

The Internet-ilization of American Parties:
The Implications of the Unity08 Effort

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Abstract

Unity08 was the first fully on-line political party, founded by Doug Bailey, Gerald Rafshoon, and Hamilton Jordan in 2005. Its nomination and platform were to be determined in an on-line convention of its members in June, 2008. It disappeared long before its proposed convention, but given its technological innovations, its membership, recruitment, and activists remain interesting in their own right. We compare Unity08 members to ANES respondents and to a subsample of CCAP respondents who were active in one of the major party primary campaigns, finding a variety of differences, but also similarities. We then examine the causes of differential activity in Unity08, and conclude with an analysis of the degree to which activity in a short-lived third party might still carryover to activity in the major parties in 2008.

The 2008 election generated a significant amount of buzz, in part because of the prominent inclusion of technology on the political frontlines (Hoffman, 2007). The internet played a particularly notable role, becoming integrated into the presidential campaigns and allowing contenders from Barack Obama to Ron Paul to organize events, and mobilize their on-line supporters, and raise substantial amounts from small contributions given over the web (Terhune, 2008). This surge in internet activity was presaged by the prominence of MoveOn.org, political weblogs and the success of the Howard Dean campaign in 2004.

The adoption of digital age strategies has never been the province of major party candidates alone, but for the first time a new party Unity08—the brainchild of Doug Bailey, Gerald Rafshoon and Hamilton Jordan—emerged organized almost entirely around the web, with online surveys to assess supporter attitudes, online discussions to resolve issues and write a platform, and ultimately an online convention to nominate candidates. It sought to harness the democratic potential of the Internet in a grassroots organization with minimal cost, wide participation, and electronic communication. Though Unity08 ultimately disbanded with no nominated candidate, its organizational model created an example which will likely influence future campaigns and constitutes a unique study in the political harnessing of technology.

Throughout its history, the American political system has witnessed a variety of election bids by minor parties. However, few of these have experienced real electoral success, hindered by the challenges of ballot access laws, funding disparities, and the ongoing difficulty of inspiring and maintaining support. Under all of these constraints, only a handful of minor parties have ever emerged as substantial challengers in the last century, despite the fact that there have been minor party candidates running in all presidential elections for the last 130 years (Rosenstone et al., 1984). Planning for Unity08 began in October 2005, when veteran political experts Doug Bailey, Gerald Rafshoon, and Hamilton Jordan sat down to a dinner discussion that developed into an unexpected call to action. Bailey, creator of *The Hotline*, and former adviser to Gerald Ford, and Rafshoon and Jordan, both strategists in Jimmy Carter's 1976 campaign, lamented the roles they had once played in integrating this media, which demanded ever greater injections of campaign cash and soured constructive political dialogue, into presidential races. However, they felt that they saw a chance to harness the positive democratic potential of a *new* technological tool and unite moderate Americans in pursuit of a bipartisan presidential ticket. Unity08, an independent, bi-partisan, Internet-based political movement was born (Green, 2007).

The three Unity08 founders quickly recruited a formidable team that included Roger Craver, an experienced fund-raising strategist behind grassroots success stories like the National Organization for Women, Sam Waterston, *Law and Order* actor turned Unity08 spokesman, Angus King, independent governor of Maine, and George Vradenburg, former America Online general counsel (Green, 2007). By June 2006, the website was live. The fundamental impetus for the Unity08 movement was based on more than just a gut instinct about the contemporary failures of the American party system. A national poll commissioned by Unity08 reported that 82 percent of Americans perceived a debilitating polarization of the main parties, and 73 percent were looking for alternative options in 2008 (Bailey and Jordan, 2006).

“What’s happened,” said Doug Bailey in a PBS interview with Judy Woodruff, “is that politics in Washington has become so polarized that, in fact, the city has become paralyzed; it cannot deal with the major issues, and the public knows that” (Bailey and Jordan, 2006). The proposed Unity08 solution was a bi-partisan ticket to be elected in an online primary that would be open to the masses. The 2004 election had proven the value of the Internet in campaigns, having catapulted Howard Dean onto the national stage with a low-cost, high-return online fund-raising effort. Bailey, Rafshoon, and other leaders also took as an encouraging example Ross Perot, whose surprising 1992 third party campaign capitalized on popular frustration with the main parties and garnered a substantial 18.9 percent of the vote (Rapoport and Stone, 2005). If Perot could impact the system without the viral communicative power of the Internet, imagine the far-reaching effects of a digital revolution.

Unity08 was never meant to be a long-standing political party, but rather as Washington Post writer Jim VandeHei wrote, a momentum-building movement that would “force Democrats and Republicans to revamp themselves by becoming more issue-focused, responsive and candid” (Vandehei, 2006). “Our view in late 2006 and early 2007 was that the country’s politics were in bad shape,” said Doug Bailey. “We didn’t see substantial leadership coming forward to change things, and there was a desperate need to find different answers.”

