Cyberculture of Postmaterialism and Political Participation

Ji-Young Kim

This article explores the emerging characteristics of cyberculture, which is postmaterialism emphasizing the quality of life, self-actualization, and participatory orientations. Postmaterialist value is viewed as an important paradigmatic shift in light of its communication effects on political participation since it entails grassroots participation in protest politics. Given the high connectivity to the Internet, the implication of postmaterialistic cyberculture appears to be significant in Korea. In particular, this article suggests a schematic relationship between postmaterialism, cyberculture, and political participation in the country whilst paying attention to three factors connecting the Internet with postmaterialist value orientations: cognitive mobilization by rising educational levels, information diffusion and political deliberation, and the evolution of new social movements. Based on the theoretical scheme, the cases illuminating the behavioral consequences of postmaterialist values such as political deliberation and grassroots participation are discussed.

Keywords: Cyberculture, the Internet, Postmaterialism, Political Participation, Deliberation

Introduction

While the focus on the modes of Internet use touches upon the behavioral dimension of the medium, another dimension of the new medium in need of future exploration is its cultural characteristics. In fact, what makes the new medium more extraordinary is its contribution to cultural transition and value change (Jones 1997). Values are integral elements of political actions since they function as a yardstick of important decision-making by individuals.

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> Values are so central to human actions that many personal and political decisions involve a choice between several valued goals. One situation may force a choice between behaving independently and obediently, or between behaving politely and sincerely. A national policy may present contrasts between the goals of world peace and national security, or between economic well-being and protection of nature. Citizens develop a general framework for making these decisions by organizing values into a value system, which ranks values in terms of their importance to the individual. (Dalton 1988:78-9)

Given the significance of values in generating political actions, it is worth noting the dominant values of cyberspace. According to Norris's study, cyberculture is characterized by postmaterialist value priorities. Internet users are more likely to be concerned about quality of life issues and self-actualization. In contrast to materialists who care more about economic security and physical sustenance, postmaterialist values — emphasizing individual freedom, self-expression, and cosmopolitanism — dominate cyberspace (Norris 2001).

Postmaterialist values of cyberspace involve even more significant political implications in that it is these values that have driven alternative forms of political movements in Western societies since the 1960s (Barnes and Kaase 1979; Dalton 1988; Dalton and Kuechler 1990; Inglehart 1977, 1990a,b; Muller-Rommel and Poguntke 1995; Poguntke 1993). The fact that the Internet is becoming a driving force that generates grassroots movements is to a significant extent related to the cyberculture of postmaterialism. Compared with materialists whose primary goal is to maintain the status quo, postmaterialists place greater emphasis on changing the existing modes of social and political operations (Inglehart 1990a; Gibson and Duch 1994:25). Thus, they are likely to be engaged in unconventional political activities which embody the new values they prioritize.

Furthermore, at present, the impact of postmaterialist attitudes on alternative political movements seems to be accelerated by the Internet. Participants in new social movements are more likely to be Internet-friendly, and it was found that the Internet is more effective in politicizing people regarding the issues of environmentalism than are the traditional media (Zelwietro 1998). By utilizing electronic technology — e.g., immediate feedback and information dissemination — invigorating activism is observed especially at the grassroots level. Grassroots movements become more advanced by means of the Internet and postmaterialist

attitudes appear to facilitate civic engagement in these alternative political movements.

The main purpose of this article is to explore a cultural dimension of the Internet: postmaterialist values. While many studies have addressed the question of whether the Internet positively or negatively influences civic political life, little attention has been given to how cyberculture affects citizens' political engagement. This article attempts to answer this question by focusing on how postmaterialist value orientations emerge in Korea to yield varying political outcomes.

Theory of Postmaterialism

As mentioned earlier, the cultural dimension of the Internet is a significant factor that determines citizens' political participation, and it is postmaterialism that characterizes cyberculture (Norris 2001). Postmaterialist theory, as a development from materialism, notes the intergenerational changes in value priorities. The theory argues that, as the economic needs of a society are satisfied, citizens become less interested in materialistic concerns and, instead, more concerned about postmaterialistic values. This argument was made by observing the political orientations of the generation born and raised in postwar era Western societies, in which economic growth and physical security were fulfilled. Unlike their elders who prioritized economic security, jobs and employment, and low inflation, the younger generation gave greater emphasis to postmaterialistic values such as self-expression, the quality of life, and freedom and equality (Inglehart 1970, 1977, 1990a,b; Abramson and Inglehart 1986).

Although some critics of postmaterialist theory argue that value priorities are determined by age and life cycle (Flanagan 1982a,b; Böltken and Jagodzinski 1985; Jagodzinski 1983), the postmaterialist thesis is fundamentally reliant on the assumption that "once value priorities are socialized, they appear to be relatively resistant to subsequent changes in social conditions" (Dalton 1988:85). This economic socialization perspective has become a fundamental of postmaterialist theory. That is, the postmaterialist thesis hinges on two principal hypotheses: a scarcity hypothesis and a socialization hypothesis. The scarcity hypothesis suggests that individuals prioritize those things in short supply. In other words, individuals' priorities reflect their socio-economic conditions and they place greater value on those things that are scarce. The socialization hypothesis claims

that economic conditions during an individual's formative years influence the value priorities that last throughout the life cycle. Based on these two hypotheses, Inglehart argued that the emergence of postmaterialist values among the postwar generation was due to their formative experiences of economic affluence (Inglehart 1970, 1977). Although Inglehart modified his theory in his later works by paying attention to period effects, such as inflation rates, on respondents' value priorities (Inglehart 1990a), he still relies on the same assumption that economic affluence during formative years is a crucial force that drives postmaterialist value orientations later in life.

Several scholars refuted Inglehart's economic socialization hypothesis. For example, van Deth (1983), by analyzing panel data from the Netherlands, found that postmaterialist values were not stable, suggesting that values acquired during one's formative years do not endure throughout one's adult life. Trump (1991) also investigated the economic socialization hypothesis with school children in terms of how they rank materialist-postmaterialist values. He found that economic conditions during early-life socialization did not have a significant relationship with the development of postmaterial values.

