedded in the cultural complexities of localized settings.
Notes

1 Gamson (2004: 260-1 n2) disputes Burstein’s contention that the distinction between social movements and interest groups is untenable and should be done away with. He feels that the existing theoretical distinctions “allow us to form ideal types against which to judge actual organizations” (p. 260 n2). However, he also admits that he sees the use value of a more generalized category that includes both. For further discussion, also see Kitschelt (2003).

2 The terms social movement and social movement organization [SMO] are used interchangeably throughout these essays. However, some social movement theorists distinguish between the two. For example, Lofland (1996: 11) says that SMOs are the named associations that are part of the larger movement towards a particular change-oriented goal.

3 Burstein (1998) recommends “interest organization” to label these organizations since choosing between “social movement organization” and “interest group” is choosing between upsetting sociologists and political scientists (p. 45). Rather than adopt his term, I am sticking with “social movement” since I do not have any political scientists on my dissertation committee to upset.

4 “It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 1991: 6).

5 It should be noted that “[a]ll the Western languages use the metaphorical term ‘movement’...: ‘Soziale Bewegung,’ ‘mouvement social,’ ‘sociala rörelse,’ etc.” (Heberle 1949: 349).

6 The term “social movement” certainly seems retroactively applicable to earlier instances of collective action as well (Nicholas 1973: 63).

7 Davis (2002) agrees that “by far the greater fraction of anthropological effort has been devoted to investigating the small-scale societies, remote communities, and ethnic minorities,” but also claims that “a large proportion of [indigenous social movements] involve religious themes and symbols; i.e., they call on shared supernatural beliefs as a source of unity, and on supernatural power to effect what their political means are too modest to accomplish.” In other words, Davis seesanthropology’s focus on religious movements and third-world movements as being connected, rather than simply two unrelated areas of the subject matter that anthropology laid claim to vis-à-vis other social sciences. Of course, these claims raise problematic issues about how one defines religion and politics that need not be addressed here (see Nicholas 1973: 66 for discussion).

8 Others have suggested this academic division of labor as well. Kaplan and Manners (1971) wrote: “From its inception, anthropology has—at least in principle—considered all cultures at all times and in all places to be its legitimate province. In practice, however, anthropologists have generally concerned themselves with non-Western cultures, and especially with the small-scale and exotic among these... by the middle of the 19th century political science, economics, and even sociology were emerging as fields of study which dealt primarily with the institutions of Western society... they apparently did not see much purpose in either abandoning their concern with the institutions of their own culture or conducting first-hand research among ‘primitive people’” (p. 20). Crist and McCarthy’s (1996) review of social movement studies methodology in sociology journals found it was rare for non-Western, industrialized nations to be included (p. 99). Burstein (1998: 39) writes: “Anyone reading what social scientists have to say about democratic politics would conclude that there are three types of intermediary organizations linking citizens and governments: social movement organizations (SMOs), interest groups, and political parties... The three types are studied separately, for the most part, by different scholars in different disciplines (sociologists focus on social movement organizations, political scientists on interest groups and parties). Each type of organization has essentially a separate subdiscipline, with its own history and theories.”

9 The degree to which early 20th century anthropologists were guilty of reifying culture has been exaggerated, according to some (see Brumann 1999: S1-S6; Bashkow 2004; Rosenblatt 2004).
According to Garfield (1984), there were nine articles that received at least 100 citations in core anthropology journals between 1966 and 1982. Wallace’s 1956 article on revitalization movements came in fourth place with 156 citations.

Ethnography has certainly not remained confined to anthropology since its inception, however; “the remarkable renewal and growth of ethnography over the past decade has touched an unprecedented variety of knowledge domains ranging from education, law, media and science studies to geography, history, management and design, to gender studies and nursing. Far from being an extinct or endangered species, as the prophets of postmodern gloom would have us believe, ethnography is a proliferating animal that walks on multiplying feet. But, for reasons having to do with its intellectual history and institutional ecology, its two main legs remain anthropology and sociology” (Wacquant 2003: 6).

