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New Innovations in State Legislatures: An Examination of the Successes of Diffusion and the Potential of Personal Home Pages

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The University of Southern Mississippi

**NEW INNOVATIONS IN STATE LEGISLATURES: AN EXAMINATION
OF THE SUCCESSES OF DIFFUSION AND THE
POTENTIAL OF PERSONAL HOME PAGES**

by

Amber Jean Reetz Narro

**Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Studies Office
Of The University of Southern Mississippi
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

May 2006

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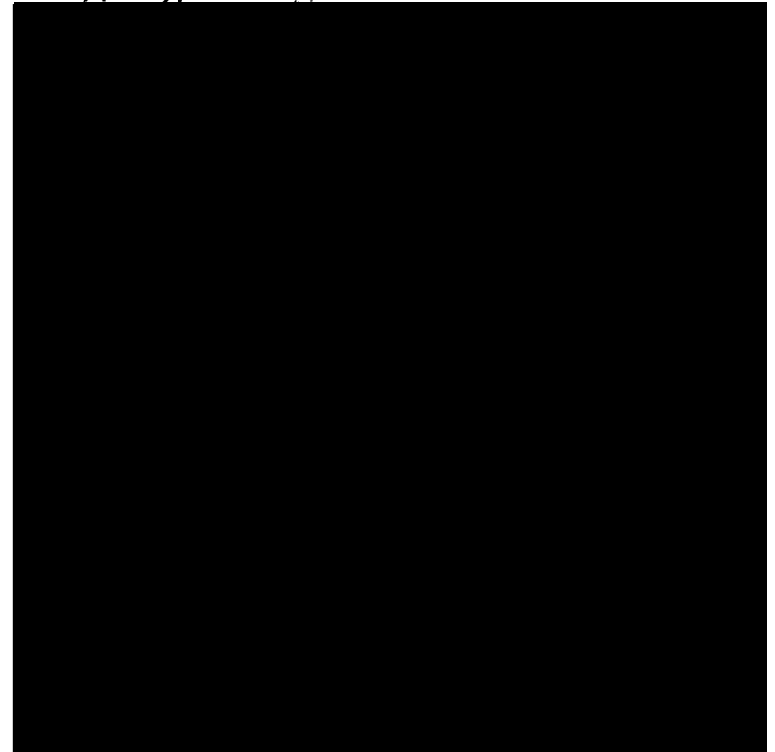
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ABSTRACT

NEW INNOVATIONS IN STATE LEGISLATURES: AN EXAMINATION OF THE SUCCESSES OF DIFFUSION AND THE POTENTIAL OF PERSONAL HOME PAGES

by

Amber Jean Reetz Narro

May 2006

This dissertation examined state legislators' dissemination of innovations on their web sites by determining the extent to which state legislators' web sites reflect "best practices" as recommended by Park and Choi (2002) and Jewell (1982). The researcher utilizes content analysis to determine which legislators employ tools of sophistication, as well as relationship-building tools. In addition, the researcher interviewed webmasters across the country to determine the limitations placed on legislators. Finally, the researcher examined legislator and constituency demographics. Using chi square analysis, the researcher determined if there were relationships between the tools on the websites and the demographics of the legislator and constituency and/or limitations set by the state legislature.

Results indicated little or no relationship between the legislators' and constituents' demographics and the tools on the legislators' websites; however, there was a relationship between the limitations on the legislators and the tools that were on their sites. Finally, there also was a relationship between the state median income and the tools provided on the sites. Directions for future research were suggested.

DEDICATION

If I had to point to one person of the very many who have made this dissertation happen, I would have to give that honor to my adoring husband. During the last 27 months, he has proven this love for me with all his being, standing beside me during the trials of the entire doctoral program. Jake has watched my emotional roller coaster twirl around him with patience and resistance and has even given me the occasional kick in the ... right direction.

My children, Shayne, Alex, Blane, Harris and Olivia have been my entertainment. They have made me laugh, sing and dance, and coerced me to take a break now and again to enjoy their innocence so I wouldn't miss precious moments of their youth. They will never know how much they did for me and how much I appreciated their antics. I have amazing, talented and creative kids.

My parents and my in-laws are next on the list. My mom and dad rescued me from responsibility on several occasions, often serving as "foster parents" for the children and even making sure I was fed when I was too busy to cook meals, or so they thought. My mother and father-in-law served up conversation on many lonely night-drives home from Hattiesburg, a 120-mile track. Marrying a man with wonderful family has its perks –and I know they haven't shown all they've got in six short years.

TJ – my little brother provided me a good laugh and gave me the occasional, "I can't believe you're doing this." I'm sure glad you're back home. I missed you.

I also would like to thank numerous old friends and many new ones as well for pushing me and telling me they believed in me, even when I was neglecting them at every pass. It's now time to make up for lost time.

I only hope that this will not be my greatest accomplishment. It can't compare to being a great mother, wife, friend, daughter, sister and aunt to all those who I thank for molding me to the person I am.

My final prayer that I will make about or during this dissertation -- I hope God bestows many blessings on those who have been so generous to me. I can never thank Him or them enough.

*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding.
In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

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My doctoral dissertation would not have been possible without the true dedication of those on my committee: Dr. Charles Mayo, Dr. David Davies, Dr. Arthur Kaul, Dr. Gene Wiggins and Dr. Fei Xue. Their guidance and diligence in making sure I took as much knowledge with me as possible did not go unnoticed.

Dr. Xue helped me through my challenges in the statistical analysis, and Drs. Wiggins and Davies used their wit and charm to carry me through. Dr. Kaul initiated challenges during my entire academic career that pushed me to realize I am deserving of this degree. Most of the gratitude, however, goes to Dr. Mayo. I don't know what I would have done without his patience and insistence on perfection. I was Dr. Mayo's first dissertation student, and the manner in which he performed his duties made it seem like I was his last and he was savoring every moment. I felt like he always had time for me, even though he spent more time on the road than I did – ten hours every week to and from his home in Chattanooga. Dr. Mayo's energy will always be remembered. He was always available as a mentor and ally during times I had to “defend” myself.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

χ^2	Chi square
N	Total number in a sample
p	Significance
=	Equal to

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of technology such as radio, television and now the Internet, political communication media have drastically changed. Iyengar (2001) says that the use "of the mass media to promote political objectives is not only standard practice but in fact essential to political survival" (p. 228). The Internet was introduced to the American public in 1994, and the 1996 presidential campaign was the first presidential campaign to use the Internet as a communication medium. This election has been studied for its Internet effectiveness through use of technology (McKeown and Plowman, 1999 & Klinenberg and Perrin, 2000). Eight years later, in the 2004 presidential campaign, the Internet reinvigorated the concept of blogging, proving that the technology had changed and will continue to change the shape and scope of political communication. Bimber (1999) says that the Internet may offer new opportunities for creating "social bonds that transcend physical proximity" (p. 409). Government use of Internet technology has been studied by scholars, but state government use of the Internet, specifically that of legislators communicating through use of their home pages, has remained largely unexplored.

Both political professionals and scholars argue about how political web sites fit into the communication program during campaigns or while the official is in office. According to Browning (2002), campaign web sites should be only one component in the strategy for communication, not its entire strategy for information transfer. Web sites should focus on visitors to the site and contain smart and current content. Also important for politicians is enticing engagement on the web site by

giving users things to do, such as finding resources on the web, sending e-mail to friends so they may see the site, obtaining detailed information about legislation and browsing campaign finance information (Browning, 2002). For example, Mack (2004) references the Howard Dean presidential nomination campaign. Dean called on supporters to get involved and get connected with others who were also involved through use of the Internet and weblogs within it. This allowed technology and political communication to walk hand in hand. Blogs became a diary of the campaign where users could check backgrounds and find new information.

Park and Choi (2002) note, "interactive web sites allow candidates to finely target an audience and communicate with them directly through direct e-mail" (p. 36). The authors state that constituents may view this communication as a method of involvement and thus feel a sense of community. While there is support that the Internet may seem important to constituents for political communication, others have reasoned that legislators do not find this new medium to be all that important for them to do their jobs. Mayo and Perlmutter (1996) question the importance of the Internet for legislators for information gathering. Following the focus of the "digital divide", in which there is a concern for those who do not have access to the Internet (Mack, 2004), Mayo and Perlmutter (1996) say it is important that the electorate know how to access information and communicate through use of the Internet in order for it to be a successful medium. Their study about legislative information gathering found that the computer online service ranked fifth in importance for legislators, as they rely mainly on legislative colleagues and interest group

representatives to provide them information. Mayo and Perlmutter note that the mass media are the main source of information for the electorate.

The use of the Internet as a political campaign tool has been studied extensively. While some researchers have examined whether the Internet aids politicians who are vying for positions higher on the political career ladder (Smith, 2003), others have focused entirely on the legislative web sites as a whole (Musso et al., 2000). However, there has been very little research in the area of how state legislators use the Internet to connect with target audiences while in office.

Lang (2004) says that local publics have been neglected as audiences in political communication studies. While many ideas are conceived at a local level, many of the decisions about these ideas are made at higher government levels such as at the state or federal level. Lang says there are four aspects that characterize local political communication as an important unit of analysis: sharing knowledge about a common space (cognitive aspects); sharing social, cultural and political practices (symbolic aspects); engaging in more face-to-face interactions (interactive aspects); and accessing local government information (democratic aspects). This dissertation focused on local audiences of political communication by examining the communication used by state legislators who must reach their constituents with important messages about the issues, decisions and actions of the state legislature.

All 50 states have begun wrestling with the implementation of digital government. Some states offer more tools of communication than others. For example, visitors to the Mississippi legislative web sites will not have the same video-viewing capabilities as do visitors to the Louisiana or California sites. On the

Florida state legislative web site, there is a link for lobbyists, which is something that many other states do not offer. Wilson (2003) says the Internet helps legislators, citizens, professional lobbyists and staff members keep track of legislative action and key issues both during sessions and also while the legislature is not in session. Attorneys also can use the site in order to determine legislators' intent of laws. They can search archives of documents and videos of the laws being debated during legislative sessions to interpret meaning (Broussard, 2005).

This dissertation examined state legislators' web sites at the local level by examining the extent to which state legislators' web sites reflect "best practices" as recommended by Park and Choi (2002) and Jewell (1982). According to Park and Choi, successful web sites need four specific components: interactivity (ability to access information, express ideas and opinions and participate in the campaign both online and offline, online polls, chatrooms); multiple communication cues (texts, video, audio clips); personalization (downloadable information, online newsletter); and ease of navigation (site maps, menus, search engines). Jewell (1982) outlines four responsibilities of legislators: communication with and accessibility to constituents, active response to policy initiative, allocation of resources, and service to constituents. Together, these characteristics offer a set of criteria for effective web site communication between state legislators and their constituents.

This study focused on the use of the Internet as a political communication channel for constituents of state legislators to remain informed of state legislative decisions and actions, as well as legislative issues. According to information provided by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2005), 137 million people,

or 68 percent of American adults, use the Internet And 70 million Americans go online daily. Although recent studies suggest Internet users as starting to become more diverse, demographics still remain skewed toward upper-income, well educated, mostly Caucasian male audiences. Therefore, classic arguments posed by Chomsky and others about the “haves” and the “have-nots” of society are particularly important because of the ability of the Internet to separate the informed from the uninformed – and subsequently the powerful from the powerless – about important issues facing their communities, or in this case constituents’ districts. On the other hand, with two-thirds of the population having access to online information, it is difficult to ignore the Internet’s ability to reach large audiences with detailed information at a relatively low cost. Therefore web site communication provides an advantage over more conventional time-consuming and costly face-to-face meetings and speeches, more costly newsletters and other direct mail message and more filtered news media interviews.

This study examined how state legislators use the Internet as a means of political communication through use of a content analysis of politicians’ official home pages provided by state legislative web sites. Systematic random sampling was employed so that legislators in all 50 states were analyzed. Variables addressed the extent to which these web sites employed the components recommended by Park and Choi (2002) and offered their audiences opportunities recommended by Jewell (1982). Telephone/Internet surveys of state legislative webmasters that addressed issues such as flexibility/rigidness of rules governing legislative web sites, the regulation/autonomy of content legislators may place in their web sites, and the

frequency with which state legislative web sites are redesigned to incorporate new Internet tools added to the richness of the information gathered from the content analysis. Data from the content analysis was compared and contrasted to demographic information from each state to determine the extent to which demographic variables are related to effective web site use by state legislators from their respective states.

Because state legislative communication through web sites is still a rather new development, the adoption of the method of communication is still in process. Therefore, this dissertation is anchored in diffusion theory (Rogers, 1983). According to Rogers, "diffusion is the process by which an *innovation* is communicated through certain *channels* over *time* among the members of a *social system*" (p. 5). For this study, the state legislative web sites were perceived as the innovation. According to diffusion theory, the speed with which information or an innovation is diffused throughout a social system depends on its relative advantage over the current methods or situation, its compatibility with existing norms and experience, its perceived simplicity, its ability to be tried with little or no risk and its ability to demonstrate readily apparent outcomes. Therefore, although traditional diffusion research examines the audience to measure how and why information or an innovation is being adopted, this study focused on the innovation to assess its characteristics during the diffusion process. The four recommendations for effective political web sites offered by Park and Choi (2002) and Jewell's (1982) four responsibilities for legislators provided the framework for assessing the effectiveness of this innovation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Political Communication in Review

Political communication has been recognized by academic researchers as a field of study since the 1970s. Only a 30-year-old area of research, the field is still developing, and researchers are striving to keep up with the constant changes coming about because of advances in technology. Campaigns and debates sparked researchers' interest in political communication, and it has since blossomed into studies of such things as how and through what media politicians communicate with constituents. Of course, politicians are interested in how they may persuade people to vote in their favor, how to gain support from those who they represent and sometimes, how to get people to vote at all. Other uses of political communication are to keep constituents informed of government decisions, keep them engaged in the process, establish dialogue and call constituents to action through forms of communication such as letter writing, public demonstrations, making telephone calls or visiting the legislature during session (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2000). Popular topics of study in political communication include campaign advertisements, debates, speeches and negative and attack advertising (Nimmo & Sanders, 1981).

It can be argued that communication is necessary for any society to function, and it certainly is essential in politics. Nothing in politics, especially in a democracy, is possible without it. Even voting is a form of communication. Hill and Hughes (1998) say that "political communication almost always involves four

main actors: the public, the print and broadcast media, the government and interest groups” (p. 22). McLeod (2001) argues that political communication became an actual field of study only when Steve Chaffee presented an edited volume entitled, Political Communication; however, history shows that the actual act of political communication began with the advent of a democratic government. The political party system in the U.S. began shortly after the establishment of the Constitution. America is a two-party system, and these parties were formed in order to communicate messages to the public and rally support around certain causes and stances on issues (Maisel and Buckley, 2004). Political organizations have used rhetoric, newspapers, radio, television, telephone, personal appearances and now the Internet to communicate their messages.

In the *Handbook of Political Communication*, Graber (1981) discusses political language as having several different components. Both verbal and nonverbal language through information dissemination and agenda-setting create the means by which people interpret information and ways by which people link information. The author introduces small group communication as influencing political communication as well through the channels of controlling negotiation, environment, climate, and agenda-setting. Groups develop online in the form of cyber communities who enter virtual politics (Davis et al., 2002).

