

Political blogging on the right and the left

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Los Angeles, CA (April 19, 2012) As presidential candidates from both parties gear up for the big day in November, more and more people are turning to political blogs to provide them with the latest news on the election-front. A new study released in the *American Behavioral Scientist* (published by SAGE) examined the differences among top political blogs from the right and the left and found that left-wing blogs encourage more user participation, present more opinion-related content, and were more likely to rally their readers to action.

The authors wrote, "The left is more egalitarian in opportunities for speech, more discursive, and more collaborative in managing the sites. The right is more individualistic and hierarchical, with its practice consisting more of pointing to external stories than of engaging in discussion or commentary."

Researchers Aaron Shaw and Yochai Benkler analyzed 155 top [political blogs](#) from a 2-week period in early August 2008. They first determined which blogs represented ideologies from the left and which represented ideologies of the right. They then applied a coding scheme to analyze blog structure, the incorporation of user activity, authorship, calls to action, and overall content from both types of blogs.

The researchers noted the following differences between right and left wing blogs:

- Close to half (46%) of blogs on the left used software to incorporate user comments, user blogs, and user diaries into the

primary blog content, while only 13% of the blogs on the right incorporated the same user-participatory software.

- Left-wing blogs tended to have larger numbers of site owners, administrators, or leaders. 42% of right-wing blogs were managed or governed by a single individual, while only 20% on the left were operated by a single-user.
- Blogs from the right adopted more distinct and impermeable boundaries between blog-administrator content and user-contributed material than blogs from the left.
- The content of blogs from the right was short and often filtered from others with links provided to outside sources. On the left, by contrast, primary content from blog authors tended to be longer and more elaborate.
- Primary authors on the left tended to write more opinion posts, whereas the right-wing blogs tend to write posts that were more concise and relatively brief.
- Of the top 65 higher-ranked blogs, the left incorporated many more calls to action the right. These include appeals to attend political rallies and protests, to participate in letter-writing or phone-calling campaigns, or to donate money.

"In effect, readers on the right are treated more as traditional media consumers: They play a relatively passive and marginal role in producing the primary [content](#)," wrote the authors. "Users on the left have a more active, productive role, blurring the production-consumption distinction and, through this, increasing the probability that the left wing of the blogosphere incorporates a wider range of views than a more centralized model."

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