Rounds (1982) did a citation analysis of *Human Organization* and found that “[i]t is immediately obvious… that *Human Organization* is only weakly connected to mainstream anthropology literature” (p. 169). Stoffle (1982) criticized Rounds’ methodology, saying (among other things) that *Human Organization* is a “specialized” journal that cannot be compared to a “core” journal like *American Anthropologist*. Even if one were to accept this argument, it does not explain why a “specialized” journal would be ignored by *Annual Review of Anthropology* when *Human Organization* contains articles relevant to the subject being reviewed.

In addition to the theoretical advances of basic anthropology being less useful, applied anthropologists often were not allowed the luxury of spending years doing their fieldwork in the positions they took, forcing them to “diversify their methodological toolkit” more than basic anthropologists, often in the form of surveys (Finan and van Willigen 2002: 63).

It should be noted that many studies in psychology suffer from an inherent ethnocentrism, and therefore it may be good to read such studies with a healthy dose of skepticism before accepting the universality of their conclusions. See Fish (2000) for details.

The four-field approach in anthropology is probably sufficient to ensure that cultural anthropologists have some background with this level of analysis.

An example of when this may be the case is Thompson’s (1996) biocultural study of breastfeeding.

While Lofland claims that all seven are common, Earl (2000) makes the following claims: “little research has examined movement outcomes, intentional or otherwise” (p. 4); “the study of intra-movement outcomes is far more developed than the study of extra-movement outcomes” (p. 4); political extra-movement outcomes have been studied more frequently than cultural extra-movement outcomes (p. 5); and the study of political extra-movement outcomes has primarily focused on “success” (p. 5).

My own research (Porter 2004) somewhat contradicts this; I found that anthropologists seem to primarily view studies of cyberspace in terms of transnationalism/globalization and in terms of linguistic anthropology.

For example, Riverbend (2005) is an Iraqi blogger who talks about her life after the U.S. invasion. Because part of her life consists of consuming (and reacting to) news media and talk about her life often includes events that seem “newsworthy,” it is difficult to classify her blog as just a personal blog or just a news blog.

A similar trend was found by Piven and Cloward (1979: 82-92) in that federal relief programs, coupled with elite cooption of movement leadership, resulted in a sharp decline in the ability of the unemployed worker’s movement to mobilize protests.

Lofland (1996) describes a similar concept: “many ethnic, national, or religious enclaves harbor standing perceptions of injustice, or… ‘cultural traditions of activism’” (p. 188).

Before the Internet, there was also Governor Jerry Brown’s use of a 1-800 number in 1990 (Trippi 2004: 48-50); “that 800 number became the key to Brown’s surprising run—his message, his organization, his fund-raising all rolled into one media-savvy, interactive bundle” (p. 49).

Graffiti carries an outlaw image with it (Glazer 1979: 3-4; Castleman 1982), something one might not expect from someone in a position of institutional legitimacy, much less poised to be a serious presidential contender.

