

**ORGANIZED INTERESTS' COLLECTIVE ACTION IN THE NEW INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT**

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[WORKING PAPER]

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\*\*The current version of the paper is presented to the American Politics Workshop (APW) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, February 22, 2010.

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### **Abstract**

In recent years, organized interests including issue advocacy groups, professional associations, and labor unions have increasingly focused on grassroots-oriented collective action, such as informational mobilization and participatory mobilization. New communication technologies, particularly the Internet, appear to have played a pivotal role in changing group politics. This research revisits previous theories of group politics and discusses how new communication technology influences the evolution of organized interests' collective action. With random samples drawn from IRS-based, advocacy group data, Study 1 analyzes the political repertoires of 120 organizations websites. Study 2 uses telephone interviews with the executives of 209 groups to examine groups' technology usage patterns and their collective action strategies. The findings from both studies consistently indicate that organized interests' adoption and usage of the Internet is positively associated with their emphasis on informational and participatory mobilization. Divergent from previous group politics theories, organizational factors, including total revenue and structured membership, are not associated with these newer forms of collective action. The implications for group politics research and for democracy as a whole are discussed.

*There is an “Old Politics” based on the conventional way of doing business in Washington DC, and there is an emerging “New Politics” that is based on savvy use of the Internet.*

*Mike McCurry, Grassroots.com*

## **ORGANIZED INTERESTS’ COLLECTIVE ACTION IN THE NEW INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT**

As early as James Madison and Alexis de Tocqueville referenced in their writings the various “factions” that make up a democracy, the importance of organized interests has since been a topic of interest for the discipline’s earliest and most influential scholars (i.e., Bentley 1908; Herring 1929; Merriam 1934; Key 1942). In particular, with the rise of interest groups, scholars who study group politics, including Truman (1951), Latham (1952), and Dahl (1961), have emphasized the increasingly specialized nature of organized interests and the role the collective promotion of common interests have played in policy-making processes. However, ironically, group theorists have been challenged by both elite theorists and political economists even though organized interests continued to proliferate. Although contemporary researchers (e.g., Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Walker 1991) provided empirical data evidencing the expansion of organized interests’ activities—especially increased “pressure politics” based on mobilizing mass public opinion (Berry 1999; Crigler and Loomis 1998; Kollman 1998)—group politics research in general has unfortunately declined. This is partly due to the disjuncture between normative theories and limited empirical evidence (Tichenor and Harris 2005) as well as fragmented research interests (Jenkins 1996), the lack of meso-perspective (Moe 1980), and the lack of interdisciplinary synthesis (Andrews and Edwards 2004).

While the activities of organized interests have ebbed and flowed with changes in the political environment (see Walker 1991), recent changes in organized interests appear to suggest a new perspective for group politics research. Contrary to the claims of elite theorists who stress the importance of institutionalized politics controlled by centralized and bureaucratic elites, and political

economists who emphasize formal membership based on the selective provision of materialistic incentives, the political action of organized interests in Western societies recently has become more flexible and characterized by loose coalitions based on issue identity (e.g., Bennett 2003; Bimber 1998, 2003). Individuals participate less in large-scale politics and engage instead in more specialized, value-laden lifestyle issues, such as gender, gay rights or the environment (e.g., Beck 1999; Castells 1996, 1997; Iglehart 1997, 1999; Giddens 1991; Melucci 1989). Political participation has become more event-driven and protest-like (e.g., Chadwick 2007; Norris 2001).

We argue that new communication technologies, particularly the Internet, play a pivotal role in the changes taking place in organized interests. The Internet substantially lowers the cost of organizing collective action, giving organized interests (especially those lacking resources and a centralized structure) more opportunities to organize and engage in collective action. The Internet relatively increases groups' controllability over information compared to mass media where messages are highly controlled by journalists' gatekeeping processes. The Internet also blurs the distinction between public and private good when it comes to collective action, making the "free-rider problem" (Olson 1965) less of an issue. Rather, the Internet strengthens common interests based on issue identity and expands an individual's opportunity to participate by offering more tailored and specialized information as well as interactive participatory features. The core argument of this research is that new communication technologies not only provide more efficient tools of communication for organized interests, but they also facilitate the evolution of organized interests' collective action. New communication technologies are expected to promote the influx of resource-poor, small organizations into group politics, but they also contribute to groups' heavy emphasis on grassroots-oriented mobilization (i.e., both informational and participatory) over traditional inside lobbying. .

Even though group politics researchers (including the earliest group theorists, e.g., Truman 1951) recognized the importance of communication technologies in organized interests' collective action (e.g., Cigler and Loomis 1998; Schlozman and Tierney 1983, 1986), little attention has been paid to the role new communication technologies play in group politics until recently. While there are some notable exceptions (e.g., Bennett 2003a, 2003b; Bimber 2003; Chadwick 2007), these groundbreaking studies rely heavily on case studies. Furthermore, the theoretical interests and orientations in this area of study are largely fragmented. All this call for more empirical research based on comprehensive data, and ultimately, the development of a theoretical framework.

This research attempts to address the influence of new communication technologies (in particular the Internet) on organized interests' collective action in the United States. Using random samples of groups drawn from IRS-based advocacy group data, Study 1 analyzed the political repertoires of 120 organizations by looking at their websites. Study 2 employed telephone interviews with the executives of additional 209 groups, collecting data on their communication technology usage patterns as well as collective action strategies. By adopting these multiple approaches, this research sheds light upon the "new" logic of collective action in group politics and calls for a revitalization of group politics research in the Internet age.

### **Theories of Organized Interests**

Organized interests include any non-party organization that regularly tries to influence public policy (Kollman, 1998) and seeks joint ends through political action (Schlozman and Tierney 1986). Truman (1951) used the term "issue interest groups" to refer to "any group that, on the basis of one or more shared attitudes, makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by the shared attitudes."<sup>1</sup>

Early group political theorists believed that organized interests are a natural phenomenon in a

modern democratic society. With industrialization and increased social complexity, individuals naturally band together based on economic and social specialization to protect their interests (Truman 1951). While individuals might be resource-poor or isolated from each other, if they care enough about their shared interests “a significant interest group will emerge and greater influence will ensue” (Truman 1951, p. 36). Citizens as *Homo Civicus* become involved in politics, sometimes intensely, if their primary interests are threatened (Dahl 1961).

However, the views of early group theorists have been challenged by elite theorists, including Mills (1956) and Schattschneider (1960), who criticized the power of individuals and a representational bias in mobilization. Political leaders can easily dissipate the passion of individuals through symbolic gestures (e.g., Eldelman 1964). The public's issue attention is unstable at best (Downs, 1972). As a result, weak groups are organized “out” of politics by elites who manipulate the agenda toward their own interests through institutionalization processes (Schattschneider 1960). Organizations successful in mobilization (especially resource-rich and historically established groups) moved on to become institutionalized Washington lobbies (e.g., Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Berry 1999). Even a social movement is formed by an institutionalized organization and it is ineffective only when the organization controls over resources (for details, see the resource mobilization theory; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1987).

