

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Papers in Communication Studies

Communication Studies, Department of

---

Winter 2011

## The Logos of the Blogosphere: Flooding the Zone, Invention, and Attention in the Lott Imbroglio

Damien S. Pfister

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, dpfister2@unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/commstudiespapers>



Part of the [Communication Technology and New Media Commons](#), [Critical and Cultural Studies Commons](#), [Mass Communication Commons](#), and the [Speech and Rhetorical Studies Commons](#)

---

Pfister, Damien S., "The Logos of the Blogosphere: Flooding the Zone, Invention, and Attention in the Lott Imbroglio" (2011). *Papers in Communication Studies*. 5.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/commstudiespapers/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Communication Studies, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Papers in Communication Studies by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

# ARGUMENTATION AND ADVOCACY

## THE LOGOS OF THE BLOGOSPHERE: FLOODING THE ZONE, INVENTION, AND ATTENTION IN THE LOTT IMBROGLIO

Damien Smith Pfister

*This essay examines the significance of a particular metaphor, flooding the zone, which gained prominence as an account of bloggers' argumentative prowess in the wake of Senator Trent Lott's toast at Strom Thurmond's centennial birthday party. I situate the growth of the blogosphere in the context of the political economy of the institutional mass media at the time and argue that the blogosphere is an alternative site for the invention of public argument. By providing an account of how the blogosphere serves as a site of invention by flooding the zone with densely interlinked coverage of a controversy, this essay theorizes how the networked public sphere facilitates invention with speed, agonism, and copiousness. The essay then identifies how flooding the zone has been adopted by corporations and the state in order to blunt spontaneous argumentation emerging from the periphery of communication networks.*

**Key Words:** networked public sphere, blogging, invention, Habermas, astroturfing

Less than a decade after the network of weblogs called the blogosphere emerged, so-called news and politics bloggers have been recognized as potent agents of public deliberation. However, before December 2002, bloggers toiled in relative obscurity as boutique websites with small audiences and questionable influence. Since then, bloggers have been instrumental in constituting the networked public sphere,<sup>1</sup> a concept that captures the evolution of the public sphere in an era of widely diffused digital mediation (Benkler, 2006; Friedland, Hove, & Rojas, 2006; Lim & Kann, 2008; Xenos, 2008). Bloggers are now considered key intermediaries brokering developments in the contemporary and continuous news cycle

---

*Damien Smith Pfister, Department of Communication Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. A version of this manuscript was presented at the 2008 meeting of the National Communication Association and was a part of the author's doctoral dissertation directed by Gordon Mitchell. The author would like to thank Gordon Mitchell, John Lyne, Barbara Warnick, Danielle Wiese, Ron Lee, and Carly Woods for their generous readings and copious, inventive advice. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Damien Smith Pfister, Department of Communication, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 439 Oldfather Hall, Lincoln, Nebraska, 68588. E-mail: dpfister2@unl.edu*

<sup>1</sup> I use the phrase *networked public sphere* instead of the familiar public sphere/counterpublics formulation to signal how digital media have destabilized conventional notions of public deliberation. Blogs cannot simply be seen as counterpublics, because many of them are run by, or otherwise comport to the deliberative norms of, traditional civil society actors. Counterpublics that arose because they were denied access to public fora are now renegotiating their status vis-à-vis the traditional public sphere through publicity-generating digital media (Palczewski, 2001). The significant reshuffling of these multi-nodal subnetworks in the "network of networks" (Bohman, 2007, p. 79) is best captured under the broad penumbra of the networked public sphere. The concept of the networked public sphere ought not to automatically import stale Habermasian assumptions about the public sphere, as I illustrate in the following section.

(Boehlert, 2009; Davis, 2009; Kahn & Kellner, 2004; Perlmutter, 2008). Despite the acclaim bloggers have received from scholars who recognize their contribution to informal deliberation about civic controversies, there has been a dearth of theorizing about the unique argumentative practices bloggers bring to episodes of deliberation. This essay identifies how citizens in internetworked societies generate communicative power by copiously producing digital discourse, or flooding the zone, and theorizes how this metaphor sheds light on internetworked patterns of deliberation. Flooding the zone can be connected to rhetorical invention, the generative process through which novel arguments are articulated, and this linkage clarifies how bloggers are able to shape the news agenda through public argument.

Scholars of public deliberation are attending anew to rhetorical invention of public argument (Heidlebaugh, 2008; McNamee & Shotter, 2004). The importance of invention to public deliberation is neatly summarized in the now familiar debate over Cass Sunstein's (2001, 2009) work on the internet and political fragmentation (see Dahlberg, 2007 for a broader overview; see Adamic & Glance, 2005 for direct application to the blogosphere). Sunstein cautions that digital media produce a cultural environment with a latent risk of political fragmentation. Citizens in an era of information abundance can—must, even—tailor their attention economies to like-minded interlocutors who confirm pre-existing ideological inclinations, resulting in extremism and a gradual weakening of the social glue that underpins democratic deliberation. Digital media become a “driver of homogeneity” rather than a “driver of opposition” like the broadcast media purports to be (Lev-On & Manin, 2009, p. 7). According to Sunstein, digital media enclaves produce more intense rancor in public discourse and foreclose opportunities to discover the common ground necessary to legitimate public deliberation. The risk of digitally enclaved deliberation is that citizens abdicate a core (liberal) democratic responsibility: listening to differing opinions.

But enclaves are not entirely antithetical to democratic practice. Amplifying an underappreciated element of Sunstein's (2001) hypothesis on enclaves, this essay examines the role of “argument pools” in deliberation (p. 68–80). Sunstein argues that enclaved deliberation is occasionally desirable because it increases the sophistication of reasoning, thus deepening the reservoirs of argument citizens draw upon in making decisions. The civil rights movement is his signature example of how protected sites of deliberation prepared citizens to articulate well-practiced arguments in broader spheres of public deliberation. Robert Branham's (1995) exploration of how debating in prison fueled the argumentative range and prowess of Malcolm X is an extreme, but salient, example of how enclaves at a remove from the conventional public sphere can eventually fund public deliberation. Enclaves, which can encompass cultural, material, and/or mediated publics, are rich sites for invention (Squires, 2001; Zulick & Laffoon, 1991). Despite the group polarization risks that Sunstein identifies, I argue the blogosphere performs a valuable democratic function in countering the homogeneity of the institutional press by supporting a communicative site for expanding the *topoi*, or lines of argument, that shape public deliberation.<sup>2</sup>

To make this case, I examine Trent Lott's now infamous December 2002 toast to Strom Thurmond, in which he made comments widely perceived as sympathetic to segregationist politics. Lott's toast was, at first, barely covered by the institutional press. Only after bloggers started connecting the toast to Thurmond's past deeds did the press pick up the story and

<sup>2</sup> There is considerable confusion and disagreement about what, exactly, the term *topoi* means (Leff, 2006). I take it to refer to recurring themes in argument, which are often conceptualized as *lines* of argument. A line of argument indicates a discrete claim supported by evidence that can sustain iterations of clash.

eventually generate public pressure for Lott to resign his Senate Majority Leader post. The aftermath of the Lott toast is often used to illustrate the political power of the blogosphere, because it was the first time that public arguments emerging from blogs gained widespread public attention. A close, in-depth examination of this single case is justified in order to establish a cogent recent history of what Benkler (2006) calls "the founding myth of the blogosphere's journalistic potency" (pp. 262–3). In order to consider the features of networked deliberation, I first trace the conventional late modern model of public deliberation articulated by Jürgen Habermas and demonstrate how that formulation has an impoverished account of networked argument practices. I detail how bloggers' interventions in the Trent Lott case deepened argument pools by flooding the zone and then more explicitly make the link between that communicative practice and invention. Finally, I identify how the concept of flooding the zone has been co-opted by administrative institutions to manipulate public deliberation.

### HABERMAS AND THE "PROBLEM" OF THE INSTITUTIONAL MEDIA

Jürgen Habermas's (1989) account of the emergence of publicity in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe remains one of the touchstones for theorizing how democratic collectives produce and circulate reasoned opinions capable of directing the institutions that structured modern life. One of the threads running through both "early Habermas" and "late Habermas" is the relationship of mass-mediated communication to public deliberation. His most recent contribution to this ongoing conversation identifies independence for media organizations and communicative reflexivity of citizens as two conditions for the activation of deliberative legitimation processes (Habermas, 2006). Both criteria protect public deliberation. Media organizations that are beholden to state or corporate institutions are unlikely to use their powerful agenda-setting functions in a democratic fashion; similarly, a citizenry unwilling or unable to use its critical faculties is unlikely to generate public opinion of any weight.

There is a way to read Habermas rhetorically that (1) explains how the political economy of the mass media dampens the inventional processes necessary to legitimate public deliberation processes and (2) draws out how invention from peripheral actors ought to function in public deliberation. This interpretation of Habermas provides a useful framework to scrutinize the democratic capacities of the contemporary institutional press. Put simply, the for-profit press reduces and homogenizes opinions in order to meet commercial imperatives. This is often at odds with the circulation of novel arguments capable of stimulating rhetorical innovation and cultural change in public conversation (Bohman, 1996, p. 199). Jon Stewart's memorable appearance on CNN's *Crossfire* on October 15, 2004, is a representative anecdote. Stewart (2004) famously called out co-hosts Tucker Carlson and Paul Begala for being partisan hacks echoing shopworn talking points in an artificial debate format that was "hurting America." The *Crossfire* model mirrors tendencies across commercial mass media: established figures are called in to represent polarized opinions, their well-rehearsed talking points are aimed at scoring immediate political gain, and the shades of grey often coloring public controversies are eliminated because it makes for bad spectacle. In the language of argumentation theory, the political economy of commercial mass mediated deliberation thus reduces the *topoi* of public argument. The centralization of these particular mass-mediated communication channels has further reduced opportunities for peripheral voices to break through established media routines and re-set the public agenda. This problem is particularly

acute in the United States, where the media monopoly has gone from fifty media firms to five in the past thirty years (Bagdikian, 1983/1997). Viewpoint diversity has steadily shrunk as syndicated material and advertiser pressure overtake investigative journalism and well-staffed newsroom workforces (McChesney, 1999, 2004).