Unity08 launched a recruitment strategy based heavily on both using members to recruit new members and using television visibility to generate interest in the movement’s website. These media efforts included appearances by Sam Waterston and Doug Bailey on Comedy Central’s Colbert Report and the O’Reilly Factor on Fox News as well as on many of the Sunday morning talk shows, the “Lehrer News Hour,” and the establishment of an official Unity08 YouTube channel. Unity08 organizers hoped to inspire interest in the movement, attracting viewers to become official members online, spreading the word to others in their respective Internet social networks. However, this goal was never entirely realized. Founder Doug Bailey admitted:

“We were not dramatically successful in using the Internet to its fullest potential. . . We assumed that if the technology was there, then they would come. That’s what the Obama campaign assumed also, and in that case, they came. That’s because *he* was there. He was there within the traditional forms of politics and they didn’t have to guess who the candidate was.”

The movement faced more of an uphill battle than other third parties. Historically, third parties form around a charismatic leader. But intrinsic to the purpose of Unity08 was its lack of a figurehead or of clearly stated issue positions, since movement members were intended to build Unity08’s identity through on-line discussions of issues and candidates, culminating in an on-line convention to draft a bi-partisan ticket as well as the party’s platform. Unity08 intended to be a movement of Internet users of the center, united not by a personality but by mutual frustration with the status quo.

Additionally, Unity08 faced the same challenges that third party candidates have faced throughout American history—the restrictions of state-dictated ballot access laws and Federal Election Commission funding rules.

In 2006, Unity08 became embroiled in a legal scuffle with the FEC regarding individual campaign donations. The FEC ruled that it had suspicions that Unity08 had secretly chosen a

candidate, an allegation that Bailey firmly denied, and as a result, the commission restricted Unity08 to a maximum \$5,000 per person donation, rather than the \$25,000 that parties can accept. This ruling was a significant blow to the Unity08 organization. The FEC decision derailed the Unity08 effort. Early on, members were tossing around over almost a dozen names for the possible Unity08 candidacy, though favored frontrunners emerged by April of 2007, including New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg and Nebraska Senator Chuck Hagel (Cillizza, 2007). By November, *Newsweek* featured Bloomberg as a likely independent candidate and suggested the possibility that he might run under the Unity08 banner. He had generated tremendous centrist appeal, becoming the promising Perot-caliber option for middle-of-the-road voters (Darman, 2007). But the fund-raising challenges created by the FEC proved insurmountable, and in January 2008, Unity08 founders Bailey and Rafshoon abandoned the now weakening Unity08 movement in favor of drafting Bloomberg for a presidential run. “It was clear from the ruling of the FEC and the courts that we would not have the money to get on the ballot,” said Bailey of Unity08’s decline. “We basically had to bring it to an end and intentionally decided to do that before Iowa voted so it would not be seen as a reaction,” he explained. Unity08 had amassed only 124,000 members and just \$1.5 million over two years (Danis, 2007), disappointing its founders who had dreamed of an online convention of 10 million voters (Green, 2007).

But a virtual convention with virtual delegates is far from impossible. Doug Bailey contends, “Something like that will happen in the future, but the prospect of a third party doing it is enormously hampered by the FEC” (Bailey, 2009) But in 2008, the FEC ruling crippled Unity08 financially, making it impossible to get on enough state ballots to attract a presidential candidate for the 2008 election.

Nonetheless, it did attract a membership of more than 100,000 members. But who were these Unity08 members who had logged on and joined the movement to address frustrations with the political system? What caused some to become more active in Unity08 than others? Where did they go politically when their movement evaporated in 2008?

Methodology

This paper is based on two waves of a three-wave panel of Unity08 members. We met with leaders at Unity08 and they agreed to give us a random sample of 3,700 email addresses of their membership. All surveys were web based. We used PHP Surveyor software for the first two waves and OPINIO for the third wave. In all cases, we sent out one initial e-mail invitation and three reminder emails. Our first survey went out in May 2007, the second in January 2008, and our final wave was distributed in December 2008, shortly after the election.

Of the 3,700 surveys sent out in the first wave, 358 emails bounced back or were not in use. We received surveys back from 1,356 respondents. Using 3,342 as our eligible sample, we received responses from 40.7% of our respondents and from 36.6% of the original sample. The second wave was sent to these 1,356 respondents, and we received responses from 460—a 33.9% response rate. Our final wave went out after the November election. We resurveyed both those

who had responded to the second wave (460) and those who had only responded to the first wave (896). There were an additional 245 wave 1 respondents who had either changed e-mail carriers had filters (unlikely since they responded the first time), or were deceased. Thus, based on an eligible sample of 1,111, we received a response rate of 48.1% in the third wave. Based on the full sample of 1,356, this wave saw a response rate of 39.1%, with a 57.2% response rate among those who had responded to both waves, and a 30.3% rate among those who had responded to wave 1 but not wave 2. This paper utilizes only waves one and three in its analysis.

Although the Unity08 survey is the main data source, we also rely on the 2008 American National Election study and the common content from the 2007-2008 Cooperative Campaign Project (CCAP) six wave panel, carried out by Polimetrix from December 2007 to November, 2008.

Who Were the Unity08 Members?