Communication between politicians themselves also has been studied. McKinney and Carlin (2004) address political debates and the twists and turns they have taken over the years with new participants and new non-verbal tactics

to which the public, researchers and the media pay close attention (i.e., attire, poise). Analysis can be done on voice and articulation, the rhetoric itself or the personal mannerisms of the candidates. Not only are the presidential candidates themselves analyzed, but also their running mates, as the vice presidents also debate; however, sometimes the vice presidents are forgotten within the field. Bitzer (1981) says, "the practice of political rhetoric is far more than uses or misuses of languages; it is the engagement of motives, principles, thoughts, arguments, and sentiments in communications – an engagement which functions pragmatically to form attitudes and assist judgments regarding the broad range of civic affairs" (p. 225). The subject and careful consideration of all the components of that subject define the type of rhetoric employed. The language examined here is that on the web sites of state legislators.

There are several approaches from which political communication can be examined including non-verbal communication, rhetoric, symbolism, campaigns communication, policy-making and relations with the press. James E. Combs (1981) introduces the process approach, saying "the realities of change, the apparent passage of time, decay and death have inspired a wide variety of philosophical, theological, and poetic attempts to cope with 'the empire of Time'" (p. 45). Combs addresses symbolic interactionism, which he describes as an active view of interaction, whereas the dynamics are studied as people adjust their actions toward each other and toward social objects. In addition, Combs includes the transactional prospective ("an ambitious program for inquiry that reflects the conviction that the social sciences should be grounded in the

methodological advances in the natural sciences” (p. 49)), and the dramatistic theory (“based on the insight that human life is aesthetic and that dramatic theory understands the symbolic actions in life which are manifestations of that aesthetic sense” (p. 52)).

Also, McLeod and Becker (1981) explain the uses and gratifications approach in political communication. Using the transactional theory as a cornerstone, as well as functionalism, these authors explain that politicians, as well as the media and their audiences, look for gratification in their dissemination and dissection of information.

Political communication has been departmentalized over the last three decades. Researchers identify political marketing, public relations and socialization as strong subdivisions of political communications. Newmann and Perloff (2004) address political marketing in their research, citing Newmann’s prior research to define it as “analysis, development, execution, and management of strategic campaigns by candidates, political parties, governments, lobbyists and interest groups that seek to drive public opinion, advance their own ideologies, win elections, and pass legislation and referenda in response to the needs and wants of selected people and groups in a society” (Newman, 1999, p. xiii). The authors site others’ research on the domains that drive voting behavior and list these indicators as including political issues, social imagery (using stereotypes to appeal to voters and encouraging them to see the association between the candidate and segments in society), candidate personality, situational contingency (using hypothetical situations to present

possible scenarios) and epistemic value (appealing to the voters curiosity or novelty).

Barbara Pfetsch (2004) cites Baerns (1985) in assessing political public relations, saying that the output of political communication concerns the “production, processing, and communication of political messages. The functional area of cross-border communication in the political system is political public relations. At the level of concrete organization, the job of political public relations workers is to generate issues, to frame and evaluate issues, and to time when they are to be made public” (p. 350). Finally, Atkin (1981) points to Hyman, Langton, Hess and Torney in defining political socialization as “a developmental process by which children and adolescents acquire cognitions, attitudes, values, and participation patterns relating to their political environment” (p. 299). The exposure that people have to political officials may define this socialization. Families may influence political socialization as well. Although this term actually is older than the field of political communication, its presence within the field is obvious. The goal of these subdivisions of political communication – political marketing, public relations and socialization – is to appeal to and familiarize a particular public with information – the same goal of any web site.

Gurevitch and Blumler (1990) say that comparing communication tactics and strategies can answer questions and produce phenomena in the field of political communication. The authors suggest that comparative analysis may define “the political” as an activity of governments, legislatures and executive bureaucracies; it defines the communication as more than one-way; and it

explains that politics and media include both structural and cultural components. The problem with comparative measures is that it is difficult to measure such variables as logic and influence. Much of the research today in political communication compares one candidate's tactics and/or political language to that of his or her opponent.

In addition, researchers examine receivers' interpretations and reactions to communication tactics and language. Of course, the more the public is predisposed to information, the more they are likely to understand it. The amount of information and the frequency of exposure make a difference in public opinion, as well as understanding of the processes involved and their action involved. Also, personal aspects of members of groups also influence public opinion. Public opinion can and is influenced by the media and by agenda-setting (Davis, 1990).

William Eveland (2004) says it is the media's responsibility to educate the public so that they can make "informed decisions about candidates, political, and current events information" (p. 177). The press often is seen as the watchdog over government. Of course, the press should make sure they are impartial and unbiased. Media should be knowledgeable about government processes in order to effectively cover the workings of the organization. Their roles are as follows: to collect and present objective information; interpret the news; represent the public vis-à-vis the government; determine public opinion and to inform it of government workings, as well as inform the government about public opinion and to participate in the governmental process. Relations are

determinant upon issues, personalities and pre-existing notions (Martin, 1981; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1981).

The media not only can influence the public through winnowing (or helping to narrow) the field during elections and setting the public agenda, but it also can provide a source of information and perhaps educate the general public on the election process and particular issues (Joslyn, 1990). Joslyn says that the media may help to provide balance to advertisements; however, political advertisements often feed off the information provided by the media. The media also have the ability to set the agenda and prime the public during election campaigns. Politicians may use their web sites not only to communicate with voters and colleagues, but also to inform the media about issues and happenings

Political Involvement and the Internet

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), electronic media is the most important form of media expansion. The changing media can be attributed to social changes. Kaid (2004) says that the Internet has both advantages and disadvantages due to its availability. It has been offered to the public since 1994, and was used exclusively for governmental matters for decades before, beginning in 1969 with the ARPA Net, which was the Internet service for the Pentagon's Advanced Research Projects Agency. Access to this communication system was limited to computer scientists at four prestigious universities. In 1994, the ARPANet inspired the Internet, which of course is the system with which we are familiar today (Browning, 2002). Since 1994, users have enjoyed much improvement in speed with the development of DSL and high-speed cable

modems. Also, interactive capabilities seem to be constantly improving as well, with such innovations as downloadable video, chat rooms and audio components.

Although past research has described Internet users as being mostly white, educated males, demographically, Internet users are beginning to look like the rest of the country's population (Bimber, 2003). Still, there is a digital divide, whereas some have access to the Internet and some do not have access. Internet users in 2005 still resembled the more educated, white, younger population. Twenty-six percent of the American population 65 and older went online, compared with 65 percent of those age 50-64, 80 percent of those age 30-49 and 84 percent of those age 18-28. In addition, 29 percent of Americans who had not graduated high school had access, compared with 61 percent of those who had a high school diploma and 89 percent of college graduates. As for the difference in ethnic populations, 57 percent of the African American population went online, compared with 70 percent of the total white population. Only 37 percent of Hispanics in America had online access (Fox, 2005). Finally, those who live in rural areas remained about 10 percentage points behind the national average of total Internet users. This could possibly be because those who live in rural areas are believed to be older and have less income and education (Rainie, 2004).

Politicians can personally benefit from the Internet. E-mail campaigns have strengths such as reaching a large number of people quickly and mobilizing them for support. Studies show that Internet users log on to gather information

on items the politicians support. Browning states, "If your site is easy to find and easy to understand – if it offers reliable, clear, direct information – you'll not only educate people who may know little about your issue but you may also win some new supporters for the cause" (p. 70). However, politicians also must be careful in their Internet endeavors. During their entrance into the 21st century, online political organizing efforts by candidates did not reflect the concerns of the Internet users. Failed attempts were due to ignoring needs of users. The Internet user already received loads of unsolicited e-mail (SPAM), direct mail, media ads, and telephone marketing. Their reactions to such interruptions are largely non-responsive (Mack, 2004).

Successful deliberative processes of any kind should be "focused and factual and the tone of the debate has to be respectful and open-minded in order to ensure that all participants get a fair and equal opportunity to air their opinion" (Jensen, 2003, p. 30). The main elements in the process are argumentation, information and reciprocity. The Internet provides fast and unhindered communication between citizens and politicians. Jensen analyzed Nordpol.dk, which is a Danish web site created to form a technological dialogue via the Internet between politicians and citizens. Nordpol.dk, named for the city council of Nordjylland in Northern Denmark, has a goal to make government more transparent. Nordpol.dk contained information about administration, the candidates for the election and topics within the county's political resort areas. There were rules for participation in the dialogue: postings had to be about county politics, privacy was to be respected and defamation was prohibited. The

moderators could delete postings violating the rules, but this was done only twice. The site included eight categories: business conditions, culture, health issues, education, roads and traffic, social services and psychiatry, nature and environment and 'other topics'. The project was heavily marketed. The politicians seemed to have contributed to the respect maintained during the debate. Some citizens were concerned the politicians used the web sites to support their election campaigns. The typical user of the site was a younger, highly educated male. The conversations online were compared to newspaper debates, town meetings, writing letters and talking to politicians. But Jensen found that "the Internet can contribute to enhanced dialogue between citizens and politicians and thereby eventually narrow the often-claimed gap between the groups" (p. 47).

The Internet offers people the chance to connect and reconnect in a high-speed world. Memberships in simple organizations have declined over the last few decades, as even participation in the PTA, labor unions, religious groups and political parties have declined (Davis, Elin and Reeher, 2002). In a fast-paced world, the Internet allows opportunities for citizens to connect on their own time at unscheduled meetings. In a time when dedication to formal organizations is in such decline, it is especially important that the Internet be considered as the medium that bridges gaps and brings people together. Communities are created in cyberspace, where people may enter and leave at their discretion. The citizen is now moving to the consumption side of information, rather than the production side (Scammell, 2000). The wealth of information that is available to the citizens

is causing the power to shift to the citizen-consumer. Citizens can access and read background information on an infinite amount of topics, and then share this information immediately with a few quick clicks of the keyboard. This quick access to information that was available through television, radio and newspapers before has now been combined on the Internet

There are three forms of political communication on the Internet: citizen information, interaction between citizens and government and policymaking (Davis, 1999). In general, the reason for civic engagement is motivation, opportunity, and ability (Carpini, 2000). People of all ages will participate in political matters when they feel they have a responsibility to do so, a satisfaction for sharing in a common purpose, a problem that affects them, or a belief that they will actually make a difference (Carpini, 2000). Maisel and Buckley (2004) found that people who participate in political elections include those who have a higher socio-economic status, a strong political party affiliation and have achieved higher education.

The reason for civic engagement is not necessarily the technology itself, but the information conveyed through its use (Bimber, 2000). There is a need for scholars to move beyond the technology to the content within the technology. Althaus and Tewksbury (2000) found that while the Internet does serve as an additional medium to collect information, it likely will not replace the television or newspaper as the only medium for getting news. The addition of the Internet simply provides an additional choice for gathering information. Uslaner (2004) agrees, saying that the Internet neither increases nor decreases socialization, but

it provides another avenue for them to gather information and interact with others. Those who normally have many relations offline are likely to have many relations online as well.

White (1997) notes that there is a desire to bring government discussion out in the open that started with the Progressive Era. The problem is that there are still many people who do not have access to the technology necessary to gather information to help them make informed decisions about their government. Aside from the availability of the Internet, another barrier to determining the success of the innovation is the time the user spends online (Bimber, 2003). The role of the Internet in keeping things in the public or private sphere is still unclear.

“For engaged citizens, the Internet provides ways to lower the costs of their engagement, improve its quality, and/or increase the types of activities engaged in” (Carpini, 2000, p. 347). Bimber (1999) said that the Internet offers the public “a yet wider array of choices in how to undertake an act of communication with government” (p. 410). After using survey data to determine how connected people are to politicians through use of the Internet as compared to other media (such as the telephone), Bimber says the Internet may have invited a wider demographic to contact government officials, which is an improvement because they are able to receive information from more individuals and have more input into their decisions.

Klinenberg and Perrin (2000) also feel that the Internet provides a means for people to interact with one another, reasoning that “this capacity to bridge the

gap between formal politics and the grassroots lies at the heart of the widespread excitement over the web's potential for democratization" (p. 17). The researchers say that the Internet derived in part from the television, radio and telephone. It can incorporate other forms of media. Further, the Internet can serve as creative communication while also creating an "array of visual and auditory sensations" (p. 33). In contrast to the research of Althaus and Tewksbury (2000), Klinenberg and Perrin feel that the Internet does have the potential for succeeding radio and television as the "primary medium of campaign communications" (p. 36). Civic engagement online may be accomplished simply by forwarding an e-mail. The problem here is sometimes those forwards are from unknown and untrustworthy sources (Marks, 2000).

The Internet can foster smarter communication between the candidate or politician and the voter or citizen. The Internet has the ability to house multi-media presentations, link citizens to more information and present multiple opportunities to gather information. In addition, citizens may view information at their own pace. The Internet allows us to measure things we were not able to measure before, such as when people visit a site, how much time they spend there, the topics in which they engage, where they link, and the cyber communities to which they belong. Finally, the Internet provides an archive of feedback for both parties, as background information can be collected quickly from the comfort of the home or office (Cornfield, 2000).

State legislative web sites offer opportunities to engage both politicians and constituents who still belong to the aforementioned dwindling organizational

membership. Many of the organizations that formerly had to pay thousands of dollars to monitor bills and legislative action are now doing it on their own.

Beauprez (1999) said that the Ohio Chamber of Commerce gathers information from the legislature and posts it on its site and offers the service free of charge to its membership. In this particular case, the Chamber provides information on legislation that affects businesses. Non-profits, especially those dealing with health and education, can use state legislative web sites to keep up in the same manner.

The press also benefits from the legislative Internet web sites. In fact, in Louisiana the government actually provides the press with computer equipment to link them directly to the legislative chambers (Downer, 2005). From the newsrooms, the press can download video of press conferences and air it immediately. The press, as well as individuals, can sign up for newsletters, gather fiscal information and access legislative reports. Reporters can be alerted to legislative information. Eleven states allow reporters to sign up for mailing lists to receive "press releases, newsletters, high-resolution photos, soundbites or, in some cases, entire reports" (Moore, 2004, p. 26). In 15 states, all site visitors, including reporters, can "subscribe" to bills, and receive an e-mail when the bill moves in the legislature (Moore, 2004).

In addition to education, ethnicity and income level, age certainly plays a role in determining whether people will communicate directly with government officials (Bimber, 1999). As of now, America's youth (age 18-24) are some of the least likely voters (Maisel & Buckley, 2004). Carpini (2000) mentions that

America's young adults are becoming less and less engaged in political matters. He says that this may change with the introduction of the Internet due to the amount of time today's youth spend online. Carpini lists the following characteristics of the Internet: increased speed of gaining information, increased volume of information, greater time flexibility in gaining information, interactivity, a change of interest from geographic to topic based, a blurring of distinctions between media, a challenge of traditional definitions of gatekeepers and authority, and a challenge of traditional definitions of producers and consumers of this information. More positive and negative aspects of the Internet may evolve as the technology continues to change and more people gain access to it.