Esther Scott's (2004) study situates these general observations about reduction of viewpoint diversity in the context of Trent Lott's toast. First, Scott identifies how the historical ignorance of reporters contributed to the institutional media missing out on the Lott story. According to Scott, veteran *Washington Post* writer Tom Edsall explained that his editors and other reporters initially failed to recognize the significance of Lott's comments. As Edsall notes, "I just think that people now see Strom Thurmond as this doddering old guy . . . and have no knowledge of the central role he played in southern politics" (as cited in Scott, 2004, p. 11). Having published two books on race and politics, Edsall's specialization gave him a unique angle on Lott's comments, but many reporters apparently did not know the intricacies of Thurmond's role in the 1948 presidential election (Edsall, 1989; Edsall & Edsall, 1992). Second, pack journalism, the tendency for news reporting to become homogenous within and across organizations, also reduces inventional range (Cook, 2000). Scott (2004) quotes reporter Ed O'Keefe on journalistic clubbiness: "if something is newsworthy . . . everyone will get it . . . if they didn't all get it, then it couldn't possibly be a newsworthy item" (p. 8). Sometimes consensus immediately congeals around the newsworthiness of a story, converting hegemonic interpretations of relevance into journalistic common sense. Third, the absence of an immediate televised response was a factor in delaying press coverage. When the Lott story failed to make the cut the day after Thurmond's birthday, it was quickly considered old news. As O'Keefe reported, part of the problem was that there was "no on-camera reaction" that could interpret Lott's comments for a television audience (as cited in Scott, 2004, p. 10). Roderick Hart (1999) has argued that "television turns faces into arguments" (p. 34) so the absence of an on-camera response made it difficult to turn Lott's comments into a genuine controversy. After a few days, reporters could not interest their editors in the story. As Edsall explained later, "for the story to move in the press . . . you've got to get a new news peg on it every time" (as cited in Scott, 2004, p. 12). New news is central in the competition for advertising dollars; neither audiences nor advertisers pay for yesterday's news.

As Habermas's work in *Between Facts and Norms* (1996) explores, this reduction of viewpoint diversity is at odds with legitimation. Public deliberation secures legitimacy to the extent that the "network for communicating information and points of view" (p. 360) operates free of artificial restraint. As perspectives wend their way through communication networks, "the streams of communication are, in the process, filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified *public opinions*" (p. 360). The spontaneous communication that emerges from the periphery hosts a "processing of 'exhaustive' proposals, information, and reasons" (p. 362)—a rhetorically inventive stratum—that converts unique perspectives from the lifeworld into articulated arguments taken up by the mass-mediated public sphere. Successfully integrating this creative layer into decision-making processes is crucial to avoid the technocratic impulses of institutional actors and achieve democratic legitimacy.

Habermas (1996) explains the "settled routines" of public deliberation must "remain open to renovative impulses from the periphery" (p. 357). As controversies unfold, increased communicative activity from the periphery

is characterized by a consciousness of crisis, a heightened public attention, an intensified search for solutions, in short, by *problematization*. In cases in which perceptions of problems and problem situations have taken a conflictual turn, the attention span of the citizenry enlarges, indeed in such a way that controversies in the broader public sphere primarily ignite around the normative aspects of the problems most at issue. (p. 357)

Habermas adumbrates the contemporary obsession with attention by identifying the enlarged attention span of citizens as the catalyst for public deliberation. However, actually existing democratic practice often departs from this normative model of deliberation because of what Habermas characterizes as the signaling problem of contemporary publics. If the public sphere is a "warning system with sensors" that bleats when citizens express felt needs, those signals must be loud enough to gain attention (p. 357). But Habermas is rather sanguine about the ability of traditional civil society agents to draw attention, explaining that "the signals they send out and the impulses they give are generally too weak to initiate learning processes or redirect decision making in the political system in the short run" (p. 373). This may well have been plausible as an account of civil society before the maturation of the public internet in the late twentieth century, but I aim to show that bloggers' ability to flood the zone and produce copious amounts of interlinked, threaded public discourse partially ameliorates this historical signaling problem. Indeed, the sequence followed by deliberation about Lott's toast parallels the process Habermas details: problematization of Lott's comments (by bloggers), increased attention by citizens, uptake by the mass media, and an eventual turn in public opinion.

One way to understand the institutional mass media's slowness to pick up on the Trent Lott story and the significance of new commentators on the journalistic scene is to acknowledge that the political economy of the institutional mass media constructs what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) called a field. A field is a setting in which actors are organized by power relationships and governed by implicit rules or norms that shape perception and action. The journalistic field shapes news production in a way that produces a narrower ideological debate, increases the dramatization of news, and routinizes certain rules of the game and codes of conduct (Benson, 2004, 2006). Though fields tend to have a powerful inertia, they are not immune to change. An increase in the number of source points producing journalism, paired with an increase in readers and spectators, will challenge received norms in the journalistic field and enable a transformation of the field itself (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 225; Matheson, 2004; Russell, 2007). The growth and influence of the blogosphere, with its multiplication of publicity-producing agents, has certainly disrupted the established journalistic field, as the boundary work between journalists and bloggers attests (Domingo & Heinonen, 2008; Jordan, 2007; Lowrey, 2006). Although bloggers in this case did function much like traditional investigative journalists, the fact that they were largely *outside* the journalistic field gave them a different vantage point from which to assess the newsworthiness of Lott's original comments.

Habermas has yet to consider the consequences of this field disruption for theories of public deliberation, specifically negating the value of increased inventional activity occurring through internet-related media forms. In a speech accepting the Bruno Kreisky prize in 2005, Habermas claims that the internet has ushered in a "welcome increase in egalitarianism . . . [which] is being paid for by the decentralisation of access to unedited contributions. In this medium the contributions of intellectuals lose the power to create a focus" (as cited in Bruns, 2007, para. 9). Habermas appears dedicated to maintaining a prominent role for face-to-face communication in associational contexts that is later focused by opinion leaders through organs of mass communication. In Habermas's telling, the increase in participation fueled by

the internet creates an information glut that hides the wheat with the chaff, for only the traditional organs of civil society have the focalizing power to make sense of it all. Habermas (2006) explicitly limits the influence of internetworked communication:

The Internet has certainly reactivated the grassroots of an egalitarian public of writers and readers. However, computer-mediated communication in the web can claim unequivocal democratic merits only for a special context: It can undermine the censorship of authoritarian regimes that try to control and repress public opinion. In the context of liberal regimes, the rise of millions of fragmented chat rooms across the world tend instead to lead to the fragmentation of large but politically focused mass audiences into a huge number of isolated issue publics. Within established national public spheres, the online debates of web users only promote political communication, when news groups crystallize around the focal points of the quality press, for example, national newspapers and political magazines. (p. 423)

Habermas specifically notes that bloggers play a parasitical role on the quality press that nonetheless may have some occasional benefit, as when the bloggers at *Bildblog.de* sent a bill for 2088 euros to the tabloid *Bild.T-Online* for corrections and fact-checking services (p. 423). This episode was a media prank designed to draw attention to the critical deficits of the institutional media, but Habermas apparently takes it as a signature example of what the blogosphere contributes to public deliberation.

There are a number of limitations to Habermas's critique of internet-mediated deliberation. First, the internet is, quite obviously, more than a series of chat rooms. Though chat rooms were a prominent element of the early internet, the vernacular web of participatory media has proliferated far beyond those humble beginnings (Howard, 2008).<sup>3</sup> Habermas's claim that the internet's democratic merit lies in the evasion of censorship by authoritarian regimes is certainly plausible, especially given the centrality of digital media in recent Iranian, Tunisian, and Egyptian protests; however, to limit the internet's efficacy in other polities ignores the growing body of literature that suggests internetworked communication facilitates political change in advanced liberal democracies as well (Bimber, 2003; Muhlberger, 2004). As troubling, Habermas (2006) situates digital media as merely reactive, or "parasitic" (p. 423), to the political communication that emerges from the dominant, agenda-setting institutional media. But as I will show in the Lott case, occasionally, traditional information flows are reversed, with bloggers breaking stories or inventing novel arguments that are later remediated by the institutional press. Finally, Axel Bruns (2007), in response to Habermas, notes the fragmentation critique "ignores or rejects the reality that especially online, individual publics are multiply connected both implicitly through shared membership and explicitly through a network of hyperlinks connecting postings right across the boundaries of individual fora" (para. 6). That bloggers can generate argumentative enthusiasm around certain events suggests that their activity should not be seen as mere fragmentation, but rather as a type of communicative differentiation emerging in order to accommodate hypercomplexity (Qvortrup, 2003). The criticism that online communities are uniquely susceptible to fragmentation ignores the possibilities that communicative coalitions,

<sup>3</sup> However, if chat rooms are perceived as the primary deliberative feature of the internet, it might be understandable why Habermas is frustrated by their inability to contribute to public deliberation. Harry Weger and Mark Aakhus (2003) suggest some key design flaws that frustrate public argument in chat rooms. First, they note that conversational coherence is difficult to maintain, with a scrolling transcript hosting multiple threads all on the same screen (p. 27). Contrast this with the tendency of blogs to focus on a single theme per post. In addition, their study suggests that chat rooms limit the number of characters a contributor can post at a single time, resulting in severely under-developed arguments (p. 29). Blogs, of course, are (virtually) unlimited in the amount of text that can be posted while also enabling images, audio, and video clips. Finally, they suggest that flaming—the use of ad hominem attacks—undermines the civil community needed to advance public deliberation (p. 31). Blogging might not fare better than chat rooms on this count; that is an issue I will leave to further empirical work.

encouraged by the lateral network form of the internet, serve as a centripetal force during outbreaks of deliberation.