Duch and Taylor's (1993) work also touches precisely on the controversy over the impact of formative economic affluence on postmaterialist value orientations. By performing a multivariate analysis of the Euro-Barometer survey data gathered over three decades, they demonstrated that economic security during the maturation period does not significantly influence the formation of postmaterialist value orientations. Along with this finding, they criticized Inglehart's theory on two grounds. First, the postmaterialist theory fails to distinguish economic security from economic growth. Inglehart uses the rate of economic growth as the most significant indicator of economic security. Despite fast economic growth, however, citizens in developed economies might have experienced economic insecurity such as job loss, declining wages, and a threat of unemployment. High rates of economic growth do not necessarily indicate that a majority of citizens are more economically secure. Therefore, it is plausible that while citizens spent their formative years enjoying high rates of economic growth, this may not have contributed to forming postmaterialist value orientations. Second, it was found that a majority of citizens from the former Soviet Union and Eastern and Central Europe prioritized postmaterialist values. This evidence contradicts Inglehart's hypothesis, given that the communist regimes experienced economic hardship during the postwar era (Gibson and Duch 1994).

Another argument in regard to the relationship of economic factors to postmaterialist value priorities is that it is economic trends at the time of the surveys, not formative affluence, that are the only relevant cause for the prioritization of postmaterialist values. Clarke and his colleagues demonstrated that the Euro-Barometer survey questions that Inglehart used to establish his theory of postmaterialism were critically sensitive to prevailing economic conditions at the time of the surveys. They argue that Inglehart ignored the changes in economic contexts when he analyzed responses to the four-item values index.[1] For example, in the early 1980s, inflation was not a serious economic problem but unemployment was a more prominent issue in many Western countries. However, the four-item index was based mainly around the "fighting rising prices" statement; it did not contain a statement that dealt with the unemployment problem. When respondents were given such items, their concern about inflation was already resolved and consequently they were likely to be forced to choose one of the remaining three items, instead of selecting the inflation statement. Apparently, a higher likelihood of choosing postmaterial values existed because there were two items concerned with postmaterialist values, compared with only one materialist item, among the remaining three (Clarke and Dutt 1991; Clarke et al. 1997). Furthermore, in a more recent article, Clarke and his colleagues conducted experiments in which they substituted an unemployment statement for the inflation item in the original question. The result showed that responses to the replaced items considerably differed from responses to the original items. They suggest that responses to the four-item values index substantially fluctuate depending on current economic conditions, which they believe are critical determinants of materialist-postmaterialist value orientations (Clarke et al. 1999).

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1 One of the original four-item materialist-postmaterialist questions:
"here is a lot of talk these days about what the aims of this country should be for the next ten years. On this card are listed some of the goals which different people would give top priority. Would you please say which one of these you, yourself consider the most important?" (Code one answer, then ask)"And which would be the next most important?" (Code one answer)

1. Maintaining order in the nation.
2. Giving the people more say in important political decisions.
3. Fighting rising prices.
4. Protecting freedom of speech.

Source. The Euro-Barometer Surveys

Davis and his colleagues also demonstrated a significant influence of current socio-economic conditions on value priorities. According to their study, individuals' selection of value priorities reflects the social and economic contexts that they belong to. For example, an increase in crime rates in the countries where respondents lived led them to prioritize the issues of "fighting against crime" and "maintaining order." Also, a positive correlation between a higher rate of inflation and a greater probability to give priority to "fighting rising prices" was observed. Moreover, they found very weak correlations and a lack of consistency between the three four-item indexes, which Inglehart used in his research. That is, the proportions of consistent materialists and postmaterialists were extremely small. The lack of coherence in the indexes was still significant even when the levels of political interest and education, which were believed to yield more coherent response patterns, were taken into account. As a result, they came to the conclusion that the four-item indexes did not represent a single underlying value dimension; the increased number of choices made by respondents for postmaterialist values in the surveys does not necessarily indicate that value orientations are evolving toward postmaterialist values. Rather, social and economic conditions during the specific periods were reflected in the selection of value priorities (Davis and Davenport 1999; Davis et al. 1999).

De Graaf and Evans, likewise, argue that formative experience of economic security is not a significant predictor of postmaterialist value orientations. But their argument is slightly different from those illustrated above, in that they suggest that economic conditions at the time of the surveys were not a significant factor. According to their findings, it was not economic factors but several other contextual variables that determined value priorities. One of the significant predictors they identified is severity of wartime experience; citizens of countries which had severe war experiences were more likely to value physical sustenance and security needs. One might argue that their finding — the impact of war experience on value priorities — is in effect consistent with Inglehart's socialization hypothesis, in that severe war experience during the maturation period resulted in giving priorities to materialist concerns. However, their finding of the impact of war experience was not confined to specific age groups (i.e., not limited to those whose formative years were during the war) but encompassed all age groups (i.e., both pre-adult and adult experiences influenced value orientations). Therefore, this study also called for some modification of Inglehart's socialization hypothesis (De Graaf and Evans 1996).

As illustrated so far, many critics claim that the underlying hypothesis of

postmaterialist theory warrants modification. Nevertheless, there is some consensus that the emergence of postmaterialist value orientations is an influential element of changing political behavior. It is undeniable that the shift of value priorities accounts, in significant part, for the changing phenomenon of contemporary politics. This warrants particular attention because its participatory orientation generated alternative forms of political movements, as will be examined next.

Postmaterialism and Alternative Political Movements

What makes the postmaterialist thesis significant to the fields of social science is not limited to the value change hypothesis. The theory has captured public attention because postmaterialist value priorities are apparently associated with the transformation of citizens' political orientations and behavior. For instance, while the older generation has strong partisan affiliation, the younger generation is more inclined to focus on issue-oriented political interests. They express interest in such issues as environmental protection and globalization and are concerned with cosmopolitan views and self-autonomy. This is in contrast to the older generation who tends to give priority to material well-being and nationalistic issues. The label "New Politics" has therefore been created to refer to the emergence of a new political paradigm that signifies these changing political demands and action repertoires (Barnes and Kasse 1979; Dalton 1988; Inglehart 1977, 1990a,b; Jennings 1990).