Park and Choi (2002) say that even though young people are not particularly interested in political matters, they may be moved to action through the Internet, as they use this medium for both information and entertainment. For this reason, politicians may want to use young people as a target audience for their web pages. They may be the change agents within the process of diffusion of innovations. Change agents are those who influence others to adopt the new innovation (Rogers & Scott, 1997).

The political communication revolution expected of the Internet has not yet come to pass. Musso et al. (2000), who studied governmental web pages in California, suggests there is only mild potential for the Internet to "reinvigorate local governance" (p. 16). Bimber (1999) said that even though it was first thought that the Internet may revolutionize constituents' contact with their respective government officials, this is not necessarily the case. He mentions

that some people may abuse technology such as electronic mail to send negative messages to politicians, which may flood their e-mail. This could possibly cause the constructive e-mail messages to get lost among those who are criticizing and offering no solution. Both Musso and Bimber's studies could possibly be updated and may have different findings now due to more accessibility to the Internet and changing technology. It should not be thought, however, that the Internet is simply a tool for the young, as the older generation is using it as a means to connect with others due to their being homebound or having limited opportunity to physically get out in their communities or to travel (Davis, 1999).

Lack of organization can be a concern for some Internet users, and it is important for state government to take advantage of this confusion and provide a central location for information about policy and pending legislation, as well as links to pertinent information about government issues. State legislators should take note of the concerns of the Internet and envision an opportunity to produce an avenue to encourage more involvement in the legislative process. This study proposed that constructive use of the Internet may provide an avenue for constituents to communicate with their government officials, and for political leaders to communicate their decisions and reasons for voting on a specific policy to their voting population. The aim of this study was to point out ways in which politicians and their target audiences use state legislative web sites. Future research may determine how the Internet can be a more *effective* medium of communication for politicians and their target audiences.

The Internet as a Medium of Political Communication

Communication has three functions from which it operates in society: surveillance, or the responsibility of keeping people aware; correlation, or disclosure of the views of important others so that people can form their opinions in relation to those important others; and transmission, or the passing of norms and values and morals within the culture to other individuals (Glynn et al., 2004). Internet communication is no exception to this rule. The first two functions of communication will be examined in this dissertation because legislators do have the responsibility to keep people aware and to disclose their views so those they represent may be informed and give feedback. Legislators have been afforded the opportunity to do this with more immediacy than ever before, and to have control over these messages through use of the Internet and their own personal web pages.

Both government officials and citizens have the opportunity to make political communication better through use of the Internet. Although past research has described Internet users as being mostly white, educated males, demographically, Internet users are beginning to look like the rest of the country's population. In 1996, nearly half of regular users had a college degree and almost two-thirds were men. By 2001, a third of Internet users had a college degree, which draws closer to the nation's figure of 25 percent, and women's usage was almost even with men (Bimber, 2003). It is also noted that different regions of the United States account for differences in the percentage of users. The Pew

Internet and American Life Project (2003) reports that there is higher use on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and in the Rocky Mountain States. However, in the Midwest and in the South, the percentage of Internet users lags well behind the national average. The project report attributes this to differences in income and educational levels. Regions that have wealthier and more educated populations are more likely to have adults online.

Characteristics of Internet users also make this medium particularly attractive to politicians and their strategists. Internet users have a higher level of governmental trust and are even more likely than nonusers to vote. More than 15 million Americans admit using the Internet as a tool for deciding how to vote (Greenberg, 2003). The Internet offers advantages other media do not: it does not require a large staff of envelope stuffers and mailroom clerks to disseminate political messages nor does this communication take days, even hours to deliver – it is instantaneous (Marks, 2000). Optimists (those who feel the Internet will succeed as a successful mode of political communication) for the Internet feel that it will make government more accountable, citizen input more direct, and political communities a new form of political unity (Hill & Hughes, 1998). In addition, optimists regard the medium as a means of revolutionizing democracy, as the Internet introduces an interactive way of citizen participation and expression of public opinion. The Internet limits the ability of the media to set agenda because the users have more of a choice of what they view. Internet communication can be top-down, bottom-up, horizontal and vertical, and it introduces an interactive two-way communication process. The increased

availability of information does not necessarily lead to more knowledge, however. It is likely that much of the information online is “grounded in misinformation” because it is not filtered as is that in traditional media (Savigny, 2002, p. 6). The broadcast media is subject to guidelines under the FCC, and print media have the benefit of editors who have the responsibility to maintain accuracy. Although political actors are not able to control information and debate online as they would like, they are able to actively participate and communicate directly with citizens.

Just because citizens are more active in their participation does not mean the participation is meaningful. Politicians and citizens alike have a responsibility to keep content and conversation relevant and productive. The pessimists (those who feel the Internet may hinder political communication) feel that the Internet’s use as a tool for political communication will encourage confusion and uninformed decisions, resulting in a flood of misinformation. Some hope online political communication will help break down ethnic, geographical, age and gender barriers. However, others fear that the Internet’s increase in size and users will only use specialized newsgroups, furthering tribalization in the world. The Internet is not going to be radical in its change in politics. Rather, politics will change and mold the Internet. This could mean that the politicians must make their Internet sites agree with what their publics desire (Hill & Hughes, 1998). Some are skeptical of the Internet and its ability to influence and encourage political communication. Pessimists feel that the Internet may “result in less deliberation and government by opinion polls” (Pole, 2004, p. 23). These

individuals say that those who already have media power may monopolize the new technologies. Shen (2004) said the media control the information received by the public through framing, or highlighting certain facts while excluding others. Webmasters and legislatures are currently experimenting with what content they will allow on their web sites. As legislators are allowed more and more leniency with which to design and utilize their sites within the state legislative web site, they must take into consideration personalization. Smith (2003) defines a legislator's home style as "a symbolic responsiveness to constituents regarding the legislators' accomplishment of Jewell's four tasks," (p. 3) which include communication with constituents, response to policy initiatives, allocation of resources, and service to constituents. Smith says that legislators' ambitions for future political positions influence their home styles. Those who wish for higher office try to draw more publicity to themselves, possibly broadening their audience and popularity. Those who do not desire higher office do not desire as much attention from the media, nor are they aggressive about getting issues on the agenda. Smith also notes that legislators' interaction with their constituencies is a trial-and-error process. Legislators may work with organized groups, lobbyists, organize town hall meetings, knock on doors or distribute leaflets. Developing home style also may depend upon variables in the district such as socioeconomic status, metropolitan/rural distinctions, and political competitiveness. Home style must fit the district and the legislator's own ambitions. Legislators also may enter this trial-and-error process through developing their web sites.

Lang (2004) says, "In urban spaces, most visibly, local publics are made up of dominant, sub- and counterpublics (p. 154)." Representatives must respond to constituents on a state and local level because people are members of different publics. Localities could offer the prospect of encouraging participatory governance and citizen activism from lower levels within the locality. It is more likely for people to identify with smaller groups than with the entire city. With citizens looking for smaller rather than larger groups with which to connect, the politician should look for ways to appeal to smaller publics, and the Internet makes this inexpensive to do. People do not necessarily need to put a face on face-to-face communication in order to feel connected – for some it seems just as personal to engage with the imagined face behind the e-mail nickname. Those "imagined communities" can acquire more reality in some people's lives than can local neighborhood councils and coalitions" (Lang, 2004, p. 175). In addition, those who would not normally participate in politics due to the "hassle" of writing formal letters or calling their legislators on the telephone now have the ease of sitting at their computers and being visible and active citizens.

Bimber (1999) said that people may use the Internet to influence others and to organize to take action. This could “shape political participation in general” (p. 409). Carpini (2000) says that some of the negative impacts of Internet political communication may include “fragmentation, manipulation, consumerism, the further dominance of entertainment over public affairs, the paralyzing impact of information overload, the devaluing of certain kinds of participation, and so forth” (p. 348).

Since everyone does not have access to the Internet, this is an inequality even if more and more people are constantly gaining this access (Bimber, 2000). Brown (2002) mentions that politics is a matter of power, and the “age of information marks a change in the nature of power” (p. 273). Information can be a weapon, and everything can be public. Politicians can use the Internet to their advantage, but it also may be used to their disadvantage. Too much information can often spur negative feelings for constituents and cause confusion because of differing opinions and framing. On the other hand, the citizens remain faceless and share their opinions without fear that they will be publicly chastised (Cornfield, 2000).

One of the problems legislators are running into where their communication online is concerned is regulation by state legislatures concerning usage of individual home pages. Policies can limit information on the sites, and limited staff to manage the site also can hinder online efforts. Whatever their limitations, lawmakers should consider their audience and their purpose when composing their web pages. Greenberg (2003) suggests including the following

on the site: explanation of votes on issues, how a bill becomes a law and a personal biography. Changes and updates to the site keep citizens interested and coming back. In addition, seasonal links may also keep constituents returning for new information (i.e., links to the electric company, or hurricane warning/tracking information).

The Limitations of Research on Political Communication on the Internet

In her research concerning the contribution of Elmer Eric Schattschneider to the field of political communication, Brown (2002) suggests that we have a shrinking world through the development of technology. She mentions “the study of politics in the USA was marked by a commitment to the education of the citizen in the values of the constitution” (p. 259). The larger the democracy grows, the more the need for small groups to support it, which may explain the need for political party organizations and their sub-groups to support specific causes, interests and the specific socio-economic groups whose interests match those of the party. Bimber (1999) uses the connectedness of people through their political participation as a dependent variable for his study concerning constituents’ use of the Internet to communicate with government officials. He uses the following criteria to determine whether people are politically involved: “candidates’ campaign organizations, political parties, national organizations with political activities, professional associations, community organizations, employers, unions, churches or religious organizations and ‘other’ organizations” (pp. 418-419). Carey (1995) says that a “modern political community must be, empirically, theoretically, and normatively, a community power not of discourse,

an arena of naked and manipulative struggle between interest groups, another item in the culture of consumption and coercion. This is the way the world works and, in truth, the only way it can and ought to work.” (p. 374). In addition, the simple act of voting can be considered as active political participation. Special interest groups and lobbyists make the political arena more active. The mass media help keep the public informed so they have knowledge of those topics that may otherwise not be visible on the political agenda. The public depends on the information that the press and political officials volunteer to them in order for them to be active participants in the political process (Glynn et al., 2004). Constant and continuing research is necessary to determine the effect technology has on voters’ decisions, as well as their political activity and participation. While this paper will not focus on voting outcomes, Bimber (1999) says that people use technology for such things as encouraging others to vote and how to vote, educating themselves about issues and candidates and coordinating political action in support or protest of an action or policy.

There are some limitations to people’s use of the Internet for political communication. Althaus and Tewksbury (2000) said that such things as computer anxiety may influence whether people will use the Internet for news. In addition, according to Bimber (1999), variables such as age, education and even gender may influence the possibility and frequency of contacting government officials. Also, there is the problem of the digital divide, whereas everyone who does not have Internet access may be excluded from civic engagement online (Mack, 2004). In addition, Davis (1999) says that it is difficult to blame the

Internet alone for political participation because it is unlikely that the Internet will influence those who were uninterested in politics beforehand to participate just because of the new tool that allows them to more easily do so. Those who participate online also are not representative of the entire population yet either. This dissertation proposed that state legislators may use some Internet tools to engage their constituents and provide information in order to encourage political participation and encourage users to return to their sites for information. It did not attempt to find that the tool alone draws people into political participation because the text and content still matters most (Burns, 2002).

Althaus and Tewksbury (2000) say that their study may be time bound, as technology will continue to grow and improve. In addition to this possibility of improving technology as a time limitation, the fact that children are now being raised with technology will likely increase the number of people who use computers, and decrease the number of those with computer anxiety. Much of the research that was done in the late 1990s is already outdated with the newfound popularity of web logging (or blogging) and other related advances to Internet technology.

Park and Choi, Jewell, and the Pew Internet and American Life Project

The content of the two methods employed in this study (content analysis and questionnaires) were based on the prior work of Park and Choi (2002), Jewell (1982) and the Pew Internet and American Life Project. Park and Choi formed a focus group to determine which Internet tools allowed users to have a more engaging experience visiting campaign web sites. Respondents were

asked which tools and components of the web site would encourage them to return to the site for future visits. These indicators included items that made the visitors feel more involved in the site and allowed them easy access to information. Their study mentioned that the focus groups indicated the need to feel connected with the candidate and have interactivity to promote interest on the site. The study revealed that users want four aspects on campaign web sites: interactivity, multiple communication cues, personalization and navigation. It also revealed that the Internet may be the avenue to encourage younger voters to participate more in the election process.

Jewell addressed four responsibilities of legislators: communication with constituents, response to policy initiatives, allocation of resources, and service to constituents. Communication with constituents means that the legislator is accessible to constituents, actively seeks to learn their needs and educates them about activities in the state legislature. Such communication includes information offered through newsletters, mail-outs and through use of the press. Also, the legislator must make available information about government programs and his/her views on issues. Policy responsiveness includes informing the public of appropriations, legislation and even mistakes made by the legislator himself/herself. The legislator must determine the importance of issues to his/her constituency and address these issues appropriately, responding to concerns and demands. Allocation of resources concerns the legislator's ability to gain resources for the district such as security, traffic remedies and state buildings and educational opportunities. Finally, service to constituents means that the

legislator services both individuals and groups and helps them to find resources necessary to meet their needs including important business accommodations and access to information about contracting business with the government.

Jewell's components of legislator responsibilities fell along the same line as Park and Choi's elements that encourage visitors to politicians' campaign web sites.

Legislators are to be open to and available for their constituents, as well as easy to access.

Tom Spooner (2003) of the Pew Internet and American Life Project observes users of the Internet based on who has access and who does not, as well as those who are more likely to use the Internet as a resource of information and communication based on certain demographics. The study divides the country into 11 regions and examines race, age, sex, income and educational attainment of Internet users of the states that fall within those defined regions. These demographics were examined in this study. The results of the content analysis were examined side-by-side the results of the Pew Internet and American Life Project to determine whether those states with larger percentages of Internet users also had more Internet tools provided by legislators, which identified the process by which legislators are adopting channels to diffuse their home pages as a means of political communication.

This study examined these prior works to determine whether legislators addressed the needs of their constituents by including Internet tools that helped fulfill their responsibilities. Their use of these tools on their home pages helped identify distinct holes in their processes of diffusion of this innovation.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Diffusion of innovations has been studied in the field of communication in healthcare, marketing and advertising. Studies have addressed how quickly people respond to advertising through purchase (Horsky & Simon, 1983), how soon buyers accept a new product (Easingwood, Mahajan & Muller, 1983), whether people change their behavior due to information (Bertrand, 2004) and through what circumstances people accept technologies (Dayton, 2004).

Rogers' definition of diffusion of innovations dates to 1962, when he was studying the diffusion of agricultural innovations at his home in Iowa (Rogers, 2004). This dissertation, unlike many other studies, was conducted during the diffusion process. Most others examine successes and failures after the fact. The problem with gathering information after the diffusion is ineffective recall for product users. Another methodological alternative to studying diffusion of innovations is a point-of-adoption study, where data is gathered from adopters at the time they begin using the innovation, which gives them better recall. In addition, archival records can help recall (Meyer, 2004). The researcher studied diffusion through the senders, or legislators and webmasters, in this study. The researcher's goal was to reveal whether legislators are using the tools available to them through use of their state legislative web sites.