Mancur Olson also directly challenged pluralistic group theorists by highlighting a fundamental problem that exists in collective action. In his book, *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965), Olson argues that self-interested individuals would not take part in collective action even when aware they would be better off if the collective good were secured. Olson posits that the major barrier to group participation is the free-rider problem. Individuals choose not to participate in collective action because the cost of participation (e.g., time, membership fee, etc.) to an individual is usually larger than the

personal benefit gained from participating in a collective action. Rational individuals choose not to bear their own participation cost if they can enjoy the benefits of collective good without joining. According to Olson, the key to group formation and maintenance is, therefore, the provision of selective benefits—especially tangible, materialistic rewards won by becoming a member (e.g., income, cheap insurance, travel discounts).

However, providing selective benefits is not easy for some groups because of increased organizational costs and minimized share of benefits among members. Evidencing the free-rider problem among the public, other scholars emphasize that the proliferation of organized interests has largely been influenced by an increase in pressure groups in the private sector (e.g., Schlozman and Tierney 1986), not by voluntary civic associations in the public domain. The rise and fall of organized interests has been greatly affected by government sponsorship (Crigler and Loomis 1995; Walker 1991).

For these reasons, the activities of organized interests have heavily focused on traditional inside lobbying as a primary group activity. While “outside lobbying” i.e., efforts to generate publicity, became an increasingly important group strategy, particularly in the 1990s (Kollman 1998; Walker 1991), the high cost of accessing mass media campaigns and the low level of control over media content ended up limiting organized interests’ involvement in outside lobbying. Only large, resource-rich, membership-based, and historically established groups received media attention and were able to carry out public campaigns (Berry 1999; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1995). Empirical evidence collected in the 1980s and (early) 1990s consistently showed that most organized interests, including small civic advocacy groups, heavily invested their collective action on more traditional forms of lobbying based on interpersonal negotiations with legislators, for instance. (Berry 1999; Schlozman and Tierney 1983, 1986; Walker 1991). This pattern was consistent with not only Washington-based

pressure groups, but state- and local-level advocacy groups as well (Nownes and Freeman 1998).

### **A New Theoretical Perspective Explaining the Emerging Trends in Group Politics**

For decades, the proliferation of public advocacy groups (Cigler and Loomis 1998; Berry 1999) as well as solidarity-based social movements (Clair and Wilson 1961; Moe 1980; Salisbury 1969; Wilson 1973) and a wider range of mass-mobilization techniques (Kollman 1998; Schlozman and Tierney 1983, 1986; Walker 1991) have cautiously qualified previous theories of organized interests. Not until recently, however, did scholars observe fundamental changes in the political landscape of organized interests: structural and organizational changes in traditional interest groups (Bimber 2003); the success of new forms of organized interests such as MoveOn.org (Chadwick 2007); the rise of lifestyle campaigns such as the Free Trade campaign (Bennett 2003a, 2003b) and the protest-type mobilization exemplified in the Battle in Seattle (Norris 2001), to name a few. All of these changes appear to contest both elite theorists who emphasize institutionalization and bureaucratization of groups, as well as political economists such as Olson, who pinpoints the free-rider problem as the collective action dilemma. In fact, numerous studies indicate that group politics have become less institutionalized, less membership-oriented, and less resource-dependent. (For more details, see the discussion of “post-institutionalization” and “new social movement”, e.g., Buechler 1993, 1995)

This research argues that recent observations on organized interests are not idiosyncratic “cases” but rather systematic evolution in organized interests’ collective action. More importantly the core argument of this research is that new information technology, particularly the Internet, plays a pivotal role behind the changes organized interests are currently undergoing. Here this research explains why and how the Internet influences the changes in organized interests’ collective action by proposing a theoretical view that synthesizes, expands and details the current theoretical discussion of group politics and new communication technologies.

*Reduced Cost of Collective Action and the Flux of Resource-Poor Organizations*

The Internet dramatically reduces the cost of collective action by decreasing the cost of accessing information and locating potential supporters. In particular, the resource threshold for organizing activities becomes substantially lower. For instance, advertising campaigns (e.g., Public Service Advertising) using mass media such as television is a costly business, but hosting a Web site and disseminating information through Web sites, emails, or blogs costs very little. If direct mail is replaced by email, groups can spend up to 30 times less money for the same collective action (Chadwick 2007).

The low cost of the Internet overcomes some disadvantages experienced by less institutionalized, non-elite groups. The success of organized interests does not solely rely on *Traditional Inside Lobbying* which ranges from private negotiations with government officials and legislators to drafting legislative language and engaging in litigation. In the past, even if groups needed to mobilize the public, the cost was often prohibitive and therefore limited the actions taken by a group. In the new information environment, however, even small, resource-poor organizations have the ability to extensively mobilize the public. Hence, with the lowered resource barrier, a rapid influx of less institutionalized, public advocacy groups (Berry 2003) have come onto the political scene.

*Increased Issue Identity and Decreased Formal Membership*

The social identity/deindividuation (SIDE) theory put forth by Lea and Spears (Lea and Spears 1991; Postmes, Spears, and Lea 1998; Spears and Lea 1994) discusses how the relative anonymity and isolation in Internet-mediated communication enhances the salience of group identity by reducing attention to individual differences within the group. Increasing attention is given to collective goals based on cognitive action (e.g., provision of issue information, see Postmes and Brunsting 2002 for details) rather than formal membership-based interpersonal trust and solidarity. Collective action, then,

involves a “loose coalition of fluid supporters” based on a shared identity with a particular issue rather than fixed group members who have strong ties (Bennett 2003a, 2003b).

When groups primarily focus on traditional inside lobbying based on interpersonal communication, it is crucial to recruit formal members and sustain a stable membership of the organizations. To maintain formal group membership and avoid the free rider problem in collective action, groups must provide materialistic benefits (e.g., insurance benefits, discounts for service) with their formal members (Olson 1965). In conjunction with Traditional Inside Lobbying, in the past, this *Activist Facilitation*, i.e., the recruitment of formal membership was an focus of organized interests’ collective action strategies. . However, only limited number of elite groups---the groups with an established history, a stable institutional base, and rich resources (especially financial resources) were more capable of providing these tangible benefits (see the resource mobilization, e.g., McCarthy and Zald 1987).

In the new information environment, however, groups are able to form horizontally-integrated networks based on the Internet even if they lack an institutionalized and bureaucratic structure. As fewer resources and fewer fixed members are needed for collective action, organized interests rely less on membership and bureaucratic structures in the new information environment (Bimber 2003). Due to this structural change, collective action focuses on a “political way of being” (Castells 2004) rather than rigid, centralized, institutionalized activities. Mobilization may be constantly and rapidly reconfigured around specific events (Norris 2001), but loose coalitions exist permanently as lifestyle campaigns (Bennett 2003a, 2003b). This implies that efforts to recruit formal members (e.g., hiring, internship, provision of membership and its benefits), that is, *Activist Facilitation*, become less of a focus in the current group politics scene.

*Blurred Distinction between Public and Private and Attenuated Collective Action Dilemma*

In the new information environment, individual participants appear to have less of a collective action dilemma. With the use of new communication technologies, the distinction between private and public becomes blurred (Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl 2005). Individuals now routinely contribute personal experience or private information electronically to social networking sites (e.g., YouTube, Facebook), blogs, wikis or discussion boards with relatively little prior knowledge about who may utilize their information or how that information may be used. As Internet-based outlets inform many individuals simultaneously of collective action, including who is participating and how, public mobilization can be incredibly accelerated.

