YouTube and Facebook:

Online Video “Friends” Social Networking

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Abstract

This paper examines the links to YouTube from the Facebook “walls” of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and John McCain over two years prior to the 2008 U.S. Presidential election. User-generated linkage patterns show how participants in these politically-related social networking dialogues used online video to make their points. We show a strong integration of the Web 2.0 and new media technologies of social networking and online video. We argue that political discussion in social networking environments can no longer be viewed as primarily textual, and that neither Facebook nor YouTube can be viewed as isolated information environments. Their interlinkage pattern, combined with links to other sites, provides a multidimensional communication environment which participants must navigate in order to gain a full understanding of the issues. Civic life is becoming more sociotechnical, and will therefore involve engagements with ideas as they are constructed by others out of disparate information sources and their interlinkages.
Introduction

In the 2008 U.S. general election the internet, social networking sites, online video, and blogs played a more significant role than they ever had before [13,20]. Not only did all Presidential candidates have extensive websites, but all were offered and utilized Facebook sites, YouTube channels, and many other new media features of the internet. YouTube and CNN partnered to carry the Presidential debates to a new demographic. Facebook and CNN.com partnered to cover the inauguration on the internet and embed streaming video of the event with ongoing status postings. Barack Obama’s innovative use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is credited with his ability to raise record amounts of money from multiple smaller donors, and the new whitehouse.gov website promised to utilize many features of Web 2.0

Use of the internet for political purposes has grown dramatically over the last decade. Smith & Raine [6] report that the percentage of American adults who report using the internet to obtain news and information about political campaigns rose from 16% in Spring 2000, to 31% in Spring 2004, and then to 40% in Spring 2008. They also report that internet use for political purposes most recently includes watching online videos (35% of all American adults in 2008) and using social networking sites such as MySpace or Facebook (10% of all American adults in 2008). For young people (18-29 years) the internet has become a primary source of news about politics.

Smith & Raine’s [6] data also show that thirty percent of all internet users have social networking profiles. Forty percent of social network users say that they have used the social networking site to engage in political activity, including discovering friends’ political interests or affiliations (29%), getting campaign or candidate information (22%), signing up as a friend of a candidate (10%), and joining a political group (9%). Twenty seven percent of young people reported using social networking sites as a source of information about the 2008 campaign [13]. As far as politicians are concerned, candidates for House and Senate seats in 2006 were more likely to update their Facebook profiles when they were in competitive races, and their Facebook support was correlated with their final vote share [18,20].

Social networking sites can be viewed as a new type of online public sphere [2,3,4,5,7,8], or context that encourages civic discourse and debate. To the degree that social capital is important to a healthy civic environment [14], social networking tools and online communities are seen by some as being a positive augmentation to real life communities and as an antidote to diminishing social capital [15,17,20]. However, other researchers have questioned whether participants in online communities are actually meeting new people and to what degree the discourse in these communities is exposing participants to new ideas or simply reinforcing already held beliefs [10,11,12].

The inter-linkage of internet sites provides a context in which to judge their significance and scope. Studies of interconnections among posts in political blogs have shown that they tend to be polarized and insular, with many links among similar blogs and few posts that move across ideological boundaries [1,11], although this effect might be more pronounced for the handful of so-called “A-list” blogs than for other blogs [9].

There has been little attention to the linkage patterns of politically-oriented community networking sites or to the interlinkage of these sites with online video sharing sites such as
The use of the social networking tool Facebook by candidates and voters allows researchers an unprecedented opportunity to observe retrospectively and unobtrusively political conversation as it unfolded. We have begun examining the wall posts on the Facebook sites of the three major 2008 U.S. Presidential candidates – Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and John McCain – during a two-year period prior to the election. Figure 1 shows a portion of Hillary Clinton’s wall on March 28th, 2008. Wall posts are unthreaded comments from Facebook users who have become “friends” of the wall owner. Others may view wall posts but may not contribute. In previous work [16] we have discussed the distribution of posts and characteristics of posters in this Facebook corpus, and we have described linkage patterns both within Facebook and between Facebook and external sites. Here we focus on the links that users posted specifically to YouTube from the three walls. Our goal is to understand in a preliminary way how YouTube and Facebook were related to each other by the linking behaviors of Facebook users.