What does the average Unity08 supporter look like? As an internet-based party without a clear candidate or set of substantive issues, it would be surprising if members were not distinctive. To understand better how Unity08 supporters differ from other activists and the population as a whole, we compare Unity08 supporters to two groups: the ANES sample and a CCAP sample of party activists. The ANES sample provides a representative comparison to the general voting public. To match up these third party activists with comparable party activists in the mainstream, we created a subset of the CCAP sample that includes all respondents who wore a button, contributed money, or attended a rally for any primary candidate. While this group is only 6.5 percent of the CCAP sample, the large size of the overall sample provides a sample of almost 1,200 activists. We provide comparisons across the samples in Table 1.

First off, one might expect that as an internet-based movement, Unity08's supporters would be younger than voters in general (the ANES national sample), and they are. However the difference is not an enormous one (55 versus 51).¹ Unity08 members are generally well educated, better educated than eligible voters in general, but fairly close to CCAP party activists— 65 percent of Unity08 members hold at least a Bachelor's compared with 48 percent of CCAP party activists and only 28 percent of the ANES national sample. Not surprising, Unity08 supporters are wealthier than either the ANES national sample or the CCAP party activist as Table 1 shows.

As was the case with Perot supporters in 1992, higher proportions of Unity08 supporters are male and significantly more are white than either major party supporters or a national sample. Additionally, Unity08 members are significantly more secular than the national sample with about twice the percentage of agnostic/atheists (25.6% versus 13.4%), but they are fairly close to the party activists in the 2008 CCAP sample, which shows 24.0% agnostic/atheist.

¹ CCAP does not report age, so no comparable sample is available.

TABLE 1 GOES HERE

When we turn to political variables, Unity08 members are distinct from both major party activists and reflect the bipartisan, independent, moderate approach of the party; 16.7% of Unity08 supporters are “pure independents” compared with 11.3% of the ANES sample and only 7.2% of the CCAP activist sample. Correspondingly, they are far less likely to identify as strong partisans of either party. While only 21.1% of Unity08 activists strongly identify with either major party, such is the case of 35.8% of the national sample and 57.2% of CCAP activists. In terms of partisan preference, the ratio of Democrats to Republicans is almost 3.5:1, compared with a 2:1 Democratic preference among ANES sample members. This partisan preference also is reflected in 2006 activity for congressional candidates. Almost half (46.1%) of the Unity08 sample did something for Democratic candidates in 2006, versus 12.5% who did something for Republican candidates. And while there is a strong moderate representation among Unity08 members as Table 1 shows, non-moderates are skewed heavily toward the liberal side (50.7% liberal and 21.9% conservative) while the ANES sample is actually more conservative than liberal (30.0% liberal and 38.2% conservative).

To be sure, an internet-based political movement attracts those who have internet access, and use it often. Twenty-three percent of respondents use the internet more than three hours per day, while 53 percent use it between one and three hours a day (data not shown). Although exact questions are not asked on the ANES or CCAP, we can still compare similar measures of Unity08 ANES and CCAP party activist daily media usage in Table 2. Interestingly although more than two-thirds of Unity08 members use on-line news daily, an almost equal percentage view television news daily, but barely half read a newspaper daily. All of these are far above the ANES sample, where television news clearly dominates both newspaper and on-line news. Only a third as many ANES respondents read on-line news as Unity08 supporters. Unity08 supporters also rely on on-line news significantly more than party activists, but the percentages using blogs and online political discussion and chat rooms is slightly higher among CCAP party activists (although this difference may be due to differences in the questions discussed in the note to Table 2). So Unity08 supporters rely on traditional media as well as on-line media, and their use of blogs and on-line political discussion does not differ much from CCAP party activists.²

TABLE 2 GOES HERE

Alienation from the political system has been widely regarded as a stimulus for third party support (Gold, 1995). Even though we do not have clear comparisons with other samples on levels of alienation, it is clear, as Table 3 shows, that Unity08 supporters were far from satisfied with the status quo. Only 12% said they could trust the government to do what is right almost always or most of the time. This contrasts with more than a third of ANES respondents selecting

² However, the utilization of the internet, particularly by Obama, but by virtually every other candidate, emulating Obama’s success probably made party activists in 2008 the most internet reliant group in history.

these two choices. Furthermore, almost three-quarters reported feeling “very dissatisfied” with politics in America, and only 4% reported being either “very satisfied” or “satisfied.” But, while almost three-quarters of the sample said that public officials didn’t care what people like them thought, a similar percentage thought that having elections makes government pay attention to what people think. Unity08 members comprise a group with the alienation to push away from the status quo, but the expectation of influence through elections to attract them to a group like Unity08. Respondents also displayed a willingness to support a third alternative, reflected in the majority (52%) of the sample who reported that “even if the race was very close between the two main parties,” they would still consider voting for a third party (52 percent).