> In a nutshell, Old Politics means preoccupation with economic growth, stable prices, a stable economy, strong military defence and conventional political style. Adherents of the New Politics, on the contrary, demand that ecological imperatives guide economic decisions, that rights to participation and the freedom to realize alternative life-styles should be extended, and unilateral disarmament be promoted in order to reduce international tensions. Furthermore, the New Politics is concerned with equal rights for all kinds of social minorities, solidarity with the Third World and a general left-wing orientation. Also, supporters of the New Politics tend to be prepared to engage in unconventional political participation. (Poguntke 1993:10)

The birth of the New Politics not only induced changes in individual-level participatory dispositions but also resulted in a political shift at the organizational level: notably, in the form of party realignment in Western Europe. The founding and electoral success of small left-wing and green parties in Western Europe in the late twentieth century reflects institutional arrangements in response to the substantive influence of new social and political movements. The German Green Party is the most notable outcome of such a tide of political change (Müller-Rommel 1990; Poguntke 1993).

The distinctive characteristics of the New Politics deserve a great deal of attention because they markedly distinguish alternative political movements from the class-based old social movements in many respects. In this regard, Dalton and his colleagues (1990) have comprehensively identified how new social movements differ from old social movements — in terms of ideology, base of support, organizational structure, and political style. First of all, the libertarian ideology of new social movements stresses civic participation in decision-making processes "through methods of direct democracy or increased reliance on self-help groups and cooperative styles of social organizations" (Dalton et al. 1990:11). The emphasis on libertarian beliefs requires changes to existing social operations, often challenging the consensual political order. These anti-establishment orientation and populist values of the New Left ideology are in conflict with both business and labor, and they are the factors that distinguish new social movements from the traditional European leftist movements, which tend to be hierarchical and bureaucratized. Moreover, arguably, this ideological orientation is also related in the base of support for new social movements: they are not based on a specific social stratum such as distinct class or ethnicity. Unlike old social movements based on capitalist class conflicts, "new social movements are not drawn from the socio-economically disadvantaged or from repressed minorities. The environmental and peace movements garner their support from a socially diffuse group of individuals who share their goals — not from a distinct class, ethnic, or other social stratum" (Dalton et al. 1990:12). In this respect, new social movements initiate a political shift from group-based cleavages to value- and issue-based cleavages.

Organizational structure is another factor that distinguishes new social movements from old social movements. While old social movements mobilize their support and resources by "centralized" and "hierarchical" organizational structure, the structure of new social movements are "fluid," "decentralized," and "open" (Dalton et al. 1990:13). This flexible organizational pattern characterizes

a less elite-directed tendency of mobilization that is observed in new social movements.

Lastly, the political style of new social movements is different from old social movements in that they pursue unconventional protest activism, rejecting involvement in conventional institutions; but unlike the traditional protest activities, which tended to be spontaneous, new social movements generate planned and organized protest actions. This anti-establishment tendency of new social movements partly stems from estrangement from a partisan structure that is hierarchical and elite-dominated. In addition, the reliance of established political parties on corporatist-industrial interests in most neo-corporatist systems of Western Europe often contradicts the political demands and policy stances of new social movement organizations (Dalton et al. 1990:14-5).

Concerning postmaterialism, it is widely accepted that the emergence of postmaterialist value orientations has generated alternative political movements and new social movements (Müller-Rommel and Poguntke 1995; Opp 1990), and the majority of the empirical evidence has shown this. For example, a number of German scholars have demonstrated how support for the German Green Party was drawn from a postmaterialist value shift (Inglehart 1990b:45). Moreover, Inglehart enumerates an array of survey research that has observed the impact of postmaterialist values on the development of these new social movements. First of all, the Euro-Barometer surveys have identified a wide range of evidence from twelve European nations: "the presence of materialist/postmaterialist values constitutes another major component underlying support for the new social movements. In each of the twelve nations, postmaterialists are far more likely to be members or potential members of these movements than are materialists" (Inglehart 1990b:52-4). Interestingly, while Left-Right political ideology is a more significant predictor of political attitudes, actual behavior — that is, actual participation such as membership in the environmental movement — is more strongly linked to postmaterial values. Inglehart notes that "the same is true of electoral behavior concerning the largest and most salient of the ecology parties, the West German Greens: the linkage between votes and values is extremely strong (postmaterialists are 23 times as apt to vote for them as are materialists)" (Inglehart 1990b:56). A multivariate analysis also demonstrates that postmaterialist value priorities drive a strong influence on membership in the new social movements even after controlling for the effects of age and education and other variables (Inglehart 1990b:60).

Postmaterialism and Emerging Societies

Although the theoretical development of postmaterialism has been shaped by observing the cultural shift in advanced industrial societies, some studies suggest that postmaterialistic values also exert a crucial impact on emerging societies by contributing to the democratization process. In their study applying postmaterialist theory to the former Soviet Union, Gibson and Duch found that postmaterialist value orientations significantly enhanced public support for democratic institutional processes. Moreover, postmaterialists were more likely to be involved in unconventional political participation, which is an important means of resisting undemocratic regimes in newly emerging democracies. Given that postmaterialists tend to be equipped with more sophisticated political skills and that unconventional political activities often demand higher political qualities, there appears to be a significant association between postmaterialistic orientations and the advancement of democracy (Gibson and Duch 1994).

Presumably, the same is true for South Korea, one of the emerging countries to experience authoritarian regimes for several decades during the postwar period. In fact, the country's economic development is a factor that renders postmaterialist theory more crucial in explaining the political transformation in South Korea. Paradoxically, South Korea achieved rapid economic development during the military-backed authoritarian regimes from the 1960s to the 1980s (Rose et al. 1999). Although the strength of the Korean economy is still far below the average for developed countries, fast economic growth in Korea has resulted in intergenerational cultural transition, which in turn has been reflected in changing political behavior. At the same time, citizens' desires for democratization, in reaction to state authoritarianism, have led to a search for alternative channels of political activism. The economic development and alternative political movements in South Korea therefore played an important role in bringing about postmaterialist value priorities.