Method

The data for this study was gathered from the Facebook Wall pages for each of the candidates. The overall procedure for collecting the postings consisted of running a Java program that connected to and downloaded the wall content as an html page. As each page was downloaded it was parsed to extract the information for each posting. This information was written to a MySQL database and made available for subsequent retrieval and analysis. The following sections detail the steps of the process for collecting and organizing the wall post data.

Data Source

The Facebook Wall component for each of the candidates is reachable through a direct URL. As there are hundreds of thousands of postings, the Facebook site distributes these postings across multiple Wall pages in descending order by time. Each page displays approximately 20 postings and can be uniquely addressed by the URL of a candidate's Wall and a numeric index. For example, a Wall page with index 0 contains the most recent 20 postings made to the Wall. A Wall page with index 1 contains the next most recent postings and so on.

Each posting displayed on a Wall page contains the display name of the user who posted the comment, the day and time they made the post, and their posted message. The postings are ordered vertically with the most recent postings appearing at the top. Some postings display additional user information such as affiliated school.
Figure 1. A facebook page from Hillary Clinton’s wall on March 28, 2008.
Data Capture

We developed a Java program to assist us in gathering the hundreds of thousands of postings made on each candidate's Wall. The program automatically connects to a Wall page and then downloads and extracts the information for each posting displayed on that Wall. The extracted information is then written to a MySQL database. A typical run of the program begins with a specified Wall page URL gathered from a candidate's Facebook site. As noted above, each Wall page can be uniquely identified by a root Facebook URL combined with a numerical index. The Java program takes advantage of this by iteratively downloading and extracting pages 0 through N where N is the last (oldest) page of Wall postings. For example, the URL for the first ever set of postings on Barack Obama's Wall at the time of this writing is "http://www.facebook.com/wall.php?id=6815841748&page=26736". The root URL includes the Facebook identifier followed by a unique id for Obama's Wall, followed by an index, in this case, 26736. For each page that is downloaded, the individual wall postings are extracted by parsing the HTML source code (also called scrubbing). The extracted information for each posting was then written to a MySQL database. The extraction program is run once for each candidate and its output is stored. Subsequent runs of the program are designed to only update the database to contain those postings on the Wall that were made since the earlier runs.

Data Storage

For each posting extracted from the Facebook Wall pages we stored the following.

- Wall Id - a unique identifier for each of the candidate's Facebook Wall. This is also used in the root URL for the Wall.
- User ID - a unique identifier for the user. This information is not visible on the page but is embedded in the HTML source.
- Timestamp - the date and time the message was posted.
- Message Content - the text of the posting.
- Network - the listed network of the user. In some cases there are multiple networks. These are extracted using a subroutine that downloads and parses user profile pages.

Results

Corpus

We harvested the wall posts from the Facebook sites of U.S. Presidential candidates Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and John McCain from September 1, 2006-September 30, 2008. In this time period, a total of 76,045 individuals created 687,626 postings on the three walls. Participation on the three walls was not equal, with Obama’s wall containing 324,780 postings (47.2%), Clinton’s wall containing 316,330 postings (46%), and McCain’s wall containing 46,516 postings (6.8%). For this study, a JAVA program was written to extract all postings that match the regular expression “[Hh][Tt][Tt][Pp]” (which finds any occurrence of the letters “http” in order, but regardless of capitalization) and a domain name matching the regular expression “[Yy][Oo][Uu][Tt][Uu][Bb][Ee]” (which matches occurrences of the letters “youtube” in order,
but regardless of capitalization). This filtered the posts and selected only those that contained an active hyperlink to a YouTube video (URLs lacking the “http” prefix would not appear as active links in Facebook). Overall, there were 39,600 posts (5.7%) that included hyperlinks, with 9,497 of those posts including links to YouTube (1.4% of all posts, 24% of all link-containing posts). Obama’s wall had 4,467 YouTube links (47.03% of all YouTube links), Clinton’s wall had 4,283 YouTube links (45.10% of all YouTube links), and McCain’s wall had 747 YouTube links (7.87% of all YouTube links). These percentages are in line with the relative percentages of all posts across the three walls.