TABLE 3 GOES HERE

But what of the potential issue appeal for Unity08? In 1992 Ross Perot identified three clusters of substantive issues—economic nationalism, reform, and the budget, on which he took strong issue positions distinct from the major parties, and in part because of this, attracted a large following. Do we see the same identification of unique substantive issues for Unity08? Of course, since Unity08 disappeared before full discussions relating to issues and the platform could take place, it is difficult to conjecture with any certainty. However, significantly, the single issue that does stand out for Unity08 members is health care. Fully 40% rated it their single most important issue among the twelve issues on which they placed themselves (no other issue was selected by even 11% of the sample). Furthermore, 82% favored a “government sponsored national health insurance plan covering all Americans,” and almost half strongly agreed. The problem facing Unity08, however, was that among all the issues included in our survey, this was the one most clearly owned by the Democratic Party. It is difficult to believe that Unity08 members sought out the party because of its stance on national health insurance when the Democrats had been championing it for a very long time. Doug Bailey (2009) emphasized this point when asked about which issues motivated support for Unity08. He contended that it was bringing about change in the process of governance—bipartisanship and change—rather than specific substantive issues that motivated support. So a strong substantive issue basis for Unity08 support seems unlikely.

The final, and most important conjecture about the movement concerns its candidate preferences. Who appealed to this group as potential nominees? Again, the premature disappearance of the party makes this very tentative, but in Table 4 we list the choices rated “exceptional” and those rated at least as “Acceptable.” Candidates from both parties rate very highly. The three most highly rated candidates were Obama, Gore, and Colin Powell. Interestingly, long before his Iowa victory (Spring of 2007), Obama led all candidates in acceptability rating, garnering support from more than three-quarters of our sample. In keeping with the focus on a fresh perspective, Hillary Clinton came in fourth among Democrats, and trailed Colin Powell and Chuck Hagel as well. On the Republican side, Powell led by a large margin, with Hagel and Giuliani trailing. Surprisingly, McCain was only third with less than forty percent finding him even acceptable as a potential Unity08 candidate. The 2:1 margin in acceptability, and the 4:1 in

“Exceptional,” that Obama enjoyed over McCain is clearly significant, once they became the nominees of the major parties.

TABLE 4 GOES HERE

Determinants of Unity08 Activity

Because Unity08 was a relatively small party, never reaching even 200,000 members of its hoped for millions, because it never had a candidate or a substantive platform, and because it went out of business before the first caucus in Iowa, predicting levels of activity is far from straightforward. As opposed to the Perot movement in which the candidate staked out strong issue positions, and for which activity did correlate with specific issue positions, Unity08 focused on the grassroots selecting the issues and the candidates. Its overt appeal was to those dissatisfied with the state of American politics who desired a moderate, bipartisan alternative.

As our measure of Unity08 activity, we use a count of the number of activities a respondent reported engaging in for Unity08 in the C wave of the survey. The average number of activities done by our sample was three. Table 5 summarizes the activities we asked about, and the responses. The three activities in which most people engaged were talking to their friends and family about the party, filling out Unity08 surveys and ranking issues of importance on the Unity08 website. These issues cover both the networking method mentioned above as a strategy for Unity08, and the interactive element so easily facilitated by the internet.

In considering independent variables, we might expect determinants of Unity08 activity to resemble those affecting political activity in general (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: 15): resources, motivation, and mobilization (there were very few targeted attempts to mobilize members, so we do not have measures of mobilization).

TABLE 5 GOES HERE

Resources include education, age, prior activity in major parties and in non-political groups, and political blogging and internet chat room experience. Motivations (which are mainly push factors away from the major parties) include political dissatisfaction, issue positions, and distance from the closer major party on the issue respondent cares most about. Substantive issues played such a small role in the party’s appeal (Bailey, 2009), we do not include respondent issue positions on specific issues in our multivariate analysis;³ rather we include the minimum distance from respondent position on her most important issue to that of the closest major party. Finally, even though the party was entirely on-line, we still expect to find a role of social context—measured as number of family and friends interested in Unity08.

³Remarkably, only one of the eleven issues³ (support for national health insurance) shows a correlation above .06 ($p > .15$), and even national health insurance is correlated only at .096 ($p < .03$). We did run the multivariate analysis with national insurance included, and it was not even close to significant ($p > .30$) and with all the issues included (in all cases $p > .30$).

We report our results in Table 6, running a regression with motivational and resource variables as well as gender (which was related to both Perot support and Wallace support). We then ran a separate regression including the same variables, but with the addition of a variable tapping the number of friend and family interested in Unity08 (it is our assumption that prior activity, political alienation, etc. might be responsible for seeking out like individuals, who might be interested in a movement like Unity08, so we add it last).

Our initial analysis in Table 6 shows mixed results. For the resource variables, previous partisan activity for both parties has a significant effect ($p < .10$), but neither activity for non-party groups, nor education affects the level of Unity08 activity. More surprising blog and political chat-room activity have insignificant effect ($p > .6$) on party activity.

In terms of motivational variables, willingness to support third parties and dissatisfaction with American politics are both substantively and statistically significant ($p < .01$), while distance from closest major party on most important issue is insignificant and in the wrong direction ($p > .10$), and neither does strength of partisanship affect Unity08 activity ($p > .3$).

Even though Unity08 was an on-line party, as opposed to more traditional face-to-face parties, the role of social support for activity cannot be ignored. We reran our model with a measure of the number of friends and family interested in Unity08. We hypothesize that the role of social support will contribute significantly to Unity08 activity. This additional variable is highly significant. In fact, the difference in Unity08 activity between two respondent at the mean on all variables, but with one having no family/friends interested in Unity08 and the other with six or more interested family/friends is 1.63 additional activities. This far surpassed the effect of any other variables in the model.⁴ With the exception of Democratic and Republican activity ($p < .20$), all other factors significant in the initial model remain significant in the current one.