The free-rider problem, thus, appears to be reduced owing to the ubiquity of information and the blurred distinction between private and public domains. In the past, individuals routinely conducted a cost-benefit analysis when making a decision that involved transitioning a private concern into the public domain; hence, many became free-riders. However, in the new information environment, individuals are less motivated to exercise the cost versus benefit calculation that participating in collective action previously entailed. Routine contributions of private information to public outlets make the private-public transition less of a social dilemma. . Similarly, as the Internet functions efficiently to make nonparticipation (and participation) more noticeable (Lupia and Sin 2003), organized interests are more likely to overcome the political action thresholds represented by “you first” and “safety in numbers” scenarios (Granovetter 1978). All suggest that collective action problems become attenuated. Group politics in the new information environment observes more of direct, grassroots-oriented mobilization.

#### *Increased Information Controllability and Emerging Information-Intensive Activities*

Furthermore, new communication technologies like the Internet drastically increase organized interests’ controllability of information. Compared to traditional news media, where messages are

highly controlled through the gatekeeping process practiced by journalists, the Internet as a decentralized, hyperlinked network enables organized interests to provide a higher volume of information. Further, information is disseminated directly to potential supporters without a filter. The information provided by the Internet therefore tends to be more specialized and issue-oriented, targeting specific segments of the public interested in those issues. In this information-rich environment, the nature of organized interests' public mobilizing efforts has become qualitatively different than before. Public mobilization, which still has been defined as "outside *lobbying*" in previous research, now cannot be simply aggregated into a means for lobbying based on the dichotomous understanding of organized interests' collective action, "inside vs. outside lobbying". Distinguishing it from large-scale, mass media-oriented, and publicity oriented mass mobilization, i.e., *Outside Lobbying*), this paper defines this newer form of public mobilizing effort---more specific, individually-tailored, grassroots-oriented, situational, and interactive forms of "information-intensive" collective action---as *Informational Mobilization* and *Participatory Mobilization*.

*Informational Mobilization* describes groups' strategic efforts to provide relevant information (e.g., specific details of a policy, Congressmen's voting records) on the issues of their concern with their latent issue publics, who are passionately concerned with the issues (Converse 1965) e. Unlike *Outside Lobbying*, *Informational Mobilization* goes beyond gaining mass publicity for organized interests. *Information Mobilization* targets latent, issue-specific, concerned supporters rather than the large-scale mass public. Ultimately, *Information Mobilization* aims to lead to individuals' participation in collective action.

*Participatory Mobilization* is described as groups' strategic efforts to induce latent supporters into information-based participation, such as signing up for rallies, petitioning, and letter-writing. *Participatory Mobilization* is more grassroots-oriented collective action as it is formed based on

targeted latent supporters and coalitions that rally around certain issues of concern. Participatory Mobilization is fluid as it is facilitated by situational associations among networks of networks, not based on formal membership of a fixed organizational structure. Therefore, it should be clearly distinguished from Activist Facilitation, which is a traditional type of recruitment of formal members and staff for organizations (e.g., membership recruitment, employment, internship, etc.).

While the reduced cost and increased controllability of information inevitably leads to more effective communication with Traditional Inside Lobbying as well, the impact is more dramatic on information-intensive collective action. Information-poor strategies that merely reflect or amplify groups' existing collective activities (such as Traditional Inside Lobbying) are relatively less affected by the information-rich environment driven by the Internet (Bimber 2003).

A careful theoretical examination of the recent trends in group politics and the role of new communication technology suggests an interwoven relationship between the two. The unique technological aspects of the Internet—the lowered cost, increased issue identity, blurred distinction between public and private, and increased controllability of information—all contribute to structural changes within a group, as well as changes in collective action strategies. Organized interests' collective action becomes more decentralized and less institutionalized, shifting the focus from Traditional Inside Lobbying and the recruitment of formal members (Activist Facilitation) to Outside Lobbying or even more grassroots-oriented collective action, that is, Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization. However, this research does not claim that certain types of technology usage must be a universal condition for these changes in collective action. Also, not every group shifts the focus of their group activities (or even changes anything at all) in the new information environment. Rather, it is a contention of this research that groups are undergoing some transformation of collective action in recent years, and new communication technology plays a pivotal role in this

direction.

**Symptomatic Patterns of Changing Group Politics in the New Information Environment:  
Expected Empirical Observations**

An ideal test of the theoretical arguments made in this paper should involve a large-scale longitudinal analysis over several decades. Still, if the theoretical examination made here is sound, we should expect to see some “symptomatic” patterns of current group politics and their associations with technology usage patterns.

*Symptom 1: More Emphasis on Information-Intensive Forms of Collective Action*

As the first symptomatic pattern, current group politics should observe organized interests’ heavy emphasis on information-intensive forms of public mobilization, that is, Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization. Group politics gradually has shifted its emphasis from the Traditional Inside Lobbying and Activist Facilitation to a large-scale mass mobilization, that is, Outside Lobbying (Kollman, 1998). Since it requires large financial and professional resources, Outside Lobbying has been limited to a small number of institutionalized groups that have access to more resources. However, in the recent political landscape, as new information technologies like the Internet help groups overcome the problem of limited resources, organized interests expand their public mobilization efforts to more information-intensive forms of collective action, such as Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization. If this trend is correct, even with cross-sectional data, we should empirically observe groups’ relatively heavy emphasis on Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization, compared to Traditional Inside Lobbying and Activist Facilitation.

*Symptom 2: Associations between Technology Usage and Newer Forms of Collective Action*

More importantly, our data should evidence another symptomatic pattern: the associations between the use of new information technologies and emerging forms of collective action. The

theoretical arguments discussed previously in this paper clearly suggest that the adoption and use of new communication technologies should contribute to organized interests' focus on newer forms of collective action. Compared to groups that use new information technologies less extensively, groups with high levels of technology usage are more likely to engage in information-intensive collective action. If the theory holds, information-rich collective action, Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization, should be highly associated with groups' new communication technology usage (such as the Internet) in cross-sectional data. On the other hand, information-poor collective action such as Traditional Inside Lobbying, Activist Facilitation, and even Outside Lobbying, should be less associated with new communication technology usage.

According to the theory put forth in this paper, this is because new information technologies lower the barrier that less institutionalized, resource-poor organizations have. Furthermore, new communication technologies lessen potential participants' collective action dilemma and collective action becomes more situational and fluid, less based on formal membership. This also suggests that positive associations between the adoption of new information technologies and emerging forms of information-intensive collective action, i.e., Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization, should sustain even after controlling for organizational factors indicating institutionalization, such as history, financial resources (e.g., total revenue), and formal membership.

*Symptom 3: Associations between Technology Usage and the Shift in the Focus of Collective Action*

This paper argues that new information technology contributes to the shift in organized interests' strategic foci of collective action, from Traditional Inside Lobbying to emerging forms of information-intensive collective action, i.e., Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization. Given that any strategy involves a trade-off between available options, it is reasonable to assume that the shift in groups' strategic foci from Traditional Inside Lobbying to newer forms of

collective action can be observed from a trade-off between Traditional Inside Lobbying and newer forms of collective activities. If so, the trade-offs between Traditional Inside Lobbying and other information-intensive collective action that is present in the data should then be associated with the adoption and use of new information technology, even after controlling for organizational factors indicating institutionalization, such as history, financial resources (e.g., total revenue), and formal membership.

