Chapter 29

Alternative Online Videos in the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election:
Multiple Mix of Media Attributes Approach to Grassroots Mobilization

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines a new form of popular political mobilization–online videos. Revising a "mix of attributes approach" to media effects (Eveland, 2003), grassroots participation is included as the Internet's new attribute, which renders a more sociopolitical impact of the medium. Furthermore, to examine its sociopolitical impact, the author suggests a "multiple" mix of attributes approach, which considers extrinsic attributes of audiences' media consumption contexts as well as intrinsic attributes of media configurations. In this regard, the author examines the grassroots participation attribute by interrogating how ordinary people participate in an online public sphere (www.dipdive.com) where they shared and reinforced their support for Obama by producing alternative videos. When it comes to the importance of individuals' critical appropriation of the Internet for political participation, through alternative video production, the potential of transformative human agency by shaping personal narratives toward a better future is realized. In online videos for the Obama campaign, identity politics and the democratization of campaign leadership as extrinsic attributes are enhancing the Internet's network politics for political mobilization. Nevertheless, there is ambivalence of online video's practical impact on society depending on each user's specific motivations and objectives of using it as seen in many cases of destructive, anti-social deployment of the Internet throughout the globe. Therefore, as an educational initiative to implement the multiple mixes of media attributes approach, this chapter concludes by proclaiming that it is a crucial issue for critical pedagogy practitioners to envisage Feenberg's (2002) "radical philosophy of technology" which demands individuals' active intervention in shaping technologies' social applications, as well as its redesign for a more egalitarian purposes. With critical media pedagogy as a premise of the strategic deployment of new media technologies for social change, common people can become leaders of democratic, grassroots political mobilization as well as active, popular pedagogues by producing alternative online videos.

INTRODUCTION

With cutting-edge online video-sharing technology, everyday authors, camera savvy users, production proficient videographers and lay individuals have much broader space now to engage in sociopolitical matters. By producing more effective audio-visual messages on the Internet, they can participate in the increasingly widening public sphere in which they realize the essence of grassroots democracy and discuss their concerns, interests, and agendas over the nation's political governance. Alternative forms of political mobilization on the Internet are also ever more available for ordinary citizens rather than the conventional political campaign advertisements grasping the public attention nowadays. Especially, with the success of the popular video-sharing website, www.youtube.com, grassroots online videos have become an important player for political campaign during the 2008 U.S. presidential election. During the 2008 campaign, many on-line users vigorously produced alternative campaign videos and distributed them via social network websites such as www.facebook.com and www.myspace.com. Considering Benjamin's (1934) belief that a "reader is at all times ready to become a writer" (p. 225), new digital media technologies can possibly contribute to a revival of the grassroots, egalitarian public sphere, which can lead to a more direct democracy. Yet, we must conceptualize Internet technologies in terms of their "embeddedness in the political economy, social relations, and political environment within which they are produced, circulated, and received" for a more correct understanding and limitations (Kellner, 1995, p. 2). While emergent technologies provide the marginalized with more liberating, counter-hegemonic politics of participation as a means of self-empowerment, they are also imbued with conformist limitations, that is, their embeddedness in the dominant social and political system that generate social reproduction. In this chapter, I argue that media technologies like YouTube, combined with a transformative pedagogy, can help realize the Internet's potential for democratization.

There have been many efforts to understand how the potential of the Internet can contribute to grassroots based egalitarian democratic governance in society. More specifically, advanced modes of online political communication have been vigorously investigated since the groundbreaking Internet-based strategy of Governor Howard Dean in the 2004 presidential election (Gillmor, 2006; Trippi, 2004). In this regard, Kellner (2005) stresses that the "result of the 2004 election has been the decentering and marginalizing of the importance of the corporate media punditocracy by Internet and blogosphere sources" (p. 306). However, there was not much effort to incorporate voluntary grassroots participations in elections prior to 2008; rather, candidates set up their own campaign Web sites mainly to raise campaign funds, publicize their policies and consolidate more voters online (Sundar, et al., 2003; Williams, et al., 2005; Xenos & Foot, 2005). With the breathtaking speed of the Internet's technological advances and its ubiquity throughout society, the campaign environment for the 2008 presidential election can be characterized as the first major Internet-oriented election.[1] More accurately, the election was a manifestation that substantiates transformative power of the Internet with the critical mass of people trespassing dividing lines between online and offline, pop culture and civic value, and new media and old for a sociopolitical cause.[2] However, there is still a dearth of research on how daily Internet users and a largely wired population make use of a relatively new video-sharing Internet technology in order to recruit, organize and mobilize fellow citizens for major election campaigns.

Among other things in the 2008 election, the sensational popularity of YouTube and the rise of the Democratic Party's nominee, Senator Barack Obama, are major indicators of the complex interconnections between Internet technologies, alternative online videos, grassroots political

mobilization, and participatory democracy.[3] To be sure, a main dynamic for Obama to be elected as the Democratic Party's candidate, and the 44th president of the United States, came from a variety of online multi-media materials produced by his technology-savvy supporters. These supporters were largely young, college-educated, and multi-cultural that worked toward boosting the number, and amount, of small donations online as well as offline.

However, we must remember that technologies do not automatically guarantee any sociopolitical utopia; due to ambivalence of technologies' social contribution, such a possibility can only be actualized when the critical mass of individuals endeavors to utilize them for a more just, egalitarian society. Meaning, if provided with proper pedagogic interventions many people become able to employ the unprecedented resources of new media technologies by means of exercising the transformative power of numbers. Consequently, it is both timely and significant to examine how traditionally underrepresented Web-users[4], who did not usually enjoy access to conventional media production and public opinion formation, utilize cutting-edge video-sharing Internet technology to publicize alternative videos as an innovative platform for grassroots political mobilization.

"Multiple" Mix of Attributes Approach to Media Effects

While criticizing a limited view of traditional media effects scholarship that tends to exclusively focus on media content, Eveland (2003) proposes a "mix of attributes approach" that highlights "how media content interacts with other attributes of media, or how the nature of a medium encourages various types of uses" (p. 408). Eveland (2003) indicates a necessity of reassessing media effects by redefining the notion of media that consist of a particular set of attributes which produce certain effects. In other words, "considering specific media as concrete operationalizations" of various

attributes, Eveland (2003) believes that a "mix of attributes approach" to media effects can better evaluate each medium's different accommodation of various attributes that produce different effects (p. 397). Accordingly, in order to evaluate media effects correctly, researchers have to identify certain attributes of the media, as well as content, because media effects are a multi-variated mixture of different attributes and content. In essence, the theoretical and practical benefits of applying a "mix of attributes approach" enables researchers to reconsider media effects to be "correlated in terms of their co-occurrence [with different attributes] in various communication technologies" (p. 398). In this respect, Eveland (2003) maintains that researchers should consider various attributes of the Internet, such as interactivity, organization/structure, control, channel, textuality and content.[5]

Although it may be appropriate to examine media effects by identifying a mix of media attributes quantitatively (Eveland, 2003), it may also be dangerous to ignore *qualitative* differences among various media in terms of audiences' context of media consumption and the political economy of the media. Also, he points out that it is important to consider the actual interaction between media's content and the structural arrangements to better assess media effects in reality. In this respect, I believe that Eveland (2003) takes a serious risk of an epistemological confusion, or technological determinism, which conflates a mix of the media's intrinsic attributes with real-world effects that have symbiotic relationships with other external factors, such as cultural, economic, and political contexts of audiences' media consumption. In other words, Eveland's (2003) proposition to measure media effects based on quantitative media attributes sacrifices other important contextual factors regarding an audience's reception of media.