### BLOGGING A LOTT: THE ARGUMENTATIVE INTERVENTIONS OF THE BLOGOSPHERE

The one-hundredth birthday of Senator Strom Thurmond was celebrated in the Dirksen Senate Office Building on Thursday, December 5, 2002. Thurmond, who began his political career as a stalwart segregationist and ran for President of the United States in 1948 on the Dixiecrat ticket, was retiring from the Senate after a long career. As Senate Majority Leader, Trent Lott took the stage to share some prepared remarks about Thurmond. The Senator from Mississippi soon veered off-script, saying "I want to say this about my state: When Strom Thurmond ran for president, we voted for him. We're proud of it. And if the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years either" (Lott, 2002). These spontaneous comments were met with "an audible gasp and general silence" by the audience (Edsall, 2002).

The epideictic atmosphere quickly regained liveliness and Lott's comments were, if not forgotten, sublimated by the effusiveness with which other speakers praised Thurmond's many accomplishments. The occasion seemed to overwhelm Lott's offense. The following day, Friday, December 6, the major metropolitan newspapers reported on the celebration of Thurmond's birthday, but made no mention of Lott's remarks. The major television networks had a total of one story on the toast and it aired at 4:30 a.m. on December 6 (Berman, 2002). The story soon dropped entirely from the national press. Yet, almost a week after Lott made his comments, the story re-emerged in the press and set off a chain of events culminating in Lott's resignation from his position as Senate Majority Leader. This is not a common pattern in the broadcast media that is biased toward jumping on stories when they first break in order to Hoover up bits of information (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 1999). So what happened to encourage the institutional media to backtrack and cover the story? Many observers suggested it was the argumentation sparked by a relatively new assemblage of digital intermediaries: bloggers.

In the wake of Lott's toast, bloggers began digging deeper into Lott's past and debating the implications of his seemingly pro-segregationist comments. Three bloggers played an instrumental role in shaping this conversation on weblogs: Atrios on *Eschaton*,<sup>4</sup> Josh Marshall on *Talking Points Memo*, and Glenn Reynolds on *Instapundit*. My description here is not exhaustive, as the rhetorical activity of these bloggers far outpaces my ability to capture each minute detail. This account does, though, identify the major public arguments emerging from the blogosphere that eventually undermined public support for Lott.

A central rhetorical challenge for critics of Lott's toast was to identify exactly what Lott meant when he said "we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years either" had the country voted for Strom Thurmond in 1948. "These problems" is a phrase vague enough to defy an automatic linkage to segregationism, especially for reporters who might not know the complicated nuances and history of Southern politics. However, as Pierre Levy (1997), an early theorist of the internet (which he refers to as cosmopedic space) predicted, "unanswered questions will create tension within cosmopedic space, indicating regions

<sup>4</sup> We now know that Atrios is actually Duncan Black, a senior fellow at Media Matters for America. I will refer to Atrios in order to maintain the spirit of pseudonymity struck in the early days of the blog *Eschaton*.



where invention and innovation are required" (p. 217). The blogosphere responded to the tension created by the vagueness of "these problems" by using the internet's vast, searchable archives and the ability to digitally reproduce and circulate artifacts from the past to shape perception of Lott's toast.

At 1:21 p.m. on December 6,<sup>5</sup> the pseudonymous blogger Atrios published the first of many posts on the unfolding Lott scandal. Atrios (2002a) wrote "the problems Lott is referring to are the Civil and Voting Rights Acts" and later updated the same post with "Lott is also likely referring [to] lots of other horrible things like the *Brown* decision as well." A second update pulled a quote from *Slate* contributor Tim Noah (2002), excerpting a speech from Thurmond saying "there's not enough troops in the army to force the southern people to break down segregation and admit the Nigra race into our theaters, into our swimming pools, into our homes, and into our churches" (Atrios, 2002a). Basic search functions were equipping interlocutors like Atrios and Noah to take advantage of the archival properties of the internet in order to recycle historical material into public conversation.

Atrios (2002b), at 6:02 p.m. the same day, posted two such pieces of historical evidence that demonstrated "what Senator Lott was proud of in 1948 Mississippi." First, he posted a reproduction of a Dixiecrat ballot from the 1948 election featuring Thurmond. The ballot tellingly says "a vote for Truman . . . means the vicious FEPC-anti-poll tax-anti-lynching and anti-segregation proposals will become the law of the land and our way of life in the South will be gone forever." Then, Atrios (2002b) reproduced a snippet from the Dixiecrat platform of that election:

The negro is a native of tropical climate where fruits and nuts are plentiful and where clothing is not required for protection against the weather . . . The essentials of society in the jungle are few and do not include the production, transportation and marketing of goods. [Thus] his racial constitution has been fashioned to exclude any idea of voluntary cooperation on his part. (ellipses and insert in original)

The ballot was a dramatic piece of visual evidence that connected the "problems" to which Lott referred to racial integration. One role that evidence plays in public argument is shaping probability statements (Majone, 1989; Toulmin, 1958). Was Lott's comment implicitly endorsing segregationism? The Dixiecrat ballot strongly suggests so, thus giving weight to bloggers' accusations of racism. The ability of bloggers to produce and publish evidence like this indicates the increased significance of primary evidence in networked argument practices. The trust-me-I'm-a-reporter ethos central to the institutional press has been eroded, replaced by a "see for yourself" culture that privileges linking to original evidence rather than merely summarizing it (Benkler, 2006, p. 218).

The circulation of the Dixiecrat ballot and platform demonstrates what Alex Halavais (2006) notes is a unique capacity of bloggers to identify points of specified ignorance. Specified ignorance is the Mertonian (1987/1996) concept meaning "the express recognition of what is not yet known but needs to be known in order to lay the foundation for still more knowledge" (p. 51). Though Merton developed this concept for a scientific context, public controversies demand a similar process of gathering available evidence and making claims

<sup>5</sup> By identifying the times that these bloggers posted, I am also illustrating the acceleration of public argument. This shift is significant. For modern social imaginaries, as Benedict Anderson (1983/2002) argues, the printed date right below the masthead was the "most significant emblem" on the newspaper, providing clear daily punctuation for public deliberation (p. 33). Timestamps, which mark the hour and minute on blog posts, are similarly important for blogs and show the accelerated cycle of public deliberation in a network society. Consequently, this essay is an effort to register the way that networked societies shift liberalism's preferred temporality for public deliberation (Greene, 2002).

that support subsequent public argument. In networked terms, even seemingly modest advantages in information, like finding and posting the Mississippi sample ballot, are valuable in making one's node more central to public conversation.

Josh Marshall, a freelance journalist who had operated his blog *Talking Points Memo* since the Bush-Gore recount controversy in November 2000, first posted about Lott's toast at 3:20 p.m. on December 6. He identified Strom Thurmond's presidential campaign against Harry Truman in 1948 as centering on an explicitly segregationist platform. Then, Marshall (2002a) quoted Lott's remarks at Thurmond's birthday celebration before concluding "just another example of the hubris now reigning among Capitol Hill Republicans" fresh from mid-term victories. Marshall followed up the Lott story the next morning. In that post, he reiterated the problematic nature of Lott's comments, and then linked to a transcript from CNN's *Inside Politics*. In a slight directed at the priorities of what the institutional press considers newsworthy, Marshall (2002b) concluded "on *Inside Politics* the John Kerry hair story made the cut, not the Trent Lott segregation story." Atrios (2002c) also noted that the John Kerry haircut story made CNN's *Inside Politics* while the Trent Lott story languished. Bloggers used the contrast between the seemingly more significant Lott story and the \$150 haircut of presidential contender John Kerry as an example of the distorted agenda setting of the corporate infotainment press. Josh Marshall's observation about Kerry's haircut is an example of gatewatching, media criticism practices that bloggers have pioneered to monitor and critique the gatekeepers of mass communication (Bruns, 2005). Bloggers are part of an emerging fifth estate of press critics, who serve a valuable function by hosting arguments about how scarce public attention should be allocated (Cooper, 2006; Hayes, 2008). Because most blogs operate without strong editorial guidance, unedited media criticism can supplement traditional (and gatekept) avenues of media critique like letters to the editor.

The blogging by Glenn Reynolds pushed the Lott story in front of a much wider (and more politically conservative) audience. Reynolds, a University of Tennessee law professor, had been blogging at *Instapundit* since August 2001 and was, at the time, one of the most frequently updated and linked-to sources in the nascent community of bloggers. December 6, the same date that Marshall and Atrios began blogging on Lott, Reynolds (2002a) posted "Trent Lott deserves the shit he's getting from Atrios and Josh Marshall," interlinking prior posts into his own. Reynolds argued that the contentious remarks were proof that Lott should not be Majority Leader and implored readers to peruse the sample Dixiecrat ballot hosted on Atrios's blog, thus directing a larger audience to *Eschaton*. This process of interlinking and commenting demonstrates, to borrow Habermas's language, a kind of bundling process for public opinion. As a particular post becomes linked to by many other bloggers, search engines and other information aggregators like social bookmarking sites identify it as capturing public attention, thus pushing the post to ever-larger audiences. What began as a fairly weak impulse of disapproval in the Lott case eventually propagated across weblogs, gaining traction as more bloggers linked to Reynolds, Marshall, and Atrios, strengthening the signaling capacity of these particular actors in civil society.