*YouTube and the Top Ten Link Domains*

In Robertson, Vatrapu & Medina (2009), we reported the top ten domain names to which posters linked from Facebook (Figure 2). In all, 21,467 links (54%) went to these top ten domains. Forty two percent of the top ten links (23.3% of all links) went to YouTube, followed by links inside of Facebook (18%), and links to various blogs (10%). The remaining links were distributed more or less evenly across news sites (cnn.com, nytimes.com, and yahoo.com), candidate websites (barackobama.com and hillaryclinton.com, but johnmccain.com was not in the top ten), popular professional news/blog sites and news aggregators (huffingtonpost.com and realclearpolitics.com) and a collection of other blogs (multiple sites within the blogspot.com domain).

![Figure 2. Distribution of links to the top ten domains (with blogs aggregated) from candidate Facebook walls.](image)
**Wall Crossing**

The walls were open for postings from any Facebook member, so individuals could post on multiple walls. Posters are uniquely identified in Facebook, so it was possible to determine whether individuals posted on more than one candidate’s wall. We used “wall crossing” as one measure of the breadth of engagement of Facebook posters. Figure 3 shows the percentages of all individuals and the percentages of individuals posting YouTube links who posted to one candidate’s wall (Obama, Clinton, or McCain), to the walls of two candidates (Obama+Clinton, Obama+McCain, or Clinton+McCain), and to the walls of all three candidates. In both cases, the relative percentage of posters decreased dramatically as the number of cross-wall postings increased.

![Figure 3. Percentages of all individuals and the percentages of individuals posting YouTube links in the three wall crossing contexts.](image)

Figure 4 shows the percentage of all postings within each wall crossing category that contained links to YouTube. We were surprised to find that the percentage of YouTube posts increased as the number of walls increased. That is, individuals with broader participation profiles were more likely to post YouTube videos. In fact, the majority of postings (66.24%) from people who posted on all three walls contained links to YouTube.

YouTube and Facebook
Frequency of Posting

Approximately 73% of posters in the overall corpus posted only once (“unary posters”), and there was a very long tail to the distribution of posters in terms of their posting frequency. We also used frequency of posting as an indicator of engagement and depth of involvement with the political dialogs occurring in Facebook. In a related study [16] we showed differences in patterns of Facebook posting across frequency category, but postings with YouTube links always showed distinctively different patterns. We divided the corpus of link-containing posts into five categories: posts from unary posters (a single post), low frequency posters (2-10 posts) moderate frequency posters (11-100 posts), high frequency posters (101-999 posts), and extreme posters (>1000 posts).

Figure 5 shows the percentage of posters across the poster frequency categories for people who did not link to YouTube versus those who did. The most striking finding in this data is the difference in relative percentage of postings for unary posters. A large majority of posters who did not link to YouTube were unary posters (74.81%) whereas the percentage of unary posters who did link to YouTube was much less (27.11%). In general, the relative percentages of

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posters across the poster frequency categories was much flatter for YouTube-linking posters than for non YouTube-linking posters.

Figure 5. Percentage of individuals who posted links to non YouTube sites and YouTube sites across the five poster frequency conditions.

Figure 6 (from Robertson, Vatrapu & Medina 2009-a) shows the relative percentages of links to each of the top-ten domains (with blogs aggregated into one category) across the five posting frequency groups (the percentage of posts in each frequency group adds to 100%). Links to YouTube dominate in all frequency categories and, unlike the other categories, the relative percentages of links to YouTube do not change across the frequency groups.

Verbosity

Elsewhere [16] we reported that the number of words in posts was higher for moderate frequency posters than for low or high frequency posters. In this study, however, we found that the number of words per YouTube post did not differ across the five poster frequency conditions.
(mean words per post = 23.92, 26.63, 28.10, 27.03, 25.58, and 26.22 for the unary, low, moderate, high, and extreme conditions respectively), $F(4,2562)=1.56$, MSe=969.68, ns.

Figure 6. Percentage of individuals posting to the top ten domains (with blogs aggregated) across the five poster frequency conditions.