Rogers (2003) lists four different adopters: innovators, or those in the first 2.5 percent to adopt the innovation early on; early adopters, or those who adopt after the innovators and encourage others to adopt; early majority, or those who may deliberate for some time before they adopt the innovation just before the

average; late majority, or those who adopt just after the average and laggards, those who may be suspicious of the innovation and must be sure it will not fail before they adopt it.

In addition, there are five stages to the process: knowledge, or learning about the innovation; persuasion, or forming an attitude about the innovation through active information seeking; decision, or determining whether to accept the innovation; implementation, or deciding whether to use the new innovation and confirmation, when the user determines if he or she made the right choice in adopting the innovation. How quickly one goes through the diffusion of innovations process depends upon the information they can gather and their opinions and quality of contact with the change agents. Also, there are perceived characteristics of the innovation itself, including relative advantage (benefits), compatibility (the innovation can exist with norms and values), complexity (ease or difficulty involved with the innovation), trialability (whether the innovation can be tried out before it is adopted) and observability (how people think the results will be visible to others). The first three characteristics seem to be the most important to people when considering adoption, with trialability and observability being secondary (Dayton, 2004).

When charted, adopters fit into an S-shaped curve because initially, only a few adopt the innovation. Later, however, there is an increasing number of adoptions as the innovation is more accepted and then finally, the acceptance rate levels off once again (Mahajan & Peterson, 1985). These are stages researchers are concerned with after the innovation has been diffused. In this

dissertation, the researcher focused on the diffusion process, not the result. The researcher did a content analysis of the home pages of legislators, then collected data from the United States Census to determine demographics of state residents and finally, conducted a telephone/Internet questionnaire with webmasters. This combination indicated the successes of the diffusion in later studies and pointed to the capabilities of the sites and possibilities of successfully moving through the diffusion process.

Review

While political communication is still a relatively new division of social science research, the Internet offers still an even newer area of research within the political communication field. The introduction of the Internet has the potential of becoming a subdivision of political communication. Concerns do exist about the Internet's usefulness as a tool of communication between politicians and their target audiences; however, there are obvious benefits to this communication medium as well. There have been several methodologies and theoretical observations within the field of political communication, and researchers have studied a vast array of topics within the field. Most of the studies about the Internet within political communication have been confined to studies about political campaigns and advertising, but there is not much research concerning the effectiveness of day-to-day political communication online and the effect that the Internet is having on local government. This study was an attempt to examine how local politicians – state legislators – use the Internet to solicit feedback from Internet users and encourage civic engagement. This was a ground level study using the diffusion of innovations process that aimed to

document the practices on this level of communication between the elected and the electorate.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

As outlined in the previous section, the study of political communication is a relatively new research area for mass communication, political science, sociology, psychology and marketing and management scholars. At only about 30 years old, ever-evolving new communication technologies are presenting new challenges within a fairly new research area. With these new communication technologies come the advantages and disadvantages and the opportunities and challenges they bring – along with a rich area of research possibilities for students of political communication and professionals in the field of politics. Much of the research examining the relationship of new communication technology with politics and government has focused on campaigns on a national level, primarily presidential campaigns. This was the genesis of the Park and Choi (2002) study that outlines the four Internet tools candidates for public office need for their home pages to make the experience engaging for visitors: interactivity, multiple communication cues, personalization and ease of navigation.

However, not as much attention has been given to local government communication using the Internet. Before the Internet was ever comprised, Jewell (1982) addressed four strategies legislators should adopt for building relationships with their constituents: communication with constituents, response to policy initiatives, allocation of resources and service to constituents.

Lang (2004) said local publics have been largely ignored as subjects of study in political communication. One issue with examining the influence of the Internet at the local level is accessibility. It is difficult for researchers to examine influence of a medium of communication such as the Internet when access to the technology is limited or even non-existent for some. Since the advent of the Internet, both academic and proprietary research has examined the rate of the adoption of the communication medium. This line of inquiry attempts to identify the types of people who *do* use the Internet. As previously stated, demographic profiles have described typical Internet users as remaining to be well-educated white men with higher-than-average incomes (Bimber, 2003). Of course, not all state legislators, much less their constituents, are affluent, well-educated white men.

The premise of this dissertation was that the Internet has been adopted by state legislators as one way of reaching their constituents concerning the activity in the state legislature and in their own offices, and that the four Internet tools for political communication proposed by Park and Choi (2002) and the four communication strategies for building legislator/constituent relations suggested by Jewell (1982) constitute effective legislator communication aimed at engaging constituents in issues, decisions and actions of the state legislative body in general and the legislator's office in particular. Furthermore, research suggests that demographics determine who uses the Internet and who does not (Bimber, 2003). This dissertation aimed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do demographics of state legislators predict legislators' use of the Internet to engage their constituents with the issues, decisions and actions of their state legislature and/or his office?

RQ2: To what extent do guidelines and policies dictated by state legislative webmasters and/or legislative committees predict the use of the Internet by state legislators to engage their constituents with the issues, decisions and actions of the state legislature and/or his/her office?

RQ3: To what extent do demographics of constituents predict legislators' use of the Internet to engage their constituents with the issues, decisions and actions of the state legislature and/or his/her office?

Demographics of legislators refers to age, gender, education, ethnicity and length of tenure in the state legislature. Demographics of constituents refers to state average household income, and population and ethnic breakdown of constituents in that legislative district.

Use of the Internet to engage his/her constituents refers to the inclusion of Internet tools outlined by Park and Choi (2002) in their official legislative home pages (interactivity, multiple communication cues, personalization and ease of navigation) and adherence to Jewell's four strategies for building legislator/constituent relations (communication with constituents, response to policy initiatives, allocation of resources and serve to constituents). Since it has been determined that there are some demographics that determine whether people use the Internet at all, the first set of hypotheses determined whether

there was a relationship between the demographics of the legislators and the sophistication of the tools they use on their web sites.

H1a: The older the legislator, the less likely he/she is to use sophisticated Internet tools and constituent relationship-building strategies on his/her official legislative home page.

H1b: The more education the legislator has, the more likely the legislator is to use sophisticated Internet tools and constituent building strategies on his/her official legislative home page.

H1c: The longer legislator's length of tenure (number of years in state legislature), the more likely the legislator will use sophisticated Internet tools and constituent building strategies on his/her official legislative home page.

H1d: Male legislators are more likely than female legislators to use sophisticated Internet tools and use constituent relationship-building communication strategies on their official state legislative home page.

H1e: Caucasian legislators are more likely than either Hispanic or African American legislators to use sophisticated Internet tools and use constituent relationship-building strategies on their official legislative web site.

Legislators are only able to include information on their sites that is within the guidelines given them by their respective states (Broussard, 2005).

Therefore, in relation to guidelines legislators are under, the following was hypothesized:

H2: State legislative web sites governed with flexible guidelines are more likely than state legislative web sites governed by rigid guidelines to use

sophisticated Internet tools and use constituent relationship-building strategies on their official legislative web site.

Also in relation to the demographics mentioned above, the constituents were examined in order to determine if the makeup of the district was related to the tools used on legislators' web sites in order to determine whether legislators were appealing to their constituents' demographics with the inclusion of sophisticated internet tools and use of constituent relationship strategies online.

The following hypotheses determined this relationship:

H3a: The higher the average state income, the more likely the legislator is to use sophisticated Internet tools and constituent relationship-building strategies on his/her official legislative web site.

H3b: The higher the legislative district population density, the more likely the legislator is to use sophisticated Internet tools and use constituent relationship-building communication strategies on their official legislative web site.

H3c: State legislators from legislative districts with a majority of Hispanic and/or African American population are less likely than state legislators from legislative districts with a majority of Caucasian population to use sophisticated Internet tools and use constituent relationship-building communication strategies on their official legislative web site.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

There are several methods of study that have been adopted into the field of political communication research (Nimmo & Sanders, 1981). Content analysis has been used to examine web pages, advertisements, speeches and letters to editors. Experiments, including passive-observation, quasi-experiments and randomized experiments, have been conducted on would-be and past voters, as well as viewers of campaign commercials. Surveys have been utilized to examine the thoughts and purpose of both the public and politicians, as well as the media.

This study was grounded in the framework of diffusion theory. Because the diffusion of the Internet is still in process, this study examined diffusion of innovations midstream. In general, it examined, using content analysis, the extent to which state legislators were utilizing the Internet and its tools to enhance communication between themselves and their constituents. And, using questionnaire data, the study examined the Internet frameworks and capabilities of all 50 legislative web sites in the U.S. In addition, demographic information provided the researcher with information specific to the state legislature and their target audience, or their constituents.

Demographics examined were as follows:

- A. For the content analysis, demographics of the legislators included age, education, gender, ethnicity and length of tenure in their current legislative positions.

- B. The study included an analysis of demographics of state legislative districts, regions and states in order to determine whether the variables of age, income, education and ethnicity affected the presence of tools for Internet political communication. This information was collected from U.S. Census reports and the Pew Internet and American Life Project. Chi square was used to determine which state and/or regional demographics, if any, were associated with the use of the more sophisticated Internet tools on state legislators' web sites, such as weblogs, chat rooms and online polling. Using census data, the constituency was examined for average income and education level, as well as dominant ethnic background and age. The population density of each state legislative district also was examined. Demographics of each district were examined, as well as the demographics of states and of the 11 regions of the country. Regions are defined as follows (Spooner, 2003):
- a. New England: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
 - b. Mid-Atlantic: Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
 - c. National Capital Region: Maryland, Virginia, Washington, DC
 - d. The Southeast: Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina
 - e. The South: Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, West Virginia
 - f. Industrial Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio

- g. Upper Midwest: Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota,
Wisconsin
 - h. Lower Midwest: Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma
 - i. Border States: Arizona, New Mexico, Texas
 - j. Mountain States: Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah,
Wyoming
 - k. Pacific Northwest: Oregon, Washington
- C. Using information provided by the Pew Internet and American Life project, percentages of Internet users were examined to determine whether those regions with higher percentages of Internet users also have more access to Internet tools on legislators' web sites.

Content Analysis

This study consisted of a content analysis of state legislators' web sites that are embedded within the main web sites of the state legislature. The unit of measurement in this study was the home pages of each state legislator chosen for this study. The subjects for the content analysis consisted of a systematic random sample of state legislators nationwide to determine whether they use the web sites provided them by their state legislative web sites and to what extent they used them. After placing all the legislators in order by last name, every fifth web site was examined, which will yield a total of 1,455 web sites. Wimmer and Dominick (2003) mention that this method of sampling is acceptable when a complete list of the population is easy to attain. In this case, a complete list of all state legislators and senators was attained from each state's legislative web site.

In addition, all e-mails were listed through the state's web sites, as well as contact information for each state representative.

A pilot study, using every fiftieth legislators' site in order to yield 145 total sites (or 10% of the total sample size), was conducted by two coders to ensure intercoder reliability. Prior to this study, there was an initial pilot study, which included the total population of legislative web sites only in Louisiana. The intercoder reliability was calculated at 100 percent; however, it revealed several holes in the original content analysis (i.e., incomplete list of available Internet tools, lack of certain demographics of the legislators), and an additional pilot study was necessary in order to test intercoder reliability with the addition of several more variables and in-depth coding choices, as well as the use of all 50 state legislatures. After the completion of the second pilot study to ensure intercoder reliability, the main test was conducted.

Operationalizing the Variables. The following variables were examined in the content analysis:

1. Addresses changes – the legislator addresses changes in laws
2. Age – age of the legislator
3. Alphabetical subject listing – an alphabetic listing of topics and/or links on the site
4. Appointment – the legislator's appointment as senator or representative (or assemblymember)
5. Appropriations – information about government spending
6. Audio – there is a link to audio clips on the page
7. Bill tracking – the ability of users to follow legislation from inception to passing into law (or dying on the floor)
8. Biographical information – personal information about the legislator and his/her accomplishments

9. Business – the legislator provides information for businesses, either in the form of press releases providing information about current or accepted legislation or otherwise
10. Chat room – areas on the page where visitors can meet online and discuss issues
11. Chat times – the legislator schedules live chats for his constituents
12. Committees – the legislator includes the committees to which he/she belongs
13. Communication of district events – the legislator provides information about events that are to occur in his/her district, but that do not specifically have anything to do with the legislature.
14. District – the district the legislator represents
15. Education – education of the legislator
16. Electronic town meetings – scheduled online meetings for constituents to voice concerns about specific legislation or issues
17. E-mail – the legislator includes his/her e-mail on the page
18. Ethnicity – ethnicity of the legislator
19. FAX number – the legislator includes his/her FAX number on the page.
20. Flexible guidelines – these are the rules that govern legislators' homepages as handed down by the state legislature. The variables tested under this umbrella include whether the legislators have the freedom to manipulate their sites, whether they may make changes to their websites from their home offices, whether the legislators have limitations on the content of their sites and whether the legislators' sites are monitored.
21. Gender – gender of the legislator
22. Government contract – the legislator provides a link directly to information on gaining government contracts for work
23. Government financial programs – the legislator provides a link directly to information on government financial programs
24. Government jobs – the legislator provides a link directly to information on attaining government jobs.

25. Information of district interest – this is information about the district (i.e., district map or demographics), or information that specifically targets the constituents of the district (i.e., bills pertinent to the area)
26. Keyword search engine – allows users to type in search words to find specific information
27. Legislature calendar – constituents can gather information about the operations of legislature and dates of activity
28. Legislative events – information about events occurring in legislature
29. Legislator – the name of the legislator
30. Legislator-sponsored bills – bills that are currently being or have in the past been considered by legislature for consideration into law. These may be sponsored or co-sponsored bills.
31. Link lobbyist – a link specifically for lobbyists
32. Link media – a link specifically for the media
33. Links to other – these are links to sites off the legislature’s main site (i.e., to the non-profit for which the legislator volunteers or the college from which he/she graduated)
34. Link to other home page – the legislator’s page off the site of the state legislature, which means the site is not governed by the state, but by the legislator him/herself. This allows them more creative and contextual freedom
35. Local environment – this includes information about energy, natural resources and conservation
36. Mailing address – the legislator includes his/her address on the page
37. Media kits from the legislator’s office – media kits created by another office.
38. Media kits from other offices – media kits created by another office.
39. Menu options – subdirectories on the legislator’s web site that direct users easily to other pages within the site. These are menu options specific to the legislator’s page, not the legislative site.

40. Newsletter no subscription – users can view archives of newsletters on the legislator's page
41. Newsletter subscription – users can sign up to receive scheduled delivery of a newsletter
42. Number of chat rooms – the number of areas available where visitors can meet online and discuss issues
43. Occupation – occupation of the legislator
44. Online survey – the legislator solicits the views of constituents or users
45. Other service – includes service outside the legislature (non-profits, town councils, etc.)
46. Party – Party to which the legislator belongs
47. Personal message – the legislator directly addresses visitors to his/her page in first-person account
48. Photos – there are picture(s) on the page
49. Press releases from the legislator's office – press releases created by his/her office
50. Press releases from other offices – press releases created by other offices
51. Relationship building strategies – These tools are those that aid in communication with constituents, response to policy initiatives, allocation of resources and service to constituents described by Jewell (1982). See Table 2.
52. Regional info – information about the region of the state to which the district belongs (must contain information about not only the district, but also areas surrounding the district, but not the entire state)
53. Response to concerns – the legislator specifically addresses the needs of constituents either through direct address or through press releases about bills
54. Site map – a map of the web site itself that directs users to information
55. Sophisticated Internet tools – These tools are those that aid in interactivity, multiple communication, personalization and ease of navigation, as described by Park and Choi (2002). See Table 1.