In the twenty days following Lott's comments, Reynolds had 90 posts, with hundreds of links, pull-quotes from other blogs or news sites, and snippets from reader emails. One day, however, stands out as indicative of the ability of bloggers to invent and circulate public arguments. In the title of his very first post on December 8, Reynolds (2002b) wrote "FLOOD THE ZONE!" in all capital letters, signaling his intentions to saturate *Instapundit*, and by extension the blogs of those who frequently linked to him, with Lott stories. And saturate he did. He posted 10 times that day, from 8 a.m. to almost midnight, exemplifying

the shift from the daily punctuation of the analog mass media to the continuous flow of information characteristic of digital media.

Reynolds's first post (2002b) excerpted a snippet from Virginia Postrel's blog expressing general outrage. His second post (2002c) recapped a story, originally on Geitner Simmons's blog, about how Thurmond, in July of 1948, rescinded a routine invitation to William H. Hastie, the governor of the Virgin Islands, when he found out Hastie was not white. His third post (2002d) that day explored more of the history of segregationism, and his fourth post (2002e) linked to a group that was calling for Lott's ouster. Reynolds (2002e) noted at the end of his fourth post: "seems the Blogosphere is way ahead on this one. Where's everybody else?" And on and on Reynolds went, displaying the ability of blogging to aggregate news and opinion by relentlessly posting updates on the Trent Lott imbroglio. Although this frequency of posting is somewhat normalized in contemporary digitally mediated contexts, the speed with which Reynolds was able to update his blog was a noteworthy development at the time. The phrase "flood the zone" reappeared as titles to his posts on subsequent days, indicating the centrality of the trope to Reynolds's self-conception of his rhetorical interventions (2002g, 2002h, 2002i).

Though Josh Marshall did not adopt the exact language of flooding the zone, the same basic strategy was implicitly at work in Marshall's blogging, as he "just started hitting it and basically hitting it and hitting it" (as cited in Scott, 2004, p. 13).<sup>6</sup> The concept of flooding the zone had traction not just amongst the blogging elite. Reynolds (2002f), soon after the first flood the zone post, posted the feedback of a reader who emailed him: "I'm glad that you are 'flooding the zone' with this one," signaling a diffusion of this concept into the public grammar. Flooding the zone *can* be an explicit strategy, as when Reynolds or other bloggers call for more public discourse on an issue. However, a coordinated campaign to flood the zone is not necessary in order for copious amounts of public discourse to be produced by networks of bloggers. I will more extensively probe the significance of this particular metaphor in the next section, but for now it is enough to simply note that it was a way for bloggers to conceptualize the argumentative activity of those involved with dissecting the Lott case.

Evidence that painted Lott as an unreconstructed segregationist continued to bob up with the blogosphere's assistance, but nothing had the impact of the story Josh Marshall broke on December 11 about Lott's role in the 1983 Bob Jones University tax exemption case. Marshall (2002c) reported at 10:55 a.m. that Trent Lott had filed an *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) brief on behalf of Bob Jones University, which was suing the Internal Revenue Service for taking away their tax-exempt status because of the university's prohibition on interracial dating. Just two hours later, Marshall (2002d), flexing the evidential see for yourself ethos of the blogosphere, followed up with "Is TPM your source or is TPM your source? Here's the Amicus Brief which Trent Lott submitted on behalf of Bob Jones University in 1981." *Amicus* briefs like this would be fairly difficult for a non-specialist reader to find and access, but Marshall's journalistic experience helped him unearth it and the blog site hosted the primary document for readers to download. In the brief, Lott wrote that

<sup>6</sup> The metaphors that redescribe flooding the zone arguably betray masculinist inclinations: Raines's gun-fight metaphor and Marshall's hitting it (sometimes a sexual metaphor) both participate in a complex economy of gender relations. Although the relationship between masculinity and maleness is often complicated, it is not insignificant that the three bloggers here all self-identify as men. Flooding the zone as a strategy might be grounded in masculine argumentation styles that presume overwhelming one's argumentative foes with the sheer quantity of postings is sufficient to win an argument.

"racial discrimination does not always violate public policy," a quotation that would receive prominent attention in newspaper accounts in the coming days (Edsall & Fears, 2002; Hulse, 2002; Milbank & Vandehei, 2002; Nagourney & Hulse, 2002). This is perhaps the clearest example of an argument developed in the blogosphere that almost immediately circulated into a wide cross-section of the general interest press during the Lott controversy. Somewhat ironically, given the prevalence of the flood the zone metaphor throughout this controversy, Marshall concluded his post by writing "drip, drip, drip," as though each new piece of evidence were adding to a stream of public opinion that was inexorably leading to Lott's ouster.

At 5 p.m. the same day, the Associated Press released a story that covered Lott's involvement in the Bob Jones University case. Reporter John Solomon (2002) wrote: "the old court papers surfaced on a day when Lott tried to quell criticism." Solomon's framing of how the Lott brief "surfaced" neatly omitted the role that Josh Marshall and *Talking Points Memo* played in discovering and publicizing that particular document. Marshall (2002e) lambasted the AP later that evening:

One other thing. Next time the AP rips off a story we broke at 11 AM and runs it as their own story at 5 PM maybe they could toss in a little attribution? I know it's their rep and all but do they have to be so slimy[?] Dow Jones Newswires caught wind of the Bob Jones Amicus Brief from the story TPM broke too. But they were classy enough to say we'd broken the story.

Marshall was arguing for an expansion of the basic journalistic norm of attribution to encompass stories emerging from the blogosphere. Blogs, of course, are keen on attribution, given the elemental unit of blogging, the hyperlink, is so conducive to recognition (Farrell, 2006).

Despite some tensions between bloggers and the traditional press, the evolution of the Lott story evinced signs of symbiosis. Reporters and editors had picked up on the evidence about Lott circulated in the blogosphere. Between Tuesday, December 10, and Wednesday, December 11, Lott's Senate office fielded 288 media calls (Lott, 2005, p. 253). By December 12, the institutional media had caught up with blogs on covering the Lott story. Coverage in *The New York Times* is representative of the overall press treatment. On December 13, the controversy started receiving a special section on the webpage, "Divisive Words," which centralized coverage of the fallout from Thurmond's birthday party. Lott's initial reluctance to entertain the possibility of his resignation as Senate Majority Leader softened as his popularity eroded from December 13 to 20. He eventually yielded to immense public and elite pressure and resigned his leadership post on December 20, 2002.

To draw a straight line from bloggers' rhetorical activities to the downfall of Trent Lott obviously simplifies complex pathways of communicative influence. What seems undeniable, though, is that bloggers deepened argument pools that ultimately shaped the broader public debate about Lott's appropriate fate. In the wake of Lott's resignation, bloggers' communicative power was identified as significant. Paul Krugman (2002) called Josh Marshall's *Talking Points Memo* "must reading for the politically curious, and . . . responsible for making Trent Lott's offensive remarks the issue they deserve to be." John Podhoretz (2002) claimed the "drumbeat that turned this story into a major calamity for Lott, and led directly to President Bush's welcome disavowal of Lott's views yesterday, was entirely driven by the Internet blogosphere." Ariana Huffington (2002), who would later found the influential blog hub *The Huffington Post*, noted that blogs "continued hammering away at the story, and eventually succeeded in moving it out of the shadows into the political spotlight." Even Cass

Sunstein (2006) cites the Trent Lott affair when he writes “bloggers appear to have influenced the public stage, driving media coverage and affecting national perceptions of national questions” (p. 84). All this positive attribution accelerated the blogosphere’s reputation as a site for rhetorical invention, drawing bloggers deeper into contemporary circuits of public deliberation.

### ON FLOODING THE ZONE, INVENTION, AND ATTENTION

The Lott case underlines how *logos*, the invention of public argument, is central to the blogosphere. My focus on the flooding the zone trope offers an alternative to a metaphor more often invoked in scholarly and popular discourse to describe the activities of bloggers: the blogswarm. Blogswarms are particularly likely when they involve political scandals that energize a partisan body politic (Castells, 2009, pp. 247–8). A blogswarm occurs, as journalism scholar Adam Schiffer (2006) explains, “when one side of the political spectrum is whipped into a frenzy by a story that it perceives to be worthy of intense, sustained coverage” (p. 494; see also Smith & MacDonald, 2010). Schiffer’s conclusion about the Downing Street Memo controversy he analyzes is that internet “buzz was the only apparent bridge between the memo leaks and the eventual American coverage of their substance” (p. 506). The etymological roots of the blogswarm metaphor are made apparent in Schiffer’s reference to buzz: the power of a blogswarm depends on the intensity of digital “humming” that multitudes of bloggers can create. Following the internal logic of the blogswarm metaphor, the institutional media cannot ignore a story if the buzz is loud enough.<sup>7</sup> There is certainly something to this account of how the blogosphere and the traditional press interact. After all, issues that gather attention in digital environments often signal important topics meriting broadcast media coverage. Yet, there is an implicit theory of attention that operates in the blogswarm metaphor that is rather impoverished and, perhaps, naïve. The assumption that a blogswarm is capable of shaping the press agenda presumes that mere buzz can move an issue toward the center of the contemporary media ecosystem. Call it the trickle-up theory of press attention: crude attention markers—number of bloggers posting, number of posts on an issue, length of comment threads, density of interlinkage, popularity of shared links on social bookmarking sites—will shape the broader agenda for public conversation.

