Chapter 1

Different Experiences of Young Adults and Other Adults in Mediated Campaigns

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College student Alexandra Trustman was ready to ask a question of the Democratic presidential candidates during a debate preceding the 2004 primaries. The CNN producer had not liked the question that she suggested about technology policy and instead handed her a note card. Alexandra asked the presidential candidates the question on the card: "Macs or PCs?"

The aftermath of the question tells us something about mediated politics and young voters. Alexandra Trustman was ridiculed for the superficiality of her question. Writing in her campus newspaper, she explained that the Macs or PCs question had not been her idea. A CNN spokesperson apologized for the network's role in the incident: "In an attempt to ensure a lighthearted moment in this debate, a CNN producer working with Ms. Trustman clearly went too far."[1] CNN's patronizing attitude toward the young audience of its Rock the Vote debate reflects the continuing struggle of political establishment culture to reach young adults through traditional media. This struggle has increased the relative role of popular culture and the new media in the political lives of young adults.

In this chapter, I will examine how young adults and other adults experience mediated presidential campaigns with a focus on the 2004 election. Survey data will be used to identify age-based differences in

reliance on political establishment culture and the traditional media versus popular culture and the new media. Having identified a strong impact of the Internet on young adults, the nature of Internet use will be examined further. Similarities and differences in the online political behavior of young adults and other adults will also be identified. Finally, the implications of the findings will be considered.

Popular Culture and Politics

While recognizing that popular culture influenced politics long before television, scholars have viewed television as a medium that has especially linked politics with popular culture. Alan Schroeder has described how television led politicians to become entertainers: "And with television in the 1950s, it added the kind of effect of having the president in your home night after night, and becoming a television character in addition to being the chief of state. . . . Presidents can use entertainment and pop culture as a means of reinforcing their bond with American voters."[2] The connection also holds true for political messages in entertainment, including the most basic conception of citizenship. In *This Is the City*, Ronald Schmidt tied the Los Angeles Police Department's support of the production of the television show *Dragnet* to promoting a particular view of citizenship: "In the 1950s, the citizens at home could strive to emulate the citizens on television as they strove to emulate [Sergeant Joe] Friday."[3] The effect of both fictional and non-fictional television is shown in the research of Delli Carpini and Williams. They found that three focus groups that watched a television newsmagazine story on toxic waste and three focus groups that watched a fictional television movie with a toxic waste story line incorporated a similar number of references to the television programs in a subsequent general discussion about the issue of pollution.[4]

The impact of television and popular culture on politics has sparked a vibrant debate among scholars about whether this is good or bad. Most recently, several scholars have articulated a positive view of the potential for entertainment with political messages to activate citizens. In *Entertaining the Citizen*, Liesbet van Zoonen identifies problems with a rigid demarcation between popular culture and politics: "[T]o set politics apart from the rest of culture is not a feasible option for the maintenance of citizenship; not only will it not survive the competition for spare time, but more importantly it will also be separated, different, and distant from

everyday life."[5] In *Entertaining Politics*, Jeffrey Jones finds that the new political television of Bill Maher, Jon Stewart, and Dennis Miller promotes civic dialogue by approaching subjects with humor and without the ideological constraints of political insiders: "In short, popular culture is just as capable of shaping and supporting a culture of citizenship as it is of shaping and supporting a culture of consumption."[6]

These positive perspectives are a reply to a growing indictment of television for disengaging people from public life. Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* placed much of the blame for the decline in civic participation on the solitary pursuit of watching television.[7] Neil Postman argued that television had impoverished political discourse by making "entertainment itself the natural format for the representation of all experience."[8] When Postman wrote these words, today's young adults were less than ten years old.