This commercial draws upon the “latte liberal” concept perpetuated by conservatives, which is “the suggestion that liberals are identifiable by their tastes and consumer preferences and that these tastes and preferences reveal the essential arrogance and foreignness of liberalism. While a more straightforward discussion of politics might begin by considering the economic interests that each party serves, the latte
liberal insists that such interests are irrelevant. Instead it's the places that people live and the things they
drink, eat, and drive that are the critical factors, the clues that bring us to the truth" (Frank 2004: 16-17).
Dean in particular was targeted as a “latte liberal” by conservatives, not just in that one commercial (p. 17).
Election maps, with their red-or-blue, winner-take-all way of dividing states, have helped provide the
boundaries in this metaphorical schema (p. 14). Fernandez notes that “[i]n effect… customs of eating, of
talking, of dancing and singing, of drinking, and of acquiring possessions come to stand for a place as its
significant if limiting metaphors. They represent ways of talking about a place in other terms. Just as place
or locality gets transformed into kinship, so it can get transformed into food habits or personal appearance
and thenceforth when we think about a place” (1988: 31).
25 For instance, Trippi wrote: “The Iowa caucuses are a little more than a month away and we are bleeding.
Our momentum is gone. Our message is getting lost. We’re spending all our time and energy deflecting
attacks from other campaigns. Our guy has become an unmitigated disaster on the road. The unscripted
candor that served him when he was the longest shot is now being played like a sort of political Tourette’s.
The press continually mangles the context of what he says…. We’ve got no adults with him on the road—
no seasoned political people—and so, naturally, he’s gaffing his way across Iowa….The young Dean
staffers—all energy and idealism—have no idea what’s about to happen. For most of them, this is their first
presidential and they don’t realize that they only thing longer than the hours are the odds of winning”
(Trippi 2004: xii).
26 The first Dean Dozen consisted of: “Mary Ann Andreas for the 80th state Assembly district in
California; Ken Campbell for the South Carolina state House; Maria Chappelle-Nadal for the Missouri state
House; Scott Clark, Mark Manoil and Nina Trasoff, who are running as a single ticket for the Arizona
Corp. Commission; Kim Hynes for state representative in Connecticut; Richard Morrison for the U.S.
House from the 22nd congressional district in Texas; Barack Obama for the U.S. Senate from Illinois; Rob
MacKenna for Hillsborough County Florida supervisor of elections; Monica Palacios-Boyce for
Massachusetts state representative; Lori Saldana for a California state Assembly district that includes San
Diego; Jeff Smith for U.S. House from Missouri, and Donna Red Wing for Colorado House District No.
25” (Graff 2004b). To see how these and other Dean Dozen candidates did, see Table 5.
27 It should be pointed out that the terms “liberal” and “conservative,” while emic classifications that cannot
be ignored, are problematic cultural constructions that cannot
be ignored, are problematic cultural constructions that encompass quite a bit of variation within them. See
Segal and Handler (2005).
28 It should be noted here that blogs tend to link and cite one another (Stone 2004: 91-94; Doostdar 2004:
655-656).
29 This quote was from
http://www.haloscan.com/comments.php?user=azizhp&comment=90413340#258106. However, the
reference information is missing from my notes, and the URL no longer works, so I am unable to give it a
proper citation.
30 This quote was from
http://www.haloscan.com/comments.php?user=azizhp&comment=90413340#255314. However, the
reference information is missing from my notes, and the URL no longer works, so I am unable to give it a
proper citation.
31 This quote was from
http://www.haloscan.com/comments.php?user=azizhp&comment=90413340#255314. However, the
reference information is missing from my notes, and the URL no longer works, so I am unable to give it a
proper citation.
32 One political strategy that the Dean campaign was contacted about using but never responded to was
buying NASCAR advertising (James 2003).
33 Berkowitz (2004) elaborates on the right-wing organizing that Dean refers to here: “More than thirty
years ago conservative ideologues like Paul Weyrich, Howard Phillips, and others made a point of
monitoring and tracking the left because they were both impressed by its organizing strategies and
chagrined by its successes…. For the next three decades, conservatives took organizing to a new level;
creating an infrastructure of right-wing think tanks, public policy institutes, media outlets, and leadership
training centers. A ‘New Right’ -- an amalgam of religious and secular organizations -- developed and
succeeded in pushing a hardcore right-wing political and social agenda. That movement grew into the
political apparatus that has dominated political discourse in this country over the past two-plus decades….
During the New Right's hegemony, progressives watched and whined as conservative foundations and philanthropists gave time, energy, and money to build their movement."

That is, until April 2005, when Meetup.com changed its policy to require that organizers pay a monthly fee (Warshaw 2005a), leading to the August 2005 introduction of DFA-Link, which combines of “some of the best features from Meetup.com, Friendster, and DeanLink” (Warshaw 2005b).