I certainly do not want to discount the ways in which these attention markers *can* shape public deliberation, for they surely do. However, the blogswarm metaphor’s focus on “buzz power” elides what I think is a more fundamental contribution that bloggers make to public deliberation: the invention of novel arguments. It is not just that bloggers simply pay attention to certain issues, thus directing the focus of the press; it is their ability to (occasionally) invent arguments worth taking up in broader spheres of public engagement. The distinction between blogswarm and flooding the zone that I am drawing here might go some ways toward answering D. T. Scott’s (2008) study about why some controversies that receive attention from the blogosphere fail to result in broader press coverage, resulting in what he calls a blogflop. At least part of the answer, to accompany the structural and situational features of any controversy, must be the quality and inventiveness of argumentation.

The genesis of the flooding the zone metaphor provides an opportunity to further elucidate how bloggers engage in argumentative invention. The idea of flooding the zone is

<sup>7</sup> One additional and, I think, unfortunate connotation of the blogswarm metaphor is the “hive mind,” which has been linked to strands of digital utopianism that are probably best avoided.

richly polysemic, but the term originates in sports strategy as one approach to defeating zone-based defenses. When a team drops into a zone defense, an arrangement where defenders guard an area of the playing field rather than an individual opposing player, an efficient offense sends multiple players toward the same area. As offensive players overwhelm a single defensive player, the playmaker can easily pick an open target because a single node can block only so many potential connections. Flooding the zone thus increases opportunities for offensive success on the sports field. The concept migrated to the journalistic field when Howell Raines became the *New York Times* editor (Shafer, 2003). As a reporter for *The Tuscaloosa (AL) News*, Raines probably could not escape learning of the legendary University of Alabama football coach Paul "Bear" Bryant's penchant for flooding the zone on the football field. Raines explicitly adapted the flooding the zone philosophy in the coverage of Enron's collapse and the *Columbia* shuttle disaster, assigning hordes of *New York Times* reporters to cover the story from every angle (Marks, 2003). According to Raines, "you have to concentrate your resources at the point of attack" (as cited in Auletta, 2002, "A Week"). By flooding the zone, *New York Times* reporters hoped to dig up new evidence and perspectives on major news events, overwhelming their opponents' bids for viewer attention in the same way that zone-flooding football offenses attack defenses. However, Raines's approach burnt out his reporters (according to Shafer, 2003). The strategy of flooding the zone, in this case, bumped up against the material limits of reporter time and energy. The blogosphere, in contrast to the journalistic resources at even major news outlets, offers many more eyeballs and fingers that can sift, report, interpret, and type.

Glenn Reynolds, the blogger at the heart of the Lott controversy, adopted the phrase flood the zone from *Slate* blogger Mickey Kaus, who had picked it up from Raines. According to Reynolds, flooding the zone is intimately linked to invention because "blogs are good at picking apart a story from lots of different angles at once, while big media outlets tend to be more similar in their coverage," making his use of this trope a useful signifier (personal communication, February 14, 2008). This multiperspectival coverage (Bruns, 2006; Gans, 2011) can ultimately influence the agenda setting of the institutional press, as Reynolds suggests that when blogs flood the zone they draw attention to certain story angles "to the extent that other outlets can't ignore it" (personal communication, February 14, 2008). Reynolds's description of flooding the zone coheres with Sunstein's assessment that enclaves can be valuable in deepening argument pools. The aqueous link between flooding the zone and argument pools is accidental, but nonetheless invites a number of playful extensions. When bloggers flood the zone, they unleash a tide of blog postings that crash into extant argument pools, reshaping the horizontal and vertical contours of public argument (see Lewiński, 2010). The ripples in public opinion initiated by these blogging opinion leaders become waves when remediated by the institutional media. This metaphor raises questions as well: Does flooding the zone deepen the argument pool without regard to water quality? Is our deliberative infrastructure capable of accommodating increased argumentative invention? Might flooded argument pools threaten to overtax the deliberative sewage systems, pushing odiferous liquids into otherwise habitable neighborhoods? Are there ways to improve the filtration system of public discourse? To help direct scholarly attention in answering these questions, I want to pinpoint three key themes of invention that emerge in this study of blogging but prevail in networked media more generally: speed, agonism, and copiousness.

The *speed* of blogging makes the blogosphere a rich site of invention. Two related features of blogs, instantaneousness and continuousness, are more amenable than the traditional

press to flooding strategies. Bloggers do not have to wait for their stories to be printed on paper and delivered (admittedly, not as significant a source of publication lag now given most news material is posted online as well). Neither do they have to wait for editorial feedback to clear a news item. The advantages of editorial feedback, like fact checking, do not include speed. Continuous publication also makes flooding the zone easier for digital intermediaries than for the press. In contrast to the newspaper, which even in the digital era is committed primarily to daily publication, bloggers are able to post as the story unfolds, sometimes tens of times in a single day like Reynolds, rather than feeling obliged to weave a more complete narrative. Together, the instantaneousness and continuousness of blogs increase the speed at which public argument is circulated in internetworked societies. When bloggers (and now other digital intermediaries) tackle an emergent controversy, they quickly populate the field of argument by proliferating possible *topoi* to be considered and activating an iterative process of critique. The blogosphere speeds up one element of the deliberative process, the summoning of evidence and enumeration of possible arguments, which might serve a productive role in keeping up with the sociopolitical acceleration contemporary societies face (Rosa, 2003). The blogosphere provides an alternative to the slower, sequential character of traditional public deliberation, where speakers must take turns in order to listen and then respond to arguments—a process the Senate filibuster has shown is occasionally laborious (Scheurman, 2001). At its best, the blogosphere provides a better balancing of sequencing and simultaneity than can the institutional press. But, to adapt the old driving safety warning, speed can kill: in what ways has the acceleration of public deliberation created challenges for argumentation? The rapid spread of rumor is one challenge, but there are surely more fundamental and less rectifiable implications to deliberative speediness.

The *agonism* of the blogosphere also fuels invention. Agonism is often used to dismiss contributions from the blogosphere *in toto*; following Sunstein and Habermas, the agonism associated with the blogosphere produces fragmentation and discord. Agonism, though, can be partially recuperated by noting how it fuels inventional processes. As Thomas Sloane (1997) has theorized, “the inventive process in rhetoric is not only dialogic but controversial, even disputatious in nature” (p. 30). The dialogic and disputatious nature of invention is particularly on display in the blogosphere because of how hyperlinks direct attention to others’ arguments. Richard Lanham (2006) argues that “hypertextual linking can move us from one world of discourse to another, and this kind of voyaging has always stimulated creativity” (p. 25). Atrios, Marshall, and Reynolds were participating in exactly this kind of inventional voyaging as they integrated others’ commentary into their own. In the information-rich environment of the internet, bloggers easily collect, parse, post, and reflect on various textual fragments circulating in the institutional media and the blogosphere. One aspect of this agonistic process that is different in blogs as opposed to the traditional press revolves around the publication of what Peter Simonson (2010) calls the “media of invention:” the “enabling contexts and communicative forms through which rhetorical invention occurs” (p. 26). The social situations, personal relationships, conversations, and media artifacts that feed into an act of invention are, in the blogosphere, publicized to a degree that is usually not made available in the traditional press. Hyperlinks, as a kind of attribution, often reveal the media of invention to a public audience and thus open these constituents of public argument to scrutiny by others.

From a rhetorical perspective, agonism plays a central role in aiding inventional processes by stimulating a third feature of invention present in the blogosphere, *copiousness*. Copiousness is an abundance of thought or resourcefulness borne of preparation (Sloane, 1997,

p. 56). According to Sloane, Erasmus's inventional strategy involved writing the same sentence 147 times in the search for variation and settling on the best one. Such a process parallels the blogosphere's proliferation of discourse through postings and comments that can expand the range of arguments and how they are articulated. The often-rowdy process of argumentation in the blogosphere invites bloggers to riff off each other's postings in a way that constantly generates new vantage points for criticism. To be clear, more is not necessarily better; however, as James Crosswhite (2008) has recently argued in defense of copiousness, "the more arguments we have, from the more perspectives, the better chance criticism has of producing valuable results" (p. 177). That is perhaps the most elegant defense of the blogosphere that can be marshaled.

However, bloggers, if they are to be considered successful, cannot simply reproduce the copious amounts of public discourse from other bloggers. They must *distill* observations from other sources into serviceable blog posts of their own. Thus, in the blogosphere, copiousness is in a dialectical relationship with concision. The condensation of the copious into the concise is one way that public opinion gets bundled in digital networks, stripping out some *topoi* and highlighting others in order to manage information abundance. This *accordion effect* of public argument involves the expansion and contraction of argumentative *topoi* as they move through different nodes of public conversation. Public argument accordions can benefit deliberative episodes when they are calibrated between too much and too little public discourse.<sup>8</sup> The proliferation of public discourse through digital intermediaries like blogs can create the information saturation that Habermas fears will drown out the focalizers of public debate if certain *topoi* are not crystallized into more condensed, quality arguments capable of organizing deliberation. Sometimes, like in the Lott case, bloggers are able to do this well, while at other times their ability to concentrate the key arguments is more limited and thus their influence on a particular controversy might be muted.