Interestingly, both prior activity with the major parties and alienation from the system of which they are part play important roles in stimulating Unity08 activity. On the other hand neither education nor prior group activity nor issues nor proximity to closest political party have significant effects, but, unsurprisingly willingness to support a third party, even in a close two-party election does. However, support from one's social group also plays a significant role. Apparently even in an on-line party, face-to-face support encourages activity.

Table 6 GOES HERE

Carryover of Unity08 Activity to the General Election

Understanding to whom a party like Unity08 appeals and who becomes active in it might be interesting in its own right, but the skeptic might ask whether there is any long-term effect and,

⁴ Because the index of Unity08 activity includes two items involving friends/family ("Talked to family/friends about Unity08 and "Got friends to join Unity08"), we reran the analysis purging the activity measure of these two items. The effect of number of friend/family interested in Unity08 remained highly significant even in this case ($p < .05$).

what can we learn from a party with a small constituency like this one that might be relevant in understanding larger and more successful third parties, and even political activity more generally? It is to these issues that we now turn.

Successful third parties like Ross Perot's 1992 effort, are often viewed as election-altering events and serious threats to the major parties, while unsuccessful ones like Unity08 (barring remarkably close elections like 2000) are viewed as irrelevancies. George H. W. Bush (1999) and other Republicans continue to blame Clinton's win on Ross Perot's presence in the 1992 campaign, but few analysts even mention the role of the Green, Libertarian, Independent or Constitution parties in their discussion of 2008.

Our contention is that the ways in which these third parties--large and small--impact the major parties may be functionally similar, even though the net impact is proportionate to the party's size. Moreover, whether small or large, the most important effect is not necessarily observed in the election contemporaneous with its candidacy or organizational persistence. Rather, the long-term effect of third parties is more likely seen when their party has completely disappeared or has seen its support seriously diminish; and, this effect shows up in the shift of supporters activity to one of the major parties (Rapoport and Stone, 2005).

By drawing almost 20% of the vote, Perot had the potential to alter the outcome of the election, as Bush claimed; however, there is much evidence to suggest that he did not. VNS exit polls showed that his voters split down the middle in terms of their preference for Bush or Clinton (actually favoring Clinton slightly over Bush). Nonetheless, Perot's supporters were to play a crucial role in electoral change when, in 1994, they shifted their support heavily to the Republicans

And among Perot activists, Rapoport and Stone (2005) found that there was significant carryover from Perot activity into major party activity:

The most highly mobilized Perot supporters became the most active Republican supporters (controlling for their prior Republican activity) extending the logic of carryover which Stone, Atkeson and Rapoport (1992) found among nomination activists. Rather than finding a sore loser in which the strongest supporters of losing nomination candidates withdrew disproportionately from support of their party's standard bearer, they found that it was actually the strongest supporters of losing candidates who became the most active for the winning candidate.

The logic of the carryover is straightforward: activists are mobilized by a major party candidacy or a third party, and this mobilization sensitizes them to the political stakes that are involved. As they become aware of the choice they are facing they move to support the candidate closest to them. That their preferred candidate is not on the ballot does not divert them from the political decision that they face in which one of the major party candidates presents a clearly preferable alternative.

However, a party like Unity08 presents challenges for this theory. Because of its size, neither party had an incentive to target this group. On the other hand, the highly involved Unity08 supporters likely are sensitized to the choices offered in the general election.

But carryover rarely affects support for both major parties equally. Unity08 was far more Democratic than Republican in its composition. Furthermore, Obama's bipartisan appeal and freshness of vision could be expected to have particular appeal to those most sensitized to the Unity08 campaign through their involvement with Unity08. The strength of this appeal is reflected in the comment of Doug Bailey, "If we had known at the outset the Obama candidacy could succeed . . . we probably would have concluded there was no need for Unity08." Although the bid for Unity08 support was far more implicit than the Republicans' bid for Perot supporters in 1994, we should expect a similar asymmetry in the effect of Unity08 activity on major party support—only this time favoring the Democrats over the Republicans.

But did Unity08 activity actually mobilize its supporters (particularly those who had not been recently involved in major party campaigns) in ways that led to increased involvement in the general election?

In Table 7 we examine major party activity⁵ as a function of Unity08 activity. To simplify the analysis, we divide respondents according to whether they did anything at all for each of the major parties in 2006 and 2008, and we trichotomize Unity08 activity into those who did 0 or 1 activities, those who did 2,3 or 4 activities and those who did five or more.⁶ As Table 7a shows, and as we expected, among those who had done nothing for the Democratic candidates in 2006, activity for Unity08 had a clear and significant effect on their Democratic involvement in 2008. Of Unity08 members who did five or more activities in connection with the party, three-in-five showed some Democratic activity in 2008 compared with less than half that percentage at the lowest category of Unity08 activity ($d=.16;p<.01$). On the other hand, of those who had been inactive for Republicans (Table 7b), there was no significant increase in their 2008 activity as a function of Unity08 activity ($d=.03;p>.50$), and in no case does it rise to even 15%. However, it is important that even though there is no increase in Republican activity with increased Unity08 activity neither is there a decline. Clearly there is the expected asymmetry in the effect of Unity08 activity, favoring the Democrats, but there is not a negative effect disadvantaging the Republicans.⁷

⁵ Our measure of major party activity includes giving money to a candidate, trying to persuade others to support, writing to a blog for candidate, writing letter to a newspaper, working on campaign, attending meeting or rally, and bumper stickers, yard sign or campaign button.