56. Speaking engagements – the legislator provides information about his/her next speaking event and invites the public
57. State – the state in which the legislator serves
58. Telephone number – the legislator includes his/her telephone number on the page.
59. Video – there is a link to video clips on the page
60. Views of legislator – views of the legislator on legislative action or needed action
61. Weblog – an unscheduled dialogue for visitors to “post” information, without the need for potential responders to be present at the time of the post
62. Years in office – the consecutive number of years the legislator has served in his/her current office

Table 1:

For this study, variables were organized as follows:

Park & Choi's web site components Tested Variables (sophisticated tools)

Interactivity	Legislator participation in technological communication including interactivity and e-mail (9, 11), online survey (8a)
Multiple communication cues	Cues for communication (16a-f),
Personalization	online newsletter (17b,c)
Ease of Navigation	Ease of navigation (18a-e)

*The numbers coincide with the number of the question in the content analysis.

Table 2:

For this study, variables were organized as follows:

Jewell's responsibilities of legislators (constituent relationship-building strategies)

Communication with constituents	press releases (5a), media kits (5b), information for the media (21), links to offsite home page (22), Biographical data (5c), Calendar included (10d), personal message (13)
Response to policy initiatives	Information about pending legislation (6a-c) and legislative decisions (7a-c), information for lobbyists (20)
Allocation of resources	Information about government programs (14a-c), information for businesses (15)
Service to constituents	Information about political participation (8b,c,d), Committee information (12), personalization (17a,d)

*The numbers coincide with the number of the question in the content analysis.

Webmaster Telephone/Internet Questionnaire

In addition to the content analysis, webmasters were interviewed in order to examine the capabilities of their web sites against the elements the legislators actually utilize. In addition, the questionnaire determined the extent to which the legislators are allowed to manipulate their sites within the main state legislative web sites to determine the flexibility/rigidity of rules on the sites, the regulation/autonomy of content and the frequency with which the sites are changed to incorporate new tools. The interviews were constructed in a manner to yield quantitative information that could be measured with the information in the content analysis..

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Participant and Subject Profile

Webmaster Survey. For this study, the researcher contacted webmasters in 43 of the 50 states (86%).

Content Analysis. The researcher had two coders to perform the content analysis for 1,455 websites. After a pre-test of 145 sites, it was determined that the coders had 86.1% intercoder reliability. After discussion between coders and training to ensure further understanding of the operationalized variables, coders moved to the main test. Forty-eight states were coded successfully. Two states, which yielded a total of 45 subjects between them (17 sites for Idaho and 28 for Vermont), were unable to be coded due to nonexistent personal sites for legislators. The other 48 states had, at the least, an information site for legislators. These simple sites included information about the legislators' personal demographics and/or contact information. Other sites included the more sophisticated tools that were discussed in the research questions and hypotheses.

District Demographic Profile. The researcher was able to get complete demographic information for all 50 states (100%); however, the population density of 10 states' legislative districts was impossible to attain through use of the Census due to those states' refusal to provide boundary lines for legislative districts during the 2000 Census. Some states have used the Census to determine their own population densities after the fact; however, for consistency

in methodology, the Census was the only tool trusted for calculation of this variable. Population density information was collected for 1,095 of the 1,455 subjects (75.25%).

Regional Information. Forty-eight of the 50 states (96%) had regional information provided for them in this study. Two states, Alaska and Hawaii, were not included in the Pew Internet and American Life Project study.

Results of Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: H1a-H1e were pertinent to RQ1 (To what extent do demographics of state legislators predict legislators' use of the Internet to engage their constituents with the issues, decisions and actions of their state legislature and/or his office?). These hypotheses predicted that legislator demographics determined the likelihood of the legislator using sophisticated tools on his/her website, as well as constituent relationship-building strategies. None of these hypotheses were supported by the data collected. In fact, as far as the sophistication of the site, there was only one relationship found in the analysis – there was a relationship between gender and whether the sites had photos on them $\chi^2(1, N=1,409) = 8.34, p = .004$. Table 3 provides the frequencies for all categories. Only 5.7% of the men did not have photos, and 10.4% of the women did not have photos. Out of 16 variables that were tested for relationships with gender (chatroom, e-mail, online survey, photo, video, audio, electronic town meeting, weblog, bill tracking, newsletter subscription capabilities, online newsletter, site map, menu of options, keyword search, alpha subject and links to other sites outside), only photos were found to be significant. This was the only

relationship in the sophistication category that had a significant outcome for any of the demographics tested in H1a-H1e.

Likewise, the variables associated with constituent relationship-building strategies (information for lobbyists, biographical data, legislative calendar, committee assignments, personal message, regional information, environmental issues, press releases from both legislative office and other offices, media kits from the legislative office or other offices, link to offsite homepage, information on sponsored legislation, information of district interest, views of the legislator, appropriations, response to concerns, addresses changes, government contracts, government financial programs, government jobs, business information, telephone number, mailing address and fax number) were insignificant. Again, gender was the only demographic that had any relationships with any of the relationship-building variables. Although the relationship was weak, only two of the 16 variables were significantly related with gender – whether the site contained biographical information $\chi^2(1, N=1,408) = 4.09, p = .043$, and whether the site has press releases that came from the legislator's office $\chi^2(1, N=1,409) = 3.74, p = .053$. Again, 81.2% of the men had biographical information on their websites, and 76% of the women did; 18.4% of the men had press releases that originated in the legislative office and 23.4% of the women did.

Because only three variables were significant, it is determined that demographics of state legislators do not significantly predict their use of the

Internet to engage their constituents with the issues, decisions and actions of their state legislature and/or his office. H1a-H1e were not supported.

RQ2. The predictions in H2 were pertinent to RQ2 (To what extent do guidelines and policies dictated by state legislative webmasters and/or legislative committees predict the use of the Internet by state legislators to engage their constituents with the issues, decisions and actions of the state legislature and/or his/her office?). H2 predicted that state legislative web sites governed with flexible guidelines (whether or not the legislators had the freedom to manipulate their sites, update them from their home offices, had limitations and whether their sites were monitored) are more likely than state legislative web sites governed by rigid guidelines to use sophisticated Internet tools and use constituent relationship-building strategies on their official legislative web sites. Of the 1,455 sites examined through content analysis, webmasters provided information for 1,169 of them. It was found that 400 legislators (34.3%) had the freedom to manipulate their sites and 769 (65.7%) did not.

Sophistication. As for whether those states that allowed legislators to freely manipulate their sites, nine of 16 variables were found to be significantly related: whether the site included the legislators e-mail address $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 32.43, p = .000$; whether the legislator had an online survey $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 8.66, p = .010$; whether the site had photos $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 43.14, p = .000$; whether the site included video $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 3.84, p = .05$; whether the site had audio $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 6.25, p = .012$; whether the site had bill tracking capabilities, $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 27.19, p = .000$; whether the site had subscriptions

to online newsletters, $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 42.4, p = .000$; whether the site had an online newsletter that did not require a subscription $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 77.04, p = .000$; and whether the site had links to other websites $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 91.95, p = .000$. Table 3 illustrates the frequencies of the inclusion of sophisticated tools on legislators' websites for both those who have freedom to manipulate their sites as well as for those who do not.

Table 3
Association of legislators' freedom to manipulate websites with legislators' using sophisticated tools on their websites

Tool	those who do have freedom	those who do not have freedom
e-mail address	98.3%	88.7%
online survey	6.3%	3.1%
photos	99%	87.8%
video	20%	25.1%
audio	14.3%	20.2%
bill tracking capabilities	55%	39%
online newsletter subscriptions	13%	3.1%
online newsletter no subscription	18%	3.1%
links to other websites	23.3%	4.1%

The researcher found that those who do have the freedom to manipulate their websites, for the most part, were more likely to have more sophisticated tools on their websites. Of those tools that were significantly related to the freedom to manipulate websites, the only two tools that were more prevalent for those who *did not* have the freedom to manipulate their sites were video and audio capabilities.

As for the capability to update their websites from their home offices, there were nine of 16 variables that had significant relationships: whether the site had the legislator's e-mail address $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 9.78, p = .002$; whether there was an online survey $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 47.30, p = .000$; whether the site had photos $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 12.62, p = .000$; whether the site had video $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 19.73, p = .001$; whether the site had audio $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 7.66, p = .006$; whether the site had bill tracking $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 30.59, p = .000$; whether the site had subscription capabilities to an online newsletter $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 3.84, p = .050$; whether the site had a site map $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 23.31, p = .000$; and whether the site had links to other sites $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 19.93, p = .000$. Table 4 illustrates the frequencies of those who have the ability to update their sites from home and those who do not on the sophisticated tools on their websites.

Table 4
Association of whether legislators who have the ability to update their websites from their home offices with legislators' using sophisticated tools on their websites

Tool	those who do have the ability	those who do not have the ability
e-mail address	98.6%	91%
online survey	14.7%	2.5%
photos	99.3%	90.5%
video	12.6%	25%
audio	9.8%	19.3%
bill tracking capabilities	23.1%	47.7%
online newsletter subscriptions	8.4%	4.6%
online newsletter no subscription	0%	14.3%
links to other websites	18.9%	7.5%

For those who do had the ability to make changes on their sites from their home offices, the sophisticated tools that were more common on their sites included e-mail address, online surveys, photos, online newsletters with subscriptions and links to other websites. For those who do not have the ability, video and audio capabilities, as well as bill tracking capabilities and the presence of online newsletters with no subscription, were more prevalent. There was only one more tool that occurred more for those who had the ability to manipulate their sites than those who did not.

As for those legislators who had limitations, there were 11 of 16 variables that had significant relationships: whether the site had e-mail $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 7.64, p = .006$; whether the site had online surveys $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 39.29, p = .000$; whether the site had photos $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 16.35, p = .000$; whether the site had video $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 6.49, p = .011$; whether the site had audio $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 28.04, p = .000$; whether the site had bill tracking $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 47.02, p = .000$; whether the site had a newsletter to which visitors could subscribe $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 4.12, p = .042$; whether the site had a newsletter that required no subscription $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 18.41, p = .000$; whether the site had a site map $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 24.95, p = .000$; whether the site had a menu of options $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 81.07, p = .000$; and whether the site had links to other sites $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 5.12, p = .024$. Table 5 illustrates the frequencies of legislators who had limitations and legislators who do not on their use of sophisticated tools on their websites.

Table 5
Association of whether legislators who had limitations placed upon them by their state legislatures with legislators' using sophisticated tools on their websites

Tool	those who had limitations	those who did not have limitations
e-mail address	90.8%	96.8%
online survey	2.6%	12.6%
photos	90%	98.9%
video	22.4%	31.1%
audio	19.4%	3.7%
bill tracking capabilities	48.7%	21.6%
online newsletter subscriptions	6%	10%
online newsletter no subscription	6.8%	16.3%
site maps	14.7%	1.6%
menu of options	54.2%	18.4%
links to other websites	9.7%	15.3%

Those who had limitations had a larger percentage of audio capabilities, bill tracking capabilities, site maps and a menu of options. Those who did not have limitations had a larger percentage of occurrence of e-mail address, online surveys, photos, video, online newsletters with subscriptions, online newsletters with no subscriptions and links to other websites. Of those sophisticated tools that were found to have significant associations with the content limitations placed on legislators, those who had no limitations were more likely to have the tools on their sites.

Finally, as for those legislators who had their sites monitored for content (this question was only considered when the legislator had the ability to manipulate his/her website), five of the 16 variables had significant relationships: whether the site had an online survey $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 37.47, p = .000$, 20% of those who were monitored had online surveys and 2.3% of those who were not monitored had websites; whether the site had audio $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 5.47, p = .019$, 6.7% of those who were monitored had audio capabilities, and 16.5% of those who were monitored had audio capabilities; whether the site had bill tracking $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 119.93, p = .000$, 4.4% of the sites monitored had bill tracking and 69.7% of those who were not monitored had bill tracking; whether the site had a newsletter that did not require a subscription $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 14.46, p = .000$, 4.4% of those who were monitored had newsletters that did not require a subscription, 21.9% of those who were not monitored had newsletters that did not require a subscription; whether the site had a site map $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 18.59, p = .000$, none of those that were monitored had site maps, 16.1% of those who were not monitored had a site map. Table 6 illustrates the frequencies of those legislators who have their sites monitored and those who do not on whether their sites have sophisticated tools on their websites.

Table 6
Association of whether legislators have their sites monitored with legislators' using sophisticated tools on their websites

Tool	those who were monitored	those who were not monitored
online survey	20%	2.3%
audio	6.7%	16.5%
bill tracking capabilities	4.4%	69.7%
online newsletter no subscription	4.4%	21.9%
site maps	0%	16.1%

Whether the site was monitored or not was considered only of those who were able to manipulate their websites. Five tools were found to be significantly associated with whether the legislators' sites were monitored. The only sophisticated tool that appeared more for those who were not monitored was the online survey. Those who were not monitored included audio capabilities, bill tracking capabilities, online newsletter with no subscription and site maps. Those who were not monitored were more likely to have sophisticated tools on their sites than those who were monitored.

Constituent Relationship-Building. When considering the legislators' freedom to manipulate their sites, 17 of 26 variables were found to have significant relationships: whether the site had biographical information $\chi^2(1, N=1,151) = 13.4, p = .000$; whether the site included the legislator's committee assignments $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 11.19, p = .001$; whether the site included personal information $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 85.73, p = .000$; whether the site has information about the local environment $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 18.70, p = .000$; whether there are press releases from the legislator's office $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 84.57, p = .000$; whether there is a link for the media $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 52.22, p = .000$; whether the site has a link to the legislator's offsite homepage $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 39.20, p = .000$; whether the site has district information $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 4.09, p = .043$; whether the site has legislator's views $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 6.93, p = .008$; whether the site has information about appropriations $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 5.37, p = .021$; whether the site has the legislator's responses to concerns $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 33.99, p = .000$; whether the site has included the legislator addressing change $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 38.27, p = .000$; whether the site has information on government jobs $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 23.26, p = .000$; whether the site has information for businesses $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 14.59, p = .000$; whether the site includes the telephone number of the legislator $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 23.53, p = .000$; whether the site includes the legislator's mailing address $\chi^2(1, N=1,152) = 38.79, p = .000$; and whether the site includes the legislator's fax number $\chi^2(1, N=1,152)$

= 31.21, $p = .000$. Table 7 illustrates the frequencies of constituent relationship-building strategies on legislators' websites.