This research attempts to evidence these symptomatic patterns through two empirical studies: A content analysis of the political repertoires of the Web sites of 120 organizations randomly drawn from the IRS-based advocacy group data (Study 1); and telephone interviews with the executives of an additional 209 groups obtained from a random sampling (Study 2) of the IRS-based advocacy group data.

### **Study 1**

Study 1 employed Web content analysis in assessing organized interests' current collective action patterns. The Web is not merely a publishing outlet, but a new political space where organized interests' collective actions are *practiced* (Hill and Hughes 1998). The Web is not a mere soapbox or brochure, but rather a political space where a variety of collective actions are manifested as political *repertoires*. Repertoires refer to "the ways that people choose to express themselves politically" (Norris 2001), or a "limited set of routines and practices that are learned, shared, and acted out through relatively deliberative process of choice" (Tilly 1995, 26). Repertoires, therefore, indicate how organized interests form as well as how they identify values, make decisions, and practice tactics and strategies to achieve their goals (Chadwick 2007).

Seeing the Web as a political space that manifests a variety of political repertoires rather than just a soapbox allows for an examination of issue advocacy groups' collective action by analyzing the

content of their Web sites. This study is unique in a sense that it employed atypical content analysis. First, the study examined the Web site content of randomly drawn 120 issue advocacy groups at the page level (a total of 15,227 Web pages) in order to discern the detailed repertoires of their collective action. Next, the content analysis was combined with the IRS-based organizational profile data to assess the associations between organizational characteristics and groups' collective action.

## Method

### *Sampling Procedure*

A total of 120 organized interest groups, including public advocacy groups, labor unions and professional associations, were randomly drawn from the IRS-based data organized by the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS).<sup>2</sup> The IRS databases contain comprehensive and standardized information on non-profit organizations. The NCCS reviews the IRS Business Master Files (BMF) based on Form 1023 and Form 1024 and the IRS Return Transaction Files (RTF) based on Form 990, Form 990-EZ, and Form 990-PF and reconstructs core information on each organization by combining these files. The organization profile includes the history of the organization (rule dates), location (region), total revenue, member dues and contributions.

### *Repertoires of Collective Action on the Web: Content Analysis*

After gathering a sample of 120 issue advocacy groups, their Web site addresses were compiled using multiple search engines. All sampled issue advocacy groups hosted their own Web sites. All Web pages from all levels of each group's Web site were then downloaded and archived using a computer software program (Total = 15,227,  $M = 130.145$ ,  $SD = 144.300$ ).<sup>3</sup> The content analysis followed standard procedure:

*Unitization.* Unitization had important advantages in terms of coding, reliability, and analytic flexibility (Krippendorff 1980). Most content analysis research on the Web defines their coding unit as

an entire Web site, aggregating identifiable separate Web pages (Weare and Lin 2000). Because of the lack of standardized design regulating the size and scope of Web sites, researchers often justified the aggregated coding unit. However, categorization of an entire site is unrealistically demanding and unreliable. As Weare and Lin (2000) argued, “researchers can and should employ individual pages as the recoding unit whenever possible” (282). This study employed an individual page as the coding unit, assuming that a Web page of a group’s Web site would be equivalent to a news article of a newspaper.

*Development of coding scheme.* The coding scheme of this study focused on the identification of issue advocacy groups’ repertoires of collective action. Due to the lack of research on this matter, a qualitative preliminary analysis of 23 randomly selected Web sites was first employed to understand the nature of information provided by issue advocacy groups. Based on this preliminary test, a total of 58 content categories were created, and trained coders used the initial coding categories as their basis for coding. At an analysis level, some conceptually overlapped categories were collapsed after a check of factor analyses. As a result, six larger content categories, including the four types of collective actions (*Traditional Inside Lobbying*, *Activist Facilitation*, *Informational Mobilization*, *Participatory Mobilization* plus *Basic Group Information*, and *Electioneering*) and 24 subcategories were developed and employed throughout the analysis in this study.

Messages involved traditional lobbying activities targeting legislators, such as presenting a client’s case to legislators, filing a case, appealing to legislators, and writing a draft of legislation were coded as *Traditional Inside Lobbying*. *Activist Facilitation* included fixed membership-based recruitment activities such as application for membership and job opportunities. Messages that involved informing the public about legislation, monitoring the legislation processes, reporting on people advocating group issues (e.g., corporations who met environmental standards, organizations

that provide animal protection), as well as groups' campaign efforts, were coded as *Informational Mobilization*. On the other hand, messages and tools that provided Web users with the means for expressing opinions, signing a petition or signing up for a protest, writing a letter to legislators, and so on were categorized as *Participatory Mobilization*.<sup>4</sup>

*Coding and reliability.* Five trained coders who were also blind to specific research hypotheses coded Web pages in accordance with the coding scheme. At an early stage of coding, paired coders' agreement rates were assessed multiple times with different combinations of pairs. Initial inter-coder agreements ranged from 83% to 97%, yielding an average agreement rate of 89%. Disagreements were resolved based on collective decisions among the coders. Final reliability assessment was conducted based on 15 randomly selected Web sites (12.4% of the sampled Web sites, Krippendorff = .88).

#### *Characteristics of Organizations*

Organizational profile variables were obtained from the IRS-based data organized by the NCCS (. The profile variables of the 120 sampled groups included total revenue ( $M = \$1,857,501$ ,  $SD = \$4,518,484$ , range from  $-\$6,476$  to  $27,019,455$ ), total membership dues ( $M = \$126,667$ ,  $SD = \$966,261$ , range from  $\$0$  to  $9,883,861$ ), region (East coast = 22.9%, Midwest = 12.7%, South = 22.9%, West-coast = 25.4%, Washington DC = 16.1 %), and history (rule date) ( $M = 18.96$  years,  $SD = 11.42$  years, range from 2 to 64 years). In addition, to estimate the influence of the history of Web adoption, a proxy for Web adoption history was employed. It was measured by months back to 1993, when Mosaic was born and subsequently service traffic increased by 341,634% (History of the Internet, 2005) ( $M = 12.78$  years,  $SD = 3.31$  years).

The organizational profile data that characterized the groups were combined with the Web content analysis data. In this way, the study was able to assess the associations between organizations' repertoires of collective actions and their group profiles.

## Results

### *Repertoires of Collective Action*

Due to the lack of standardized design or norms in presentation styles across Web sites and because the size of Web sites vary tremendously, a simple comparison of the frequency of each manifested activity (i.e., frequency of each coding category) across different groups' Web sites would be meaningless. Therefore, the study used a proportion measure—that is, the weight of Web pages that manifested a specific group activity (i.e., coding category) compared to the total number of Web pages contained in any group's Web site—in order to examine repertoires of collective action.

As expected, organized interests exhibited repertoires of Participatory Mobilization ( $M = .263$ ,  $SD = .380$ ) as well as Informational Mobilization ( $M = .587$ ,  $SD = .340$ ) more than those of Traditional Lobbying ( $M = .012$ ,  $SD = .017$ ) at statistically significant levels (Participatory Mobilization v. Traditional Lobbying,  $t = -7.325$ ,  $df = 116$ ,  $p = .000$ ; Informational Mobilization v. Traditional Lobbying,  $t = -18.82$ ,  $df = 116$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization were emphasized more than member recruitment-based Activist Facilitation ( $M = .059$ ,  $SD = .089$ ), yielding statistically significant differences (Informational Mobilization v. Activist Facilitation,  $t = -15.833$ ,  $df = 116$ ,  $p = .000$ ; Participatory Mobilization v. Activist Facilitation,  $t = -5.683$ ,  $df = 116$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

Overall, groups appeared to emphasize newer forms of collective action—Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization—more than Traditional Lobbying and Activist Facilitation.