Yet there probably has been an acceleration of the influence of popular culture on the political lives of young adults. By asking for open-ended life histories, Kevin Barnhurst has investigated how young adults come to understand a political issue. He has found increasing alienation from traditional news sources: "Young American citizens remember learning that newspapers were supposed to be an important avenue for political information, but their own encounters with the medium taught them that the products of institutional journalism are largely irrelevant to their lives."[9] Barnhurst concludes that young adults come to understand political issues from "many genres (especially entertainment media)" and personal discussion.[10]

The increasing influence of popular culture on the political perceptions of young adults may also be seen as a response to watershed political events. The most enduring news story about the first president vividly remembered by many of today's young adults centered on when President Clinton was impeached by the U.S. House of Representatives for lying to the special prosecutor about his sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky. The underlying subject matter obviously offered little role for political expertise. It is not surprising, then, that a scholarly study has found that the perspectives offered by political outsiders on the television show *Politically Incorrect* about the Clinton scandal were more diverse and resonated better with the public than the perspectives of political insiders on *This Week with Sam Donaldson and Cokie Roberts*.[11] The establishment political culture and traditional media also failed young adults in the 2000 campaign. This failure is symbolized by the third presidential debate, when the two candidates were given an open-ended

question to address issues of special concern to young adults. In their awkward answers, neither candidate was able to resist a reference to the importance of providing prescription drugs for seniors under Medicare. Al Gore let young people know that "the big drug companies are against the prescription drug proposal that I've made"; George Bush said that "Medicare is relevant for all of us, young and old alike."[12] Only 42 percent of young adults voted in the 2000 election.[13]

While the political establishment communicating through traditional media has clearly struggled to speak the language of young adults, there were hints early in the 2004 campaign that the Internet was engaging young voters. Scholars have found that the 2004 Democratic primary candidates gave a prominent role to interactive functions in their online campaigns.[14] The opportunity for interactivity may have had a special appeal for young voters. In particular, the Howard Dean campaign was able to energize young voters through Internet appeals. Reflecting on his campaign's success in mobilizing young voters, Dean's campaign manager Joe Trippi described the Internet as having characteristics that are well suited to the high energy of young adults:

> As one of the first mainstream organizations to tap into this demographic vein, we were learning that, unlike generations of dull and deadened TV watchers, these young people actually *wanted* to be engaged politically. They were out there asking questions, organizing, and just waiting for someone who could speak their language back to them, the language of the Net.[15]

Research has suggested that young adults may seek different things from the Internet than other adults. For example, using an experimental design, Lupia and Philpot exposed young adults and other adults to nine different political websites for a five-minute period. They asked participants to evaluate the quality of the information presented on the website. Subjects were also asked how the website affected their political interest—whether it made them want to learn about politics, talk about politics, and vote in the 2000 presidential election. The results showed significant differences between age groups in how websites were evaluated. The different quality rankings then had an impact on whether the website increased interest in politics.[16]

The literature's suggestion that young adults may be drawn more to popular culture and the new media suggests a pairing. An alternative pairing would be establishment political culture and traditional media. These loosely competing pairings will frame this chapter's analysis of

news consumption during presidential campaigns. The goal will be to move beyond anecdote to examine if there are systematic differences between young adults and other adults in how they experience mediated presidential campaigns. It is hypothesized that young adults are more likely than other adults to experience the mediated presidential campaign through popular culture and the new media. Conversely, it is expected that other adults are more likely to experience the campaign through establishment political culture and the traditional media.

Methods

In order to examine the different experiences of young adults and other adults during presidential campaigns, this chapter will rely heavily on a survey from the Pew Internet & American Life Project taken immediately after the 2004 election. This survey provides the best and most recent available data for understanding how presidential campaigns are experienced through the media. The survey had a large sample size and asked a wide range of detailed questions about media use during the 2004 election. It was conducted during the period from November 4-22, 2004. Media use during the campaign was fresh on the minds of respondents. The Pew Internet & American Life Project is well-respected for the quality of its survey research. I am grateful to the Pew Internet & American Life Project for making its data available to scholars, although the organization is not responsible for my interpretations of its data.