This section is based upon a blog entry I wrote at:
http://community.livejournal.com/cmanthropology/5779.html#cutid1

In addition to these categories, there are also beneficiary constituents, conscience constituents, and bystander publics. The generic category of beneficiary constituents includes “people perhaps not participating in the SMO but in whose name it speaks and who are asserted to benefit from the SMO’s actions” (Lofland 1996: 307). Conscience constituency are “people not thought directly to benefit from the SMO but who are sympathetic with it and who, taken collectively, form a field of allies for the SMO” (p. 307). The generic category of bystander publics includes “that portion of the public primarily concerned with the risks and inconvenience an SMO may be creating for them (rather than the issues in dispute) and who demand the authorities ‘do something’ to end their risk and inconvenience” (p. 307). Lofland acknowledges that these “proposed categories of reactors are sketchier, murkier, inconsistently defined, and overlap the five reactors [ruling elites, dissident elites, media, similar SMOs, and counter-SMOs] reported on [previously]” (p. 333). For these reasons, I will not use these categories in my analysis.

Joe Trippi explains: “I know what hell there is to pay when an insurgent catches the mainstream party leaders off guard. I can practically hear the guns swinging around, the sights settling on our backs” (Trippi 2004: xii).

In his writings, Howard Dean does recount several incidents in which the media unfairly smeared him even before the infamous scream incident (Dean 2004a: Ch. 5), suggesting his attitude was at least somewhat justified.

In addition, any policy victories that are achieved may not be achieved right away. Francis Fox Piven, a sociologist, writes: “antiwar movements -- popular opinion against wars expressed in marches and demonstrations -- [have] rarely succeeded at the outset. It's as the war grinds on and people become more and more angry and disillusioned with the war that popular opinion, popular resistance to the war begins to take its toll on the capacity of government to make war” (Baldwin 2004). Similarly, Goldman (2001) has argued that it has taken 10 years of pressure by green movements before the World Bank partially addressed their criticisms.

Dean Dozen candidates in 2004 won 33 races and lost 58 races (see Table 3).

For instance, Cornfield (2004), writing in late 2003, still felt it necessary to define “blog” (p. xii). A quick search for the term on Google News supports the idea that a definition is no longer necessary.

For those unfamiliar with this controversy, Terri Schiavo was a Floridian whose brain damage left her in a persistant vegetative state. Her husband and her parents disagreed about whether or not her feeding tube should be removed, thus igniting a firestorm of controversy. The Florida legislature passed “Terri’s Law” to give Gov. Jeb Bush the right to intervene in the case.
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Appendices
Appendix A: DFA-Tampa Bay Recommendations

The following is from a presentation of my research findings to DFA-Tampa Bay.

Introduction

For those of you who don’t know who I am, my name is Noah Porter, and I’m a Ph.D. candidate in the anthropology program at USF. My research focus is on the cultural impact of the Internet, which is why I chose to write my dissertation on DFA. Howard Dean was considered the frontrunner during the Dean for America period, something that would almost certainly have been impossible without the Internet.

There are a lot of interesting academic questions raised by DFA about virtual community and democracy, for example, though these are not the focus of my talk here today. Instead, I would like to focus on the aspects of my research findings that, in my opinion, are relevant to improving the way that DFA operates. There will be three parts to this talk. First, I will talk about what DFA members told me they liked about DFA. Second, I will review some of the issues DFA members reported, either with DFA itself or problems related to achieving DFA’s goals. Third, I will go over some recommendations I came up with that I believe could improve DFA. Keep in mind that these are preliminary findings, and I welcome any feedback you might have on what I have to say.

What DFA Does Well

Members liked how DFA spends most of its time working towards political change, not just talking about the need for it. Many members experimented with other groups before settling on DFA for this reason.
Members liked the friendly atmosphere of DFA, some even going as far as to describe their fellow members as family. DFA meetings are not just an opportunity to be an activist, but an opportunity to be an activist with friends. In the words of one member: “Who else would I want to spend the first Wednesday of each month with? Who else would I want to ride around town putting candidate signs out with? Who else would I want to approach strangers with to discuss politics?”