### *Technology Usage and Collective Action*

The theoretical discussion of this research suggests that more institutionalized groups (i.e., groups with more total revenue, a longer history, and more formal membership) should be correlated

with Traditional Lobbying and Activist Facilitation. However, newer forms of collective activities such as Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization would be less affected by such factors. Rather, the adoption and use of new communication technology should contribute to explaining groups' newer forms of collective action.

Table 1 is about here

Table 1 shows that Traditional Lobbying strategies (such as presenting and appealing a case to legislators) were positively associated with total revenue, membership dues, and history. Activist Facilitation based on the recruitment of fixed members was positively associated with total revenue, indicating that the groups with greater financial capital would be more likely to focus on formal membership-oriented activities. On the other hand, history of Internet use did not appear to contribute to Traditional Lobbying and Activist Facilitation.

Concerning newer forms of collective action, both Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization appeared to be less associated with organizational factors. None of the indicators for institutionalization (e.g., total revenue, history, formal membership) were associated with these types of collective action.

The history of Internet use, however, appeared to be associated with newer forms of collective action, especially Participatory Mobilization. Facilitation of letter writing, for instance, was negatively associated with Internet history, indicating that newer groups adopting the Internet recently would be more likely to engage in Participatory Mobilization.

## Study 2

Study 1 considers the Web as a political space, not merely a publishing outlet. Repertoires of political activism should be manifested as identifiable communication patterns on the Web. The reliability of our content analysis is robust, indicating the method and the process of measuring

repertoires employed by this study are consistent; thus, the results of this study are replicable over time.

However, one might still disagree with our view on the Web as a political space where repertoires of political activism and mobilization are manifested, arguing that the Web is a mere publication outlet that simply aims to manage groups' impressions and appeal to the general public. This criticism raises a question of validity of the content analysis method employed in Study 1 in examining organized interests' repertoires of political activism and mobilization.

To address this concern, Study 2 employs telephone interviews of executives of organized interests, who direct and oversee the groups' activities, from collective action strategies to specific communication technology usage. By directly asking about a group's behavioral patterns as well as their strategies for collective action, we would better understand the landscape of group politics.

Study 2 utilized Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) with a random sample of 209 organizations, including public advocacy groups, labor unions and professional associations.<sup>5</sup> The study surveys the strategic activities of organized interests as well as their media and communication usage patterns. In this approach, this study looks at the types of collective actions (i.e., *Traditional Inside Lobbying, Activist Facilitation, Informational Mobilization, Participatory Mobilization*) emphasized by organized interests and examined how new communication technologies contributed to explaining characteristics of newer forms of collective action found in post-industrial politics.

## Method

### *Sampling Procedure*

A total of 1,176 public advocacy groups, labor unions and professional associations that are registered were randomly drawn from IRS databases organized by the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS). (For details of IRS-NCCS data, see *Sampling Procedure* of Study 1.) The

organization profile includes the history of the organization (rule dates), location (region), total revenue, member dues and contributions.

### *Telephone Interviews*

Selected organizations were interviewed between October 13 and December 12, 2006. Six trained interviewers conducted telephone interviews using the Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system. Several screening questions were selected for direct interviews with executive directors or ones equivalent to this position (i.e., one who oversees the group's activities). Ultimately, a total of 242 interviews were obtained (including 31 partially completed interviews), yielding a response rate of 35.9% (based on the RR1 formula suggested by the American Association for Public Opinion Research, AAPOR). With partial interviews counted (based on the RR2 formula by the AAPOR), the response rate reached 43.5%.

The telephone interviews included questions regarding the group's mission and major activities, areas of policy concern, and activities and strategies for influencing policies. Questions about the use of a Political Action Committee (PAC), the adoption and uses of media and communication technologies, the adoption and uses of the Internet (including perception of utility and resources for the development of the Internet), membership and recruitment status, and incentives offered by the groups were also asked. The average interview time per group was 29.6 minutes. The final analysis used a total of 209 cases, excluding the 31 partially completed interviews and two interviews conducted incorrectly.

### *Measures*

*Organizations' strategies and activities.* Based on previous empirical studies on issue interest group politics (Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Walker 1991; Nownes and Freeman 1998; Kollman 1998), lobbying and mobilizing activities were measured by 30 items of frequency of various group

strategic activities (8 point-scale; 0 not used, 1 very rarely---7 very often). Drawing upon the previous literature and the information obtained from a confirmatory factor analysis with the varimax rotation method, the items were grouped into several categories. *Traditional Inside Lobbying* was created based on eight items relating to classic legislative lobbying as defined by Schlozman and Tierney (1983, 1986) ( $M = 18.760$ ,  $SD = 11.641$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .826$ ). *Outside Lobbying* was obtained by combining three items relating to mass-oriented promotion of groups' missions (e.g., organizing conferences and meetings, conducting public service campaigns) ( $M = 11.160$ ,  $SD = 5.290$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .609$ ). *Informational Mobilization* was created by combining five items concerning the provision of information for latent supporters regarding issues, policy implementation processes and group activities ( $M = 21.070$ ,  $SD = 7.762$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .752$ ). *Participatory Mobilization* was based on eight items concerning the facilitation of political participation in a group's collective action ( $M = 29.190$ ,  $SD = 13.360$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .858$ ). In addition, *Activist Facilitation* was measured by three items concerning the organization's formal member recruitment activities ( $M = 15.1$ ,  $SD = 4.33$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .455$ ).

As part of gauging a shift in relative emphasis on different strategic activities<sup>6</sup> and the impact of new communication technologies on these shifts, two "trade-off" variables were created as well. *Trade-off with informational mobilization and outside lobbying* was obtained by subtracting the traditional lobbying score from the sum of outside lobbying and informational mobilization score ( $M = 13.474$ ,  $SD = 10.138$ ).<sup>7</sup> *Trade-off with participatory mobilization* was obtained by subtracting traditional lobbying from the participatory lobbying score ( $M = 10.431$ ,  $SD = 12.135$ ).

*Media and communication technology usage.* Media and communication technology usage were measured by the frequency of a group's use of diverse types of media and communication technologies (8 point-scale; 0 not use, 1 very rarely—7 very often) including direct-mail ( $M = 4.182$ ,

$SD = 2.192$ ), email/listserv ( $M = 5.828$ ,  $SD = 1.690$ ), Web sites ( $M = 5.861$ ,  $SD = 1.764$ ), chat room/bulletin board ( $M = 1.201$ ,  $SD = 1.918$ ), instant messaging/mobile media ( $M = .737$ ,  $SD = 1.688$ ), TV ads ( $M = 1.361$ ,  $SD = 1.976$ ), radio ads ( $M = 1.737$ ,  $SD = 1.996$ ), newspaper ads ( $M = .435$ ,  $SD = 1.146$ ), and press conferences ( $M = 2.540$ ,  $SD = 2.144$ ).