Table 7
Association of legislators' freedom to manipulate their sites with constituent relationship-building strategies on the website

Tool	those who had freedom	those who did not have freedom
biographical information	83.8%	74.3%
committee assignments	99.8%	96.7%
personal information	24%	5.5%
local environment	10.3%	3.9%
press releases (from legislators' offices)	36.3%	13%
link for the media	10%	1.1%
link to the legislators' offsite homepages	13.3%	3.5%
information of district interest	46.8%	23.8%
legislators' views	30.3%	23.1%
information about appropriations	21%	15.6%
legislators' responses	22.3%	9.7%
addresses changes	22.8%	9.4%
information on government jobs	14.5%	6%
information for businesses	8.8%	3.5%
telephone number	99.3%	92.7%
mailing address	99.3%	89.2%
fax number	45%	28.6%

For all the tools that were found to be significantly associated with the freedom to manipulate their sites, those who had the freedom to manipulate their

sites had a larger percentage of occurrence of relationship-building tools. Therefore, the researcher concluded that those who had the freedom to manipulate their sites were more likely to have relationship-building tools.

As for webmasters who may update their websites from their home offices, seven of 26 variables were found to be significant: whether the legislator included a legislative calendar on the site $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 51.48, p = .000$; whether the legislator included information about the local environment $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 5.21, p = .022$; whether the site includes press releases from the legislator's office $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 60.61, p = .000$; whether the legislator has press releases from other offices $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 3.82, p = .051$; whether the site has information about government jobs $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 9.72, p = .002$; whether the site has the legislator's telephone number $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 8.69, p = .003$; and whether the site has the legislator's mailing address $\chi^2(1, N=1,131) = 13.13, p = .000$. Table 8 illustrates the frequencies of including constituent relationship-building strategies when legislators have the ability to update their sites from their home offices.

Table 8
Association of legislators' ability to update their sites from their home offices with constituent relationship-building strategies on the website

Tool	those who had ability	those who did not have ability
legislative calendar	1.4%	29.6%
information on local environment	10.5%	5.6%
press releases (from legislators' offices)	44.1%	16.3%
press releases (from other offices)	13.3%	8.3%
information on government jobs	2.1%	10.1%
telephone number	100%	94.2%
mailing address	100%	91.5%

Those who had the ability to manipulate their sites had a larger percentage of relationship-building strategies for five of the seven strategies found to be significantly associated. For those who did not have the ability, only the presence of legislative calendars and information on government jobs was more prevalent.

As for those who have limitations on the information on their sites, 13 of 26 variables had relationships that were significant: whether the site had a legislative calendar $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 51.46, p = .000$; whether the site had a personal message $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 25.9, p = .000$; whether the site had regional information $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 18.9, p = .000$; whether the site has information about the local environment $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 10.44, p = .001$; whether the site has a link for the media $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 10.17, p = .001$; whether the site has information of district interest $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 15.17, p = .000$; whether the site has views of the legislator $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 4.99, p = .026$; whether there is information about appropriations on the site $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 38.59, p = .000$; whether the site includes the legislator's response to concerns $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 17.08, p = .000$; whether the site includes the legislator addressing changes $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 15.218, p = .000$; whether the site includes information for businesses $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 6.56, p = .010$; whether the site has the legislator's telephone number $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 170.14, p = .000$; and whether the site has the legislator's mailing address $\chi^2(1, N=1,127) = 93.03, p = .000$. Table 9 illustrates the frequencies of constituent relationship-building strategies on homepages when the legislators had limitations placed upon them by their state legislatures.

Table 9
Association of legislators' having limitations placed upon them by their state legislators with constituent relationship-building strategies on the website

Tool	those who had limitations	those who did not have limitations
legislative calendar	28.8%	4.2%
personal message	9.9%	23.2%
regional information	2.8%	9.5%
information on local environment	7.3%	1.1%
link to the media	5.1%	0%
information of district interest	32.7%	18.4%
legislators' views	26.7%	18.9%
information about appropriations	21%	2.1%
legislators' responses	15.5%	4.2%
addresses changes	15.4%	4.7%
information for businesses	6.2%	1.6%
telephone number	98.7%	75.8%
mailing address	95.9%	75.8%

Surprisingly, those who had limitations had more prevalence of tools that were significantly associated with whether the legislators had limitations or not. Of the 11 found significant, only two were more prevalent for those who did not have limitations, personal messages and regional information. Therefore, the researcher determined that those who had limitations on their sites were more likely to have relationship-building tools than those who did not.

Finally, as for those who had their websites monitored for content, 12 of 26 variables were significantly related: whether the site had biographical information $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 16.79, p = .000$; whether the legislator included a legislative calendar on his/her site $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 33.72, p = .000$; whether the legislator had a personal message on the site $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 12.48, p = .000$; whether there were press releases from the legislator's office $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 16.64, p = .000$; whether there was a link for the media $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 12.90, p = .000$; whether the site had information of district interest $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 25.58, p = .000$; whether the site had information about appropriations $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 6.85, p = .009$; whether the site had the legislator's response to concerns $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 4.09, p = .043$; whether the site included the legislator addressing change $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 4.56, p = .033$; whether the sites have information about government jobs $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 19.69, p = .000$; whether the site had information for businesses $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 8.49, p = .004$; and whether the site included the legislator's fax number $\chi^2(1, N=400) = 9.05, p = .003$. Table 10 illustrates the frequencies of constituent relationship building variables on legislators' sites according to whether or not they are monitored for content.

Table 10
Association of legislators' sites being monitored for content with constituent relationship-building strategies on the website

Tool	those who were monitored	those who were not monitored
biographical information	97.8%	79.7%
legislative calendar	0%	29%
personal message	10%	28.1%
press releases (from legislators' offices)	54.4%	31%
link for the media	0%	12.9%
information of district interest	23.3%	53.5%
information about appropriations	11.1%	23.9%
legislators' responses to concerns	14.4%	24.5%
addresses changes	14.4%	25.2%
information on government jobs	0%	18.7%
information for businesses	1.1%	11%
fax number	31.1%	49%

For those who were able to manipulate their sites (N=400), those who were not monitored had more prevalence of relationship-building strategies on their sites. Of those tools found to be significantly associated with whether the sites were monitored or not, only two tools were more prevalent on sites that were monitored, biographical information and press releases from the legislators' offices. Therefore, the researcher concluded that those who were not monitored were more likely to include relationship-building strategies on their sites.

Therefore, it is determined that the guidelines and policies dictated by state legislative webmasters and/or legislative committees partially predict the use of the Internet by state legislators to engage their constituents with the issues, decisions and actions of the state legislature and/or his/her office. H2 is partially supported.

RQ3: H3a-H3c were pertinent to RQ3 (To what extent do demographics of constituents predict legislators' use of the Internet to engage their constituents with the issues, decisions and actions of the state legislature and/or his/her office?). H3a-H3c predicted that the demographics of the constituents would predict the legislators' use of sophisticated tools on their personal websites, as well as constituent relationship-building strategies.

As for state median income, 11 of 16 variables had significant relationships: whether the legislator had e-mail $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 91.71, p = .000$; whether the sites had online surveys $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 292.34, p = .000$; whether the site had video capabilities $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 73.78, p = .000$; whether the site had audio $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 96.89, p = .000$; whether there are bill tracking capabilities $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 214.91, p = .000$; whether the website has newsletters that constituents may subscribe to $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 114.96, p = .000$; whether the legislator had a newsletter that did not require a subscription $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 96.56, p = .000$; whether the site has a site map $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 275.81, p = .000$; whether the site had a menu of options $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 287.47, p = .000$; whether the sites have keyword search engines $\chi^2(6, N=1,410)$

= 53.113, $p = .000$; and whether the sites had links to other sites $\chi^2(6, N=1,410)$
= 111.79, $p = .000$. Table 11 includes frequencies of variables that indicate use
of sophisticated tools on legislators' website when considering state household
median income.

Table 11

Association of state median household income with sophisticated tools used on legislators' websites

Tool	\$25,001- \$30,000	\$30,001- \$35,000	\$35,001- \$40,000	\$40,001- \$45,000	\$45,001- \$50,000	\$50,001- \$55,000	\$55,001- \$60,000
e-mail address	100%	87.9%	95.7%	99.7%	83.5%	99.2%	100%
photos	100%	99.6%	99.1%	99.7%	71.6%	97.6%	100%
video	0%	12.1%	20.6%	33.7%	19%	7.1%	0%
audio	0%	20.4%	34.6%	11.5%	16.5%	4.8%	4%
bill tracking	100%	29.6%	61.1%	38.2%	46.1%	2.4%	100%
newsletter (subscription)	0%	0%	.3%	5%	16.8%	4%	0%
newsletter (no subscription)	0%	0%	2.3%	10.9%	17.7%	9.2%	0%
site map	0%	23.8%	2.9%	18.3%	3.9%	0%	100%
menu of options	0%	34.2%	35.1%	55.9%	85.2%	26.2%	100%
keyword search	0%	32.9%	30.3%	26.3%	13.9%	18.3%	0%
links to other sites	0%	0%	.9%	13.6%	19.7%	10.3%	0%

The researcher found that the association of household income with use of sophisticated tools on the website was more prevalent in the states where the income was between \$30,000 and \$55,000. On the lower and higher ends of the income spectrum, \$25,001-\$30,000 and \$50,001-60,000, the appearance of tools was inconsistent. The researcher found that those legislators in states that had a median household income in the middle range were more likely to have sophisticated tools on their sites.

Where constituent relationship-building was concerned with state median income, 17 of 26 variables were significantly related: whether the legislator's site had a biography $\chi^2(6, N=1,409) = 217.4, p = .000$; whether the site had a legislative calendar $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 227.7, p = .000$; whether the legislator had a personal message on his/her site $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 122.89, p = .000$; whether the site had information about the local environment $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 98.88, p = .000$; whether the site had press releases from the legislators home office $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 128.19, p = .000$; whether the site had press releases from other offices $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 157.3, p = .000$; whether the site had a link to the legislator's other homepage $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 47.47, p = .000$; whether the site had information of district interest $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 204.78, p = .000$; whether the site had the legislator's views on issues $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 279.05, p = .000$; whether the site contained information on appropriations $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 193.51, p = .000$; whether the legislator had responses to constituents' concerns $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 148.39, p = .000$; whether the legislator addressed changes on his/her site $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 152.34, p = .000$; whether the legislator had information about government jobs on the site $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 98.48, p = .000$; whether the site contained information for businesses $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 87.55, p = .000$; whether the site had the legislator's telephone number $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 154.43, p = .000$; whether the site had the legislator's mailing address $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 504.09, p = .000$; and whether the site had the legislator's fax number listed $\chi^2(6, N=1,410) = 107.18, p = .000$. Therefore, it was determined that state median household income was significantly related to the tools legislators used

and the constituent relationship-building strategies legislators used on their websites. Table 12 illustrates the frequencies of occurrences of constituent relationship-building strategies on legislators' websites when considering state household median income.

Table 12

Influence of state median household income on relationship-building tools used on legislators' websites

	\$25,001- \$30,000	\$30,001- \$35,000	\$35,001- \$40,000	\$40,001- \$45,000	\$45,001- \$50,000	\$50,001- \$55,000	\$55,001- \$60,000
biography	0%	80.8%	84.3%	89.3%	61.9%	98.4%	100%
calendar	0%	41.7%	28.3%	6.5%	21.3%	0%	100%
personal message	0%	5.4%	0%	17.2%	23.5%	7.1%	0%
information on local environment	0%	0%	.9%	14.8%	10.3%	0%	0%
press releases from legislators' offices	0%	4.2%	9.1%	32.2%	28.4%	28.6%	0%
press releases from other offices	0%	0%	2.3%	24.6%	13.5%	.8%	0%
link to legislators' offsite homepages	0%	2.9%	13.7%	7.4%	3.5%	1.6%	0%
district information	100%	10.4%	27.4%	36.7%	38.4%	6.3%	100%
views on issues	0%	3.8%	18.9%	31.7%	57.4%	5.6%	0%

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Table 12 (continued)

Influence of state median household income on relationship-building tools used on legislators' websites

	\$25,001- \$30,000	\$30,001- \$35,000	\$35,001- \$40,000	\$40,001- \$45,000	\$45,001- \$50,000	\$50,001- \$55,000	\$55,001- \$60,000
appropriations	0%	14.2%	6%	25.7%	21%	0%	100%
responses to concerns	0%	3.8%	4.9%	27.5%	22.6%	0%	0%
addressed changes	0%	3.8%	4.6%	27.8%	22.6%	0%	0%
information about government jobs	0%	0%	21.4%	16.6%	9.4%	0%	0%
information about businesses	0%	0%	.9%	13%	10.3%	0%	0%
telephone number	100%	99.6%	99.1%	84%	99.7%	100%	100%
mailing address	0%	99.6%	98.9%	84%	99.7%	100%	100%
fax number	0%	20.4%	38.3%	47.6%	44.2%	62.7%	0%

Again, the researcher found that the association of household income with use of relationship-building tools on the website was more prevalent in the states where the income was between \$30,000 and \$55,000. On the lower and higher ends of the income spectrum, \$25,001-\$30,000 and \$50,001-60,000, the appearance of tools was inconsistent. The researcher found that legislators who served in states with median household incomes falling in the middle range were more likely to have relationship-building tools on their websites.

As for the population density of the legislative districts and sophistication, only one variable of the 16 was significant: whether the site had menu options $\chi^2(30, N=1,050) = 56.31, p = .003, 57\%$. In addition, as for constituent relationship-building, only one variable of the 26 that were tested for relationships was found to be significant: whether the legislator had a fax number on the site $\chi^2(30, N=1,050) = 69.81, p = .000$. Therefore, H2a was not supported. Therefore, it was determined that population density did not affect the sophisticated tools or constituents relationship-building strategies used by state legislators on their websites.

When considering constituent ethnicity, only the districts with a predominantly white population within the district had significant relationships with any of the variables. As far as sophistication was concerned, five of 16 variables were significant: whether the site had video capabilities $\chi^2(12, N=1,395) = 24.86, p = .015$; whether the site had audio capabilities $\chi^2(12, N=1,395) = 39.53, p = .000$; whether the site has bill tracking capabilities $\chi^2(12, N=1,395) = 21.11, p = .05$; whether the site had menu options $\chi^2(12, N=1,395) = 57.08, p = .000$; and whether the site had a keyword search $\chi^2(12, N=1,395) = 74.86, p = .000$.

Additionally, there were only five variables of 26 that were significant where constituent relationship-building was concerned with the predominantly white population: whether the site had biographical information $\chi^2(6, N=1,394) = 79.98, p = .000$; whether the site had a legislative calendar $\chi^2(12, N=1,395) =$

35.74, $p = .000$; whether there is information of district interest on the site $\chi^2(12, N=1,395) = 40.39, p = .000$; whether the site has views of the legislator $\chi^2(12, N=1,395) = 28.27, p = .005$; and whether the site has the legislator's fax number listed $\chi^2(12, N=1,395) = 72.08, p = .000$.

There were no associations between the black or Hispanic populations and the presence of either sophisticated or constituent relationship-building tools on legislators' sites.

Therefore, it was determined that ethnicity of district populations was not a determining factor in whether legislators used sophisticated tools or constituent relationship-building strategies on their websites.