The first key step in analyzing the data is to define young adults. Any definition, of course, is arbitrary and different age ranges for young adults abound. For the purposes of this chapter, young adults will be those aged eighteen to thirty in November 2004. Other adults are the rest of the adult population. This distinction has intuitive appeal, which means that, given that the top cohort of young adults were born in 1974, the entire range of young adults generally would have entered high school after Bill Clinton was elected. Because the goal is to ascertain whether young adults have distinct characteristics, the chapter does not draw further distinctions among other adults.

The findings in this chapter are based on the primary data set and a relevant subset. The primary data set includes the entire sample of respondents whose age is indicated in the Pew post-election survey. The final sample includes 378 young adults and 1,768 other adults. As with any subgroup in a survey, the smaller number of young adults means that

there is a little more uncertainty about the responses of this group. For young adults, the margin of error (at the conventional 95 percent confidence interval) of the survey is approximately ±5. For other adults, it is ±2. For the question about the use of traditional media sources (reported in Table 1), there were so many potential outlets that the survey only asked people about half of the items, thereby creating two panels of about half of the total sample. The average panel size for the traditional media source question was 189 young adults and 884 other adults, with margins of error of ±7 and ±3, respectively.

The subset is the entire sample of respondents who are Internet users. This includes all people who answered "yes" to the following question: "Do you ever go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or to send and receive e-mail?" For the subset of Internet users, there were 287 young adults and 1,016 other adults, providing margin of errors of ±6 and ±3, respectively. In both the primary data set and subset, respondents who refused to answer or didn't know about their use of a particular media source were coded as non-users. This minor coding adjustment has intuitive appeal, since people who can't recognize a media type or recall using it were unlikely to have used it, but has no real impact on the results, since lack of knowledge responses were so rare (typically no more than 1 percent).

The key question in the chapter is whether young adults are systematically different than other adults in their mediated experiences of campaigns. In a poll, it is possible that what appears to be a meaningful difference occurred by chance. Before identifying something as a difference, scholars must be fairly sure that pure mathematical chance is not responsible for the difference. The two most common standards in social science are that scholars must be at least either 95 percent or 99 percent sure that the differences would not have occurred by chance. In this chapter, I will err on the side of caution and use the at least 99 percent sure standard for significant findings. Stated in another way, the probability that the difference between age groups could have occurred by chance must be less than 1 percent ($p < .01$) before a finding will be considered statistically significant. In presenting results, I will highlight only those differences that are statistically significant.

Results

Table 1 reveals both similarities and differences between how young

adults and other adults consumed traditional media in the 2004 campaign. The major differences are consistent with the hypothesis that young adults are less likely to have campaign exposure to establishment political culture and the traditional media. This can be seen in the dramatic difference between young adults and other adults in watching the nightly network news. While only 34 percent of young adults regularly watched the nightly network news, 52 percent of other adults did. A difference of similar magnitude was also found in the lower viewing of local television news by young adults. Reading a newspaper was also less common among young adults (42 percent) than other adults (57 percent). As denoted by the asterisks in Table 1, there are a number of other statistically significant differences between young adults and other adults. Young adults were less likely consumers of cable news, Sunday morning talk shows, and the PBS *News Hour* with Jim Lehrer.

The few categories in which young adults had greater media use than older adults have ties to popular culture. The media source for which young adults enjoyed the greatest advantage over other adults was *The*

Table 1: Regular Sources of Information About 2004 Campaign

Information Source	Young Adults (%)	Other Adults (%)
Local television news *	53	72
Local daily newspaper *	42	57
Nightly network news *	34	52
Cable news *	30	44
Morning television shows	16	23
National Public Radio	13	16
News magazines	13	12
Late night television	12	10
Daily Show with Jon Stewart *	12	3
Sunday morning news shows *	10	16
National daily newspaper	8	10
C-SPAN	5	6
Howard Stern *	5	2
Rush Limbaugh	4	6
Business magazines	4	5
Magazines like *Harper's*	4	4
PBS *News Hour* with Jim Lehrer *	2	7
Political magazines like *New Republic*	1	2

*$p < .01$

Source: 2004 Pew Internet & American Life Project Post-Election Survey Primary Data Set.
Notes: Q: "How often do you get news or information from the following sources? Regularly, sometimes, or hardly ever?" Percentages are for "regularly." Significance levels take into account all three ordinal response categories.