**Link Contexts**

Approximately 61% of all of the YouTube links in our corpus were posted with no text. In the remaining cases, it is possible to discern something about the intent of the poster by the context of the accompanying text. In Robertson, Vatrapu, & Medina 2009-b, we identified five link contexts. Here we again propose those contexts as purposes for posting links to YouTube videos:

- Evidence: A video is provided in order to provide evidence for a position of belief or assertion. Sometimes the poster asks a question.
- Rebuttal: A video is provided in order to rebut a prior statement or assertion or to counter a widely held position, belief.
- Action: A video is provided in order to encourage action, for example donating money or joining a cause.
- Ridicule: A video is provided in order to ridicule, embarrass, or otherwise show someone in a bad light.
• Direct Address: A poster directly addresses a candidate and provides a video

A user may post a video in order to achieve multiple goals. In the following section we present a brief and informal analysis of the textual context surrounding links to YouTube. The example text in this section is quoted verbatim with the exception of user names or id’s which have been replaced with the text “[Name removed]” or swearing which is replaced with “[***]”.

Evidence.

• “Barack Obama is not the only candidate who talks to younger voters...see the YouTube videos! http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jp_mn1_z9UY&eurl=http://www.facebook.com/hillaryyclinton”

• “Obama supporter changing his mind http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6LtKDwVo-o”

• “This is called a primary source. Hillary CSPAN vote footage http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8fknhbB-Xo&feature=related I will take the President at his word, that he will try hard to pass UN Resolution and will seek to avoid war, if at all possible.”

• “The Truth about McCain, I’ll wait another four years for a better candidate http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLzWDmxUeLI&feature=related”

• “Tibet: The Truth http://youtube.com/watch?v=Xsoc4-QnplY >Riot in Tibet: True face of western media http://youtube.com/watch?v=uSQnK5FcKas&feature=related”

• (also Action) “Obama lied to the people of Ohio on NAFTA. Send this to news media in Ohio!! The voters deserve to know http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LtbLEKHsi0 >Here is some media links... lets send it out! http://www.nbc4i.com/midwest/cmh/about/contact.html http://www.daytondailynews.com/ http://www.ohio.com/about/contact.html http://www.wkyc.com/compan y/contact/”

• “Obama’s Tricks? http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwzVLP2NcqI&feature=related”

• “will a fellow obama supporter or obama moderator explain why he is aligned with this organization http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRLPG_HplrA”

• “[Name removed] Michael, >Watch it and find out... http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTFsB09KhqI”

• “McCain’s YouTube Problem Just Became a Nightmare http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEtZlR3zp4c”

Rebuttal.

• “Colin Powell didn’t endorse Obama.... http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auco5TU8Y9g”
• “Die Hard Obama people will tell you that Obama is not against it. But he is. You just heard it. But as I said..he talks differently depending on who he is talking to. >Just watch this: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHEli4XKRmM”

• (also Action and Direct Address) “McCain is the true flip flopper. Don’t believe me? Actually watch this, and tell me about the video to prove you did. Your probably too scared. How can you stand behind your candidate and then call the other a flip flopper? That is hypocrisy at it’s peak. http://youtube.com/watch?v=GEtZIR3zp4c >Oh and were not fighting a war, we’ve just invaded a country. Usually in war there are two sides in uniforms fighting against each other and you have the whole rules of engagement and war rules and such. >Don t use the word hypocrite my friend, watch that video and respond to me, don t avoid it.”

• [Name removed], a joke huh? Sen. McCain is a great man. How can you call someone the served our country a joke. Yes he does agree with President Bush on some issues, but there are also many which he does not. So before you start calling him a joke maybe you should take a look into it for yourself. McCain choose Gov. Palin because she a reformer like himself and is not in politics for her own personal interests. She is a strong woman and is going to BE a great VP, he didn’t need her to boost is campaign. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtY_deSusQ8&feature=related http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zk0Hq0abZM”

• “What [Name removed] can’t get his head around is tat the same people thattold us that Iraq had WMD s and Al Qaeda and they had links to 9/11 are the same ones throwing this rhetoric out in our faces. > The hardest part of my job is linking Iraq to the war on terror. >GWB http://youtube.com/watch?v=3_Ds4O3z-Xc”

• “Double standard - Imus v. J. Wright. http://youtube.com/watch?v=g0pNjhZEqdQ >What does it tell you about what Obama wants to enable and encourage?”