Internet and Postmaterialism

The emergence of postmaterialist value priorities is also related to the development of technologies, since public life is essentially influenced by new technologies, and technology-driven societal changes demand different civic skills (Smith and Marx 1994). In contemporary society, the Internet is a significant

influence on public life, both positively and negatively. A recent study of the ideological dimensions of Internet users upholds the view that postmaterialist attitudes are prominent online (Norris 2001). In this section, the factors linking the Internet to postmaterial value shift will be illustrated: 1) cognitive mobilization driven by rising educational levels, 2) cognitive mobilization through media diffusion, and 3) the evolution of new social movements.

Cognitive Mobilization: Rising Educational Levels

There are a series of theoretical underpinnings for the significant linkage of the Internet to the development of postmaterialism. First of all, the way in which the Internet is associated with changing political behavior can be illuminated by the cognitive mobilization thesis. According to Inglehart's study of political culture, postmaterialist attitudes and the shifting of value priorities result from cognitive mobilization, which refers to the process by which the mass public becomes involved in politics by obtaining appropriate political skills to cope with the political world (Inglehart 1990a: 337). One of the most overt indicators of cognitive mobilization is level of education. That is, better educated people tend to be politically more sophisticated, which in turn reduces the impact of political cues such as partisanship on their political attitudes and behavior. These people are more prone to integrate an extensive range of political information in determining their political action. Instead of using simple ideological cues, they evaluate political candidates based on their policy proposals and issue stands (Inglehart 1977, 1990a). In fact, a number of scholars contend that the impact of education on political participation is crucial, showing how a higher level of education leads to greater levels of subjective political efficacy and political participation (Almond and Verba 1963; Milbrath and Goel 1977; Verba et al. 1978). Nevertheless, it is often the case that better educated people have a higher socioeconomic status. Such affluent people are not always actively involved in political activities. Although there have been inconclusive results and contradicting views regarding the political impact of educational level, it is apparent that well-educated citizens tend to give priority to postmaterialist values. Given that people heavily engaged in Internet-related activities are more likely to have higher levels of education (Bonchek 1997), cognitive mobilization seems to be a prominent mechanism by which postmaterialist values become prevalent among Internet users.

Cognitive Mobilization: Information Diffusion and Political Deliberation

Another factor leading to cognitive mobilization is the diffusion of political information (Dalton 1984; Gibson and Duch 1994). It is because of this factor that the Internet merits special attention given that it fulfills its role as a mass medium. The Internet is undeniably a mass medium through which a huge amount of information regarding politics is made readily available to the mass public. But at the same time, the Internet possesses unique properties that enable targeted communication and personalized media use, which in turn distinguishes it from traditional mass media (Farrell 1996). One of the most pronounced distinctions is that the Internet is a pull rather than push medium: unlike push media that provide messages without users' requests, each bit of content on the World Wide Web comes to users only if they request it. Traditional mass media such as TV and radio are prominent examples of push media in the sense that audiences are exposed to all varieties of content once a channel is selected. Meanwhile, Internet users decide whether to receive — pull — particular messages, and there are no interruptions like TV commercials. Although some advertising on the net blurs the line between push and pull media, the fundamental mechanism of Internet use is primarily deemed as pull rather than push.

Another unique feature of the Internet is concerned with narrowcasting. While television content seeks to appeal to the widest audience possible (i.e., broadcasting), the new media — cable television and the Internet — deliver messages that are targeted only to a specific segment of the mass population (i.e., narrowcasting) (Farrell 1996). Narrowcasting is an essential format of the Internet, giving a wide range of alternatives to the different groupings of audiences to meet their "special interest and special purpose communications" (Neuman 1991:172). Especially combined with its feature as a pull medium, narrowcasting on the Internet reflects how users get involved in more personalized communication that satisfies their preferences and goals (Bonchek 1997). By and large, the impact of the information that meets personal needs and desires on cognitive mobilization is greater than a passive reception of messages generated for the general mass audience.

The third feature of the Internet is more directly associated with its special function of being conducive to public deliberation of political affairs — namely, interactive communication. Interactivity is defined as "the quality of electronically mediated communications characterized by increased control over the communications process by both the sender and receiver" (Neuman 1991:104).

The interactive process on the net ensures that citizens are no longer passive receivers of messages generated by the sender, blurring the clear-cut distinction between the sender and receiver. As reviewed in the previous section, the influence of the citizenry on the political process has therefore become greater owing to the expansion of opportunities for citizens to deliberate on public issues over the net. Political deliberation was found to draw public attention to politics and to elicit active engagement in political affairs. The deliberative dialogue reduces passiveness and disengagement, and enhances political efficacy and awareness of alternative roles of citizens in democratic processes (Frost and Makarov 1998). In fact, a positive impact of the mass media on political deliberation has been evidenced such that exposure to the mass media — even such traditional media as newspapers and television — increases political discussion with acquaintances during the course of daily life (Mondak 1995). Such impact appears to be far greater when it comes to the Internet considering a variety of interactive communication methods available for users to engage in political discussion, such as chat rooms, list servs, bulletin boards, and e-mails. The interactive communication mobilizes individual citizen's cognitive capacities to deal with the complicated political world, and envisages citizens' bottom-up reactions to institutional processes. The interactivity not only changes the pattern of vertical communications between political elites and ordinary citizens, but also extends "horizontal communications within the citizenry" (Neuman 1991:89).

The unique attributes of the Internet illustrated above effectively generate information diffusion and therefore enhance cognitive skills needed for engagement in political spheres. As it is found that the impact of postmaterial values on political participation was mediated by media use and communication patterns (Sotirovic and McLeod 2001), personalized and goal-directed interactive communications via the Internet foster cognitive mobilization and magnify the political impact of postmaterialism.