Daily Show with Jon Stewart on the cable channel Comedy Central. While 12 percent of young adults reported regularly watching *The Daily Show*, only 3 percent of older adults did. There was also a statistically significant gap in listening to Howard Stern.

For news magazines and about half of the information sources, there were no statistically significant differences between young adults and other adults. Although Table 1 may show small differences in these categories, the differences between the two groups are so small that there is a decent possibility that they would have occurred by chance. They are not statistically significant. Thus, in some ways young adults and other adults behaved similarly. Where differences exist, it is clear that young adults relied less on political establishment culture and more on popular culture than other adults.

Next, I turn to whether there are differences in the general type of media used by young adults and other adults. Pew asked people about their principal means of getting campaign information. Respondents were allowed to give up to two answers. As shown in Table 2, the relatively new medium of the Internet turns out to be very important for young adults. While 30 percent of young adults named the Internet as a principal means of learning about the campaign, only 14 percent of other adults did. The other side of the picture is that older adults were significantly more likely than young adults to have newspapers as a principal source. Both groups relied on television as the most important way of learning about the campaign.

Table 2: Principal Sources of 2004 Campaign News

News Source	Young Adults (%)	Other Adults (%)
Television	73	80
Internet	30	14
Newspapers	28	45
Radio	16	16
Magazines	3	4

Source: 2004 Pew Internet & American Life Project Post-Election Survey Primary Data Set.
Notes: Q: "How have you been getting most of your news about the presidential election campaign? From television, from newspapers, from radio, from magazines, or from the Internet?" Since respondents could give up to two answers, the totals exceed 100 percent.

The magnitude of the difference between young adults and other adults in reliance on the Internet for campaign information prompts further investigation. Certainly, part of the difference in Internet use in politics emerges from greater overall use of the Internet by young adults. In the survey, 76 percent of young adults and 58 percent of other adults reported going online. Once the population is limited to Internet users, is there a difference between how young adults and other adults use the Internet for politics? To answer this question, this chapter examines the subset of Internet users. The survey asked respondents about their political use of the Internet generally and during the campaign specifically. Both types of questions will be helpful in understanding Internet use.

Table 3 presents the general nature of Internet use at the time of the 2004 campaign. It shows that among Internet users, there is not a statistically significant difference between young adults and other adults in seeking online information about politics.

Table 3: Selected Internet Activities at Time of 2004 Campaign

Online Behavior	Young Adults (%)	Other Adults (%)
Look for info about politics and campaign	63	56
Look for info from government website *	49	59
Read someone else's blog *	34	25
Create content for Internet (blog, post, etc.) *	25	16
Get or send invite to meeting with online service *	22	12

*$p < .01$
Source: 2004 Pew Internet & American Life Project Post-Election Survey, subset of Internet users.
Notes: Q: "Please tell me if you ever do any of the following when you go online. Do you ever? Did you happen to do this yesterday, or not?" Percentages are for "yes" to ever doing. Significance levels take into account all ordinal response categories.

The absence of a significant difference or perhaps even a small advantage for young adults over other adults in seeking political information on the Internet is especially important in light of the imbalance in traditional media. Beyond general political information seeking, there are significant differences in online behavior. It is not just that young adults are more likely to be online. They behave differently than other adults when they are online. Young adults are significantly more likely than other adults to send or receive an invitation to a meeting through online services like meetup. They are also significantly more likely to read someone else's blog or create content for the Web. These dimensions suggest that young adults are more likely to encounter popular culture. Their online lives have a greater potential for voices outside of the political establishment, including their own as content producers. In contrast, other adults are significantly more likely than young adults to look for

information from a federal, state, or local government website.