Based on Eveland's mix of media attributes approach, and to better understand the sociopolitical impact of grassroots mobilization in political campaigns via alternative online videos, I propose a "multiple" mix of media attributes

model to refine Eveland's conceptualization on media effects. In the model, there are two levels that revise Eveland's earlier attempt. First, I categorize attributes which engender media effects as intrinsic–or extrinsic, which introduces larger contextual elements for individual media experiences. By including participation attributes as new element of the Internet that encourages a broader sociopolitical effect, the multiple mix model endeavors to examine the roles of a medium's infrastructure and application that accommodate active interaction and collaboration between users. Thereby, it can help demonstrate how the Internet's broader space for individuals to organize and mobilize themselves contributes to realizing a more participatory democracy. Considering that different combinations of media attributes produce different effects, identifying and assessing a new attribute will entail an advanced perspective, which explains a more dynamic, "predictive strength" of media effects research by expanding a "repertoire of independent variables" (p. 405). In other words, by indicating the participation attribute of the Internet, it can be argued that researchers will be better able to examine an Internet probability to accommodate grassroots participation in sociopolitical matters. Furthermore, since there should be democratic reconstructions of technologies for us in order to maximize social benefits (Feenberg, 2002), I believe that examining Internet participation attribute can contribute to the progressive re-evaluation of new media technologies by "identifying the combination of factors that would increase the most desirable effects and decrease the most abhorrent media effects" (Eveland, 2003, p. 408). With this perspective, incorporating a participation attribute into Eveland's (2003) "mix of attributes approach" will facilitate a more critical re-appropriation of new media for a sociopolitical goal.

On the other hand, emphasizing the importance of individuals' concrete media experiences, a multiple mix of media attributes model recommends employing a research method designed to investigate intrinsic attributes of media configurations in tandem with holistic interactions and other extrinsic attributes such as culture, society, and politics at large. By extrinsic attributes of media effects, I mean forthcoming results of individuals' attitude toward certain media technologies within larger cultural and political contexts. In other words, it mainly refers to socialized and realized characteristics of certain communication media from users' specific commitment. In considering extrinsic attributes of media effects, researchers will be more able to examine a concrete distinctive sociopolitical impact of new Internet technologies by envisioning the importance of dialectic interactions between the media's technological features and the audiences' subjective appropriation of them. The main theoretical and practical contribution of including the extrinsic attributes of media effects is that it sheds crucial light on the important role of individuals' media consumption and production experiences within larger sociopolitical situations. For example, in the case of the Obama campaign, larger hostile sentiments against the Republican Party played an important role motivating everyday citizens to rely on new Internet technologies as a means of grassroots political mobilization. In this respect, online videos using a multiple mix of attributes approach provided an updated perspective on the relationship between grassroots participation of ordinary people and the communicative effects of online videos in the 2008 presidential campaign.

The Internet and Individuals' Sociopolitical Participation

As Bimber (1999; 2001; 2003) indicates, the Internet as a mode of political communication does not solely entail a "revolution" of political participation. Thus, researchers have to closely investigate other factors that may lead to the political engagements of a number of individuals. In other words, highly developed communication technologies do not automatically guarantee a par-

ticipatory democratic society. Rather, the Internet is one of conditions that make possible politically motivated people to practice democratic values in society. Just as direct democracy in ancient Greece was possible through direct participation of groups of individuals who were affordable and willing to travel and spend their daytime in the public arenas, the Internet can be a favorable condition that helps reconsider the real value of democratic governance in industrial capitalist societies. In order for democracy to work in society, a more quintessential philosophy must precede, that is an individual's critical sociopolitical consciousness. Without voluntary critical participation of socially conscious people, efficient forms of communication will not revive the essence of democracy as a crucial process of self-governance through collective cooperation. No matter how advanced, secure, or cost-efficient information technologies may be as a kind of intrinsic media attributes,[6] without the practical engagement of civic-minded citizens, and good amounts of socio-politically conscious masses, there ends up being an echo without resonance.[7] Consequently, it is not a "limited effects" media model for grassroots political participation, but the individuals' lack of *interests* and *motivation* that better explains the gap between technological developments of the medium and political engagement.

Bimber (2001) asserts the relationship between information and political engagement is not straight-forward. The traditional instrumental-quantitative approach to the effect of information based on "mechanism links between information availability and levels of engagement" does not successfully explain how Internet's rich and cost-effective provision of political information secures broader political participations (p. 64). Stressing the necessity to examine "how information technology affects attention, salience, affect, schema, and other cognitive phenomena" (p. 64), he believes there are other qualitative factors that induce individuals' political engagement. The instrumental-quantitative model in the political

role of information seems equivalent to Eveland's (2003) attempt to evaluate quantitative make-ups of intrinsic media attributes as primers of media effects. Meaning, these elements do not successfully consider the crucial role of human agency in the purposive and practical applications within the real world. Thus, a simple equation between a quantity of information and individuals' political engagement does not hold true. Considering that traditional indicators of political participation such as education, gender, socioeconomic status, age, trust, and political interest exercise direct and strong impacts on individuals' engagement (Bimber, 1999; 2001), my "multiple" mix of attributes approach explains how individuals in different sociopolitical contexts exercise political involvement to accomplish their objectives, according to symbiotic interactions with the media they apply. Having the deliberative importance of political communication in mind, it is more important to remember that the true value of the Internet as a means of political communication is only constructed by how individuals put it into actual deployment with specific civic-minded intentions, with an individual's critical consciousness playing the most important role in shaping the media as a transformative tool. However, it is a difficult pedagogical question to invite people to use online videos for sociopolitical matters, which tend to be used as a medium of entertainment mostly.

Taking into account that all sociopolitical mobilizations are based on the successful utilization of crucial information that marshals the masses, the content/ information of the Internet should equally be stressed with Internet's technological attributes (Bimber, 2000). Content/ information can be classified as both an intrinsic and an extrinsic attribute depending on how one recognizes its function. When one considers media content as a constructive product of social actors, it is an extrinsic attribute that exerts open-ended sociopolitical impacts. However, if media content is classified by how it is created and with what

purpose, then it is more of an intrinsic commodity that engenders pre-determined certain effects. The cost-lowering effects of the Internet to circulate content/ information is certainly a groundbreaking contribution. However, the technological innovation of the Internet can only be fulfilled by people's conscious utilization of it with acute purposes in order to realize the wishful thinking of equating the quantity of information and direct participation. To be sure, there is a huge variety of the content/ information available on the Internet from pornography to political manifesto. In this regard, alternative online political videos for the Obama campaign as a strategic innovation of grassroots participation can be considered an extrinsic factor that is imbued with individual contributions.

Compared to text-based and fact-driven information in earlier stages of the Internet, online videos are capable of carrying more contextual, affective, and other cognitive elements. Regarding Internet's communicative structure and multiple sources of information as objective conditions for grassroots political participation, the deployment of online videos in the 2008 election was a subjective factor of a tactical innovation for political mobilization from bottom up. Grasping critical sympathetic attentions and affections from fellow citizens, by sharing vivid testimonies for the necessity of political change based on their everyday experiences, online videos successfully motivate ordinary people to take part in a community of alternative media producers and campaign organizers. Here, rather than technological determinism, which devastates the transformative power of human agency, it is more desirable to understand people's concrete, dialectical appropriation of the Internet for their sociopolitical causes as an extrinsic attribute. While it is certainly true that there is far more access to media production tools than ever before, there is a disparity between the potential and actual utilization of the Internet's productive potential of alternative materials. Also, though some people can create an alterna-

tive online video, it is not always the case that they use it with clear sociopolitical intentions.[8] As an indicator of popular YouTube video trends, for example, *Time* magazine's annual report of "Top 10 Viral Videos" reveals that most of the videos in the list are about comedy, parody, spoof, music video, celebrity, or sensational materials, which mostly recirculate the dominant corporate media spectacles just as Juhasz (2009) indicates. From this point of view, there should be much more emphasis on the pedagogical as well as the social implications of alternative content created by socially motivated Internet users as a means of their political participation. Thus, given the importance of the actual nature of alternative grassroot-initiated content, and its correct sociopolitical purposes, it is reasonable to stress pedagogical interventions to motivate, encourage and mobilize common Netizens to do so in their everyday lives.