As for RQ3, the researcher finds that demographics of constituents only partially is related to whether state legislators use sophisticated tools and constituent relationship-building strategies on their websites.

A post-hoc analysis was performed to determine if states in different regions of the country determined whether those legislators had sophisticated tools and constituent relationship-building strategies on their websites. Regions were defined as follows (Spooner, 2003):

- a. New England: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
- b. Mid-Atlantic: Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
- c. National Capital Region: Maryland, Virginia, Washington, DC
- d. The Southeast: Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina

- e. The South: Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, West Virginia
- f. Industrial Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio
- g. Upper Midwest: Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin
- h. Lower Midwest: Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma
- i. Border States: Arizona, New Mexico, Texas
- j. Mountain States: Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming
- k. Pacific Northwest: Oregon, Washington

This test showed significant relationships for 11 of 16 variables concerning sophisticated tools: whether the sites had e-mail $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 84.06, p = .000$; whether the site had photos $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 378.66, p = .000$; whether the sites had video capabilities from their home pages $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 414.68, p = .000$; whether the site had audio $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 494.51, p = .000$; whether the sites have bill tracking $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 196.63, p = .000$; whether the site had a newsletter with subscription capabilities $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 448.84, p = .000$; whether the site has newsletter that does not require a subscription $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 378.66, p = .000$ whether the website has a site map $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 327.53, p = .000$; whether the site had menu options $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 322.71, p = .000$; whether the site has keyword search engines $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) =$

594.79, $p = .000$; and whether the site had links to other sites $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) =$
511.24, $p = .000$.

Table 13
Influence of region on sophisticated tools used on legislators' websites

	New England	Mid-Atlantic	National Capital	Southeast	South	Industrial Midwest
e-mail	92.3%	96.9%	100%	100%	85%	80.9%
photos	66%	100%	100%	99.3%	99.3%	100%
video	3.6%	6.9%	50.7%	22.3%	0%	22.3%
audio	2.3%	0%	0%	49.3%	0%	1.9%
bill tracking	31.7%	38.2%	38.3%	51.4%	38.6%	27.4%
newsletter (subscription)	1.9%	1.5%	0%	0%	0%	4.5%
newsletter (no subscription)	1.2%	6.9%	0%	0%	0%	8.3%
site map	.4%	22.1%	0%	2.1%	0%	19.7%
menu options	54.8%	53.4%	38.3%	29.5%	13.1%	61.8%
keyword search engines	3.1%	.8%	0%	78.8%	0%	28%
links to other sites	10.8%	2.3%	0%	1.4%	0%	7%

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Table 13 (continued)
Influence of region on sophisticated tools used on legislators' websites

	Upper Midwest	Lower Midwest	Border States	Mountain States	Pacific Northwest	California
e-mail	95.9%	99%	91.3%	95%	100%	95.2%
photos	100%	100%	98.6%	98.3%	100%	95.2%
video	57.4%	3%	55.1%	11.8%	52.1%	19%
audio	63.9%	31.7%	55.1%	11.8%	39.6%	19%
bill tracking	58.2%	21.8%	87%	46.2%	100%	42.9%
newsletter (subscription)	21.3%	0%	0%	6.4%	33.3%	85.7%
newsletter (no subscription)	8.2%	4%	5.8%	0%	89.6%	81%
site map	0%	0%	40.6%	42%	35.4%	0%
menu options	77%	43.6%	98.6%	31.1%	100%	95.2%
keyword search engines	25.4%	0%	49.3%	70.8%	14.3%	100%
links to other sites	9.8%	2%	0%	.8%	72.9%	90.5%

Those legislators in the South, the Southeast and the National Capital regions had less occurrence of sophisticated and constituent relationship-building than those in other parts of the country.

When considering constituent relationship-building strategies, 14 of 26 variables had significant relationships: whether the site had biographical information: $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 236.37, p = .000$; whether the site had a legislative calendar $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 417.11, p = .000$; whether the site had a personal message from the legislator $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 738.39, p = .000$; whether the legislator had information about the local environment on the site $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 227.78, p = .000$; whether the legislative site had press releases from the legislator's office $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 406.46, p = .000$; whether the site had press releases from other offices $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 226.42, p = .000$; whether the legislator had a link to his/her other homepage $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 52.88, p = .000$; whether the site had information of district interest $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 275.16, p = .000$; whether the site had the views of the legislator $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 377.94, p = .000$; whether the site had information about appropriations $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 490.97, p = .000$; whether the sites had the legislator's response to constituents' concerns $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 484.53, p = .000$; whether the legislators address changes on the sites $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 496.85, p = .000$; whether the site had information about government jobs $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 383.06, p = .000$; and whether the site included information for business $\chi^2(12, N=1,401) = 270.41, p = .000$.

Therefore, it was determined that the region to which the state belonged had a significant relationship to whether the legislator had sophisticated tools and constituent relationship-building strategies.

Table 14
Influence of region on constituent relationship building tools used on legislators' websites

	New England	Mid-Atlantic	National Capital	Southeast	South	Industrial Midwest
biographical	55.8%	99.2%	100%	100%	73.2%	76.4%
legislative calendar	1.9%	16%	0%	21.9%	22.2%	7%
personal message	3.5%	2.3%	0%	0%	0%	39.5%
information about local environment	2.7%	16.8%	0%	0%	0%	4.5%
press releases (legislators' office)	21.2%	30.5%	0%	6.2%	3.3%	17.2%
press releases (other offices)	7.7%	29.8%	0%	0%	0%	5.1%
link to other homepage	14.7%	11.5%	0%	5.5%	0%	6.4%
district information	27.4%	47.3%	38.3%	0%	16.3%	14%
views of the legislator	45.2%	31.3%	0%	30.1%	0%	13.4%

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Table 14 (continued)

Influence of region on constituent relationship building tools used on legislators' websites

	New England	Mid-Atlantic	National Capital	Southeast	South	Industrial Midwest
appropriations	8.5%	44.3%	0%	0%	0%	3.8%
legislators' responses	6.6%	30.5%	0%	0%	0%	6.4%
address changes	6.2%	30.5%	0%	0%	0%	7%
government jobs	0%	1.5%	0%	28.1%	0%	22.9%
business information	1.9%	14.5%	0%	0%	0%	3.2%

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Table 14 (continued)
Influence of region on constituent relationship-building tools used on legislators' websites

	Upper Midwest	Lower Midwest	Border States	Mountain States	Pacific Northwest	California
biographical	80.3%	98%	62.3%	73.1%	97.9%	95.2%
legislative calendar	23%	15.8%	79.7%	60.5%	70.8%	0%
personal message	9.8%	0%	0%	0%	93.8%	95.2%
information about local environment	21.3%	1%	2.9%	0%	41.7%	0%
press releases (legislators' office)	40.2%	4%	29%	0%	97.9%	90.5%
press release (other offices)	32.8%	4%	5.8%	0%	25%	33.3%
link to other homepage	3.3%	5%	0%	5.9%	2.1%	4.8%
district information	56.6%	42.6%	55.1%	.8%	100%	76.2%
views of the legislator	44.3%	12.9%	40.6%	17.4%	97.9%	81%
appropriations	36.9%	4%	15.9%	28.6%	100%	0%
legislators' responses	40.2%	11.9%	20.3%	0%	95.8%	4.8%

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Table 14 (continued)

Influence of region on constituent relationship building tools used on legislators' websites

	Upper Midwest	Lower Midwest	Border States	Mountain States	Pacific Northwest	California
address changes	40.2%	12.9%	17.4%	0%	97.9%	4.8%
government jobs	2.5%	0%	49.3%	11.8%	62.5%	0%
business information	19.7%	3%	0%	0%	47.9%	0%

Those legislators in the South, the Southeast and the National Capital regions had less occurrence of sophisticated and constituent relationship-building than those in other parts of the country.

Summary of Findings

H1a-H1e were not supported by the data in the research. In this study, it was found that demographics of state legislators do not predict legislators' use of the Internet to engage their constituents with the issues, decisions and actions of their state legislature and/or office.

H2 was supported by the data in this research. It was found that the guidelines and policies dictated by state legislative webmasters and/or legislative committees predict the use of the Internet by state legislators to engage their constituents with the issues, decisions and actions of their state legislature and/or office.

H3a was supported; however, H3b-H3c were not. It was found that state median household income did predict the use of sophisticated tools and constituent relationship-building strategies on state legislative websites. Population density and ethnicity of the constituents did not affect the sophisticated tools and constituent relationship-building strategies used on the website.

Finally, in a post-hoc analysis, it was found that the region to which the legislator belongs had a relationship to whether the legislators had sophisticated tools or constituent relationship-building strategies.

Table 15

Summary of Findings in this study

Hypotheses	Sophisticated tools	Constituent Relationship Building
H1a: legislators' age	not supported	not supported
H1b: legislators' education	not supported	not supported
H1c: legislators' tenure	not supported	not supported
H1d: legislators' gender	not supported	not supported
H1e: legislators' ethnicity	not supported	not supported
H2: flexible guidelines	supported	partially supported
H3a: median state income	supported	supported
H3b: population density	not supported	not supported
H3c: district demographics	not supported	not supported
RQ1: legislator demographics	not supported	not supported
RQ2: legislators' flexibility	supported	supported
RQ3: constituent demographics	partially supported	partially supported

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

The goal of this study was to determine what factors may be related to the tools legislators use on their websites. The researcher examined legislators' demographics, flexibility in guidelines and policies guiding the websites and constituent demographics.

Legislator demographics. The researcher found only three variables that had associations with only one demographic. Gender was associated with whether sites had photos, as a larger percentage of men had photos on their sites than did women. In addition, a larger percentage of men had biographical information. This could be because women are still trying to establish themselves as capable leaders in government and do not want their gender to hinder this goal, as state legislatures are still largely male dominated bodies of government. On the other hand, a larger percentage of the women had press releases that originated in their offices than men. Again, with women having to assert themselves as leaders, they may feel it necessary to gain public trust by providing as much information as possible to their constituents and allowing their constituents to feel part of the legislative process. Because only three of the 42 variables tested for association were found to be significant for only one of the five demographics examined, it was determined that legislators' demographics do not determine the tools they use on their websites.

Legislators' flexibility. The researcher found support for both the use of sophisticated tools as well as constituent relationship-building strategies when

their use was compared to the legislators' flexibility. When determining whether the legislators used sophisticated tools on their websites, exactly half of all variables tested showed a significant association. Almost half of the variables tested for constituent relationship-building were found to have significant associations. Therefore, it was determined that the hypothesis was partially supported. It was clear to researchers during the content analysis that the state in which the legislators resided made the difference in the sites. Most of the time, the difference was found from state-to-state, not from legislator-to-legislator.

Those who had the freedom to manipulate websites had more presence of sophisticated tools than those who did not have the freedom to manipulate their sites. Likewise, those legislators who had the ability to update their sites, had no limitations set on their content and did not have their sites monitored also had more sophisticated tools on their sites. Sophisticated tools included the following: chatroom, e-mail, online survey, photograph(s), video and audio capabilities, electronic town meeting(s), weblog(s), bill tracking, newsletter(s) with or without subscription, site map, menu of options, keyword search, alphabetical subject list and links to other sites outside of the legislative site. Legislators who are given the freedom to manipulate their sites and who control their content can be more creative with what is included on the sites and provide a wider variety of information and tools. Legislators with flexible guidelines have the ability to change their sites without limitations and restrictions provided by the state, which

can be a benefit to their constituents. The site is more of a direct line to the legislator instead of the state serving as the gatekeeper.

When considering the constituent relationship building tools on the sites, those who had more freedom to manipulate their sites, had the ability to update their sites from their home offices and were not monitored had more tools on their sites to do so. However, those who *had limitations* on their sites, although they were allowed to manipulate them, such as no direct attacks on colleagues, no fundraising and no party-affiliated messages, had *more* constituent relationship building tools on their sites. Constituent relationship-building tools included the following: information for lobbyists, biographical data, a legislative calendar, committee information, a personal message, regional information, environmental issues, press releases, media kits, information for the media, a link to their offsite homepages, pending legislation, legislative decisions, government programs, business information, telephone number, mailing address and fax number. Many of these tools are included in the templates provided by the state legislature to the legislators. In some states, the legislators simply fill out a questionnaire and answers are loaded into a database that feeds the website. With limitations defining what are political messages versus what are messages directed solely at providing information to constituents for their government participation, legislators are actually building relationships with constituents for government initiatives, not for personal gain. Constituent relationship-building is somewhat required on these websites, which may

inadvertently further solidify incumbents' advantages in future elections, even in the absence of so-called politically directed messages.

Constituent demographics. The only demographic that was found to have an association with the presence of tools on legislators' websites was state median household income. When the researcher examined the frequencies of the occurrences of tools, it was found that the majority of presence was falling within the mid-range of income. Those states that had incomes ranging from \$30,000 - \$55,000 were more likely to have more of the sophisticated and constituent relationship building tools than those on the lower and higher ends of the income ranges studied. It is interesting to note that most of the tools were falling where most of the income is anyway – in the middle range, not in the extremes. Because the researcher only found two variables (whether the site had menu options and a fax number) of 42 that were associated with population density, H3b was rejected. In addition, because only 10 of 42 variables were found to be associated with only the districts with a majority of white people in the constituency, and none of the variables were associated with the districts with predominantly black or Hispanic people in the district, H3c also was rejected.

As mentioned previously, it was found that the region was associated with the presence of tools on the sites. Those legislators in the South, the Southeast and the National Capital regions had less occurrence of sophisticated and constituent relationship-building tools than those in other parts of the country. It is also interesting that those in the South also are on the lower end of the income spectrum, with median household incomes between \$29,696 and \$36,630. The

other two regions had a higher state median household income ranges. Those in the Southeast have median state household incomes in the ranges of \$37,082-\$42,433. Finally, those in the National Capital region have median state incomes that range from \$46,677-\$52,868.

Webmaster Interviews. Legislators did not immediately have the luxury of adopting the Internet as a medium of communication because most state legislatures did not adopt the Internet until the late 1990s and some did not do so until after the turn of the century. Still, some states do not allow legislators to determine what is on their "member pages". States legislatures must take state laws of utilizing state funding into consideration when considering the rules of legislators' use of their homepages within the site, as most sites disallow political campaigning and/or fundraising from being directly associated with the site. Although some legislative sites do link to legislators' offsite pages, many do not even allow the linking capabilities because there exists a fine line between what is political campaigning and what is purely constituent information. At the same time, some states are putting pressure on other states to provide more information and opportunities for citizens to participate online. Some webmasters mentioned that they change with the demands of the constituents. As constituents get accustomed to the benefits and capabilities of the Internet, they may begin demanding more and more.

In order to aid constituents in voting and in order to provide constituents the information necessary for them to offer support or concern to legislators' decisions, it is important to keep them informed. An interactive and updated web

site may provide them even more thorough information than a telephone call or abbreviated newsletter. It is a must that the web sites conform to the needs of the constituents. A web site that aids only the legislator may be obsolete.