Evolution of New Social Movements

The third aspect of the Internet that warrants discussion in identifying its connection with postmaterial values is in regard to the evolution of new social movements. A pervasive phenomenon observed in recent years is that membership in traditional political organizations, such as political parties and trade unions, has substantially declined. It is argued that citizens turn their attention away from political parties, and party affiliation is no longer an effective indica-

tor of citizens' political choices. This waning trend of party loyalties and electoral participation has been one of the most discernable empirical indicators of citizen disaffection with politics (Dalton 2000).

However, it is notable that public disengagement from conventional politics does not necessarily indicate the entire withdrawal from political spheres. In fact, there have been counter-arguments that the level of citizens' political participation is not in a decline but indeed in a gradual increase when taking into account unconventional political activities (Cain et al. 2003; Norris 1996, 2002; Wattenberg 2002). Many have observed the rise of new social movements and protest politics (Barnes and Kaase 1979; Kriesi et al. 1995), and perhaps a more accurate diagnosis of the current state of the political world is that the modes of political participation are changing.

The development of new social movements can be explained by two dimensions, cultural and structural, in which postmaterialism relates more to the former and the Internet to the latter. While materialists are sympathetic to the maintenance of the status quo, postmaterialists are motivated by political tendency to challenge the existing, rather consensual, political order (Inglehart 1990b; Gibson and Duch 1994:25; Poguntke 1993). Thus they tend to be involved in unconventional political action which spreads the protest ideas that they prioritize. Indeed, the objectives of new social movements are far from economic and material concerns but more likely closer to postmaterial values: the environmentalist movement, the women's movement, the peace movement and the opposition to nuclear war, and the animal rights movement all reflect concerns for a better quality of life.

Moreover, the Internet promotes new social movements by making effective communication methods available for movement supporters. In fact, a significant impact of the Internet on political participation is that it has invigorated civic organizations and minor and fringe parties, which benefit more from the Information & Communication Technology (ICT) applications than do the major parties. Primarily due to financial constraints and reduced organizational structures, the activities of these groups are heavily dependent on the Internet (Bonchek 1997; Norris 2001). New social movement activists are more likely to utilize the Internet for their activities because it is a more effective means of disseminating the ideas of new social movements, such as environmentalism, than the traditional media (Zelwietro 1998). The Internet stands in the middle of the political transformation by creating new arrangements to serve the political needs of Internet users and by enabling direct-action politics to flourish on the

net. Protest politics rapidly diffused via the web, and alternative modes of political action — cyber-demonstrations, cyber-boycotts, Internet petitions, and so on — dramatically changed the existing political operations. Rallying against the multi-national corporations for their inhumane abuse of workers has become a popular repertoire of political movements in cyberspace (Norris 2001, 2002). The reason behind citizen disengagement in conventional politics is the notion that an individual's participation in politics makes little difference to the political landscape. Internet-driven political activism wipes out such notions and increases individuals' political efficacy. Diversified modes of political action available on the net afford new opportunities for citizens, giving rise to a sense of empowerment and enhancing political efficacy. As such, although Internet users may still avoid engagement in conventional mode of participation (e.g., participation in voting), they seem to express their political interests through non-institutionalized and unconventional political activities.

There are a number of examples of movements organized on the Internet which demonstrate postmaterial values such as cosmopolitan views and freedom and equality. In addition to the well-known example of the Seattle rally against the WTO in 1999 (Bennet and Entman 2001), 'Civil Disobedience', a New York-based Internet activist group, performed a cyber-demonstration against the Mexican government who had suppressed farmers' movement and Zapatista supporters. Cyber-picketing, for example Blue Ribbon which expressed concerns about the US enactment of cyber censorship, is another mode of worldwide movement initiated and led on the Internet. In effect, the efficiency of the Internet is another strength that fertilizes the evolution of alternative political movements on the net. Norris has noted that,

> As exemplified by the Institute for Global Communications' progressive network, through the internet people can subscribe to advocacy and lobbying groups, affiliate with the organization, receive e-mailed policy newsletters and action alerts, send faxes and e-mails to decision makers, circulate electronic petitions, learn about forthcoming street demonstrations, protest events, job vacancies, and voluntary activities, as well as share effective strategies for activism, contribute short news items to the site, and participate in online discussions. (Norris 2002a: 209)

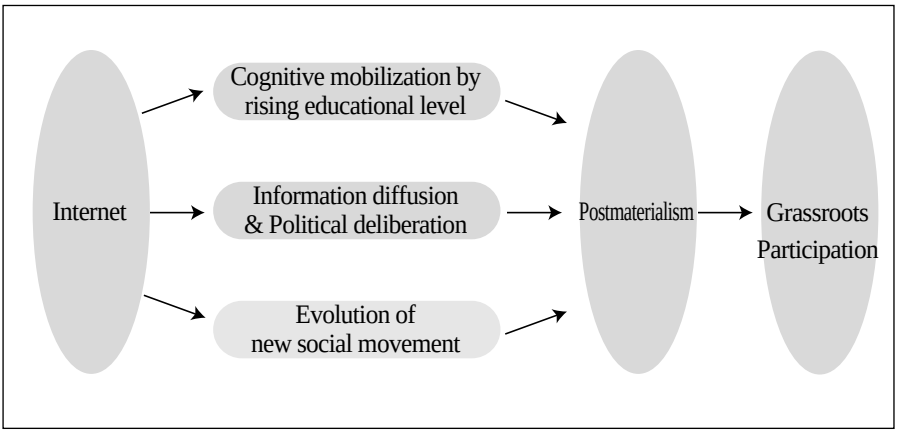
This statement not only illustrates behavioral routines of online political activities but also implies that Internet users can be efficiently engaged in political

actions. By means of the multi-tasking functions of the Internet, users are exposed to political stimuli in a variety of ways (e.g., web-based news outlets) whenever they are connected to the Internet. While off-line face-to-face meetings are unlikely to be extended beyond their instrumental goals, there are plenty of possibilities for Internet users to engage in new forms of political activities as illustrated above. That is, there is a greater potential for Internet users to be exposed to political information and to get involved in alternative political movements. Furthermore, it has been suggested that participation in political protests is "contagious" such that a successful protest propels others to engage in protest activism, and the media play an important role in publicizing successful protests (Sanders et al. 2003:691). Given that the interactive mechanisms of the Internet increase the contagion effect further by making it possible to publicize political protests more widely and more frequently, new social movements, which are in general reliant on protest action repertoires, benefit considerably from the Internet.