The Obama Phenomenon and Grassroots Campaign Mobilization

Along with the successful debut of political online videos, the most conspicuous characteristic of the 2008 U.S. Presidential campaign is the rise of a seemingly novice politician, Senator Barack Obama. Among many journalistic accounts for the Obama campaign's success, Collins (2008) maintains that Obama is more than a candidate for the presidential election; rather, he is a major phenomenon in the United States. His first victory in the Democratic Party's primaries and caucuses in Iowa on January 3, 2008 marked an initiation of upward political spirals in popularity that were powered by grassroots participation and mobilization. Under dire cultural/ social/ economic conditions within the Bush Administration, his campaign provided lay people with opportunities to think over problems in their daily lives and get involved in the campaign as a problem-solving process. Others account for the political implication of Obama's Iowa victory as something

qualitatively different from the traditional party conventions because of the type of voter, with "57 percent said they were participating for the first time" (Balz et al., 2008, n.p.). It was also reported that for more than 40 percent of the turnout, Obama was the main reason for their participation.[9] The campaign may serve as an exemplar for showing how the transformative power of common people are realized by collective self-organization and mobilization in using technology for democratic governance.

The network nature of Internet communication has been perfectly matched with voluntary and spontaneous participation of grassroots communities of ordinary people (Castells, 2000). By the communicative rationality (Habermas, 1984) with the network politics of the Internet, the conventional notion of formal political participation characterized as one-vote-per-person can be reconditioned to be "direct democracy with grassroots participation" through the unfettered "ideal speech" condition of the Internet public sphere. If this utopian notion of democracy could be realized with individuals' voluntary participations via the Internet, Dewey's (1954) egalitarian notion of democracy as a form of human relationships not as a formal political representation will become more viable. In this respect, individuals' transformative use of the Internet as an extrinsic condition, together with its communicative competence as an intrinsic media factor, proposes a probability to revitalize the democratic self-governance by people (Habermas, 1987).

The changed media landscape for political information production, distribution and consumption encourages individuals to take on a broader space of political participation. During the campaign season, together with large opportunities to produce political information through blog postings and alternative online videos, individuals' major source of campaign-related news marked a shift from conventional mass media such as radio and newspaper to newer media like cable TV or the Internet. For instance, even though television

remains as the most dominant news source, "a solid majority of voters now say that they get *any* news about the presidential election from the Internet, with voters between the ages 18 to 29, proclaiming 76%" (Kohut, Doherty, Dimock & Keeter, 2008, pp. 24-5). While the Obama campaign mass-distributed its core message of "change" via TV, on the other hand, it revolutionized social-networking media applications that spread grassroots media content for younger voters. In this regard, Young (2008) summarizes the Obama campaign's effective deployment of Internet media as a "strategy to build his [campaign] brand, and later a more targeted broadcast media schedule that was supported by on-the-ground events and one to one media programs" allowing him to take the Oval Office in the end (n.p.). Nonetheless, more than anything else, it was lay people's civic minded and politically conscious deployment of the Internet technologies that helped implement the transformative politics of technology as a tool of social change.

Thus, the Obama campaign carved out a new rule for the Internet's role in political mobilization and organization. One journalistic account compares Obama campaign's deployment of the Internet to other historic presidential cases: What newspaper was to Jefferson, radio to F.D.R. and television to J.F.K., the Internet was to Obama (Carr, 2008). The most interesting aspect of the Obama campaign's strategic deployment of media for political advertising is that it realized a good mix of new individual media with traditional mass media alike. This combination helped make possible record-breaking online fundraising through grassroots participation. According to TNS Media Intelligence, "Obama campaign spent a record-shattering $ 293 million on TV ads between January 1, 2007 and October 29, 2008 … [while] McCain spent $132 million during the same period" (Delany, 2008, n.p). However, this conventional method of campaigning that consumes large amounts of money was rather auxiliary to the micro level recruiting via

a blend of voters' voluntary participation, and new media technologies. Organized by online social-networking applications, e-mail, phone-calls and text-messaging, the campaign not only distributed mass information but also individual supporters efficiently informed, motivated and engaged additional supporters. As one of the most widespread individualized media, e-mail played an important role in persuading individuals to vote. Considering that younger voters usually are defter in utilizing new media applications, one particular advantage of using e-mail is that it reaches an audience with broader age segments though there was socioeconomic gaps in receiving campaign-related issues. For example, "nearly a quarter of voters (24%) say they received email from a campaign or other group urging them to vote in a particular way, up from 14% in the November 2004" (Kohut, Doherty, Dimock & Keeter, 2008, p. 22). Also important to note is the Obama campaign's skillful use of text-messaging contributed toward mobilizing hard-to-engage politically young voters with two-third of voters younger than age 30 voting for Obama,[10] which is at least more than 2.2 million young voter ballots compared to 19.4 million for Kerry in 2004.[11] Considering young adults are actively social-networked in the course of their daily lives, dissemination of grassroots YouTube videos played an important role to catch uncommitted young voters' attention and mobilize them to vote. Pew center supported this claim in its research report that shows 66% of 18-to-29-year-olds who use the Internet has at least one social-networking profile, contrasting to 18% of those age 30 and older (Smith & Rainie, 2008). In sum, it was a good match between the Obama campaign's active strategic deployment of Internet's social-networking capability and young voters' vigorous online engagements. Consequently, the campaign manifested the power of peer-to-peer, bottom-up model of mobilization powered by voluntary participation from millions of "block-walkers, phone-bankers, email-forwarders, Facebook-status-changers, and

parent-pesterers, as well as the tens of millions of dollars needed to fund their activities and the online system that organized them" (Delany, 2008, n.p.; Stirland, 2008).

The crux of this political media phenomenon though remains centered on forms of grassroots participation. Major activities for the Obama campaign such as fund-raising, recruiting and organizing campaign volunteers, and developing campaign strategies were largely created by Internet communities.[12] Though supporters' for Republican candidates also utilized Web applications, those for the Democrats surpassed in their aptness of matching Internet's non-hierarchical and synchronized communicative competence with voluntary grassroots participation (Smith, 2009). In other words, the bedrock of the campaign's innovative strategies is a perfect combination of Internet's effective communicative capacity and ordinary people's vigorous grassroots participations (Gibbs, 2008; Keeter, Horowitz & Tyson, 2008; Smith & Rainie, 2008). From this point of view, Maag (2008) considers the race for the Democratic presidential nomination to be a litmus test for a grassroots-centered campaign organization today:

Clinton enjoys endorsements from Ohio's popular governor and many Democratic officeholders. If she retains her (albeit shrinking) lead in the polls, it will mean that a traditional, top-down campaign rooted in the party establishment still can win in the clutch. But if Obama scores an upset, it could prove that a new breed of grassroots campaign—viral, internet-based, built from the ground up by neophytes like Antoinette McCall—is finally ready for prime time. (n.p., emphasis added)

Within the Internet-based political campaign, popular grassroots participants are the essence and motor of a social revolution. Focusing exclusively on major candidates and turning them into mere "horse-race" coverage, traditional journalism privatizes the public good of political campaign

events which is a critical process of democratic governance. Simply put, there used to be no place for ordinary people to be major participants in conventional political campaigns as an essential governing process of "democracy." Dissemination applications, such as online videos, afford innovative grassroots political participation thus presenting a paradigm-shift of political mobilization in the age of new media.