As it appeared that organizations adopted and used new communication technologies frequently (and more frequently than traditional media in general), the study also explored the factors that influence a group's adoption and use of the Internet in lobbying and mobilizing activities. The interview questions included the history of technology use ( $M = 8.421$  years,  $SD = 3.319$  years), number of staff members devoted to Internet-related work ( $M = 1.793$ ,  $SD = 2.214$ ), money spent on the development and maintenance of the Internet ( $M = \$12,355$  per year,  $SD = \$33,985$ ), and outsourcing (yes= 1, 46.9%). As a motivational factor, the study also surveyed the organization's perception of the utility of the Internet, which was measured by six items (11-point scale) ( $M = 53.373$ ,  $SD = 9.650$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .737$ ).

*Organizations' characteristics.* This study obtained or constructed some variables that characterized organizations. In addition to describing the characteristics of the sampled groups, these variables were mainly used to control for organizational profiles when assessing the unique contributions of technology usage in explaining different strategic activities and their relative emphasis on those activities.

While telephone interviews of issue advocacy groups and grassroots organizations provided detailed and robust information about groups' strategies and activities as well as the implementation of new communication technologies, some organizational profile information was best obtained through the IRS-based data. This information supplied the most accurate organizational profiles concerning financial information (e.g., total revenue) as well as a group's history. Therefore, total revenue ( $M =$

\$1,002,312,  $SD = \$2,307,417$ ), dues ( $M = \$22,710$ ,  $SD = \$144,627$ ), contributions ( $M = \$800,176$ ,  $SD = \$1,899,374$ ), region (East coast = 20.1%, Midwest = 26.8%, South = 22.0%, West coast = 20.1%, Washington DC = 11.0 %), major policy issue areas (based on the NTTE code), and history (rule date) ( $M = 17.972$  years,  $SD = 10.905$  years) variables were obtained from the IRS data organized by the NCCS. On the other hand, information about a group's ideological stance (liberal scale; 1 extremely conservative --7 extremely liberal;  $M = 4.646$ ,  $SD = 1.709$ ), Political Action Committee (yes, 13.9%), number of fixed staff members ( $M = 12.331$ ,  $SD = 25.371$ ), and the estimated number of members and supporters ( $M = 14,461$ ,  $SD = 128,488$ ) were constructed through the telephone interviews.<sup>8</sup>

## Results

### *Organizations' Strategies and Activities*

Overall, organized interest groups appeared to utilize newer forms of collective action, including Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization, more frequently compared to Traditional Inside Lobbying and Activist Facilitation. Groups focused more on Informational Mobilization, such as providing detailed information on the issue of their concerns and Congressmen's voting records, than they did on Traditional Inside Lobbying or Activists Facilitation ( $t = 3.620$ ,  $df = 208$ ,  $p = .000$ ;  $t = 17.365$ ,  $df = 208$ ,  $p = .000$ , respectively). In addition, organized interests involved Participatory Mobilization including signing up for collective action, letter writing, and organizing protests more than Traditional Inside Lobbying or Activist Facilitation ( $t = 12.426$ ,  $df = 208$ ,  $p = .000$ ;  $t = 22.046$ ,  $df = 208$ ,  $p = .000$ , respectively).

Furthermore, newer forms of collective action appeared to be less restrained by organizational factors. In assessing how the strategic activities of organized interests were associated with organizational factors such as a group's total revenue, history, and structured membership (e.g., the number of fixed and staff members, membership dues), multivariate analyses revealed that total

revenue was positively associated with Traditional Inside Lobbying only ( $b = 3.443$ ,  $SD = 1.232$ ,  $p < .01$ , table is not shown here).<sup>9</sup> As financial resources become larger, groups are more likely to be involved in traditional inside lobbying. Indicators of structured membership, such as the number of fixed members and formal members, were not associated with newer forms of collective action. Rather, formal membership dues were negatively associated with newer forms of collective action, meaning that groups who rely highly on formal membership dues are less likely to engage in informational and participatory mobilizations.

#### *Organizations' Communication Technology Usage*

New communication technologies were widely adopted by most organized interests. Universally, groups were using some form of the Internet (email/listserv, Web sites, blogs). In general, for lobbying as well as mobilizing activities, organizations utilized email/listserv ( $M = 5.828$ ,  $SD = 1.690$ ) and Web sites ( $M = 5.861$ ,  $SD = 1.764$ ) more frequently than traditional media including TV ( $M = 1.361$ ,  $SD = 1.976$ ), radio ( $M = 1.737$ ,  $SD = 1.996$ ), and newspaper ads ( $M = .435$ ,  $SD = 1.146$ ).

The financial or professional resources of organizations appeared to be less of issue in adopting and using new communication technologies. The overall Internet usage (frequency) in groups' lobbying and mobilization efforts was regressed on the time of adoption (history), the amount of financial investment on technology (spending), the number of technical staff, outsourcing, and groups' perceived utility of the Internet (for descriptive information for each variable, see the Method section). Only the perceived utility was positively associated with Internet usage ( $b = .369$ ,  $SD = .093$ ,  $p < .01$ ).<sup>10</sup>

#### *Technology Usage Patterns and Collective Action*

Based on the theoretical discussion, this study expected to find some associations between types of organized interests' activities and their adoption and use of certain types of technologies even after controlling for organizational characteristics. Whereas information-rich collective action

(including Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization) should be highly associated with the use of new communication technology, information-poor collective action (such as Traditional Inside Lobbying or even Outside Lobbying) should be less associated with new communication technology usage, but more associated with traditional media usage. Similarly, traditional Activist Facilitation based on the recruitment of formal members is less associated with groups' new communication technology usage.

Table 2 is about here

Even after controlling for organizational characteristics, newer forms of collective action (both Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization) were positively associated with new communication technology usage, as expected (See Table 2). On the other hand, none of the traditional media was correlated with Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization. Even direct mail was not associated with newer forms of collective actions (Informational Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization). In contrast, more institutionalized, bureaucratic, and formal membership-based collective action, such as Traditional Inside Lobbying and Activist Facilitation, were not associated with groups' use of new communication technologies. Rather, television advertising was positively associated with Traditional Inside Lobbying, although statistically marginal. Direct mail, which costs a lot more than new communication technologies like the Internet, was associated with formal membership-based Activist Facilitation only. Outside Lobbying, which included mass-oriented promotion of a group's mission (e.g., holding conferences and meetings, PSA), was positively associated with radio advertising, which costs significantly less than television advertising. However, none of the new communication technologies was associated with this type of collective action. Given that Outside Lobbying is geared toward the general public rather than legislators and that it is still mass-publicity-oriented rather than a grassroots-oriented, individualized action, the findings make

sense.

The relationship between technology usage and collective action patterns appeared to be consistent when the impact of technology usage on organizations' relative emphasis on newer forms of collective action was assessed.

