

*Collaborative Information
Seeking in an Online
Political Group
Environment*

Christopher Mascaro

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The Coffee Party Movement

- Established as a Facebook Page on January 26, 2010
 - Over 315,000 followers
 - Over 1,100 official posts with 160,000 comments
 - 174 local coffee party groups
- First National Party Convention in September 2010
- First political candidate
 - Jeff Reed - 9th District of Missouri



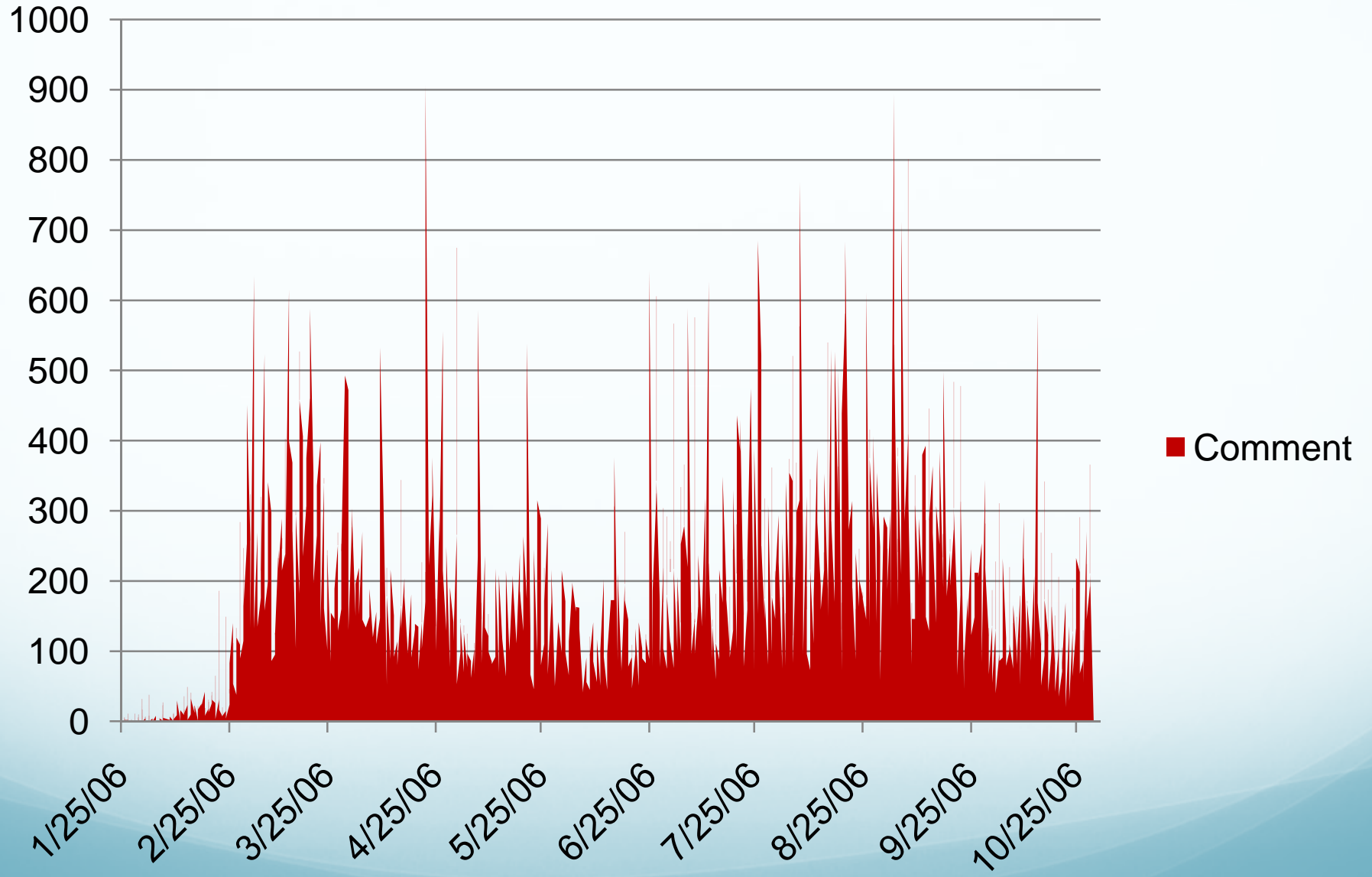
Coffee Party Goals

- Coffee Party's goals focus on collaboration among members of society and establishing a space in the public sphere
- The Coffee Party held numerous online and physical meetings to develop a charter
- The Coffee Party's goals:
 - Create a public space for open and civil dialogue
 - Foster collective deliberation, considering facts and values to arrive at a decision among participants
 - Work towards implementing the decisions from the deliberative process

Research Questions

1. What is the composition of the network of individuals who are most active on the Coffee Party Facebook Group?
2. To what extent, do the most active individuals in the coffee party take part in identifiable action outside of the National Coffee Party Group structure?
3. How do members collaboratively seek information using the Coffee Party's Facebook site?
4. What categories of discussion emerge as dominant in virtual political organizations? For example, what types of coordination, information sharing, information seeking or other technologically mediated collaborative behavior emerge in these groups?

Comments



Types of Official Posts

- Mobilization – Take Action
 - Call elected leaders
 - Organize “something”
- News Article
 - Position/issue cased
 - Alert to congressional vote
- Organizational Information
 - Information about meetings – physical/virtual
 - News from local chapters
 - Posts about convention

Preliminary Findings

- Very limited occurrence of flaming/non-constructive comments
- Significant amounts of information sharing, coordination, cooperation and some basic forms of collaboration efforts are apparent from cursory analysis
 - Coffee party convention had many collaboration sessions to attempt to build solutions to problems identified by attendees
 - Possible need for better tools and more direction to enable more successful collaboration
- Significant amounts of interindividual, interpersonal and intragroup communication
 - Many comments contain personal references to other participants signifying conversation among followers

Direction of Research

- Pilot study will focus on Coffee Party activity from September 17, 2010 - November 9, 2010
 - Projected to contain 35% of all comment data that has occurred on Facebook page
- Future Research
 - Analyze earlier activity on Coffee Party page
 - Examine Twitter activity (retweets, mentions of Coffee Party, use of the #coffeeparty hashtag)
 - Analyze activity of Local Coffee Party Groups and relationships with National Party