Historically, during the 2004 Democratic primary campaign trails, the party's nomination candidate Howard Dean had a weblog, "Blog for America," which was a harbinger that indicated the potential of the Internet in mobilizing a grassroots campaign (Gilmore, 2006; Kahn & Kellner, 2005a; Kerbel & Bloom, 2005; Trippi, 2004). The success of his blog offered some early evidence that the Internet had great potential for promoting grassroots involvement based on voluntary participation. It also provided an increasingly wired population to engage in both their virtual and physical worlds. In other words, individuals not only engaged in political deliberations of the virtual public sphere but also physically entered into the political campaign as a revitalization of grassroots political participation.

The initial stage of grassroots campaign mobilization by Howard Dean in 2004 has been further elaborated in its strategies to use alternative media and extended in its strategy to mobilize undecided voters more recently in the 2008 Presidential election. Grassroots visual materials–as opposed to professionally produced TV commercials–were one of the Obama campaign's fundamental differences from conventional political campaigning (Keeter, Horowitz & Tyson, 2008; Kohut, Keeter, Doherty, & Dimock, 2008; Smith & Rainie, 2008). Here, online videos stand as another method for a qualitative breakthrough of self-organization and communal mobilization. Given the fact that young people's everyday lives are strongly associated with online social networking sites, both the popularity and the spontaneity of grassroots visual material are enormous, especially in comparison

with conventional media coverage. It is also remarkable to acknowledge that the conventional broadcasting media outlets have increasingly been incorporating grassroots videos as a way to deliver live reports in their regular programs (e.g., CNN's http://www.ireport.com). Several studies have shown that more than half of social networking websites users are between 35 and 64 years old and comprise a more active voting population than other voting groups (Gueorguieva, 2008). In the 2008 election, Obama received more votes from people active in creating online visual materials and using social networking sites than McCain, constituting 66% votes from the 18-to-29 age group and 52% from the 30-to-44 (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2008).

Thus, the Obama campaign helped to reinvent and reinstate the meaning of democratic politics not as a patronizing model of top-down elitism but as a grassroots model of mutual self-organization and collective governance. More than posting and forwarding political writings and multimedia productions online, Obama supporters devoted themselves to organizing and mobilizing uncommitted fellow Americans to get out and "vote for change" as an extrinsic sociopolitical attribute. In other words, an optimal mix of Internet's intrinsic attribute of participation with extrinsic attributes of American polity came to fruition resulting in the Presidency of Obama. In this regard, Feenberg's (2002) ambiguity of technology was determined upon a dialectical interrelationship between the sociopolitical contexts of the 2008 election and people's practical applications of media technologies. Likewise, from the 2008 election we learned there will be many more social moments when ordinary people are "increasingly bringing Web 2.0 to political activism, developing new watchdog tools" against formal political systems (Caplan, 2008, n.p.). In sum, the most significant outcome of the 2008 election substantiates the heuristic competence of the multiple mix of attributes approach which contemplates Internet's communicative power and people's conscious utilization of it as a means of grassroots mobilization.

"Yes, We Can": A Model of Political Online Videos

Among the enormous volume of alternative media artifacts for the Obama campaign, will.i.am's *"Yes, We Can"* music video is most iconic. It manifests how a powerful online alternative video can be inspirational and persuasive. As a professional musician of the hip-hop group Black Eyed Peas, will.i.am made the *"Yes, We Can"* song and music video after he was inspired and moved by Senator Obama's concession speech at the New Hampshire primary on January 8, 2008. From the inception of this MTV-style music video, it breaks with conventional ways of producing music videos, as will.i.am assembled a variety of artists to participate. He describes:

[I]t was pure inspiration ... so I called my friends ... and they called their friends.... We made the song and video.... Usually this process would take months ... a bunch of record company people figuring out strategies and release dates ... but this time I took it in my own hands ... and we did it together in 48 hours ... and instead of putting it in the hands of profit we put it in the hands of inspiration....[13]

In addition to "*Yes We Can*," on Dipdive, grassroots-based videos by ordinary people articulated their own agendas and narratives to support Obama.[14] Under the name of "YWC Testimonials," 29 personal videos manifest rationale support for Obama. With a personal narrative form, ordinary supporters in the videos pronounce their own sociopolitical perspectives concerning the importance of their participation as well as the campaign. The main purpose for the videos was to consolidate broader popular support for Obama and to recruit undecided voters sharing the genuine understanding about the election as a means of alternative political mobilization. In this respect, I regard alternative online videos as a unique extrinsic attribute that contributed to motivating,

organizing and mobilizing grassroots participants as opposed to an intrinsic media component driven by greed and political agendas. Thus, it is meaningful to examine how online grassroots videos are deployed as an alternative form of political mobilization and its further sociopolitical implications as a part of broader interactions between media's intrinsic technological features and users' extrinsic application. Focusing on personal narratives in the videos, I conducted narrative/discourse analysis of 29 online videos. By doing it, I explore the sociopolitical resonances of grassroots online videos and analyze how ordinary people make counter-hegemonic use of such media as a tactic to mobilize others online.

Online Videos and Alternative Political Mobilization for the Obama Campaign

Kellner (2008) sketches big moments of the 2008 election campaigns in terms of corporate media spectacles. Throughout the campaign trails, there were so many spectacular moments that were (re) produced by corporate media outlets, such as Palin's lipstick on a fighter dog on the one hand, and created and distributed online by grassroots campaign supporters like "*Yes, We Can*" and "*We are the Ones*" music videos. Though Kellner (2008) is right to point out that there were so many spectacular aspects of the Obama phenomenon and they exercised huge influences on the result of the campaign, in this chapter, I maintain that one needs more detailed analyses on the sociopolitical characteristics of the Obama spectacle based on its producers and contents. In terms of a producer of the Obama spectacle, its success was mainly attributable to grassroots participation in online video production that contained people's vivid narratives of hope for a better future. Considering one major reason why George W. Bush was elected in the 2000 election was that he "successfully pretended" to be a guy in the neighborhood, it was ordinary people

who got impressed with Obama's personality, biological hybridity, community service experiences, and potential to serve the common sense of ordinary people who (re) produced, disseminated and ultimately mobilized other people to get him elected as the 44th president of the United States in 2008. Therefore, the 2008 election is a unique case that proved the power of grassroots online video spectacles, which differed decisively from the conventional media spectacles. This is the crux of the Obama spectacle that infiltrated Obama's image as a "new kind of politician representing change and bringing together people of different colors and ethnicities, ages, parts of the nation, and political views" (Kellner, 2008, p. 17).

