The Emerging

Ethics of Digital Political Strategists

Dr. Luis E. Hestres

Research Colloquium Series 1
October 10, 2014
Networked activism

Internet-mediated organizations

Political campaigns
Internet Director
Online Communications Manager
e-Advocacy Coordinator
Web Master
Digital Political Strategist

Donate

Database
TimeKey
CustomerKey
Action
WeekOfYear
YearMonth

Digital Political Strategist
The Rise of Digital Political Strategists

The digital wizards behind Obama's tech-heavy re-election strategy
The names behind a crack team of some of America's top data wonks building a digital campaign from bottom up

Meet Obama's Digital Gurus
You won't see these Obama operatives on "Hardball." But they're building the 21st-century campaign.

When the Nerds Go Marching In
How a dream team of engineers from Facebook, Twitter, and Google built the software that drove Barack Obama's reelection
The Rise of Digital Political Strategists

Thought Leadership
Professional & ideological conferences

Online discussion venues

M+R
STRATEGIC SERVICES
Journalism

Political Consultants

Data Managers
Useful Ethical Theories for Digital Strategy

- Relativism
- Absolutisms
- Ethical Egoism
- Utilitarianism
Kantianism

CI 1: “Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.”

CI 2: “Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.”

CI 3: “If our conduct as free agents is to have moral goodness, it must proceed solely from a good will.”
Data Management

What is A/B testing?

A
Original: Green Button
5% conversion

B
Variation 1: Red Button
7% conversion

WINNER!!!
Data Management

Facebook mood experiment
Actual Political Impact of Online Tactics

PETITION: Tell Republican Leaders to Denounce Rush Limbaugh's Anti-Women Tirade

"What does it say about the college co-ed Susie Fluke [sic] who goes before a congressional committee and essentially says that she must be paid to have sex — what does that make her? It makes her a slut, right? It makes her a prostitute." -- Rush Limbaugh

UPDATE: Rush Limbaugh now says the "tire left" made him apologize. Call on Republican leaders to denounce him immediately.

Sandra Fluke, the courageous Georgetown Law student who had the strength to stand up in Congress against Republican attacks on birth control coverage, is now under attack from the right wing.

First, House Republicans refused to let Sandra testify. Now, they think they can shame us into silence. Standing up for women’s health care does not make you a "slut" or a "prostitute."

Sign our petition right now calling on Republican leaders to publicly denounce Rush Limbaugh's cruel tirade against women >>
Political Polarization

Democrats and Republicans More Ideologically Divided than in the Past

Distribution of Democrats and Republicans on a 10-item scale of political values

1994

Consistently liberal
Consistently conservative

Median Democrat
Median Republican

2004

Consistently liberal
Consistently conservative

Median Democrat
Median Republican

2014

Consistently liberal
Consistently conservative

Median Democrat
Median Republican

Source: 2014 Political Polarization in the American Public

Notes: Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see Appendix A). The blue area in this chart represents the ideological distribution of Democrats; the red area of Republicans. The overlap of these two distributions is shaded purple. Republicans include Republican-leaning independents; Democrats include Democratic-leaning independents (see Appendix B).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
## Political Polarization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democracy for America</th>
<th>Heritage Action for America</th>
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<tr>
<td>When Tea Party extremists won gubernatorial races across the country that year, Republicans found a new and powerful way to undermine President Obama -- and <strong>pushed a radical agenda</strong> that takes our country in the wrong direction [emphasis in original].</td>
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<td>Governors like Scott Walker and Rick Snyder have attacked women's rights, made it harder to vote, smashed labor unions, and gutted funding for public schools and health care.</td>
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<td>The <strong>battle for America's future</strong> is often won in the states. As a former governor myself, I know that they have a lot of power to decide what that future looks like. We can't afford to see four more years of <strong>radical extremism</strong> in our states.</td>
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<td>Liberals like George Soros and labor bosses are pouring huge sums of money and resources into campaigns and grassroots activism right now.</td>
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<td>They're coordinating their spending through the so-called Democracy Alliance, a <strong>secret partnership of rich bigwig liberals</strong>, who are arguably more powerful than the Democratic Party itself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Their plan is to use huge influxes of cash -- up to $39 million this year alone -- to influence elections and policy and force through a radical liberal agenda.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Democracy Alliance is in direct opposition</strong> to the conservative ideas you stand for and which Heritage Action promotes [emphasis in original].</td>
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