The results are similar when looking only at online behavior related to the 2004 campaign. The differences in Table 4 show a more popular orientation for young adults. While 9 percent of young adult Internet users participated in chats about the election, 3 percent of other adult Internet users engaged in this interactive activity. The 22 percent of young adults who voted in an online poll was significantly more than the 14 percent of other adults who did. Another important area in which online political behavior differed is in finding information on how to vote. Young adults were more than twice as likely as other adults to use the Internet to learn about the logistics of voting. On the other hand, activities with no statistically significant difference between age groups were more closely related to establishment political culture, such as finding a candidate's voting record or identifying the candidate preferences of interest groups.

Table 4: Political Use of Internet During 2004 Campaign

Online Campaign Behavior	Young Adults (%)	Other Adults (%)
Get or send e-mail with election jokes	39	36
Seek more info on candidate issue positions *	39	29
Check accuracy of candidate claims	30	28
Watch online video clips about campaign *	28	19
Get info about when and where to vote *	24	11
Register opinion in online poll on election *	22	14
Get info about candidate voting record	20	18
Find group ratings or candidate endorsements	19	18
Be in online discussion (chat) about election *	9	3
Contribute money online to candidate	3	5

*p < .01
Source: 2004 Pew Internet & American Life Project Post-Election Survey, subset of Internet users.
Notes: Q: "When you went online to get information about the elections, did you ever do any of the following?" Percentages are for "yes." This question was a follow-up question for people who had earlier indicated that they had gone online for information about the election. If they answered "no" to the overall questions, "no" is imputed for specific categories of online campaign activity.

The absence of a statistically significant difference on e-mailing jokes is also important. The results definitely do not suggest that other adults lack a sense of humor about politics. Indeed, it is clear that the use of online humor had appeal across the electorate. It crossed age and, perhaps more importantly, partisanship. Humor may be a potential bridge in a polarized election. A powerful example of this can be seen in the overwhelming popularity of the JibJab.com video, "This Land Is Your Land," in which animated versions of George Bush and John Kerry hurled insults at each other. During summer 2004, visits to the parody website far exceeded visits to the official presidential candidate websites.[17]

The combination of Internet activities during the campaign had an impact on election day. The survey asked all Internet users whether online information was important to how they voted. As shown in Table 5, young adults were significantly more likely to say that they were influenced by online information. While over half of young adults reported that the Internet was at least somewhat important to their vote, only 35 percent of other adults felt that it was. Within the population of Internet users, young adults relied more on the Internet than other adults.

Table 5: Importance of Online Information to How Internet Users Voted in 2004

Importance	Young Adults (%)	Other Adults (%)	Total (%)
Very important	19.5	11.0	12.9
Somewhat important	31.4	23.6	25.3
Not very important	19.2	18.8	18.9
Not at all important	30.0	46.6	42.9
Total	100%	100%	100%
(n)	(287)	(1,016)	(1,303)

$p < .01$; tau-c = -.142; gamma = -.284
Source: 2004 Pew Internet & American Life Project Post-Election Survey, subset of Internet users.
Notes: Q: "How important, if at all, has the Internet been in terms of providing you with information to help you decide how to vote in the November election? Very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?"

Not only do young adults believe that the Internet helped their decision making on election day, but also that the Internet improved the overall quality of the campaign. Pew asked Internet users for a summary assessment of online information: "Thinking about all of the information available online about this year's campaign, do you think the Internet has raised the overall quality of public debate about the candidates and issues, has lowered the overall quality of public debate, or that the Internet hasn't made much difference?" Fifty-seven percent of young adults believed that the Internet raised the quality of public debate; while only 4 percent believed that it had lowered the quality of the debate. Older adults were less enthusiastic, but still overwhelmingly believed that the Internet raised, not lowered, the quality of public discourse.