However, not everyone welcomed alternative online videos that expressed political agendas with visual glitz. Especially, the conventional media outlets criticized that young supporters' activism through online videos is merely a form of consumerism that proliferates the cultish imagery of Obama through glitz media spectacles. For example, Klein (2008) warns that Obama's inspirational and even mesmerizing speech, and young supporters' blind support, could result in a political backlash that reduces its substance to mere rhetoric or spectacle. Because of the visual elements of alternative online videos, Phillips (2008) disparages participants in Obama's grassroots campaign, both online and offline, for replacing "reason, intelligence, stoicism, self-restraint and responsibility [with] credulousness, emotional incontinence, sentimentality, irresponsibility and self-obsession" (n.p.). Further, critics warn that Obama's young supporters seem to be transfixed and "dangerously close to becoming a cult of personality" (Krugman, 2008, n.p.). From this point of view, Klein (2008) argues that will.i.am's *"Yes, We Can"* music video is the center of gravity which draws the attention of young people into the creepy "mass messianism" of Obama.

As Kellner (2008) asserts, media spectacle has become the core ingredient of the presidential election. And it is absolutely true that an "in-

formed and intelligent public thus needs to learn to deconstruct the spectacle to see the real issue behind the election, what interests and ideologies the candidate represent, and what sort of spin, narrative, and media spectacles are being used to sell the candidate" (p. 18). This chapter, however, contends that common Netizens are no longer passive recipients of messages– that is, from the mainstream political elites in the form of MTV-style hip music video, *"Yes, We Can."* The current new media environment offers an entirely different situation that enables individuals to creatively engage in sociopolitical matters. Considering the interlocked relation of knowledge to power (Foucault, 1980) and the relative democratization of access to newer media, the monopoly of knowledge/power becomes fundamentally improbable if not impossible. Unless Althusser (1971)'s concept of the media as an Ideological State Apparatus that interpellates ordinary people as obedient subjects is losing its ground, the strategic deployment of such media technologies enable lay individuals to exercise active sociopolitical agency. In other words, in the age of YouTube, individuals are no longer just consumers of corporate media spectacles; rather, there are a plenty of opportunities to (re) create grassroots media spectacles as a means to fight against the conventional media representations. Considering a diversity of opinions as a fundamental of democracy, grassroots YouTube spectacles for the Obama campaign illustrated a high potential of alternative online video productions as a new form of Gramscian counter-hegemonic cultural politics that is based on individuals' everyday life experiences.

In this regard, with people's grassroots participation, the strategic importance of the conventional media outlets as a means to mobilize campaign supporters is severely challenged. As an alternative means of campaign mobilization, everyday citizens are now able to express their political aspirations effectively via online videos. In this respect, O'Neill (2008) argues that the grassroots campaign is revolutionary because "supporters are

not cultish slaves: they are people who have had enough of negative, fear-driven, small-minded politics, of both the Republican and Democratic variety, and now–as they keep telling us–they Want Change" (n.p.). Therefore, it is highly important to reveal how traditionally marginalized, unrepresented people deploy new media technologies to construct and publish their political agendas and mobilize other uncommitted people to participate in the grassroots campaign. With the benefits offered by new media technologies, they can articulate their critical social consciousness and become active leaders toward sociopolitical transformations, thus envisioning the true value of grassroots democracy. Thus, online videos are highly pedagogical as well as political that demand much attention from scholars that deem education to be political endeavors of difference. In terms of the pedagogic implication of videos, this chapter stresses the necessity of critical pedagogic interventions that encourage motivated people to utilize the sociopolitical resources rendered by the Internet technologies as a means of a democratic movement mobilizer in the age of new media.

Critical Media Pedagogy and Situationism

As a new form of critical pedagogy, critical media pedagogy provides individuals with a concrete strategy to exert transformative human agency through producing and distributing alternative media representations in a multi-media society (Kim, forthcoming). When the main purpose of critical pedagogy is to empower students to acquire critical, voluntary human agency that aims for social transformation (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007), critical media pedagogy considers alternative media productions as a form of political engagements to achieve a more egalitarian society. Just as the dominant class deploys mass media as an ideology machine (Sholle & Denski, 1994), it helps individuals to exercise the counter-hegemonic power of alterna-

tive media as a means of cultural politics of representation (McLaren, et al., 1995). Considering new media as a means of social transformation, critical media pedagogy prioritizes the ethical goals of progressive education by fostering the sociopolitical impact of grassroots media production, and thus promotes a more egalitarian, direct democracy.[15]

Lay individuals are able to connect their political beliefs by their personal narrative, identity and leadership on the videos with larger collective actions via Internet's communicative infrastructure. In other words, by obtaining the "strategic knowledge" of media's cultural politics that deals with the technical and political operations of the media, they can exercise active human agency to realize participatory democracy "by which less powerful ones struggle for audibility and for access to the technologies of social circulation and by which they fight to promote and defend the interests of their respective social formations" (Foucault, 1980, p. 4). Therefore, a critical analysis of grassroots videos calling for change in the 2008 U.S. Presidential election provides critical media pedagogy with concrete examples of transformative cultural politics that offers both a broad civic impact on sociopolitical arenas and an alternative to the sensationalist "horse-race" campaign coverage of the mainstream U.S. media.

Successful political mobilization requires people to critically scrutinize the objective social conditions and seize new opportunities; out of this dialectical analysis comes strategic knowledge of new media. So, not only should individuals analyze and take over the given situation, they have to carve out an alternative situation for social transformation, for example by producing alternative online videos as a strategic means to mobilize uncommitted supporters. From this point of view, Debord (1967) emphasizes the importance of critical consciousness for reconstructing an alternative social situation in relation to existing social problems mediated by the media. The media system has to be reconstructed because

both the media and their spectacle "embody totalitarian varieties of social communication and control" (p. 37) and "[impose] images of the good which is a resume of everything that exists officially … the guarantor of the systems' totalitarian cohesiveness" (p. 42). Consequently, critical media pedagogy emphasizes the construction of an alternative media situation that disturbs the ordinary and normal in order to jolt people out of their customary, conformative ways of thinking and acting. In this respect, I consider grassroots online videos, such as used during the Obama campaign, a kind of a Situationalist project that aims for a larger societal transformation through individuals' collective engagements in the counter-hegemonic politics of alternative media in their everyday lives.

Extrinsic Attributes: Grassroots Mobilization Perspectives

Regarding the Internet as a resource for social movements, individuals can manage viable alternative strategies for democratic mobilization. Referring to the politics of the media as a "refined instrumentalism" (p. 216), Scott and Street (2000) believe that new media provide the oppressed with unprecedented opportunities for a "new form of political discourse" of liberation (p. 218). In other words, as much as the dominant economic and political powers manipulate the mainstream media to strengthen their ideological hegemony, the marginalized can also deploy counter-hegemony by taking over a new set of sociopolitical opportunities offered by new media. As crucial components for any collective action, organizational as well as communicational conditions created by the Internet are replete with "the creation of networks of networks," a "high degree of co-ordination between movement networks," an "enormous reduction of costs," and a "relative lack of regulation" (p. 230). Likewise, Carroll and Hackett (2006) maintain that "media activism is indeed a diverse field of collective action, bringing us to the related issue of *strategic*

interaction" among many sociopolitical constituencies (p. 90, emphasis original). For example, grassroots Obama supporters vigorously utilized social-networking online technologies which they shared crucial campaign information by creating over 2 million personal profiles on MyBrackObama.com, and more than 10 millions on MySpace and Facebook. In this respect, Obama's grassroots campaign politicized the Internet, operating the strategic knowledge of the new media that offers more egalitarian applications of technology for social change. It is this kind of extrinsic attribute of media effects, i.e., the cost-lowering effect for collective action (Polat, 2005), which common Netizens enacting a radical philosophy of technology are drawn toward.