“80% fun, 20% work” is a term used at several meetings to describe how DFA events should be run and should feel for participants. Back during the Dean for America period, some DFA members complained about being pressured into phone-banking on holidays. However, nowadays DFA-Tampa Bay has done a good job of maintaining a balance between work and fun.

Not surprisingly, given that DFA fulfills members’ desire for friendship and activism and maintains a healthy balance between the two, members reported positive feelings during DFA activities.

DFA National in Vermont provides suggestions, not demands. Members generally considered these suggestions to be good ideas, but sometimes not applicable to their current group situation. Since they are merely suggestions, when this occurs, DFA-Tampa Bay is free to ignore them.

Despite having only a handful of employees to handle DFA groups all across the nation, members found DFA National to be accessible and helpful, both in person and on the phone.

Canvassing, phone banking, and framing are just a few of the skills that DFA teaches. Members felt that DFA’s training was helpful both to members and candidates.

**Room for Improvement**

One member expressed some concerns about which candidates DFA decided to fund. Although she understood that DFA has limited money to give out, she felt that it might be a good idea if local candidates in swing states such as Florida received more funding.
Members have often described the HCDEC as bureaucratic, ineffective, and contentious. This is why many members chose DFA over the HCDEC. However, DFA members have recently started claiming that the HCDEC is improving.

Many members feel that the public is ignorant and apathetic when it comes to politics. They are frustrated that DFA puts on candidate and issue forums, yet few attend. One even said: “It may take something like the draft to really wake people up.”

One of Howard Dean’s main messages to supporters was “You have the power to take your country back.” However, after the infamous scream incident, many members felt disillusioned, as though the media proved to them that they didn’t have the power to accomplish political change after all. Hillsborough County had 8 different DFA groups at one point. This group is slowly growing, however.

**Recommendations**

In my third section, I would like to suggest a series of steps that DFA can take to improve the way it operates. For many of these suggestions to work, other suggestions will have to be implemented first, so I will review these steps sequentially to show how they build upon each other.

My first suggestion is for DFA-Link to be debugged. DFA-Link was unveiled earlier than planned due to Meetup.com suddenly increasing their service fees, forcing DFA to either pay up or switch to beta software. DFA-Link's bugs have led to DFA members and groups using other online social software, which in turn has lead to conflict between different DFA groups in at least one case. DFA's Internet presence has been fragmented, and fixing DFA-Link to fit the needs of its members would go a long way to fixing this disunity.

My second suggestion is that members who need it should be trained in basic computer skills, and in the use of DFA-Link specifically. During the Dean for America period, DFA was usually characterized in the press as having a young and tech-savvy membership, so it may seem
counterintuitive that there is a need for training. However, I encountered at least two older DFA-Tampa Bay members who were not even completely proficient in using e-mail yet, much less DFA-Link. If DFA-Link is going to be an inclusive community for all of DFA-Tampa Bay's members, then everyone will need the basic computer skills to use it. Training could be done in a variety of ways. Hands-on training would perhaps be best, but if DFA members are too busy, then handouts and e-mailed training guides could be substituted. A PowerPoint on using DFA-Link was made for a previous meeting; making printed copies of this available would be an easy first step.

Third, DFA-Link should be made a regular part of member's routines in order for it to become a real community. DFA's core membership has generally emphasized DFA-Link's event feature, encouraging members to RSVP. However, there has been little effort to encourage online discussions and turn it into a vibrant virtual community. One member said, "I don't even know if our people are looking at it," and this is the problem. I once posted an event on DFA-Tampa Bay's group, and received no feedback, which led me to wonder if the event was somehow inappropriate, or if nobody bothered to look at it. In either case, it did not encourage me to post any more events. In addition, I once spent hours creating a chart of membership trends for DFA-Tampa Bay and posted it on their group blog. I received only one comment for my efforts, and the commenter did not even appear to be a DFA-Tampa Bay member. In this case, I did receive credit for my efforts at future meetings, but until then, I was left to wonder if anyone noticed or cared about the chart I put so much effort into. Another member once asked if it was a good idea for her to post dozens of upcoming events on DFA-Link at the same time; if the event feature was already being used consistently, she would have no need to wonder if this was socially acceptable or not.