⁶ More than half of the sample (54%) were inactive for Democrats in 2006, and more than eight in ten Unity08 members were inactive for the Republicans in 2006.

⁷ On the other hand, neither those previously active for the Democrats nor those previously active for the Republicans showed Unity08 activity effects on their level of continued activity.

TABLE 7 GOES HERE

However, these results fail to control for a number of relevant confounds. It is possible that the reason that Unity08 activists increased their activity for the Democrats in 2008 is that they were more likely to be contacted by Democratic candidates, and that it is this contact rather than Unity08 support that contributed to their increased Democratic activity. Similarly, some of these Unity08 supporters might also have been involved in Democratic primary campaigns as well as Unity08 activities, and, once again it might be that it was this sort of activity, independent of anything they did for Unity08, which is responsible for the results. Finally, respondents might have had strong affective preference for Obama over McCain, and this was the reason for their support for Democratic candidates in 2008, so we also need to control for the difference in evaluations of Obama and McCain. This last control is especially strong because work on motivated reasoning and cognitive dissonance predicts that those most active for Obama should show commensurate increases in positive evaluations of Obama relative to McCain. Any effect of Unity08 activity that we find is among individuals who are equal in their relative evaluations of the two presidential candidates as well as measures of actual past activity in primaries and general elections contact from Democratic campaigns and party identification. These are all strong controls, and they are likely, if anything, to understate the independent effect of Unity08 support on 2008 Democratic activity.

Our regression analysis in Table 8 shows, as expected, that continuity of Democratic activity is very strong and campaign contact, primary activity, candidate preference and partisanship all have significant effects on 2008 Democratic activity. Interestingly, neither education nor age has a significant effect. Most important among the control variables is the very strong effect of Democratic primary activity. Nonetheless, even with all of these controls, Unity08 activity has a significant effect ($b=.173$; $p<.01$). For every additional activity that respondents performed for Unity08 they increase their activity for Democratic candidates by 0.173 activities.

TABLE 8 GOES HERE

On the other hand running a parallel analysis for Republicans (see Table 9) produces results that are similar in some respects and different in others: while the controls show consistently significant effects for contact, primary activity, candidate effect and partisanship produce an insignificant effect that is very close to zero ($b=-.017$; $p>.5$). Again, this is not surprising given Doug Bailey's comment that Unity08's goals succeeded when Obama won (even though that was not the original intention of the party). What is also important is that there is no significant drop-off in Republican activity attributable to Unity08. So while Democratic activity increased significantly as Unity08 activity increased, Republican activity was left unchanged.

TABLE 9 GOES HERE

The question remains: was there a trigger through which Unity08 activity translated into Democratic activity in 2008? In the case of Perot supporters, their activity translated into

Republican activity to a much greater degree when they received multiple contacts from Republican candidates in 1994 (Rapoport and Stone, 2005). This makes sense since the Perot movement was targeted with mailings from the Republicans that emphasized Perot's issues. But such was not the case with Unity08 supporters, whose number made them largely irrelevant to the 2008 election outcome.

One thing that is unique about Unity08 is its reliance on the internet. Obama certainly emphasized the use of the internet in his campaign, raising vast sums of money and coordinating meet-ups, rallies, etc. via the web. We hypothesize that among Unity08 supporters who rely on the web, the Obama message would achieve maximum mobilization potential. We therefore created a dummy variable based on whether respondents engage in interactive internet activity (either political blogs or on-line political discussion).

We reran our regression for 2008 Democratic activity, only this time including our count of new media and its interaction with Unity08 activity. It is the interaction in which we are most interested, since it will tell us the degree to which Unity08 activity translates into Democratic activity at differing levels of exposure to new media. A positive coefficient indicates that among those using blogs and political chat rooms, as new media usage increases, Unity08 activity translates into a higher level of Democratic activity than among other respondents.

As Table 10 shows, including these two new variables does not substantively affect the coefficients of any of our control variables. The interaction of Unity08 with our new media variable is highly significant and strong ($b=.48$ $p<.001$). Moreover, the main effect for the Unity08 activity level is now close to zero. For a Unity08 supporter who did not use new media at all, there is only a small and insignificant effect of Unity08 activity on Democratic activity. Nevertheless, for someone who frequents blogs or political chat rooms, the effect is almost three times as great. Figure 2 shows the effect of Unity08 activity on Democratic activity (holding all other variables constant at their means) for respondents who do not use interactive internet and for those who do. We show levels of Democratic activity for Unity08 activity one standard deviation below the mean, at the mean and one standard deviation above the mean. Someone who was one standard deviation above the mean (4.5 activities) would do more almost three times as many activities for the Democrats in 2008 as one standard deviation below the mean (1.5 activities). To give an idea of the strength of this relationship, the effect of this three-activity shift among the "new media" group is more than an increase from no activity to maximum possible activity among the full sample (which is itself statistically and substantively significant).