What impact does the speed, agonism, and copiousness of bloggers mean for the Habermasian signaling problem that actors in civil societies with corporate political economies must face? As journalism scholars Lewis Friedland, Thomas Hove, and Hernando Rojas (2006) speculate, "perhaps under conditions of *systematically increased communicative reflexivity*, the unattainable ideal of [media] independence is loosened" because "the new networked media system radically, even exponentially, increases the possibilities for reflexivity at every level of society" (p. 18, emphasis in original). As they explain,

perhaps for the first time in history, the informal public sphere has a medium that in principle allows for large-scale expression of mass opinion in forms that *systematically* affect the institutional media system . . . We might say that networked communication has begun to *surround* the traditional media system. (p. 19, emphasis in original)

The Trent Lott case illustrates a very early instantiation of this enveloping process by networked media. Public argument emerging from the blogosphere addresses some of the institutional media weaknesses identified in Esther Scott's (2004) study: specifying knowledge counters historical ignorance, gatewatching counters pack journalism, and immediate agonism counters the inability of reporters to get quick reactions to stories. It would, of course, be a mistake to conclude that this synthesis of blogging and the traditional press

<sup>8</sup> This musical instrument metaphor and the careful calibration between copiousness and concision that I am identifying is inspired by Ehninger's (1970) famous argument violin (see also Mitchell, 2010), a trope that recommends the fine-tuning of one's argumentative stance to adopt a standpoint between the neutralist and the naked persuader.



mirrors the nostalgic public sphere; however, such a tiered, interconnected, and critically-oriented media system does open more space for digital intermediaries to facilitate deliberative legitimation processes. Perhaps Dewey's (1927/1954) "shadowy and formless" public (p. 142) has, with a new space of appearance that supports many-to-many communication, a way to prevent its regular eclipse.

### CO-OPTATION OF "FLOOD THE ZONE"

I have, so far, outlined how bloggers' inventional prowess can facilitate deliberative legitimation processes. However, administrative organizations like the state and corporations have used the same practice of flooding the zone in order to co-opt or blunt spontaneous communication emerging from the networked periphery, putting a digital spin on traditional astroturfing practices (Rettberg, 2008). Digital astroturfing through flooding the zone reintroduces what Habermas calls the steering media of power and money back into deliberative processes that were previously reliant on spontaneous communication emerging from the lifeworld. As a result, the legitimacy of deliberation is jeopardized. Although the Habermasian model outlined previously has trouble accounting for digital intermediaries, at a more general level it is sufficient in explaining how deliberation initiated through spontaneous communication from citizens on the periphery is superior in achieving legitimacy when compared to communication manufactured by core administrative actors like the state and corporations. Though flooding the zone offers a theoretical explanation for the practices of invention in the blogosphere, the real power of the term for critics of public culture and argument is in naming an anti-democratic argumentation practice of the state and corporations.

A significant example of how administrative institutions have adopted flooding the zone as a communication tactic is in the military information management efforts in the wake of 9/11 and during the war in Iraq. After 9/11, the Pentagon created the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI), whose "stated purpose was simple: to flood targeted areas with information" (Murphy & White, 2007, p. 23). The press excoriated the OSI for being a propaganda machine, eventually causing the office to be shut down. Although the office was shut down, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld later noted that the same goals were being pursued under different auspices ("Secretary Rumsfeld," 2002). Later, during combat operations in Iraq, a similar strategy was employed as Department of Defense outlets produced overwhelming amounts of information emphasizing how well the military operations and subsequent occupation were going. As Torie Clark (2006) relates in her memoir of her years as Pentagon spokesperson, flooding the zone was a key element in the Pentagon's efforts to influence perceptions of the war (see especially Chapter 2, "Flood the Zone"). More recently, a study by James Kinniburgh and Dorothy Denning (2006) written for the Joint Special Operations University contemplates Pentagon efforts to become more actively involved in the blogosphere. As the report's authors explain, "sometimes numbers can be effective; hiring a block of bloggers to verbally attack a specific person or promote a specific message may be worth considering" (Kinniburgh & Denning, 2006, p. 20). Alternatively, they suggest that military branches might consider supporting homegrown blogs that appear independent but actually funnel on-message talking points from the Pentagon. Although this report does not indicate that the Pentagon has undertaken these specific steps to influence public argument in the blogosphere, the Department of Defense has set up a *Bloggers Roundtable* which provides

“source material” and access to military officials in live chats (“DODLive: Bloggers’ Roundtable,” n.d.; “Pentagon to Rework,” 2006).

Flooding the zone is also on the cusp of becoming the gospel for public relations firms working on political campaigns in a networked era, in part because of what is now known as Macacagate. During a 2006 Senate re-election bid, George Allen’s derisive use of the racial epithet *macaca* was caught on tape, posted to YouTube, and widely circulated through blogs, ultimately contributing to his electoral defeat. Campaign strategists are now scheming methods to flood the zone in order to frustrate future episodes of public deliberation like that surrounding Allen. One campaign strategist recently recommended that the Allen campaign should have flooded the zone in order to overwhelm curious searchers looking for the macaca video:

To flood the zone, upload dozens and dozens of random videos which have absolutely nothing to do with the clip you’re trying to make “disappear.” The real strength of the clips you’re uploading isn’t to respond directly to the video, but to confuse the YouTube user and make it impossible for them to find the video they’re looking for. The one thing every campaign can count on is that any web user has a slight case of undiagnosed ADD (attention deficit disorder). If they don’t find what they’re looking for seconds after the search has begun, they’ll tire, and give up the search. (All, 2007)

This strategy is increasingly widespread, with public relations firms now offering services to flood the zone with their specially trained “blog warriors” in order to “put your talking points on the blogosphere 24/7,” because “today’s blog attacks can be tomorrow’s news” (Advantage Consultants, n.d.).

Some attempts at artificially inducing an opinion cascade by blog warriors such as those advertised by Advantage Consultants have been ferreted out by intrepid bloggers. For example, Wal-Mart created a blog called *Working Families for Wal-Mart*, which positioned itself as a grassroots advocacy group designed to rebut critics of Wal-Mart. It was, in fact, a joint effort between Wal-Mart and their public relations firm Edelman to counter the bad press Wal-Mart had been receiving online (Craig, 2007; “PR Firm Admits,” 2006). In the 2004 election cycle, bloggers got on the payroll of a few high profile races. Markos Moulitsas Zuniga (of *DailyKos*) and Jerome Armstrong were paid by Howard Dean’s campaign while writing blog posts that praised his politics. They eventually disclosed that they were on Dean’s payroll, but the suspicion of *quid pro quo* persisted (Glover, 2006). At the same time, John Thune, in a heated race with Tom Daschle for a Senate seat in South Dakota, hired two bloggers to critique negative press and create positive buzz for his campaign. Neither blogger disclosed he was on the payroll of the Republican candidate, though Thune’s campaign account eventually revealed that the bloggers were being paid (Kuhn, 2004). This revelation created a tempest in the blogosphere condemning the tactic.

Bloggers have been quick to pounce on attempts by administrative actors to artificially flood the zone, confirming Habermas’s (1996) thesis of the dual orientation of public sphere actors. This dual orientation involves efforts by civil society actors to “directly influence the political system” while also “enlarging civil society and the public sphere as well as with confirming their own identities and capacities to act” (p. 370).<sup>9</sup> Bloggers, by identifying orchestrated efforts to flood the zone, have drawn attention to the communicative infrastructure needed to sustain legitimation processes. These critical interventions expose where

<sup>9</sup> Habermas points to Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato’s (1992) theory of social movements which posits a movement between what they characterize as defensive identity-consolidating and offensive public-influencing functions.

“publicity attempts to hide itself, pretending to come from the people, for example, through what have come to be called ‘astroturf’ groups, that is, organizations that purport to be ‘grassroots’ but that are actually funded and operated by hidden organizations” (Barlow, 2007, p. 177). Astroturf, of course, resists being peeled back.

In at least some instances, bloggers (and others) have been able to identify astroturfing and neutralize artificial opinion cascades, usually at some expense to the credibility of the organizations that were attempting to influence public debate. Certainly, bloggers have not been able to catch all instances of astroturfing. However, when astroturf blogs *are* found out, the amount of criticism lodged against them can be seen as a process whereby bloggers attempt to protect the norms which underline the value of their participation in public deliberation in the first place: namely, as coalescers of spontaneous communication coming from peripheral nodes of society. The expansion of our rhetorical imaginary with the metaphor flood the zone, then, captures both the potential and the threat of communication in a networked society. As an addition to the emergent vocabulary of the networked society, the term can be used as a normative benchmark to demarcate organic processes of spontaneous communication from artificial attempts by institutions to overwhelm communicative power with money.

## CONCLUSION

The growth of the blogosphere can be situated as a response to the late twentieth century political economy of the institutional mass media, which had partially abdicated a historical role in picking up signals from civil society actors and sluicing them toward decision-makers. The trope of flooding the zone signifies the capacity of bloggers (and potentially other digital intermediaries) to invent arguments that shape public deliberation. There are two primary conclusions to be drawn from this investigation of a blog-borne deliberative episode. First, the blogosphere is now a key site for invention of public argument. What is unique about the inventional abilities of the blogosphere? Bloggers, being outside the journalistic field of the institutional press, expand the possible *topoi* for consideration through multiple perspectives rather than simply reproducing the dominant frames of the mass media. Additionally, bloggers dredge up primary evidence that can shape the interpretation of unfolding controversies, spurring a qualitative shift in citizens’ expectations of proof away from authority-driven models of evidence and toward more participatory ones. Finally, bloggers practice invention with speed, agonism, and copiousness. The ability of bloggers to instantaneously and continuously publish their insights accelerates inventional frequency. Public deliberation finally has a medium of communication that can keep pace with the speeding up of other social, political, and economic sectors, even as it contributes to that acceleration.