Nevertheless, it is notable that the evolution of new social movements is historically directly associated with the advancement of civil society in Western countries. From this point of view, the political significance of new social movements remains questionable in South Korea, which has a weak tradition of civil society. One might presume that Korean citizens may not have as strong an interest in the issues like environmental protection, animal rights, and support for global peace as people in Western societies do. However, it has been found that concern for the environment is also prevalent in developing countries as indicated by the proliferation of environmental organizations in those countries (Brechin and Kempton 1994). Furthermore, given the prominent feature of the Internet as a borderless communication channel, the evolution of new social movements in Western post-industrial societies seems to be reflected in South Korean politics in one way or another.

In sum, the three factors of cognitive mobilization by rising educational levels, information diffusion and political deliberation, and the evolution of new social movements facilitate a postmaterialistic value shift. As a result, amongst a variety of characteristics, cyberculture is prevailed by postmaterialist value orientations. While cyberculture of postmaterialism focuses on dominant value orientations in cyberspace, its behavioral consequence in primacy is grassroots participation in protest politics. Given that the dominant feature of postmaterialist value is participatory orientation and it has been historically evidenced that postmaterialism entailed protest movements, a behavioral consequence of the value

Figure 1 Schematic diagram of the relationship between the Internet, postmaterialism, and grassroots participation.(%)]



shift concerns grassroots movements by means of political protest. Figure 1 presents a schematic relationship of the Internet, cyberculture of postmaterialism, and grassroots participation.

Cyberculture of Postmaterialism and Grassroots Participation in Korea

Given that Korea is a leading country in terms of Internet connectivity, it is easy to conceive that postmaterialist value orientations have become dominant in the society. In fact, there are several indicators displaying the prevalence of postmaterialist values, which impacts value priorities, life-style changes, and transformative worldview of the emerging society. For instance, in a survey conducted in 2001, a majority of respondents (82.4%) selected "health" and "happiness of family" as the most important things in their lives while only 4.9% of the respondents prioritized "economic affluence." (See Table 1).

The prevalence of postmaterialist orientations is not limited to value priority as above, but we can grasp its salience by looking at an increasing trend of expenditure for cultural activities as demonstrated in Figure 2. The percent of expenditure for cultural activities including Internet use has been consistently increasing over the last few decades. This pattern indicates that people have become more interested in enhancing their quality of life by participating in cul-

tural activities including hobbies and leisure activities as well as Internet use. This is an indicator of the predominance of postmaterialism physically reflected in the actual lives of Korean people while Table 1 displays postmaterialism in light of value orientations.

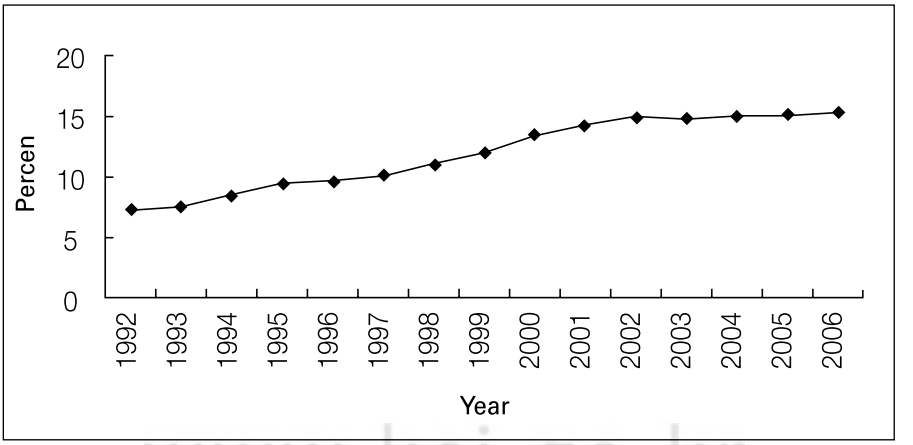
Amongst various characteristics of postmaterialism, it is participatory orien-

Table 1 Patterns of responses on the most important things in life

	Frequency	Percent
Health	580	63.1
Happiness of Family	177	19.3
Manpower Development	38	4.1
Economic Affluence	45	4.9
Successful Career	25	2.7
Intellectual Maturity	16	1.7
Hobbies/Leisure	4	0.4
Socizl Relationship	30	3.3
Other	4	0.4
Toal	919	100.0

Source: Survey on Korean's Consciousness and Value Priorities commissioned by the Government Information Agency (2001). Available on the Korea Social Science Data Centre website (www.ksdc.re.kr).

Figure 2 Increasing trend of expenditure for cultural activities



Source: Korea National Statistical Office (2007).

tations that have a close nexus to the Internet and cyberculture in Korea. The political consequences of this high demand of ICTs are encouraging as one might assume that a political breakthrough has occurred to dramatically enhance civic participation in South Korean politics. Speculation over what makes Koreans enthusiastic about digital politics reaches the conclusion that both political and economic reasons led to the impact of the Internet becoming crucial in South Korean politics. As Korean politics was shaped by authoritarian regimes for a long time in its history, the citizens' desire for democratization, a reaction to state authoritarianism, resulted in a search for alternative channels for political discourse. Given that the political impact of the media can be greater in developing countries than in mature democratic societies, this democratization process in Korea seems to have consolidated the role of the Internet in civic political life (Lawson 2002; Winters 2002). Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the South Korean economy grew in tandem with its rise to being a leading country in the IT industries. The strength of the IT industries is attributed to the intensive promotion by the Korean government. Government IT policies have been very aggressive because IT industries were considered the only solution to breaking the deadlock of the economic crisis which had occurred in recent years. For these reasons, the Internet has become an important symbol in understanding the political transformation of Korea

More significantly, it is noteworthy that the growth of Internet use in Korea coincided with the rise of protest movements. The movements organized by civic dissidents including students and labor forces significantly contributed to the birth of civilian government in the 1990s. The data from the World Values Surveys regarding protest politics in twenty-two nations support this argument of the popularity of protest activism in Korea: South Korea shows the most marked increase in citizens' participation in protest activities such as street demonstrations and petitions between the early 1980s and the early 1990s (Norris 2002:200-1).