• “Why does Hillary Clinton act as if her husband did not sign the NAFTA in 2004? She is so fake. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L28wLOES5eU”

• “Obama rebuts his accusers... personally... http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBGIQ7ZuuiU”

• “Yup Obama’s a liar! >everyone write write write: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LtbLEKHsi0 >to Lou Dobbs (CNN) and Dan Abrahms (MSNBC) before it s too late!!”

• (also Action) “The Clintons ARE lying and distorting Obama s record. Don’t think Obama was against the Iraq war from the start? Watch this video from 2002 and educate yourself: http://youtube.com/watch?v=sXzmXy226po...”

• “No [Name removed], Hillary played dirty... Obama didn’t. I don t have anything personal against her, but the best democrat won. >Anyway, even Fox agrees McCain is a joke http://youtube.com/watch?v=3aMDJP4VxY4”
Action.

- “Ask Obama to run, in a video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMiL98CpDLU
  >Then enter it here: http://www.studentsforbarackobama.com/getinvolved.html#YouTube >Show your support!”

- “everyone write write write! http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LtbLEKHsi0 >to Lou Dobbs and Dan Abrahms before it s too late!!”

- “TO ALL OBAMA SUPPORTERS! >Watch this video, where a Clinton advisor says, >Indiana, those people are [****]! They are stupid http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-MzByUHIzw >before Clinton s election in 1992. SPREAD THIS VIDEO AROUND, IT NEEDS TO GO VIRAL!!! THIS IS THE REAL CLINTON AND IF THE PEOPLE IN INDIANA FINALLY REALIZE IT, OBAMA WILL WIN!!! >SPREAD THE VIDEO NOW!!! http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-MzByUHIzw”

- “yeah.. >please pass this around about the Bosnia trip! http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pef5AUt-tic”

- “McCain supporters pass this video along: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCbrveq1XbQ

- “Watch this. Pass this link on and get some good media coverage: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nc5lHXkrdQ8”

- “All McCain supporters!! Watch this news-- http://youtube.com/watch?v=jiFsxp5qOpM

- “Tell everyone about this. No one seems to care. >Same finger at the same point of the same speech given at two different events on the same day. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DygBj4Zw6No”

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zhkq11UExcw >Is it possible to put these videos up on this page? Would someone make an ad since the media s not picking it up? >Sigh. I m resigned to voting for a loser again on Tues. I know that s not what you want to hear.”

Ridicule.

- “HILARIOUS parody of Obama by Christopher Duncan! The Donald Duck part is especially funny! Enjoy! http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8N_VAdYogU”

- “WOW! He does not get it!!!!!

- “Rush Limbaugh has a crush on Hillary and his crazy [***] operational chaos ~LOL
  >Today will be a BIG DAY for Hillary!

YouTube and Facebook
• “Sorry [Name removed], but everytime Khayam speaks I feel like he should be doing a two step and singing that he represents the Lollipop Guild. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_CAs3q7G48 >Rep. Khayam Raza (D-Munchkinland)”

• “Palin’s idea of VP http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loUHRv3ipLE&feature=related”


• “McCain Brain...lol... http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qUVQDmLf7s”

• “Obama is a preacher. Go start a church. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1C7FSTyVKvE”

Direct Address.

• “McCain run, run, run! video tribute to John McCain: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UlQHLSfAQo8”

• “Dear Senator McCain, I wish you talked more about nuclear safety and security. This issue should be on top of your agenda. Nuclear terrorism is not a joke, and the United States have way too many nukes to keep them safe and secure... >Here is a little tip for you: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yKDrmlF6C3”

• “JOHN! I made a 30 second commercial for you on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaTddiODbKA >Enjoy my friend.”