Table 3 is about here

Even after controlling for organizational factors, technology usage patterns contributed to explaining a shift in groups' emphasis on collective action, from traditional lobbying to newer forms of collective action (See Table 3). Email/listserv and Web site were positively associated with groups' *Trade-Off with Informational Mobilization* and *Outside Lobbying*. Similarly, *Trade-Off with Participatory Mobilization* was positively associated with groups' use of email/listserv and Web sites. Radio advertising was also positively associated with Trade-Off with Informational Mobilization and Outside Lobbying, probably because the moderate level of positive relationship between radio advertising and Outside Lobbying (see Table 2) contributed to the trade-off as well. On the other hand, television advertising was negatively associated with the Trade-Off with Participatory Mobilization, although marginally so. Overall, the results of this study appeared to be consistent with the overall findings of Study 1, confirming the theoretical views of this research.<sup>11</sup>

### **General Discussion**

Beyond case study, this research empirically examined random samples of 329 organized interests by adopting multiple methodological approaches. The consistent findings from the two studies with different methodological approaches imply some important changes underway in group politics in the U.S.

On a broad level, the findings of this research imply that the primary criticism on group politics—elitist theory and Olson's Logic—needs to be reevaluated. Theories on group politics must

encompass and expand examination of emerging trends in collective action in the new information environment. Contrary to the elite theorists' prediction that emphasizes the importance of institutionalized politics controlled by centralized and bureaucratic elites, group politics overall appear to be moving toward grassroots-oriented and situational mobilization of individualized participation, such as Informational and Participatory Mobilizations. Unlike Olson's central tenets of collective action stressing the recruitment of formal members based on selective materialistic incentives, organized interests' newer forms of collective action is based on loose coalitions of latent supporters centering on issue identity.

Indeed, the findings of this research indicate that with the newer forms of collective action, financial and professional resources as well as institutional and bureaucratic organizational structure are less of an issue. Regardless of group profile factors, more groups are expanding Informational and Participatory Mobilization, moving from Traditional Inside Lobbying towards grassroots-oriented, situational public mobilization. Large, institutionalized and resource-rich organizations would continue their involvement in public mobilization, but do so more efficiently; less institutionalized, less resourceful, smaller organizations can now enter into the landscape of group politics and actively engage in public mobilization. If this shift is persistent, the conventional distinction between interest group politics and social movements would become even more blurred compared to the past. The distinctive organizational features and unique policy impacts of each type of organization would converge (e.g., Burstein and Linton 2002). In support of Chadwick's (2007) "organizational hybridity" theory, organized interests' repertoires appear to resemble each other, and tactical strategies traditionally considered social movement strategies are widely adopted by interest groups. Consequently, as Norris (2001) argued, organized collective actions have been increasingly gearing

toward event-driven, protest-type participation such as boycotts and street demonstrations. Direct action “protest politics” may rise as an important venue of political participation.

Perhaps the most important set of findings in this research is that newer forms of collective action, including Information Mobilization and Participatory Mobilization, appear to be less affected by organizational factors; rather, they are spurred by the adoption and use of new communication technologies, especially the Internet. While there is little research on group politics that emphasizes the role of new communication technologies in understanding organized interests’ collective action (with some exceptional case studies, as noted earlier: Bennett 2003a, 2003b; Bimber 2003; Chadwick 2007), the results of this research clearly indicates the significance of new communication technologies in the emerging trends within group politics in the U.S.

Evidence from this research suggests that new communication technology is not just an efficient tool of communication, but an important social factor that contributes to the transformation of group politics. New communication technology not only promotes the influx of resource-poor, small organizations on to the scene of group politics, but also facilitates groups’ structural transformation in collective action. As group politics become more situational and more geared toward grassroots-oriented collective action, organized interests’ must be successful in connecting latent supporters, building up common interests, and synchronizing individual tasks in response to particular circumstances. The success of collective action in the new information environment perhaps depends on how well groups translate potentially interested, fluid individuals into situated publics through appropriate use of new communication technologies.

To some extent, the results of this study indicate that new communication technologies may facilitate a significant transformation of our democracy as a whole. After the collapse of communism, the relatively simple ideological dichotomy (i.e., capitalism versus socialism) gave way to a

multiplicity of ideologies (Beck 1999; Giddens 1991), and various specialized social issues previously regarded as marginal (such as abortion, sexual orientation, racial conflict, gender and environmental issues) now play substantive roles in mundane politics (Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994). Individuals become less engaged in obviously institutionalized political participation (Agre 2002; Beck 1999; Berry 2003; Inglehart 1997; Melucci 1989, 1996) and traditional political institutions become less powerful (Dalton 2000). Citizens become more involved in less hierarchical and fluid networks based on their identities and individualistic values (Beck 1999; Castells 1996, 2004; Giddens 1991). Instead of an aggregated mass public, pluralistic “issue publics” who consider particular issues personally important (Converse 1964) are often observed in the current political scene (Hutchings 2004; Kim 2007; Kim 2009). The evolution in organized interests’ strategic activities from Traditional Inside Lobbying to Informational and Participatory mobilizations observed in this research is, perhaps, another piece of evidence indicating the decline of “grand politics” in post-industrial democracy (Agre 2002; Beck 1999; Grossman 1995; Inglehart 1997, 1999; Melucci 1989, 1996). Furthermore, new communication technologies appear to significantly contribute to this transformation process by lowering information costs, increasing availability and controllability of information in collective action, and making organizational barriers less of an issue. New communication technologies would enable diverse issue advocacy groups to identify fragmented issue publics more easily (Bennett 2003a, 2003b) and solicit their rapid and intense participation. As a consequence, the transition to pluralistic democracy grounded on diverse issue publics may be accelerated in the age of new communication technologies. With the growth of new communication technologies and the sharp distinctions among citizens aligned with diverse issue concerns, the “grand” political platforms may continue to decline, and pluralistic issue publics (Converse 1964) may play a more substantial role in politics. The question of how these competing different groups can succeed in collective decision-making beyond their

values and self-interests may arise as one of the most important issues for those concerned with democracy.

Despite the effectiveness of random sampling and the multiple approaches (intensive telephone interviews and an enormous amount of Web content analysis), this research of course has some limitations. Multivariate analyses employed in this study do not provide definite causal relationships, especially without properly designed longitudinal data. For a complete understanding of the transformation of group politics and the impact of new communication technologies on this transformation, historical analysis of longitudinal data based on a large scale sample should be achieved. The data of the present research cannot fully reveal the complete stages of the historical development of group politics. However, with a sensible theory, the data still can observe some important “symptoms” of organized interests’ group politics and diagnose the transformation of group politics. By doing so, the present research sheds light upon new emerging group politics and changing democracy in the new information environment. The results of this research underscore the need for more active research in this area.

### Note

<sup>1</sup> For example, unlike churches, the organizations in this research have collective goals that are relevant to politics. While private corporations influence public policy, their political relevance is relatively peripheral because their central goal is to make a profit. On the other hand, occupational associations and labor unions (e.g., the American Medical Association, the Women’s Business Enterprise National Council, American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations) and citizen advocacy groups such as the League of Women Voters or the National Rifle Association, are more basic in their organizational purpose and fall into the purview of the present study.

<sup>2</sup> The sample of Study 1 included 6 labor unions (5.0%) and professional/occupational associations (6.6%), as well as public advocacy groups. The sample resembled the population of 501(c)(3) organizations including labor unions (3.8%), and professional/occupational associations (4.9%).

<sup>3</sup> In the case of Web sites containing more than 10,000 pages (13 cases), only 200 pages (estimated mean + 1 estimated standard deviation) were randomly drawn from the archived pages for coding.