As the most adverse predicament of mobilization, the problem of "free riders" can largely be overcome in the contemporary media situations. Over the course of individuals' decision making processes in stages of any collective action (Olson, 1965), the problem of "free riders" can be considered as a matter of the communicative problem which demands the deliberative consensus from movement constituencies concerning the necessity as well as the possible reward of risky collective action. In order to make any movement successful, unfettered communication is quintessential as Habermas insists. In this vein, Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl (2005) hold that the high communicative competence and economic benefit of the Internet propose much better conditions for collective action mobilization: "locating and contacting appropriate participants, motivating them make private resources publicly available, persuading them to remain involved despite short-term setbacks and long-term risks, and coordinating their efforts appropriately" (p. 368). While over one million supporters received campaign news by subscribing to Obama's text-message alert system, supporters' communicative and organizational orchestration through the Internet substantiated the importance of simultaneous and free flow of information for campaign mobilization.

To put it differently, online videos for Obama's campaign furthered the possibility to realize McLuhan's proposal of re-tribalization in which the boundaries between the private and the pubic are malleable, as people become encouraged by watching like-minded and, equally important, like-appearing people in the videos. The communality of information and communication is a precursor of any collective action in a new media society so that individuals can share their political agendas and reach consensus. Thus, grassroots online videos have the potential to facilitate "transitions between private and public domains" which make collective action more feasible and successful because "boundary-crossing phenomena lie at the heart of new forms of technology-based action" in which the problem of "traditional free-riding" is ameliorated (Bimber et al., 2005, p. 377).

The transformative power of network politics has given grassroots political participation favorable conditions to operationalize a more egalitarian model of social relationships and voluntary governance. For Salter (2004), "the constitutive structure of the Internet" which is designed to allow "maximum inter-operability" makes possible for civic-minded people to implement the practical "application structure" of the Internet for decentered, interactive, and multi-layered communications (p. 188). During the campaign trails, lay citizens actively participated in organizing supporters by sending e-mails that encouraged others to visit neighborhoods and hold town-hall meetings. Considering the importance of social networks for recruiting possible supporters (Fernandez & McAdam, 1988; Gould, 1991; McAdam, 1986; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993), both Internet's configuration and application attributes fortify the campaign's ability to mobilize supporters with a firm commitment toward a better future. In this respect, seeing that around 200,000 offline gatherings were held by more than 35,000 volunteer groups based on MyBO.com (Vargas, 2008), the network-based grassroots Obama campaign exemplified the fundamental features of autonomous participation.

The network-based politics of the Internet supplies a huge platform for the politics of narrative as a source of political alternatives. Owing to the Internet's multiple, decentered, interactive nodes for grassroots participation, individuals are able to take advantage of new opportunities to publicize the "hidden transcript of subordinate groups" as a form of everyday resistance and alternatives (Scott, 1990, p. 138). Considering narrative as an agency's active involvement in the interpretation of social issues, it plays an important role in promoting the "polyvalence of meaning" as the foundation for alternative perspectives (Polletta, 1998, p. 142). For example, as a protest against Republican efforts to equate Obama with Muslim terrorists, people showed solidarity to him by changing their middle name to "Hussein," which is Obama's political liability on social networking websites such as Facebook.[16] It reveals that people engage language-games[17] in the polyvalence of meaning as an initial stage of their grassroots participation.

In this regard, the politics of narrative can further the diffusion of movements by giving individuals opportunities to construct a "base for mutual identification" and "shared interests" as the bedrock of political mobilization (Nepstad, 2001, p. 22). Considering Obama's popular public support came from his relentless pursue for an egalitarian society, his supporters vigorously reconstructed the narrative of hope in online videos; thereby, they addressed the rationale in their grassroots participation within the dire socioeconomic and political situation such as massive home foreclosures and financial meltdown under the Bush Administration. Moreover, when underrepresented people see a similar person declaring perspectives on politics, they feel entitled to participate in the public discussion because an "effective narrative fosters the audience's identification with the protagonist who embodies the values of the movement" (p. 24). In other words, people multiply their motivation and identity to support by sharing narratives

formulated in their everyday lives. Though the degree of agency's narrative is circumscribed by the prescriptive power of discursive hegemony, counter-hegemonic discourse is also possible due to the nature of hegemony and human agency's active engagement in both individual and collective levels through its multi-vocality.[18] Thus, by implementing empowering features of personal narratives as an alternative political perspective, alternative online videos serve to fulfill the potential of supporters' multi-vocality of narrative.

Multi-vocality further illuminates the powerful strategy of identity formation as a subjective condition of mobilization. For instance, a continually repeated slogan for the Obama campaign exclaims "You are the one we've been waiting for." In terms of Bernstein's (1997) category of identity politics, hope/dream for a better future is perpetuated as an "identity for empowerment" (p. 536); unity/prosperity is deployed as an "identity goal" for participation (p. 536); and "change we can believe in" as a catch-phrase serves as an "identity strategy" to recruit the broadest possible supporters (p. 537). Furthermore, identifying the political success of Obama, the grassroots video participants try to project their symbolic desires by conflating Obama's career and their own personal success. In other words, Obama is more than a merely "political" figure who runs for the Oval Office; rather, he is a reincarnation of "forgotten" American dreams for them to pursue. Throughout the videos, people look sanguine and motivated to make a difference by participating in the grassroots political campaign for a better future. For example, Melissa George, who recently obtained American citizenship, believes that "Barack Obama represents and embodies the reasons why I came to this country" in her video on Dipdive.[19] In this respect, moreover, the multi-vocality provides the general Internet audience with broad and sensitive repertoires of their situational identities for support. On the power of identity politics for grassroots political mobilization, Bennett (2003) elaborates:

The ease of creating vast webs of politics enables global activist networks to finesse difficult problems of collective identity that often impede the growth of movements. To a remarkable degree, these networks appear to have undergone scale shifts while containing to accommodate considerable diversity in individual level political identity (p. 164, emphasis added).

This chapter argues that, with the network politics of the Internet for rapid distributions of political agendas, the grassroots online videos furnish enormous resources for everyday citizens to create popular strategies for participatory political mobilization.

With the politics of networks and counter-hegemonic narratives, the grassroots online videos present alternative visions for leadership roles in political mobilization. They suggest a more practical outlook to implement the democratization of leadership roles in campaign mobilization. People in the videos exert visionary leadership roles for political mobilization and carry out the important task of recruiting supporters by proposing both an alternative political prospect and the necessary critical insight to diagnose present conditions. With the non-hierarchical feature of the network, virtually no one can assume a dominant power position in the discursive practices among campaign constituencies, thus realizing the democratization of leadership (Bennett, 2003; Pickard, 2006a; 2006b). In other words, the multi-vocality within online network politics suggests the democratization of leadership roles and the multiple points for recruiting movement supporters because there are complex constraints on dominant leadership roles on the issues of class, gender, race and sexuality. For example, a decreased gap of voter turn-outs between the white population and other racial minorities, as well as the increased turn-out rate of the latter groups, potentially reveals a competence of leadership democratization in campaign mobilization as African-Americans, Asian-Americans and Hispanic-Americans participated in not only

producing alternative online videos but also volunteering for the Obama campaign (Lopez & Taylor, 2009). Most of all, the highest increase in African-American females' voter turn-outs from 49.6% in 2004 to 58.2% in 2008 remarked a historic importance of the campaign characterized by grassroots participation and leadership democratization. Thus, considering the importance of the intermediate layer of leadership (Robnett, 1996), the multi-vocality exercised through the network politics of the Internet provides ordinary people to implement the potential of micro-/ meso-leadership and grassroots political mobilization via the Internet.