Conclusion

The results show that popular culture and the new media are more a part of the mediated presidential campaign experience of young adults than of other adults. Young adults are significantly less likely than older adults to receive news from conventional cable, local, and national television newscasts. The format of the traditional newspaper has struggled to engage young adults. While conventional political programming in the traditional media has had less appeal to young adults, some entertainment programming with political messages in the traditional media has found an audience with young adults. Late-night comedy often uses the news of the day as a springboard to humor. The television program that has served as a news source for the most disproportionately young audience is *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart. Entertainment programs clearly have potential relevance for the political lives of young adults. Yet, entertainers may have mixed feelings about their role as a news source. On the December 7, 2006, episode of NBC's *Tonight Show*, Jay Leno teased some young adults in his studio audience who were visibly surprised by the news that he had used as the background for a monologue joke. "If you get your news from me, you're in a lot of trouble," Leno told them.

In addition to documenting how popular culture in the traditional media conveys political information to young adults, this chapter also illuminates the important role of the Internet in the political lives of young adults. Of course, Internet content may or may not be a part of popular culture. The data show that young adults are attracted to both entertainment and non-entertainment political content on the Internet. The Internet has become a vital source of information for many young adults who have been turning away from traditional media sources. It should not, however, be blamed for the decline of other media. Indeed, the declining appeal of traditional sources was a trend in place well before the Internet. What the Internet has done is to counterbalance declining consumption of traditional sources. The Internet clearly has characteristics that appeal to young adults and may help them relate to politics.

What characteristics of the Internet make its use for political purposes appeal to young adults? The Internet has many characteristics, not all of which may be relevant to the question. For some reason, scholars have found it helpful to think of relevant Internet characteristics as alliterative triads, such as the three characteristics that have been said to explain why the Internet may foster addictive behavior—accessibility, affordability, and anonymity.[18] In the case of Internet political use and

young adults, the characteristics of immediacy, interactivity, and intractability seem to stand out.

Growing up in a 24/7 culture of cellular telephones and the Internet, young adults may be drawn to the immediacy of the Internet. When asked why they go online for political information, young adults gave convenience as the major reason. Young adults are more likely to cite convenience than other adults. The Internet is available for immediate access.

The interactive nature of the Internet clearly appeals to young people. The establishment political culture and traditional media are greatly invested in the one-way communication of political messages. The Internet allows for more interactive communication. It provides new ways of collaboration. Even within the online population, young adults are more likely to take advantage of the interactive features for politics.

The Internet is also intractable. It is not easily controlled or managed. Young adults have less investment in the established political order and long-standing ideologies. They may look for a way to rebel in the context of mediated politics. Young adults may be more enthusiastic about an online environment in which the regular order of politics is not as pronounced. They may be attracted to the more bottom-up communication structure of the Internet.

While the appeal of some Internet activities may rest on only one characteristic, other activities may reflect all three of them. The appeal of video sharing, for example, seems to capture all three characteristics. Although most of their content is not political, video-sharing websites have started to influence political campaigns. Candidates, for example, may assign workers to videotape opponents with the hope that an opponent's mistake could be captured and posted to cyberspace. It is not surprising that it was a young adult, twenty-year-old S. R. Sidarth, who videotaped George Allen insulting him as "macaca" while working for Allen's opponent Jim Webb during the 2006 U.S. Senate campaign in Virginia. In this case, a young adult was not merely the passive recipient of one-way communication; instead, he immediately responded with his videotape of the event, which was beyond the control of the videotaped person. The way in which this video quickly took on a life of its own shows how video sharing exhibits the characteristics of being immediate, interactive, and intractable.