<sup>4</sup> Study 1 included other categories: Electioneering and Basic Group Information. *Electioneering* included information specifically about elections and election campaign activities such as voters’ guides and campaign

endorsement. Basic Group Information included information about the history of the group, founders, and mission statement. In addition, home pages including menu, a list of headlines, or graphic elements only with no salient content presented were separated and coded as Home.

- <sup>5</sup> The sample of Study 2 included 11 labor unions (5.3%), 8 professional/occupational associations (3.8%; total=19, 9.1%), as well as public advocacy groups. The sample resembled the population of 501(c)(3) organizations including labor unions (3.8%) and professional/occupational associations (4.9%).
- <sup>6</sup> As another way to examine groups' relative emphasis on different strategic activities, this study also tested whether the mean differences between frequencies of different group activities were statistically significant. See the *Result* section for the details of the results.
- <sup>7</sup> According to the factor analysis, three outside lobbying items could be grouped with five informational mobilization items, although they differ at a conceptual level. This study used separate categories for most of the analyses, but in creating the trade-off variable, the eight items of traditional lobbying were subtracted from the eight items of these combined items for comparison.
- <sup>8</sup> The telephone interview questions also included the principal benefit that the group offers to members (3-point scale, 0- not provided, 1-not important, 2-important). Based on the question of principle benefits that groups offer, four categories of selective benefits were created with some modification of the incentive literature (Olson 1965; Berry 1995; Loomis and Cigler 1998). *Financial benefit* (three items: discount, insurance, credit cards;  $M = .450$ ,  $SD = 1.122$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .658$ ), *solidary benefit* (two items: contacts, friendship;  $M = 2.919$ ,  $SD = 1.386$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .752$ ), *purposive benefit* (four items: participation, voluntary activities, representation, advocacy;  $M = 5.383$ ,  $SD = 2.616$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .792$ ), and *cognitive benefit* (three items: subscription to publications, education, conference;  $M = 4.610$ ,  $SD = 1.805$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .716$ ). Overall, organizations appeared to less frequently use the financial benefit as their primary benefit compared to others.
- <sup>9</sup> Each of the four collective actions was regressed on groups' ideology, history, region (Washington DC-based or not), total revenue, the number of fixed and staff members, membership dues, and PAC. Ideology (liberal) was also positively associated with traditional inside lobbying. PAC appeared to be positively associated with all four types of collective action.
- <sup>10</sup> The time of adoption was negatively correlated with Internet usage at a marginal level, indicating that later adopters would more frequently utilize the Internet for collective action
- <sup>11</sup> Thirteen organizations of the sampled telephone interviews in Study 2 were overlapped with the sample of the content analysis employed in Study 1 (10.83% of the sample of Study 1). This study compared the patterns of the 13 groups' strategies found in the telephone interviews with those of the same groups' repertoires found in the content analysis. The findings of this analysis confirmed that both telephone interviews and content analysis of those groups illustrated the same patterns of political activism and participation. In both telephone interview and content analysis data, groups' strategies were more focused on Informational Mobilization than Traditional Lobbying ( $t = 4.566$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = .001$  in telephone interviews;  $t = 4.443$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = .001$  in content analysis) and Activist Facilitation ( $t = 2.556$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = .025$  in telephone interviews;  $t = 3.743$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = .003$  in content analysis). Groups also appeared to focus on Participatory Mobilization than Traditional Lobbying ( $t = 7.232$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = .000$  in telephone interviews;  $t = 3.404$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = .005$  in content analysis) and Activist Facilitation ( $t = 4.962$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = .000$  in telephone interviews;  $t = 2.775$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = .017$  in content analysis) in both of the data.

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Table 1. Organizational factors, technology, and activities (Study 1)

	Traditional Lobbying	Activist Facilitation	Informational Mobilization	Participatory Mobilization
Total revenue	.572**	.237*	-.007	.186
Region (DC) <sup>a</sup>	.154†	.099	-.150	.145
Total lobbying expenditure	.706**	-.215	-.025	-.084
Membership dues	-.026	.083	.026	-.035
History	.208*	-.166	.182	.090
Diffusion of the Web <sup>b</sup>	.053	.154	-.327*	-.318*
R <sup>2</sup>	.201	.081	.149	.100
Std. Error	.001	.017	.075	.014

Note. Entries are standardized coefficients.

a is a dummy variable.

b indicates early adoption of the Web

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , †  $p < .01$

Table 2. Technology usage patterns and activities (Study 2)

	Traditional Inside Lobbying	Activist Facilitation	Outside Lobbying	Informational Mobilization	Participatory Mobilization
Email/Listserv	.236 (.483)	.190 (.190)	.348 (.238)	.840** (.305)	1.752** (.432)
Online Chat/ Bulletin Board	.200 (.417)	-.049 (.077)	.030 (.225)	.048 (.263)	.755* (.350)
Web	-.436 (.418)	.001 (.078)	-.376 (.206)	.439** (.164)	1.20** (.461)
Direct mail	-.506 (.379)	.192** (.070)	.135 (.186)	-.048 (.239)	.284 (.417)
TV Ad	.810† (.474)	-.053 (.088)	.017 (.234)	.200 (.300)	-.068 (.524)
Radio Ad	-.482 (.484)	.070 (.090)	.681** (.238)	.020 (.305)	.188 (.533)
Newspaper Ad	-.304 (.666)	.054 (.125)	.086 (.328)	-.452 (.420)	-.414 (.734)
R <sup>2</sup>	.254	.192	.124	.314	.307
Std. Error	10.489	1.948	5.164	6.614	11.561
R <sup>2</sup> -Change ( $\Delta R^2$ )	.027	.079**	.094*	.060*	.115**

Note. Results are based on a hierarchical regression analysis.

Organizational factors (ideology, history, region, total revenue, number of fixed members, dues, and PAC) are entered in the first block as control variables. Entries are obtained from the final model.

Web sites and blogs were collapsed into "Web" due to respondents' perceptual mixture of the two, as well as potential collinearity.

Entries are unstandardized coefficients. Parentheses are standard errors.

Significance of  $\Delta R^2$  is based on the *F*-test.

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , †  $p < .01$

Table 3. Technology usage patterns and trade-off between traditional inside Lobbying and newer forms of activities (Study 1)

	Trade-off with Outside Lobbying and Informational Mobilization	Trade-off with Participatory Mobilization
Email/Listserv	.953** (.354)	1.516** (.522)
Online Chat/ Bulletin Board	-.123 (.392)	.554 (.450)
Web	.499† (.293)	1.626** (.452)
Direct mail	.593† (.356)	.800† (.509)
TV Ad	-.592 (.357)	-.878† (.523)
Radio Ad	1.183** (.455)	.669 (.523)
Newspaper Ad	-.062 (.626)	-.110 (.719)
R <sup>2</sup>	.135	.210
Std. Error	9.862	11.329
R <sup>2</sup> -Change ( $\Delta R^2$ )	.110**	.197**

Note. Results are based on a hierarchical regression analysis.

Organizational factors (ideology, history, region, total revenue, number of fixed members, dues, and PAC) are entered into the first block as control variables. Entries are obtained from the final model. Web sites and blogs were collapsed into "Web" due to respondents' perceptual mixture of the two as well as potential collinearity.

Entries are unstandardized coefficients. Parentheses are standard errors.

Significance of  $\Delta R^2$  is based on the *F*-test.

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , †  $p < .01$