• “YOU ARE A REAL HERO MCCAIN!!! ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS SHOULD WATCH YOU IN ACTION!!! HEHE ;-) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fm9rLDU-SIe”

• “To the Hillary Campaign, I would contact the creator of this video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rlATFrHhMQc >This is just such an emotionally charge spot that presents all of the great reasons to support her, I would highly recommend you contact the creator if you haven’t already, because running this spot on TV and at events will make people the wake-up and energize them behind Hillary. It’s powerful, to the point. >Suggest you post it on hillaryclinton.com just like Barack posted that rather lame music video on his site.”

• “hill - look - if you really want to know how i feel about the dnc resolution - in this post, most notably, michigan, please watch this: http://youtube.com/watch?v=um5QHGxmoBE >i am not going to recount the arguments and points proposed therein. the onus is on you to watch (if you have not already, and let it be known, i hope you have already). i’d like to know what you have to say / think in these regards.”

• “Hillary, marry me, baby!! http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2IECzSCuWQ >*sigh*”

• “BRUSH IT OFF BARACK!!!!!!!!! http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZJex9Ge2-Q”
• “Obama your not very supportive of critiques! I suggest you leave my comments up! >Now for people that want to know why to Vote for Hillary review this: http://youtube.com/watch?v=4gexyfVpFMU”

• “A message to Hillary – DON’T Mock Obama and his Supporters!!! http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7PXAJABO_4 >Cheers”

A significant next step in our research program is to characterize the context of wall postings and their relationship to different types of posters more thoroughly.

Summary of Results

In this study we focused on the pattern of posts containing links to YouTube on the Facebook walls of the three major candidates for U.S. President in 2008. The findings reported here can be summarized as follows:

• A small amount of the total activity (1.4%) on the walls of the candidates involved linking to YouTube, however approximately a quarter of all posts that contained links were pointed to YouTube.

• YouTube dominates the top ten sites to which Facebook posters linked. 42% of the links in the top ten went to YouTube.

• Breadth and depth of posting matter in the use of YouTube. Posters who are highly involved in Facebook political discourse, as evidenced by the number of different candidates’ walls on which they posted and the number of posts they made over two years, tend to post more links to YouTube.

• Text surrounding links to YouTube suggests that linkers have at least the following motives:
  o Providing evidence to others for a point of view, belief, or position
  o Offering rebuttals or negative evidence to others against a point of view, belief, or position
  o Encouraging others to engage in political action on the internet and in real life
  o Sharing funny or satirical content with others and ridiculing politicians
  o Influencing a politician by direct request, and encouraging or discouraging a politician by direct statements of support or distaste

Discussion

Social networks, Facebook in particular, and online video, YouTube in particular, are important components of Web 2.0 technologies. These technologies are characterized by user-generated content, multi-way communication, and multi-media content. In this study we have shown that social networking and online video in the context of political discourse are tightly connected by user-generated interlinking. For highly active social networkers, blogs are also providing important contexts for comments and opinions. The ecology of political discourse
using these tools moves seamlessly among multiple user selected, and often user created, content in multiple forms.

Public discourse is an essential aspect of public spheres and online discussion is an integral component of online public spheres. However, going forward “discussion” can no longer be viewed as primarily textual. Neither Facebook nor YouTube can be viewed as isolated political discourse environments. Their interlinkage pattern (combined with links to other sites) provides a multidimensional communication environment which participants must navigate to gain a full understanding of the issues. Civic life is becoming more sociotechnical, and will therefore involve engagements with ideas as they are constructed by others out of disparate information sources and their interlinkages.

The sociotechnical construction of ideas in the online public sphere will require visualization and navigation environments that can transcend applications (i.e. move seamlessly among Facebook, YouTube, blogs, official websites, etc.) and information modalities (i.e. text, video, interactive graphics, etc.) to provide an integrated sense of civic involvement. Increasingly, being knowledgeable about civic matters may involve greater technical sophistication and access. The current tight coupling of YouTube and Facebook is just the beginning of the evolution of e-government and e-participation to more complex, but hopefully more useful, sociotechnical contexts.

The information network that is generated by one’s friends in a social networking environment such as Facebook will become an increasingly important source of learning and participation. In the context of politics, research is needed on how these friend-generated information spaces are used to make decisions about candidates and issues, develop political identities and affiliations, and participate in “techno-civic” life.

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