My fourth suggestion concerns time usage. At DFA meetings, it seems like members are often competing for time with each other and with the group organizer’s schedule. At DC for Democracy, I once witnessed a woman who was talking too long, so someone slipped a piece of
paper on the table in front of her that said “time’s up.” She put down a stack of papers she was holding right on top of the note without seeing it, and kept talking. At a DFA-Tampa Bay meeting, one new person talked for a long time about her personal experiences and views on American society during what was supposed to be a brief introduction. Members started nonverbally indicating their discomfort with the amount of time she was using up, and when she was done, the next scheduled speaker promised: “I’ll keep it real brief.” He did not, in fact, keep it brief, and the group organizer had to cut him off. Why does this keep happening? I contend the reason for this is that DFA meetings are a rare opportunity for the politically frustrated to vent, and the politically active to recruit, and both know they are guaranteed an audience of progressive activists. Unfortunately, the amount of time required for everyone to get everything off their chest exceeds the amount of time available at DFA meetings. However, if DFA-Link became a vibrant virtual community where people can share their thoughts on the blog and be assured that it will be read and receive feedback, then being cut off at DFA meetings would not seem like losing their only opportunity to address DFA members.

My next few suggestions concern growing DFA’s membership. Fifth, I would suggest that once the competition for time has been reduced, DFA-TB should allow more opportunities for personal experience sharing, either at the meetings or on DFA-Link. Personal experience allows people to connect their own lives to politics, which could be helpful for retaining people who may not already view themselves as politically involved. By placing more value of the experiences of those already politically involved, newcomers may feel devalued.

My sixth suggestion is to promote awareness of framing for different audiences. DFA does a good job of promoting the concept of framing generally, but I think it would be beneficial for DFA to talk more about framing in terms of membership growth. Let me start with what I believe to be a useful model. The terminology gets a little complicated here, but bear with me and I will explain what the terms mean. Snow et. al (1986) describe four frame alignment processes that may be employed in reaching out to others to support or join a social movement.
organization. These are: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation. Frame bridging is when SMOs reach out to “aggregates of individuals who share common grievances and attributional orientations, but who lack the organizational base for expressing their discontents and for acting in pursuit of their interest” (p. 467). Frame amplification involves strengthening and explaining existing values and beliefs (p. 469-472). Frame extension involves extending boundaries of existing beliefs and values “so as to encompass interests or points of view that are incidental to its primary objectives but of considerable salience to potential adherents” (p. 472). Frame transformations involve planting and nurturing new values and meanings, thereby jettisoning old meanings and understandings. What does all this talk of frame alignment processes mean to DFA? DFA’s core beliefs seem best characterized as progressive, activist, and seeking to reform rather than abandon the Democratic Party. Which, if any, of these beliefs a potential recruit shares in common should be taken into account when you are framing DFA to them. Frame bridging means you’re reaching out to someone who already shares your beliefs, and you’re merely providing them with an outlet for their belief in the need for change. This is the easiest frame alignment process because you just have to tell them that you exist and then they do the rest. Frame amplification is a little more difficult, however. Frame amplification means they share your basic beliefs, but not with the same intensity as you. A good example of when frame amplification might be useful is someone who supported Howard Dean but was disillusioned after the scream incident. Such a person would share your same basic beliefs, but you may have to strengthen their belief in the necessity of activism. Frame extension means that you have to show someone how something they care about relates to your beliefs in a way they might not have realized previously. For example, a friend of mine who is a Marine and considers himself an Independent attended a DFA-endorsed event about the Iraq War because a lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps was a speaker at it. As someone who is disillusioned with the two-party system, he probably never would have gone to a DFA meeting, but he went to this event because it related to what he was already interested in.
DFA needs to find ways to connect people’s current interests to what DFA does. Finally, frame transformations involve completely changing a person’s beliefs, such as a Christian missionary trying to convert an atheist. People who require frame transformations are probably not worth DFA members investing their time in. However, if DFA were to work on developing strategies of frame amplification and frame extension, they may be able to grow their membership more effectively.