TABLE 10 GOES HERE

Activity for Unity08 clearly translated into Democratic activity in 2008, even with strong controls, and the translation appears to be contingent on the new media intersection of Unity08 and the Obama campaign, (i.e., the interactive world wide web).

FIGURE 1 GOES HERE

Although Unity08 was a relatively small movement, the finding that activity on its behalf carries over into increased general election activity on the Democratic side without a countervailing diminution in Republican activity is significant. It builds on and extends findings of carryover from presidential nomination activists into the party's general election presidential (Stone, Atkeson, and Rapoport 1992) and congressional campaigns (McCain, Partin, Rapoport, and Stone) and on findings of carryover from Perot activity in 1992 into Republican campaign activity in 1994 and thereafter (Rapoport and Stone 2007), and it further touches on findings of translation of non-political activity into political activity (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995).

Conclusion

Even though, because of its size, it was not a group targeted by either major party, involvement in the Unity08 movement spilled over spontaneously into support for the Democrats in 2008. And the effect went beyond simple preference for the Democratic presidential nominee. Independent of candidate preference, Unity08 activity translated into actual activity on behalf of Democratic candidates. The inclination of those active to remain active politically seems strong from this analysis. Mobilization around one party or candidate easily carries over into activity for another candidate or party when there is a mobilizing medium, be it the campaign, internet involvement, media exposure or something else. In other cases, it may spill over to all prior activists as they are exposed to the broader campaign. In any case, the carryover effect identified initially for supporters of nomination campaign losers clearly has applicability to third party movements of various types, and in the case of Unity08, the usage of new media among members of the movement was directly related to their involvement with the Democratic party. Having existed without a candidate or even a firm party platform, Unity08 was a creation of the Internet and its networking potential. Thus, even without targeted messaging, the Obama campaign witnessed activity from Unity08 supporters catalyzed by the *medium* through which they obtained their political information. The implications for incipient third parties, particularly

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Table 1: A Comparison of Unity 08 Supporters to CCAP Party Activists and ANES National Sample

Variables	Unity08	CCAP Party Activists	ANES
Demographic			
Average Age	55		47.02
College grad or more	65.3%	38.4%	28.3%
Graduate degree	28.5%	14.7%	9.4%
Income above \$100,000	27.6%	21.9%	18.4%
Men	72.5%	56.0%	47.2%
Agnostic or Atheist	25.6%	24.0%	13.4%
White	94.8%	73.3%	75.1%
Political Ideology			
Very Liberal	12.4%	10.8%	4.3%
Liberal	17.2%	20.0%	14.1%
Slightly Liberal	21.1%		11.6%
Moderate	27.3%	35.2%	31.6%
Slightly Conservative	14.1%		14.6%
Conservative	4.3%	17.6%	19.1%
Very Conservative	3.5%	17.5%	4.6%
Party Identification			
Strong Democrat	18.7%	35.9%	25.6%
Weak Democrat	14.1%	7.3%	17.3%
Independent Democrat	31.7%	14.1%	17.1%
Independent	16.7%	8.5%	11.3%
Independent Republican	12.2%	6.6%	9.7%
Weak Republican	4.3%	6.1%	8.8%
Strong Republican	2.4%	21.5%	10.2%
N	536-1335	1051-1194	1426-2287

Note: Religion for Unity08 does not include "other option" which includes some answers that might be categorized as agnostic or atheist. CCAP agnostic or atheist aggregates "Atheist", "Agnostic", and "Nothing in particular". ANES Agnostic or Atheist number calculated from wave 1 answers of "no religion".

Table 2: Comparisons of Daily Media use Between Unity08 Respondents, CCAP Party Activists and the ANES Sample

Variables	Unity08	Party Activists	ANES
Political Blogs	18.4%	24.8%	NA
Online News	67.7%	44.3%	22.7%
Newspaper	52.2%	NA	29.0%
Television News	64.9%	NA	43.1%
Engage in Online Political Discussions/Chat Rooms	5.9%	9.8%	NA

Note: Questions vary on each survey. Unity08 percent for television news is the number who watch either cable or network news. All Unity08 numbers combine those who answered "More than once a day", and "Daily". For both the ANES and CCAP, respondents are asked "how many days a week". We code 6 or 7 as being daily. All party activist questions are "in the last week" rather than in an average week.