Nowadays, the impact of alternative political movements is becoming even more crucial to the public's political life as the Internet affords new opportunities for citizen empowerment. By means of computer-mediated communication, civil society effectively intervenes in institutional processes including parliamentary and presidential elections. Three instances observed in the first decade of the 21st century are worth mentioning: 1) the candidate boycott campaigns (the Nakchon and Nakson Movements) of the 2000 and 2004 National Assembly elections, 2) the 2002 Presidential Election campaign, and 3) Web 2.0 and the

utilization of User Created Contents (UCC) in the 2007 Presidential Election campaign. These three cases illuminate behavioral consequences of postmaterialist values grounded on participatory orientations.

In early 2000, ahead of the general election, hundreds of civic activist groups formed the ad hoc organization Citizens' Solidarity for the General Elections (CSGE) in an attempt to reform the election process by performing a candidate boycott campaign. Its fundamental goal was to expel corrupt and unqualified politicians from the political arena so as to make the political landscape more reform-oriented. To this end, two primary platforms of their movement were pronounced:

> The first was to generate a list of politicians who should not be nominated by political parties to run for the national assembly elections, and then to campaign against their nominations (the Nakch'on movement). Second, if some of those 'blacklisted' candidates were nominated anyway, the movement was to campaign against their actual elections (the Nakson movement). (Kim 2003:91)

This candidate boycott movement received enormously strong public support, creating strong political efficacy especially among young people. The core ideas and major activities of this movement frequently became the subject of dialogues and conversations that evolved on the net. Netizens voluntarily participated in the movement and encouraged fellow citizens to sympathize with and give support for the activities.

The success of this candidate boycott movement reoccurred in the 2004 general election held in April. Civic organizations made an attempt to create more advanced modes of civic participation; while the selection of corrupt candidates in the 2000 movement was made by the ad hoc organization, citizens were, in 2004, empowered to determine which candidates should be disqualified from being nominated and elected by participating in electronic voting via the Internet. This candidate boycott campaign vividly showed the growth of civil society in Korea as a formidable and influential force in the political arena. It also demonstrated that the Internet enables the strengthening of civic empowerment in the political process.

Another example that sheds light on the political impact of widespread Internet use is the 2002 Presidential Election. During the course of the election, an Internet-based fan club (Rohsamo) for Roh Moo-Hyun, the then presidential

candidate, played a tremendously important role, resulting in Roh's victory. In fact, this group and the presidential election process received a great deal of attention all around the world because of the significant role the Internet played, and many regard this event as a political breakthrough in Korea. Members of the fan club fueled discussions on political reform over the Internet and mobilized supporters by utilizing all kinds of online communication devices—e-mails, bulletin boards, chat rooms, and instant messages. The peak of their activities was observed on election day in which their mobilization of votes dramatically changed the election result over the course of the day. With the significant influence of the Internet-based campaign, Roh Moo-Hyun was elected against all odds, becoming what was referred to as the first 'Internet President' (Watts 2003; Kim and Yang 2004).

The upgraded mode of Internet user participation in the 2007 Presidential Election campaign is represented by the utilization of User Created Contents (UCC). In the age of Web 2.0, the significance of the cyber-community has doubled, and a paradigmatic shift of political behavior is being observed especially from young people. Web 2.0 was created to represent the most up-to-date mode of the relationship between the Internet and political campaigns. The concept, when it is used in the fields of social sciences, captures the phenomenon of changing patterns of cyber-communities such as a variety of social—networking sites focusing on participatory orientations of community members and sharing of political outcomes between them. Driven by the improved applications of the World Wide Web including blogs, podcasts, social bookmarking, and wikis, the emergence of web-based communities in the political landscape is seen as more genuinely interactive and participatory, blurring the line between producers and consumers of web products as well as between election camps and general voters. Web 2.0 thus denotes a higher emphasis given to the role of cyber-communities in election campaigns in the way that community members produce political messages in voluntary capacities—as they are called as User Created Contents—by utilizing web applications and sharing them with their fellow members and ordinary citizens.

The emergence of Web 2.0 has coincided with the altering value priorities among young people. A number of polls indicate that young people's lifestyles and their worldviews are changing to prioritize postmaterialist values. They converge on the issues drawing their attention and build online communities to deliberate on those issues with fellow community members. They proactively participate in political activities such as cyber-petition and online rallies in order

to actualize their political ideals. By virtue of the enhanced technology available on the Internet, they create by themselves moving images and visual messages of the presidential candidates and disseminate those messages all over cyberspace. The presidential election camps, regardless of their political ideological spectrum, are making efforts to succeed in implementing effective campaign strategies by accommodating postmaterialistic cyberculture created by young Koreans. According to technological progress made in the last few years, the patterns of political participation in cyberspace have been transformed in a direction of eroding the clear distinction between political actors and observers. Given that South Korea is an early adopter of political applications of web technology, the behavioral outcomes of postmaterialistic cyberculture, including User Created Contents (UCC), is expected to significantly influence the 2007 Presidential Election race.

However, the evolution of these Internet-driven movements should not be attributed solely to the technological revolution. Rather, the emergence of civil society and overall societal transition seem to have altered citizens' political orientations and value priorities. Admittedly, postmaterial value change is in some part one of the forces that induced the rise of protest movements and political reform in Korea. According to Flanagan and Lee's (2000) study, the growing sympathies with libertarian values were observed in Korea passing through the 1980s and 1990s when civic protests against military-backed governments were at their peak. Furthermore, this value change is found to be associated with a series of political reforms which came about in the late twentieth century in Korea. As mentioned earlier, paradoxically enough, rapid economic progress had been achieved in Korea while it was under a form of military dictatorship over several decades. Consequently, the increase in the level of education and overall affluence nurtured the shift of value priorities among the general public (Flanagan and Lee, 2000). Postmaterial value orientations elicited participatory dispositions among Korean citizens, which in turn became a driving force for the growth of civil society and the advancement of political reform.