Conclusion. While many legislators did employ Park and Choi's (2002) list of elements that make sites engaging for visitors for interactivity, multiple communication cues, personalization and ease of navigation, this study shows that there is still work to be done. Much of the work can only be accomplished at the state level. Those who control the web sites at the state level must consider allowing legislators to take control of their homepages and use them as a real medium of communication with constituents in order to successfully employ the strategies suggested by Park and Choi and Jewell (1982). While some states have turned the legislators' sites over to them for use, others are using the sites simply as a "bio page" for the legislators, offering little or no interactivity or inviting element for visitors to return.

The same can be said of those states who offer their legislators the use of their homepages to utilize those tools in this study that suggest constituent relationship building efforts identified by Jewell: communication with constituents, response to policy initiatives, allocation of resources and service to constituents.

State legislators have the control to make changes in web policies by appealing to the committees assigned to govern the operations of the site. For those states that simply do not yet have a committee to handle the site, the first step may be to establish a committee to determine which tools, if any, they desire

to offer for legislator/constituent online communication. Since each state site is controlled by the state, it is up to the legislature itself to make changes that are reflective of the needs of the constituents they serve. A proactive approach in the Internet revolution is paramount to the reactive stance that seems to be in place at the present time. Since the Internet is the fastest growing, as well as the fastest ever accepted, medium ever, and it has capabilities of so many combined media, it is important that legislators realize the potential of the tool at hand and offer the tools necessary to allow people "in" online.

It is difficult to assess the degree to which state legislators and their constituents are adopting to the Internet as an important communication tool because of the speed with which this technology is being diffused and adopted by both elected officials and the electorate. In addition, the diffusion process is not complete. Certainly, this is a challenge for state webmasters and legislative committees that make the rules for legislative websites. They obviously need to stay abreast of the latest developments in this regard and decide what is necessary for their constituencies.

Even though legislators are bound by the rules that govern the site, the sites are state-run, which means legislators can change the policies if they so choose by appealing to the committee designated to drive the policies of the web site, the state legislative leaders or sometimes to the webmaster him/herself, depending upon the state in question. As it has been found through interviews with state webmasters and through content analysis, the states dictate what their sites have or do not have on them. Legislators define what the state allows, as

well as whether legislators have control of their online communication through use of the state legislative website. It is essentially up to the legislators to control the content of the sites, and it is up to constituents to approach their legislators if they are not happy with the tools of communication offered on those sites. The fact of the matter is that the choices fall at on the state. While deciding to make the legislative website a true online community takes funding, hard work, and a dedication to updating and monitoring content, it is certainly a tool that legislators may use to bond their constituents and encourage government participation. Flexible guidelines and polling the constituency for their needs may certainly provide surprising results for legislators who feel it is not worth the time or money to invest more money and time in this medium.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research. In performing this study, the researcher quickly found complications, as each state has its own set of rules, as well as expectations for the website. Many factors determined the look of the site. Some states have legislator websites that are maintained solely by the state legislative webmaster. Some states divide the responsibility for maintaining the site on the lines of the house – there is a house web designer and a senate designer. Even still, some states further divide the responsibility between House Democrats and Republican Party and Senate Democrat and Republican Parties, each having their own separate web designers and capabilities. Those sites are still within the infrastructure of the state legislative website and therefore, still under the guidelines of the state as a whole. The states make the rules and the legislators fall in line. Finally, some states hand

the space over to the legislator and allow them to maintain their own sites, creating their own guidelines. These initial findings prompted H2, as it was necessary to determine the level of freedom legislators had and how that may affect their tools on the site.

Another obstacle for the researcher was that not all the states participated in the redistricting portion of Census 2000.

This dissertation set the stage for the author's intended field of research – diffusion of innovations in political communication involving state legislators. Future research in this field may include exploring the extent to which web sites of state legislators keep legislative decisions out of the public sphere and keep them as discreet exchanges between the legislators and their constituents. In addition, researchers may ask if the Internet is a merging of the public and private spheres of politics because Internet users have more immediate and open access to the information contained on web pages; however, they also have an immediate and private link of communication in the form of e-mail.

While the literature points to users being defined heavily by demographics, this study found that the only demographic that really made a difference in the tools provided on state legislators' websites was state median household income. Other than that, the rules that guided legislators were the determining factor on whether the legislators had tools on their sites. In addition, the areas of the countries defined the tools legislators had on their sites. Researchers should pay more attention to state demographics than district demographics until the

legislators begin to target their audiences more specifically than only from a statewide prospective. While some states have made the leap from a state-centered site to district-centered sites within the main site, most are still under the direction of a single webmaster with limited time, funding and resources. That said, many of the legislators seem to be happy with the way their sites are, as only a minimal number of webmasters stated that they had plans for changing their sites in the next two years. Many indicated that they were not interested in changing their sites at all. Again, this may change with the demands of the constituents.

This study should be performed again in 2010, after the Census, as new demographics and changes to the websites may be observed at that time and compared to the findings in this study. Continuing to study the diffusion of innovation process midstream will aid in the study of the success of the diffusion process when it is complete – in many years to come.

APPENDIX A

Content Analysis

Coding Sheet

1. Legislator's Name:
2. Legislator's State:
3. Is the legislator a house or senate member?
4. What is the number of the legislator's district?
5. Media-related information:

	Yes	No
a. Press releases		
Generated by legislator's office	_____	_____
Generated by other office	_____	_____
b. Media kits		
Generated by legislator's office	_____	_____
Generated by other office	_____	_____
c. Biographical Data	_____	_____
6. Information about pending legislation
 - a. Sponsored by the legislator
 - b. Of interest to district
 - c. Views of the legislator
7. Information about legislative decisions:
 - a. Appropriations
 - b. Response to concerns
 - c. Addresses changes

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Content Analysis

Coding Sheet

- | | | | |
|----|--|-------|-------|
| 1. | Legislator's Name: | | |
| 2. | Legislator's State: | | |
| 3. | Is the legislator a house or senate member? | | |
| 4. | What is the number of the legislator's district? | | |
| 5. | Media-related information: | Yes | No |
| | a. Press releases | | |
| | Generated by legislator's office | _____ | _____ |
| | Generated by other office | _____ | _____ |
| | b. Media kits | | |
| | Generated by legislator's office | _____ | _____ |
| | Generated by other office | _____ | _____ |
| | c. Biographical Data | _____ | _____ |
| 6. | Information about pending legislation | | |
| | a. Sponsored by the legislator | _____ | _____ |
| | b. Of interest to district | _____ | _____ |
| | c. Views of the legislator | _____ | _____ |
| 7. | Information about legislative decisions: | | |
| | a. Appropriations | _____ | _____ |
| | b. Response to concerns | _____ | _____ |
| | c. Addresses changes | _____ | _____ |

APPENDIX B

Coder Instruction Sheet

Code all instances that appear within the web sites according to the following:

1. Provide the first and last name, along with the middle initial, if provided.
2. Provide the state in which the legislator serves.
3. Is the legislator a house or senate member?
4. What is the number of the legislator's district?
5. Answer yes or no to whether the site contains the provided media-related information.
6. Answer yes or no to whether the site contains the listed forms of pending legislation.
7. Answer yes or no to whether the site contains the listed forms of legislative decisions.
8. Answer yes or no to whether the site contains the listed forms of political participation.
9. Answer yes or no to whether the site contains the listed forms of interactivity specific to the legislator.
10. Answer yes or no to whether the site contains a calendar of the listed events specific to the legislator.
11. Answer whether the legislator's e-mail address is provided.
12. Answer whether the site lists the committees on which the legislator serves.

13. Answer yes or no to whether the site contains a personal message from the legislator.
14. Answer yes or no to whether the site contains information about the government programs listed.
15. Answer yes or not to whether the site contains information for developing/maintaining business in the district. This may be in the form of press releases about current or specific legislation or links specifically for businesses.
16. Answer yes or no to whether the site contains the listed cues of communication.
17. Answer yes or no to whether the site contains the listed personalization for the legislator.
18. Answer yes or no to whether the site contains the listed forms of navigation.
19. Indicate the demographics of the legislator.
20. Answer yes or no to whether there is a link specifically for lobbyists.
21. Answer yes or no to whether there is a link specifically for the media.
22. Is there a link to the legislator's offsite home page?

APPENDIX C

Internet/Telephone Questionnaire of State Legislative Webmasters

Hi, this is Amber Narro, a doctoral student at the University of Southern Mississippi. I am conducting research about state legislative web sites and have had this project reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the institutional Review Boards, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. This research is completely voluntary and you may stop at any time. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete the survey, and I thoroughly appreciate your cooperation, as well as your complete answers to the following questions and statements. Do you wish to participate in the research?

1. The state in which the webmaster works:
2. Which of the following capabilities does your web site offer state legislators? Check all that apply.
 1. Chat room
 2. Web log
 3. Press releases
 4. Press information
 5. Bill tracking
 6. Civics education information
 7. Video of legislative sessions
 8. Audio of legislative sessions
 9. Regional information
 10. Online newsletter
3. For those elements that your web sites does not currently offer, are you looking to implement them within the next two years? Which ones?
 1. Chat room
 2. Web log
 3. Press releases
 4. Press information

5. Bill tracking
 6. Civics education information
 7. Video of legislative sessions
 8. Audio of legislative sessions
 9. Regional information
 10. Online newsletter
4. Are the state legislators given the freedom to manipulate their sites?
 5. In what year did (your state) implement the state legislative web sites?
 6. Are capabilities the same for both representatives and senators?
 7. What determinants do you feel affect whether a legislator actively uses his or her web sites to communicate with constituents?
 - a. Age
 - b. Gender
 - c. Demographics of district
 - d. Educational level
 - e. Longevity as legislator
 - f. Other, please indicate

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree, please respond to the following statements.

8. Legislators' web sites communication through use of their home pages provided by the state legislators has increased over the last three years.
9. There is much resistance to legislators' communicating to constituents through their home pages.
10. Legislators could improve the quality of communication with constituents by utilizing their home pages more.
11. Legislators do use their web sites to their fullest potential.
12. Legislators fear new technological capabilities offered on the state web sites.
13. When new technology is introduced for the web sites, legislators need a lot of training.

14. Legislators often call to ask for additional resources for their web sites (i.e., online polling capabilities, press release links, etc.).
15. The visitors to the site significantly increase every year.
16. Visitors to the state legislature have increased since the inception of online government.

Please answer the following questions.

17. Whose responsibility is it to update the legislators' web pages?
 1. The legislator him/herself
 2. The legislative assistant
 3. The webmaster
 4. Other, please indicate _____
18. Can the legislators update their home pages from their home offices?
 1. Yes
 2. No
19. Are there limitations that you set for legislators? For example, is there any information that you disallow on the site?
20. Are the web sites monitored for content?
21. How are the policies regarding legislative web sites decided?
 - a. Individual legislators
 - b. Legislative committee
 - c. Legislative leader (Senate President and/or Speaker of the House)
 - d. Webmaster
 - e. Other _____
22. When was the last time these policies were changes or altered?
23. Why were they changed or altered?
24. Who was the initiator of this change?
 - a. Legislators
 - b. Legislative committee
 - c. Legislative leader
 - d. Webmaster
 - e. Other _____

25. Do you require that legislators routinely (at least once a month) update their web sites' information?
26. Please describe the results of implementing the web to state legislation.
27. What are your recommendations to encourage greater public acceptance of this technology?

APPENDIX D



The University of
Southern Mississippi

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: 601.266.6820
Fax: 601.266.5509
www.usm.edu/irb

TO: Amber Narro
15475 Patrick Drive
Ponchatoula, LA 70454

FROM: Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 25103103

PROJECT TITLE: New Innovations in State Legislatures: An Examination of the
Successes of Diffusion & the Potential of Personal Home Pages

Enclosed is The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection
Review Committee Notice of Committee Action taken on the above referenced
project proposal. If I can be of further assistance, contact me at (601) 266-4279,
FAX at (601) 266-4275, or you can e-mail me at Lawrence.Hosman@usm.edu.
Good luck with your research.

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW FORM
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
(SUBMIT THIS FORM IN DUPLICATE)

Protocol # 25103103
(office use only)

Name Amber Narro Phone (985) 370-0841

E-Mail Address narrofamily@charter.net

Mailing Address 5475 Patrick Dr.; Ponchatoula, LA 70454
(address to receive information regarding this application)

College/Division Mass Communication Dept. Journalism

Department Box # 5121-0001 Phone (601) 266-4258

Proposed Project Dates: From Nov. 1, 2005 To Nov. 30, 2005
(specific month, day and year of the beginning and ending dates of full project, not just data collection)

Title New Innovations in State Legislatures: An examination of the successes of diffusion & the potential of personal home pages

Funding Agencies or Research Sponsors n/a

Grant Number (when applicable) _____

New Project

Dissertation or Thesis

Renewal or Continuation: Protocol # _____

Change in Previously Approved Project: Protocol # _____

Principal Investigator Amber J. Narro Amber Narro Oct. 20, 2005
Date

Advisor Charles Mayo, PhD Charles Mayo Oct. 20, 2005
Date

Department Chair Christopher Campbell, PhD CCampbell Oct 20, 2005
Date

RECOMMENDATION OF HSPRC MEMBER

Category I, Exempt under Subpart A, Section 46.101 (b) (2), 45CFR46.

Category II, Expedited Review, Subpart A, Section 46.110 and Subparagraph ().

Category III, Full Committee Review.

Margot Hall Ph.D. 11/01/05
HSPRC College/Division Member DATE

Lawrence A. Horvath 11-05-05
HSPRC Chair DATE

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ADVERSE EFFECT REPORT		
<i>This form should be used to report single adverse effects. Incident reports (i.e., reports of problems involving the conduct of the study or patient participation, including problems with the recruitment and/or consent processes and any deviations from the approved protocol) should be described in a letter. Return this form to the IRB Coordinator, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive # 5147, Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39406-0001.</i>		
Principal Investigator:		Phone:
IRB Approval #:		
Study title:		
Adverse Effect (3-4 words):		
Date of adverse effect:		
Additional details/description of effect and treatment, if any. (A detailed report may be attached.)		
Adverse effect appears to be (check one):	<input type="checkbox"/> Directly related to the research <input type="checkbox"/> Indirectly related to the research <input type="checkbox"/> Unrelated to the research	
Research involved the use of a:		
Was use of procedure intended to directly benefit subject?	Yes	No
Was subject enrolled at a USM site?	Yes	No
Has this type of adverse effect been reported before?	Yes	No
Is this type of effect likely to occur again?	Yes	No
Is the effect adequately described in the protocol and consent form?	Yes	No*
* If not, are changes needed in the protocol and/or consent form?	Yes**	No
** If so, a modification application should accompany this report.		
What other agencies (e.g., sponsors) have been notified of this adverse effect?		
Signature of Principal Investigator	Date	



The University of
Southern Mississippi

Institutional Review Board

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www.usm.edu/irb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 25103103

PROJECT TITLE: **New Innovations in State Legislatures: An Examination of the Successes of Diffusion & the Potential of Personal Home Pages**

PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 11/01/05 to 11/30/05

PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation or Thesis**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: **Amber J. Narro**

COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Arts & Letters**

DEPARTMENT: **Mass Communication**

FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**

HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: **Exempt Approval**

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **11/03/05 to 11/02/06**



Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

11-04-05

Date

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