Second, flooding the zone is one communicative strategy that can focus public attention in a networked media environment. Despite the centrifugal tendencies of public discourse in internet-enabled fora, there are, as Yochai Benkler (2006) notes, “mechanisms and practices that generate a common set of themes, concerns, and public knowledge around which a public sphere can emerge” (p. 256). Flooding the zone is an example of such a practice that provides a centripetal counterweight to the fragmentary tendencies of digital deliberation. In some cases, bloggers’ generation and development of public argument is so compelling that they migrate from the enclaves where they are incubated to more general media. This process would seem to meet the criteria that Sunstein and Habermas defend concerning the necessity of broader, mass-mediated circulation of public argument.

Digital technology has made more feasible many-to-many public deliberation, a shift in communication patterns that supplements the few-to-few model of oral societies and the one-to-many model of broadcast societies. Scholars of digital media, as well as theorists and practitioners of argument and deliberation, must begin to account for this many-to-many model of communication. As this case study has shown, the internet networked space of appearance in the Lott case allowed deliberators to focus attention and generate communicative power that ultimately dislodged Trent Lott from his perch at the top of the Senate. This early episode of blog-borne public argument funneled inventive, spontaneous communication from the periphery to more general interest media. But, as blogs have become more institutionalized, theorists and critics of digital media must ask whether or not some of the political economy problems of the broadcast media are being imported into new media forms. Is a gradual narrowing of viewpoint diversity inevitable in any media form, or, does the more intensely networked public sphere have tools to better prevent the slow hardening and monetization of pathways of influence? That question is a crucial one in working out the complex connections between digital media and democratic legitimation in networked societies. Scholars of public argument can play a fruitful role in answering this question through a more sustained investigation of the networked argumentation practices native to digital media.

## REFERENCES

- Adamic, L. A., & Glance, N. (2005). *The political blogosphere and the 2004 U.S. election: Divided they blog*. Paper presented at the WWW-2005 Workshop on the Weblogging Ecosystem, May 10–14, 2005, Chiba, Japan. Paper retrieved from <http://www.blogpulse.com/papers/2005/AdamicGlanceBlogWWW.pdf>
- Advantage Consultants. (n.d.). Retrieved September 11, 2009, from <http://www.advantageconsultants.org>
- All, D. (2007, June 10). Five essential tips for the YouTube campaign trail. *David All Group Blog*. Retrieved September 11, 2009, from <http://www.davidallgroup.com/2007/06/10/five-essential-tips-for-the-youtube-campaign-trail/>
- Anderson, B. (2002). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. New York: Verso. (Original work published 1983).
- Atrios. (2002a, December 6 1:21pm). Trent Lott [Web log message]. *Eschaton*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from [http://atrios.blogspot.com/2002\\_12\\_01\\_archive.html#90022436](http://atrios.blogspot.com/2002_12_01_archive.html#90022436)
- Atrios. (2002b, December 6 6:02pm). Here is what Senator [Web log message]. *Eschaton*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://www.eschatonblog.com/2002/12/here-is-what-senator-lott-was-proud-of.html>
- Atrios. (2002c, December 7 11:23am). I love being right! [Web log message]. *Eschaton*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from [http://atrios.blogspot.com/2002\\_12\\_01\\_archive.html#90025159](http://atrios.blogspot.com/2002_12_01_archive.html#90025159)
- Auletta, K. (2002, June 10). The Howell doctrine. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://www.kenauletta.com/howelldoctrine.html>
- Bagdikian, B. (1983/1997). *The media monopoly*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Barlow, A. (2007). *The rise of the blogosphere*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Benkler, Y. (2006). *The wealth of networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Benson, R. (2004). Bringing the sociology of media back in. *Political Communication*, 21, 275–92.
- Benson, R. (2006). News media as a journalistic field: What Bourdieu adds to new institutionalism and vice versa. *Political Communication*, 23, 187–202.
- Berman, J. (2002, December 6). *World News This Morning*. ABC. Retrieved from LexisNexis News.
- Bimber, B. (2003). *Information and American democracy: Technology in the development of political power*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Boehlert, E. (2009). *Bloggers on the bus: How the internet changed politics and the press*. New York: Free Press.
- Bohman, J. (1996). *Public deliberation: Pluralism, complexity, and democracy*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Bohman, J. (2007). *Democracy across borders: From demos to demoi*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*. (R. Nice, Trans.) Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1996). *The rules of art*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Branham, R. (1995). "I was gone on debating:" Malcolm X's prison debates and public confrontations. *Argumentation and Advocacy*, 31, 117–37.
- Bruns, A. (2005). *Gatewatching: Collaborative online news production*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Bruns, A. (2006). Wikinews: The next generation of alternative online news? *SCAN Journal*, 3. Retrieved from [http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/print.php?j\\_id=9&journal\\_id=69](http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/print.php?j_id=9&journal_id=69)
- Bruns, A. (2007, February 18). Habermas and/against the internet [Web log message]. *Snurblog*. Retrieved April 4, 2009, from <http://snurb.info/node/621>

- Clark, T. (2006). *Lipstick on a pig: Winning in the no-spin era by someone who knows the game*. New York: Free Press.
- Cohen, J., & Arato, A. (1992). *Civil society and political theory*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Cook, T. (2000). The future of the institutional media. In W. L. Bennett and R. Entman (Eds.), *Mediated politics: Communication in the future of democracy* (pp. 182–202). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cooper, S. (2006). *Watching the watchdog: Bloggers as the fifth estate*. Spokane, WA: Marquette Books.
- Craig, D. A. (2007). Wal-Mart public relations in the blogosphere. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 22, 215–218.
- Crosswhite, J. (2008). Awakening the *topoi*: Sources of invention in *The New Rhetoric's* argument model. *Argumentation and Advocacy*, 44, 169–84.
- Davis, R. (2009). *Typing politics: The role of blogs in American politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dahlberg, L. (2007). Rethinking the fragmentation of the cyberspace: From consensus to contestation. *New Media & Society*, 9, 827–847.
- DoDLive: Bloggers Roundtable. (n.d.). Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://www.defenselink.mil/blogger/index.aspx>
- Domingo, D., & Heinonen, A. (2008). Weblogs and journalism: A typology to explore the blurring boundaries. *Nordicom Review*, 29, 3–15.
- Dewey, J. (1954). *The public and its problems*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press. (Original work published 1927)
- Edsall, T. (1989). *The new politics of inequality*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Edsall, T. (2002, December 7). Lott decried for part of salute to Thurmond: GOP Senate leader hails colleagues run as segregationist. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from LexisNexis News.
- Edsall, T., & Edsall, M. (1992). *Chain reaction: The impact of race, rights, and taxes on American politics*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Edsall, T., & Fears, D. (2002, December 13). Lott has moved little on civil rights issues: Analysts say remark, record consistent. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from LexisNexis News.
- Ehninger, D. (1970). Argument as method: Its nature, its limitations and its uses. *Speech Monographs*, 37, 101–10.
- Farrell, H. (2006, May 30). Norms and networks. *Crooked Timber*. Retrieved May 12, 2009, from <http://crookedtimber.org/2006/05/30/norms-and-networks/>
- Friedland, L., Hove, T., & Rojas, H. (2006). The networked public sphere. *Javnost-The Public*, 13, 5–26.
- Gans, H. (2011). Multiperspectival news revisited: Journalism and representative democracy. *Journalism*, 12, 3–13.
- Glover, K. D. (2006, October 31). Bloggers proliferate on campaign payrolls. *MSNBC*. Retrieved from <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15498843/>
- Greene, R. (2002). Rhetorical pedagogy as a postal system: Circulating subjects through Michael Warner's "Publics and Counterpublics." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 88, 434–443.
- Habermas, J. (1989). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Habermas, J. (1996). *Between facts and norms: Contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy* (W. Rehg, Trans.). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Habermas, J. (2006). Political communication in media society: Does democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research. *Communication Theory*, 16, 411–26.
- Halavais, A. (2006). Scholarly blogging: Moving towards the visible college. In A. Bruns & J. Jacobs (Eds.), *Uses of blogs* (pp. 117–126). New York: Peter Lang.
- Hart, R. (1999). *Seducing America: How television charms the modern voter*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hayes, A. (2008). *Press critics are the fifth estate: Media watchdogs in America*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Heidlebaugh, N. (2008). Invention and public dialogue: Lessons from rhetorical theories. *Communication Theory*, 18, 27–50.
- Howard, R. G. (2008). The vernacular web of participatory media. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 25, 490–513.
- Huffington, A. (2002, December 22). Vox populi is heard at full volume. *Cleveland Plain-Dealer*. Retrieved from LexisNexis News.
- Hulse, C. (2002, December 11). Lott's praise for Thurmond echoed his words of 1980. *New York Times*. Retrieved from LexisNexis News.
- Jordan, J. (2007). Disciplining the virtual home front: Mainstream news and the web during the war in Iraq. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 4, 287–293.
- Kahn, R., & Kellner, D. (2004). New media activism: From the "Battle of Seattle" to blogging. *New Media & Society*, 6, 87–95.
- Kinniburgh, J., & Denning, D. (2006). Blogs and military information strategy. *JSOU Report 06-5*. Hurlburt Field, FL: The JSOU Press.
- Krugman, P. (2002, December 13). The other face. *New York Times*. Retrieved from LexisNexis News.
- Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (1999). *Warp speed: America in the age of mixed media culture*. New York: Century Foundation Press.
- Kuhn, D. P. (2004, December 8). Blogs: New medium, old politics. *CBS*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/12/08/politics/main659955.shtml>
- Lanham, R. (2006). *The economics of attention: Style and substance in the age of information*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Leff, M. (2006). Up from theory, or I fought the *topoi* and the *topoi* won. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 36, 203–11.
- Lev-On, A., & Manin, B. (2009). Happy accidents: Deliberation and online exposure to opposing views. In T. Davies & S. P. Gangadharan (Eds.), *Online deliberation: Design, research, and practice* (pp. 105–122). Palo Alto, CA: CSLI Publications. Retrieved from <http://odbook.stanford.edu/viewing/filedocument/46>
- Levy, P. (1997). *Collective intelligence: Mankind's emerging world in cyberspace*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lewński, M. (2010). Collective argumentative criticism in informal online discussion forums. *Argumentation and Advocacy*, 47, 86–107.