Table 3: Unity08 Member Responses on Attitudes Toward the Political System (N=1327-1353)

Variables	Agree	Disagree
Trust the government to do what is right almost always/most of the time	6.2%	93.8%
How much do government officials care what people like you think?	72.8%	27.2%
Having elections makes the government pay attention to what people think	72.6%	27.4%
Even if the race between major party candidates was very close, I would still consider voting for a third party candidate	70.5%	29.5%
Very Satisfied/SatisfiedSatisfied with politics in America	4.1%	95.9%

**Table 4: Candidate Preferences of Unity08
Members (N=1308-1340)**

Candidate	Percent Rated Exceptional	Percent Acceptable
Democrats		
Al Gore	0.372	0.699
Barack Obama	0.331	0.765
Joe Biden	0.133	0.56
Hillary Clinton	0.132	0.475
Republicans		
Colin Powell	0.343	0.74
Chuck Hagel	0.132	0.476
John McCain	0.095	0.384
Rudy Giuliani	0.087	0.454
Others		
Michael Bloomberg	0.105	0.416
Lou Dobbs	0.129	0.319

Table 5: Unity08 Activity

Activities for Unity08	Percentage of Sample
Talk to Family and Friends about Unity08	73.1%
Got Friends to Join Unity08	17.9%
Donated Money to Unity08	16.6%
Ranked Issues of Importance on the Unity08 Website	70.5%
Filled out Unity08 Survey by Hand	77.2%
Posted Comments on Unity08 Website	16.8%
Gathered Petitions to Get Unity08 on the Ballot	2.1%
Signed a Petition to Get Unity08 on the Ballot	23.3%
Attended a Unity08 Event	2.1%
	N=536

Table 6: Regression Predicting Activity for Unity08

Variables	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error
Constant	1.981**	1.298	0.889	0.685
Age	-0.012*	0.005	-0.009+	0.005
Gender	0.409*	0.159	0.395*	0.152
Education	.027	0.058	0.038	0.056
Non-Political Group Activity	-.050	0.09	-.086	0.087
2006 Democratic Activity	0.077*	0.039	0.056	0.038
2006 Republican Activity	0.132*	0.074	0.088	0.071
Strength of Party ID	-0.079	0.084	-0.082	0.081
Satisfaction with US Politics	0.383**	0.126	0.337**	0.121
Issue Proximity to Closest Major Party	-			
Disagree-Would Vote For Third Party in Close Election	0.125++	0.08	-0.070	0.077
Use of New Media			0.102	0.156
Family/Friends Interested in Unity08			0.543***	0.091
N	427		427	
Adjusted R-square	0.078		0.15	
Standard Error of Estimate	1.429		1.372	

***p<.001 **p<.01 * p<.05 + p< .10 ++ p<.20

**Table 7a: Level of Activity for Dems in 2008 by
Unity08 Activity for Those Inactive for Dems in 2006**

Variables	Unity08 Activity Level			
	Low	Medium	High	Total
Inactive for Dems 2008	71.20%	61.30%	40.00%	60.40%
Active for Dems 2008	28.80%	38.70%	60.00%	39.60%
N	52	186	35	273

**Table 7b: Level of Activity for Reps in 2008 by
Unity08 Activity for Those Inactive for Reps in 2006**

Variables	Unity08 Activity Level			
	Low	Medium	High	Total
Inactive for Reps 2008	90.5%	91.3%	86.7%	90.6%
Active for Reps 2008	9.5%	8.7%	13.3%	9.4%
N	84	322	60	466

Table 8: Effect of Unity08 Activity on Democratic Activity, Controlling for Other Relevant Variables

Variables	B	Std. Error
(Constant)	0.289	.588
Unity08 Activity	0.173**	.061
Age	-0.007	.006
Education Level	-0.015	.074
Activity in 2008 Dem Pres Primaries 2008	0.522***	.042
2006 Democratic Activity	0.287***	.055
Contact by Dem Pres and Congressional Candidates	0.255***	.051
Preference for Obama over McCain	0.151**	.046
Party Identification	-0.199**	.075
Adj. R-Square	0.607	
Std. Error of Estimate	1.895	
N	458	

***p<.001 **p<.01 * p<.05

Table 9: Regression of 2008 Republican Campaign Activity on Unity08 Activity and Relevant Control Variables

Variables	B	Std. Error
(Constant)	-0.274	0.286
Unity08 Activity	-0.016	0.031
Age	0.002	0.003
Education Level	-0.031	0.038
Activity in 2008 Rep Pres Primaries 2008	0.126***	0.019
2006 Republican Activity	0.414***	0.053
Contact by Repub Pres and Congressional Candidates	0.056*	0.028
Preference for Obama over McCain	-0.083***	0.024
Patry Identification	0.156***	0.037
Std Error of Estimate	0.974	
Adj R-square	.407	
N	458	

***p<.001 **p<.01 * p<.05

Table 10: Effect of Unity08 Activity on Democratic Activity, Controlling for Other Relevant Variables

Variables	B	Std. Error
(Constant)	0.274	.581
Unity08 Activity	0.078	.067
Age	-.004	.006
Education Level	-0.02	.072
Activity in 2008 Dem Pres Primaries 2008	0.515***	.041
2006 Democratic Activity	0.298***	.054
Contact by Dem Pres and Congressional Candidates	0.256***	.050
Preference for Obama over McCain	0.141**	.045
Party Identification	-0.194**	.074
Use of New Media	-1.028*	.381
Interaction of New Media and Unity08 Activity	0.475**	.111
Adjusted R-Square	.617	
Standard Error of Estimate	1.871	
N	458	

***p<.001 **p<.01 * p<.05

Chart 1: Effect of Unity08 Activity on Democratic General Election Activity by Level of New Media Use (all control variables at mean)