The combination of these characteristics suggests the resonance of the mosh analogy in this book. Young adults and other adults behave differently online. In the 2004 presidential campaign, the Internet use of

young adults was more at the forefront in exploiting the special characteristics of the Internet. It was more uninhibited and interactive. Even among Internet users, young adults were more likely than other adults to participate in chats, vote in online polls, create their own content, read blogs, and send or receive meeting invitations through online services. The only specific online political activity that young adults were significantly less likely than other adults to engage in was visiting a government website, which is a more regulated outlet from an establishment source. The Internet and popular culture clearly helped young adults to connect with campaign 2004. Even if they were not on the stage, young adults used the Internet as a vehicle for participation beyond being part of the audience. This mediated experience stands as one of the possible reasons why voter turnout by young adults increased from 42 percent in 2000 to 51 percent in 2004.[19]

Of course, the question is whether increased political activity will continue. There are many challenges to that outcome. Young adults start from a lower base of overall political awareness. The Pew survey asked respondents how often they "follow what's going on in government and public affairs." While only 39 percent of young adults reported following politics "most of the time," 63 percent of other adults said they do. Even without a lower base of political awareness, enthusiasm can fade. Others may not encourage it. Joe Trippi has described how other adults may find it difficult to relate to the uninhibited high energy of young adults:

> In Vestavia Hill, Alabama, an earnest nineteen-year-old named Gray Brooks listened to Howard Dean once on the radio, got on the Internet to research him, decided Dean was "a good man," and the next thing you knew, was in his car and on the freeway, driving to Vermont to volunteer for the campaign, to work seventeen-hour days and sleep on the floor. A handsome, clean cut, lifelong Boy Scout and Baptist, Gray couldn't help but be courtly, calling everyone ma'am or sir. . . . I would think of Gray often later in the campaign, when Republican operatives, our Democratic opponents, and some in the press caricatured young Dean supporters as pierced, vegan weirdos. Here for the first time in decades were young voters inspired to get involved—and believing that they could make a difference—and they were being painted as some kind of freak show. For wanting to be involved![20]

The age of the median voter and median news consumer may cause politicians and traditional media to fail to exert the effort required to reach young adults. Indeed, CNN may trivialize young adult interest in technology as a choice between Macs or PCs.

Ultimately, however, technology has important political implications for young adults. When online, young adults behave differently than other adults. To some extent, their use of technology reflects a desire for a different kind of politics. It has certainly brought many young people closer to politics. Overwhelmingly, young adults believe that the Internet elevates the quality of public debate during a presidential campaign. No one doubts that further elevation is possible. The prospects for future elevation will depend increasingly on Internet users, regardless of whether they access the Internet on Macs or PCs.

Notes

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18. Al Cooper, "Online Sexual Activity in the New Millennium," *Contemporary Sexuality* 38, no. 3 (March 2004): i-vii.

19. Patterson, "Young Voters."

20. Trippi, *Revolution*, 87.

Chapter 2

Links, Chicks, Blogs, Banners: Using the Internet for Youth Voter Mobilization

Laura Tropp

P. Diddy, Russell Simmons, and Norman Lear all have something significant in common: they are part of a celebrity trend to create organizations to mobilize young voters. Interestingly, these campaigns rely on mass media for their mobilization efforts. This is not a completely new phenomenon. Celebrities have been involved in media voter drives in radio and television since at least the 1950s. Yet now the celebrities are not simply a small part of the voter drive but a key feature of the campaign. In 2004, two organizations, Rock the Vote and Declare Yourself, two organizations that rely on celebrity appeals, used the Internet specifically to mobilize young people for the election. Their Internet campaigns used the celebrities and visual aides to stimulate visitor response, capitalized on the ability to supply a degree of personalization for the visitor, encouraged a type of interactivity within their websites, and ultimately, commoditized their messages for their young audiences. Yet these campaigns were limited by how the Internet was conceived and dominantly used during the 2004 campaign period. The characteristics of the Internet shaped and drove these campaigns as much as their creators did. This chapter explores the media environment that drove Internet usage during the 2004 campaign and how this landscape is changing right now, in the midst of the 2008 campaign. By situating the 2004 campaign in comparison to earlier broadcast media efforts to appeal to voters, this chapter will examine the characteristics of the Internet and how they worked both with and against the goals of the organizations.[1] Along the