The participatory orientation of postmaterialists is particularly noteworthy in that it augments general interest in politics in the midst of an arguably waning political engagement. Also, in a sense, this result supports the argument that the decline in electoral turnout and party membership does not necessarily indicate the entire withdrawal from the political sphere (Cain et al. 2003; Norris 2002; Wattenberg 2002). Although voting participation has decreased in recent years, engagement in other forms of political activities — especially protest activism —

is increasing (Margetts 2000). In fact, postmaterialists tend to show a lower level of engagement in electoral participation while retaining active involvement in other areas of political activism. As Dalton argues, "this is partially because the establishment parties have been hesitant to respond to new issue demands. In addition, postmaterialists are generally skeptical of established hierarchical organizations, such as most political parties. Instead, postmaterial values have stimulated participation in citizen initiatives, protests, and other forms of unconventional political activity" (Dalton 1988:92-3).

However, it is important to note that the historical context of new social movements developed in Western societies in relation to postmaterialism is absent in Korea. The evolution of new social movements and new issue demands in Western societies progressed while basic needs for democracy were already fulfilled and pluralistic civil society was far advanced. In Korea, however, it has been only a decade since the institutional arrangements to substantially ensure democracy in civic political life were attained. Democracy was a long-standing concern that saturated Korean society as a whole and, hence, it was at the top of the primary political agenda. Therefore, the absorption into the matter of democratization resulted in a limiting of the scope of political issue demands. Whereas protest politics has been fully advanced as a reaction to anti-democratic governments, there was not much room for the core issues of new social movements — environmental protection, women's rights, the opposition to nuclear war, and animal rights — to capture the attention of Korean Internet users. While the impact of postmaterialist value orientations on promoting new social movements might be universal as indicated by the positive association between the two, the new issue demands have not yet been brought to the forefront of the political sphere in cyberspace in Korea.

Conclusion

It is rather encouraging that postmaterialist value, which characterizes cyberculture, is an influential factor generating citizens' political engagement in South Korea. As many observers have demonstrated, participatory dispositions of postmaterialist attitudes generate political interest and engagement in the political process. Postmaterialists are the ones who believe that politics is a critical component determining the quality of life and that therefore citizens ought to be attentive to how politicians handle their jobs (Dalton 1988; Inglehart 1990a).

Although the economic socialization hypothesis remains to be tested, the positive association between postmaterialist value orientations and political participation appears to be universally valid.

Moreover, it is meaningful that postmaterialist values influence various dimensions of political participation: general interest in politics, protest participation, and support for a new social movement (Kim 2006). Although these three dimensions considerably overlap each other, each dimension represents a particular kind of political engagement with varying degrees of involvement and different goals of action. For example, protest activism in Korea has a historical root distinct from that of the new social movements and there is no obvious connection between the two; political protest in Korea developed through the democratization process whereas it evolved as a typical political repertoire of new social movements in Western societies. Despite this disparity, postmaterialist values emerge to influence universally all those various aspects of political engagement.

In particular, it is also noteworthy that postmaterialist values are positively associated with support for the environmental movement in Korea (Kim 2006). In fact, there is an ongoing controversy over the relationship between postmaterialist values and concern for the environment: some argue that environmental concern is a consequence of objective environmental conditions rather than of postmaterialist value priorities. They demonstrate the prominent environmental concern in countries where economic development has not been achieved and therefore postmaterialist orientations are unlikely to be fostered (Brechin and Kempton 1994; Dunlap and Mertig 1997). However, the finding of this study turned out to endorse the view that postmaterialist values are a significant predictor of environmental concern in developing countries (Kidd and Lee 1997).

The participatory values of postmaterialism may be more important in forecasting the future of democracy in Korea. While representative democracy might be said to be at stake, such that an increasing number of citizens do not trust representative institutions and do not participate in elections, new forms of democratic practices are indeed being explored around the world. In addition to the efforts to reform representative processes, there is evidence that citizens' direct involvement in political processes, such as referendums and policy juries, is more frequently adopted in the workings of the state than was the case a generation ago. Furthermore, greater potential for citizen engagement in the policy process has been created in regard to a new mode of democracy, which is called "advocacy democracy": citizens influence the policy process through public

interest groups while the eventual decision-making is still in the hands of political elites (Dalton et al. 1990). The protest potential of postmaterialists, which was found in this study, appears to be crucial especially with regard to advocacy democracy in Korea. The growing influence of civil society groups on democratic transition in Korea is largely attributed to the enrichment of political protest against authoritarian regimes. Political protest was an effective and symbolic means to express public concern for democratization and to demand a citizen's rights for engagement in the political decision-making. Going beyond the role of resistance against authoritarianism, some of the protest groups have taken a step forward to fulfill their roles in policy advocacy. As Sunhyuk Kim argues in relation to the role of civil society in Korea, "In the past, its purpose was to challenge, oppose, and even overthrow the authoritarian regimes. Now, civil society must engage, affect, monitor, check, and control the state by articulating and promoting new visions and developing and presenting new policy prescriptions" (Kim 2000:148-9). Participatory orientations toward alternative forms of political movements among postmaterialists emerge as a crucial element that embodies new opportunities for citizens to engage in the policy process and actualizes advocacy democracy in Korea. Given that cyberculture is dominated by the participatory values of postmaterialism, the future of democracy in Korea seems to, at least in part, lie with how the Internet is effectively used for civic engagement in the governmental policy process.

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Dr. Ji-Young Kim is a full-time lecturer in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Sungkyunkwan University. Her research interests include the Internet and political participation, social capital, and civic journalism. Her works have been published in both national and international journals including the *International Political Science Review*, *Information Polity*, *Korean Journal of Journalism and Communication Studies*, and *Korea Observer*.