Online Videos and Politics of Alternative Media

In the grassroots campaign mobilization for Obama, common citizens practiced the theoretical and practical potential of the multiple mixes of attributes approach to the Internet, which provides opportunities to take on the dominant structure of power and knowledge. The uncontested monopoly of knowledge and the control of political news are now challenged by people's critical appropriation of the Internet for more egalitarian social purposes, further validating a participatory model of culture and democracy. With alternative online videos to articulate multiple voices based on the Internet's expanded flow of information, individuals are better able to construct alternative media situations that entail a new field for the conjuncture of media production, civic engagement, political mobilization, and participatory democracy. This new media situation has amplified individuals' capabilities in mutual pedagogy through proliferating new voices and visions, making possible the democratization of knowledge. Meaning, conventional relationships between the producers and the consumers of knowledge have been productively challenged. Thus, grassroots videos on Dipdive exemplify the practical viability of the democratization of knowledge, pedagogy, and political leadership

in the age of new media. Within the constraints of the current paper, the widespread use of the Internet to distribute unfounded diatribe and mis-information will not be addressed although the author acknowledges its existence.

Clearly, the main purpose of producing grassroots online videos is to consolidate broader popular support for and to recruit undecided voters for Obama. Along with the politics of identity formation by online videos discussed earlier, people consider Obama's multi-racial and cultural background as an appropriate qualification to unify the country. From minorities' point of view, Obama offers a figurative sense to redeem the long history of racial and ethnic discrimination because he shares their biographical details and experiences. In this regard, Obama's symbolic capital as the first African-American president suggests a new chapter of the U.S. history which seemingly overcomes the multi-layered and chronic shackles of bigotry. Thus, Nia Long, as an African-American woman, affirms the meaning of Obama in the election: "he looks like me and I thought to myself this isn't [only] about him being a black man [but also] it's being a right man."[20] In turn, people expect Obama to help rehabilitate society with justice and harmony by doing "the right things for all people from the poorest to the richest [because] Barack was there for Black, White, Latino, and Asians."[21] In this vein, Christine Kim believes that the campaign is "all about bringing us together as a nation and as a world and healing us as a people."[22] As Freire (1970) asserts the philanthropic, therapeutic power of the pedagogy of the oppressed that gives both oppressors and the oppressed chances to reconcile peacefully, Obama's own stigma based on his skin color brings people united under the common theme of hope and a better future.

In the videos, Obama's community service experience is presented as his qualification to be the U.S. President who can understand the public sentiments and problems of daily lives. Hill Harper, a classmate at Harvard Law School,

stresses Obama has committed himself to social justice and equality by turning down all the prestigious positions that naturally come to Harvard Law School graduates which could guarantee his personal prosperity.[23] With a long-term friend's genuine story-telling about Obama's personal history, the video carries an authentic discursive power from his lived experiences. The ontological meaning of Harper's appearance in the video provides supporters with a chance to remind of their "forgotten" ambitions in their school years. Also, as a lifetime community service organizer, Paul Schrade affirms the importance of Obama's local community service experiences to administer policies for broader social equity: "Obama's community organizing experiences really fit into the national office. If one doesn't understand problems of grassroots, being a national officer doesn't help very much."[24] By accentuating the importance of community service experiences, Schrade declares his political belief that the real politician has to take care of not elite lobbyists and multi-billionaires, but ordinary people in the marginalized corners of society. As a grandchild of the revolutionary Cesar Chavez, Christine Chavez praises Obama for inspiring ordinary people to voluntarily participate in the election campaign as something important for themselves as well as the nation. "We don't need a perfect political system, but we need prefect participation. And that's what I'm asking people to do today is to participate to help us change in the word of my grandfather, Cesar Chavez."[25] It reconstitutes the emancipatory value of narratives as construction of identity for the social progressive, forming a community for social change, and creation of voluntary human agency (Mitra, 2002).

As seen above, ordinary people in these grassroots videos are not mindless, brainwashed subjects characterized by the "replacement of reason, intelligence, stoicism, self-restraint and responsibility by credulousness, emotional incontinence, sentimentality, irresponsibility and self-obsession" (Phillips, 2008, n.p.). Even though there are some symptoms of "becoming a cult of [Obama's] personality" in several online sites such as "Obama Girl,"[26] such alternative video participants and producers are well aware of the social, economic, and political importance of the 2008 election and argue that Obama's qualities make him the presidential candidate most likely to work toward a more just society.

Through sharing beliefs, experiences, and political agendas in online videos, political supporters played crucial roles in organizing and mobilizing by providing others with models of political involvement. Not only do grassroots videos supply other uncommitted people with symbolic empowerment while watching, they facilitate others' physical and material participation in the form of small monetary donations or campaign organization volunteers. For example, the Obama campaign collected one hundred and fifty million dollars in one month of September, 2008. Compared to previous records of online fundraising performances which John McCain made six million dollars for his entire campaign in 2000, Howard Dean for twenty-seven million dollars and John Kerry for eighty-four million dollars in 2004, the Obama campaign's small, online donation for September surpassed the previous records all combined (Halperin, 2008). By the end of the election, over "3 million donors made a total of 6.5 million donations online adding up to more than $500 million" (Vargas, 2008, n.p.). Stated differently, videos provide ordinary people with opportunities to construct political participations on the campaign by utilizing new media technologies as a means of political mobilization and the democratization of leadership.

However, there are several limits to production style in the videos. With less than one minute videos, people mostly address their views and agendas in only a few sentences; this limitation led people to state just one main point without providing enough evidence or argument for their support. Considering that a mechanism of reaching consensus is based on uninhibited participation in mutual

conversation, the identical format of the videos hinders grassroots video-production participants from exhibiting freer methods of articulating their opinions and agendas. So, even though alternative online videos suggest a possibility to wage a grassroots-initiated counter-hegemonic politics of media representation against corporate media spectacles, it is still confined to limits of mediated communication with time-space distances to engage free, unlimited communicative action.

In this chapter, I examine how common citizens critically appropriated newer Internet media within larger cultural, economic, social and political contexts of the 2008 election, and how it brought about the unprecedented political sensation of grassroots political mobilization. I, however, do not claim their effective deployment of newer media explains exhaustively overall success; rather, as noted earlier, this chapter endeavors to elucidate the new contribution that alternative online video and common Netizens's critical deployment of it rendered the medium's probability to revitalize the essence of democratic governance in the given sociopolitical confinements. In other words, this chapter sheds critical light on the complex relationship between macro extrinsic sociopolitical conditions and micro intrinsic new media factors that made possible via grassroots political organization and mobilization during the campaign trails. Within political communication scholarship that delves into the Internet's roles in political campaign and mobilization, this chapter contributes to understanding the importance of dialectical relationships between individuals, attributes of media technologies and larger sociopolitical contexts. For that matter, it is critical media pedagogy's fundamental task to emphasize that individuals' critical sociopolitical consciousness is a precondition, and capability to employ a newer media technology is necessary for effective political deployment.

Transformative Power of Grassroots and Necessity of Critical Media Pedagogy

The success of the Obama campaign validates the importance of examining how traditionally marginalized people deploy alternative online videos to construct and publish their political agendas and can thus involve themselves in participatory, grassroots democracy by political agenda-setting, mobilization of supporters, and fighting for the transformation of social conditions in their everyday lives. In this regard, grassroots videos and campaign organizations represent highly important political as well as pedagogical implications for the future.