- Lim, M., & Kann, M. (2008). Politics: Deliberation, mobilization, and networked practices of agitation. In K. Varnelis (Ed.), *Networked publics* (pp. 77–108). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Lott, T. (2002). Toast delivered at Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-SC) 100th birthday celebration. Retrieved from <http://web.archive.org/web/20021207064833/www.c-span.org/politics/>
- Lott, T. (2005). *Herding cats: A life in politics*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Lowrey, W. (2006). Mapping the journalism-blogging relationship. *Journalism*, 7, 477–500.
- Majone, G. (1989). *Evidence, argument, and persuasion in the policy process*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Marks, A. (2003, June 6). *New York Times* resignations signal industry turmoil. *Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0606/p04s01-ussc.html>
- Marshall, J. (2002a, December 6 3:20pm). I've always thought [Web log message]. *Talking Points Memo*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/archives/000451.php>
- Marshall, J. (2002b, December 7 5:55am). Hard-hitting coverage? [Web log message]. *Talking Points Memo*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/archives/000450.php>
- Marshall, J. (2002c, December 11 10:55am). And, of course, there's [Web log message]. *Talking Points Memo*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/archives/000477.php>
- Marshall, J. (2002d, December 11 12:56pm). Is TPM your source [Web log message]. *Talking Points Memo*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/archives/000476.php>
- Marshall, J. (2002e, December 11 8:47pm). One other thing [Web log message]. *Talking Points Memo*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/archives/000473.php>
- Matheson, D. (2004). Weblogs and the epistemology of the news: Some trends in online journalism. *New Media & Society*, 6, 443–467.
- McChesney, R. (1999). *Rich media, poor democracy: Communication politics in dubious times*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- McChesney, R. (2004). *The problem of the media: U.S. communication politics in the 21st century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- McNamee, S., & Shotter, J. (2004). Dialogue, creativity, and change. In R. Anderson, L. A. Baxter, & K. N. Cissna (Eds.), *Dialogue: Theorizing difference in communication studies* (pp. 39–56). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Merton, R. (1996). Specified ignorance. In P. Sztompka (Ed.), *On social structure and knowledge* (pp. 51–56). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1987).
- Milbank, D., & Vandehei, J. (2002, December 13). President decries Lott's comments: Bush calls for racial fairness but doesn't call for Senator's resignation. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from LexisNexis News.
- Mitchell, G. R. (2010). Higher-order strategic maneuvering in argumentation. *Argumentation*, 24, 319–335.
- Muhlberger, P. (2004). Testing cyber-realism. In P. Shane (Ed.), *Democracy online: The prospects for political renewal through the internet* (pp. 225–238). New York: Routledge.
- Murphy, D., & White, J. (2007). Propaganda: Can a word decide a war? *Parameters*, 37, 15–27.
- Nagourney, A., & Hulse, C. (2002, December 13). Bush rebukes Lott over divisive words. *New York Times*. Retrieved from LexisNexis News.
- Noah, T. (2002, December 6). Blurted out conviction of the week: Trent Lott; what's a little segregationism among friends? *Slate*. Retrieved from <http://web.archive.org/web/20021230101827/http://slate.msn.com/?id=2075151&device=>
- Palczewski, C. H. (2001). Cyber-movements, new social movements, and counterpublics. In R. Asen & D.C. Brouwer (Eds.), *Counterpublics and the State* (pp. 161–86). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Pentagon to rework public relations operation. (2006, October 31). *Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com>
- Perlmutter, D. (2008). *Blogwars*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Podhoretz, J. (2002, December 13). The internet's first scalp. *The New York Post*. Retrieved from LexisNexis News.
- PR firm admits it's behind Wal-Mart blogs. (2006, October 20). *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://money.cnn.com>
- Qvortrup, L. (2003). *The hypercomplex society*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Rosa, H. (2003). Social acceleration: Ethical and political consequences of a desynchronized high-speed society. *Constellations*, 10, 3–33.
- Rettberg, J. (2008). *Blogging*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Reynolds, G. (2002a, December 6 9:15pm). Trent Lott deserves the shit [Web log message]. *Instapundit*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://www.instapundit.com/archives/005985.php#005985/>
- Reynolds, G. (2002b, December 8 8:41am). Flood the zone! [Web log message]. *Instapundit*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://instapundit.com/archives/006007.php>
- Reynolds, G. (2002c, December 8 10:55am). Geitner Simmons has more [Web log message]. *Instapundit*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://instapundit.com/archives/006008.php>
- Reynolds, G. (2002d, December 8 11:07am). Of course, it's not as simple [Web log message]. *Instapundit*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://instapundit.com/archives/006009.php>
- Reynolds, G. (2002e, December 8 11:10am). The Center for the Advancement of Capitalism [Web log message]. *Instapundit*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://instapundit.com/archives/006010.php>
- Reynolds, G. (2002f, December 8 3:39pm). Christopher Johnson at the *Midwest Conservative Journal* [Web log message]. *Instapundit*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://instapundit.com/archives/006016.php>
- Reynolds, G. (2002g, December 12 3:00pm). Flood the zone [Web log message]. *Instapundit*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://instapundit.com/archives/006127.php>
- Reynolds, G. (2002h, December 16 3:06pm). Flood the zone! [Web log message]. *Instapundit*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://instapundit.com/archives/006183.php>
- Reynolds, G. (2002i, December 16 11:02pm). Flood the zone! [Web log message]. *Instapundit*. Retrieved January 14, 2008, from <http://instapundit.com/archives/006190.php>

- Russell, A. (2007). Digital communication networks and the journalistic field: The 2005 French riots. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 24, 285-302.
- Scheuerman, W. E. (2001). Liberal democracy and the empire of speed. *Polity*, 34, 41-67.
- Schiffer, A. (2006). Blogswarms and press norms: News coverage of the Downing Street memo controversy. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 83, 494-510.
- Scott, D.T. (2008). Tempests of the blogosphere: Presidential campaign stories that failed to ignite the mainstream media. In M. Boler (Ed.), *Digital media and democracy: Tactics in hard times* (pp. 271-300). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Scott, E. (2004). "Big media" meets the "bloggers": Coverage of Trent Lott's remarks at Strom Thurmond's birthday party. *Kennedy School of Government Case Program*. Retrieved from [http://web.archive.org/web/20040412233307/http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/presspol/Research\\_Publications/Case\\_Studies/1731\\_0.pdf](http://web.archive.org/web/20040412233307/http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/presspol/Research_Publications/Case_Studies/1731_0.pdf)
- Secretary Rumsfeld media availability en route to Chile. (2002, November 18). *U.S. Department of Defense News Transcript*. Retrieved from <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3296>
- Shafer, J. (2003, May 16). The Tao of Bear: The Paul Bear Bryant lessons on leadership Howell Raines failed to absorb. *Slate*. Retrieved from <http://www.slate.com/id/2083025/>
- Simonson, P. (2010). *Refiguring mass communication: A history*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Sloane, T. (1997). *On the contrary: The protocol of traditional rhetoric*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press.
- Smith, C. M. & MacDonald, K. M. (2010). The Arizona 9/11 Memorial: A case study in public dissent and argumentation through blogs. *Argumentation and Advocacy*, 47, 123-139.
- Solomon, J. (2002, December 11). Lott expresses regret for remarks: Court filing from 1981 surfaces. *Associated Press*. Retrieved from LexisNexis News.
- Squires, C. (2001). The Black press and the state: Attracting unwanted (?) attention. In R. Asen & D.C. Brouwer (Eds.), *Counterpublics and the State*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Stewart, J. (2004, October 15). *Crossfire*. Retrieved from <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0410/15/cf.01.html>
- Sunstein, C. (2001). *Republic.com*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sunstein, C. (2006). *Infotopia: How many minds produce knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sunstein, C. (2009). *Going to extremes: How like minds unite and divide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Toulmin, S. (1958). *The uses of argument*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weger, H., & Aakhus, M. (2003). Arguing in internet chat rooms: Argumentative adaptations to chat room design and some consequences for public deliberation at a distance. *Argumentation and Advocacy*, 40, 23-38.
- Xenos, M. (2008). New mediated deliberation: Blog and press coverage of the Alito nomination. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, 485-503.
- Zulick, M., & Laffoon, A. (1991). Enclaved publics as inventional resources: An essay in generative rhetoric. In D. Parson (Ed.), *Argument in Controversy: Proceedings of the Seventh SCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation* (pp. 249-255). Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association.