My seventh suggestion is to promote a greater awareness of the consequences of DFA’s choice of meeting locations. Some of these consequences are cultural; for instance, Starbucks has been a popular location for DFA meetups, and one study found: “participants who have middle class and upper middle class backgrounds find Starbucks’ upscale corporate ambiance to be a comfortable setting because they are fundamentally at home in this socio-cultural milieu” (Thompson and Arsel n.d.: 35). In addition, as progressives, it is common for members to want to “buy blue” or support local businesses over corporations. Some of these consequences are geographic; some members choose virtual DFA groups over face-to-face groups if the meetings are just too far away to be practical. Some of the consequences are practical, such as bars excluding potential members who are not old enough to drink, or noisy locations discouraging members not willing to shout to have a conversation. There is no easy solution guaranteed to satisfy all members and potential members here, especially given the limited number of venues available for DFA events in the first place, but it is important that DFA organizers are aware of these consequences. In addition, I would also suggest developing a ride-sharing system, possibly as a new feature on DFA-Link, so that members reluctant or unable to drive for any reason can request a ride from members in their area.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I contend that by following these suggestions, DFA-Tampa Bay can make effective use of DFA-Link as a virtual community, which should alleviate some of the time
conflicts at the meetings, and thereby give more opportunities for experience-sharing. Experience-sharing should be more valued, as it allows people who are experimenting with DFA to make DFA personally meaningful to their lives. However, it is also imperative that not only are new members given the opportunity to connect their experiences to DFA’s political mission, but also that DFA learn how to use the four frame alignment processes to be proactive in recruiting potential members. DFA should also be aware of the various consequences resulting from their chosen meeting locations, and how ride-sharing could help lower the barriers to participation. Taken together, I believe that implementing these suggestions while keeping in mind the aspects of DFA that members like and dislike will keep DFA growing into a more effective organization.

I hope you will give my ideas serious consideration, and I welcome your feedback.

Thank you for your time.
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

1. How would you describe DFA’s goals?
2. What beliefs do you share in common with DFA?
3. Is there anything that you disagree with DFA about? If so, what?
4. How would you describe the organization of DFA?
5. What role does Howard Dean, Jim Dean, and the DFA national headquarters in Burlington play in your local DFA group?
6. How and why did you come to join DFA?
7. Were you a member of any other political group before or after joining DFA?
8. What strategies has DFA used to achieve its goals?
9. What do you feel you have learned, if anything, as a result of your participation in DFA?
10. How do you usually feel when you are participating in DFA activities?
11. In your experience, how are differences of opinion and arguments handled in DFA?
12. How would you describe your relationship with other DFA members? Would you consider any of them friends? Do you spend time with them outside of DFA activities?
13. Do you go to DFA Internet sites? If so, how often?
14. Which DFA web sites do you check most often?
15. What do you typically do when you visit DFA web sites?
16. What role do you see the Internet playing for DFA? How important do you think it is for DFA?
17. What effect do you think DFA will have on the country?
18. In general, how would you describe DFA’s role in your life?
About the Author

Noah Porter received a Bachelor’s Degree in Anthropology from Appalachian State University in 2001 and a M.A. in Applied Anthropology from University of South Florida in 2003.

While in the Ph.D. program at the University of South Florida, Mr. Porter has worked as a research assistant for multiple faculty members, created a website about computing and anthropology, and published an article in the peer-reviewed journal *Nova Religio.*