While the concept of pedagogy focuses on the ethical-political dimension of knowledge, critical media pedagogy provides individuals with alternative perspectives on a more strategic deployment of media technologies toward a more just and egalitarian society. Since new opportunities offered by digital media do not automatically secure successful democratic mobilization, this chapter argues for the importance of implementing critical media pedagogy. Considering commodification and individualization as the current trends of the Internet (Brown, 1997; Dawson & Foster, 1996; McChesney, 2002; Wilhelm, 2000), it is a matter of critical pedagogy to motivate people to take advantage of new media for sociopolitical causes. In this respect, by acknowledging the counter-hegemonic power of alternative online videos, critical media pedagogy aims to equip individuals with a "radical philosophy of technology" that cultivates the political operations of the new media technologies to engage the hegemonic power of domination where it is maintained and pursue the counter-hegemonic politics of alternatives (Feenberg, 2002, p. vi). By taking strategic advantage of extrinsic attributes of the Internet, such as cost-lowering conditions to publicize political agenda

(Bennett, 2003; Carroll & Hackett, 2006) and the Internet's boundary-crossing feature as a solution to the problem of "free riding" in collective action (Bimber, et. al., 2005), individuals are positioned to manage unprecedented resources of grassroots political mobilization. More importantly, it revisits the emancipatory power of "praxis" by fusing theory and practices in individuals' everyday lives thanks to Internet's ubiquity for the cultural politics of the media. Thus, Giroux (2001)'s call for "performative pedagogy" becomes ever more possible, which "*translates knowledge back into practice, places theory in the political space of the performative, and invigorates the pedagogical as a practice through which collective struggles can be waged*" by operating the radical philosophy of new media technologies (p. 14, emphasis added).

Keeping in mind the dialectical relationship between sociopolitical conditions of new media technologies and individuals' transformative appropriation of them as discussed in the multiple mixes of media attributes, this chapter sheds critical light on the immense potential of individuals' critical assumption of the Feenberg's (2002) "democratic struggle over technology" for social change (p. 61). Just as Marx (1845) clearly states, there are highly dialectic relationships between human agency and environmental conditions in historical processes, critical media pedagogy provides the marginalized with the practical viability of a counter-hegemonic media culture. In other words, it is necessary to proliferate the transformative power of media production praxis that people can create the "skill of insurgents in devising protest tactics" within "the larger political environment" of new media as seen in the case of online videos for the Obama campaign (McAdam, 1983, p. 737). To this end, people should focus more on the critical use of technology with extrinsic attributes. Thus, it manifests the necessity of pedagogical endeavors that critically incorporate media technologies in the general education settings (Kahn & Kellner, 2005b; Kellner & Share, 2007). Just as ordinary people were able to demonstrate the power of strategic deployment of Internet technologies to realize positive change in the 2008 presidential election, it is recommended that media pedagogy should provide citizens with the up-to-date tools to carry out this analysis and, thus, make it more common to deploy them for social transformation within the cost-lowering structure of the Internet.

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ENDNOTES

[1] See Rasiej, A. and Sifry, M.L. (November 12, 2008). The Web: 2008's winning ticket.

Politico. URL: http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1108/15520.html (12/12/08).

2   For example, on relationships between new media and old ones, see Rosenstiel, T, and Kovach, B. (2009). Special Reports: Lessons of the Election. *The State of the News Media: An Annual Report on American Journalism*. Washington, D.C.: The Project for Excellence in Journalism. Available at: http://www.stateofthemedia.org/2009/narrative_special_lessonsoftheelection.php?cat=1&media=12 (3/28/2009)

3   For the social impact of YouTube for the contemporary politics and pedagogy, see Kellner, D. & Kim, G. (2009). YouTube, Politics, and Pedagogy: Some Critical Reflections. In R. Hammer & D. Kellner (eds). *Media/ Cultural Studies: Critical Approaches*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. Pp. 615 – 636.

4   In this chapter, I use "ordinary people," "lay citizens" and "everyday Netizens" interchangeably to refer to individuals who usually did not have enough access to the media and capability to produce media artifacts as a means of public opinion building, realizing personal interests or sociopolitical participation.

5   For discussions on attributes of the Internet, see Newhagen, J. & Rafaeli, S. (1996). Why Communication Researchers Should Study the Internet. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 1/ 4,* and Walther, J. B., Gay, G. & Hancock, J. (2005). How Do Communication and Technology Researchers Study the Internet? *Journal of Communication, 55/ 3*, 632 – 657.

6   See, For example, Watson, A. and Cordonnier, V. (2002). Voting in the New Millennium: eVoting Holds the Promise to Expand Citizen Choice. Lecture Notes in Computer Science. Springer Berlin / Heidelberg, pp. 234-239; Wolman, D. (2003, October 31). Computer-Enabled Democracy? *Technology Review*. Available at: http://www.technologyreview.com/biomedicine/13344/

7   If one argues the Internet only reflects a herd mentality in society, creating the critical mass of sociopolitical conscious voices online can further an upward spiral of public sentiments/ opinions for grassroots political participation. Even if the Internet only reflects the public mentality of social constituencies, it is important to recognize the public opinion is a concrete outcome of a dialectics of people's interests, deliberation and participation. Therefore, there should be more emphases on the transformative potential of human agency that initiates positive redirection of the public sentiment and pedagogical intervention in lay Netizens's online activities that furthers a political participation.

8   For a reconsideration of users' purposes of deploying YouTube videos, see Kim, G. (2009). The Future of YouTube: Critical Reflections on YouTube Users' Discussion over Its Future. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies, 5/2,* Article #4.

9   For the contribution of young adults' voter turn-out, see Pew Research Center for the People & the Press (2008). *Inside Obama's Sweeping Victory*. URL: http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1023/exit-poll-analysis-2008 (11/14/08).

10   See, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press (2008). *Inside Obama's Sweeping Victory*. URL: http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1023/exit-poll-analysis-2008 (11/14/08).

11   See, Falcon, M. (2008, November 5). Youth Turnout Up By 2 Million From 2004. The *New Times*. Available at:http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/05/youth-turn-out-up-by-2-million-from-2004/ (11/5/08)

12   Zephyr Teachout, a former Internet director of the Dean campaign believes that the

Obama campaign's online social networking applications were "in essence, rebuilt and consolidated versions of those created for the Dean campaign" by allowing people to donate money, organize meetings, and distribute media. See, Talbot, D. (2008). How Obama *Really* Did It. *Technology Review, September/October 2008*. Available at: http://www.technologyreview.com/web/21222/?a=f

13 http://yeswecan.dipdive.com/biography/

14 http://yeswecan.dipdive.com/ (YWC Testimonials)

15 For theoretical and practical potential of YouTube from critical media pedagogy's perspective, see Kellner, D. & Kim, G. (2010). YouTube, Critical Pedagogy, and Media Activism. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies, 32(1),* 3 – 36.

16 See Kantor, J. (June 29, 2008). Obama Supporters Take His Name as Their Own. *The New York Times*. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/29/us/politics/29hussein.html?ref=politics (7/12/08).

17 For discussions on the relationship between language-games, legitimation, justice and human agency, see Lyotard, J. (1979). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

18 See Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers, and Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

19 http://yeswecan.dipdive.com/#/~/video-player/0/285/1532/~/

20 http://yeswecan.dipdive.com/#/~/video-player/0/285/1591/~/

21 http://yeswecan.dipdive.com/#/~/video-player/0/285/1582/~/

22 http://yeswecan.dipdive.com/#/~/video-player/0/285/1520/~/

23 http://yeswecan.dipdive.com/#/~/video-player/0/285/1524/~/

24 http://yeswecan.dipdive.com/#/~/video-player/0/285/1537/~/

25 http://yeswecan.dipdive.com/#/~/video-player/0/285/1519/~/

26 http://obamagirl.com/