WHEN THE NERDS GO MARCHING IN

How Digital Technology Moved from the Margins to the Mainstream of Political Campaigns

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Acknowledgments

This book was written over a number of years, as my very patient publisher Angela Chpnako and series editor Andrew Chadwick can attest to. While its long gestation period means that some of the insights it offers are somewhat "late to market," it has also given the book a richer historical perspective and hopefully a longevity that will continue to serve scholarship in the future. In particular, what has become apparent from taking this "longer view" is how truly humble the origins of the modern digital campaign were. Only by seeing that initial amateurism and exuberance can one fully appreciate the very rapid pace of advance that has occurred in recent years. The "electronic billboards" of yesteryear that won awards simply by having revolving ribbons now dwindle into utter insignificance, compared with the digital behemoths that have taken over the heart of campaign headquarters. Another unintended but useful consequence of its time in preparation is the confidence with which it can state its core conclusion. The intertwining of digital technologies is now so pervasive within campaign operations that talk of "the" digital campaign as a stand-alone entity is anachronistic to the point of sounding quaint.

In undertaking this project I have drawn on the inspiration and intellectual stimulation of many colleagues—too many to name personally here, but I thank each and every one of them for the nuggets of wisdom they contributed to the production of this volume. Perhaps I can start where it all began and thank my coauthor (of other works) and former Salford colleague and friend Steve Ward, without whom I think I might have actually missed the internet boat. That conversation in Crescent House canteen certainly bore a lot of academic fruit. I have also had the great joy and privilege of regularly brainstorming ideas about digital political communication with my long-time coauthor (of other works) and incredibly dear (and stylish) friend Andrea Rommele; I look forward to toasting the book's publication in our time-honored tradition. The roots of the book itself took hold initially with the commencement of my Economic and Social

Introduction

This book charts the increasing role and centrality of the internet within election campaigns across established democracies, following its electoral debut in the mid-1990s. It does so by presenting a four-phase model of digital campaigns that charts the movement of the technology from the margins to the mainstream of party operations. Historically it reveals how the new medium shifted from being a mere novelty item to a basic necessity for any candidate or party now seriously contemplating a run for political office. It does so by combining a systematic review of the extant literature with a range of secondary and original data sets to present a 20-year overview of the evolution of internet-based electioneering. Through extensive analysis of both large *N* and also more focused case studies of the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and Australia, it reveals how the four phases developed in different contexts, and highlights some of the reasons for the varying evolutionary patterns that are observed.

While it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the first "cyberspace" campaign was officially launched, the general consensus is that the breakthrough moment, at least in terms of public awareness, came during the 1992 US election cycle (Bimber and Davis, 2003; Davis and Owen, 2008; Janda 2015). At the presidential level, it was Democrat nominee Bill Clinton who laid claim to this virtual *terra nova* after his staff uploaded a series of basic text files with biographical information for voters to browse. Since that time, use of the internet in elections has expanded dramatically in the United States and elsewhere.

As well as increasing in overall volume and visibility around the world, digital campaigning has grown in stature and strategic importance over time. It is this process of evolution and maturation that forms the focus of this book. In particular, it is argued that digital campaigning in established democracies has progressed through four main phases to date—experimentation, standardization, community-building, and direct voter mobilization—although, as shall become clear, not all countries have experienced the full cycle. Movement through these

phases, we argue, has placed digital technology center stage in election management and has changed the "art" of campaigning into something more of a science. From being little more than an afterthought for most parties 20 years ago, the technology now sits at the core of a finely tuned "get out the vote" (GOTV) machine.

In addition to profoundly changing the way that campaigns operate, this book argues that the growing use of digital technology is also transforming their internal structure. While there were hopes that the new media would lead to the devolution of power to members and supporters, who would exert a stronger "co-production" role in running the campaign, more recent developments have countered these expectations. From the mid-2010s we have seen a new digitally literate elite—comprising data analysts and software engineers—start to emerge at the apex of campaign organizations. These new staff, some of whom are imported directly from the tech world, exercise an increasing influence over key decision-making tasks.

Thus, the central conclusion of the book broadly endorses the long-standing argument that the internet has "normalized" electoral politics by reinforcing the power of the main parties and those who run them. However, it subverts and reformulates that narrative to an extent. Rather than understanding this process as one in which seasoned national "politicos" and consultants exert ever more power over local-level underlings, instead we see a reconfiguration or changing of the guard at the top as a new set of nontraditional *apoliticos* move in to run the show. Such individuals are notable for their lack of experience of being in the field during elections, and concomitantly greater immersion in "big" data and algorithms to remotely model and predict voter behavior. Furthermore, given the resource implications of the new "data-driven" mode of digital campaigning for political parties, the smaller players face an even greater challenge to compete with their bigger rivals. This leads to the emergence of a new and even more unbalanced communications playing field—an environment we describe as one of *hypernormality*.

In the chapters that follow, we locate these developments in the longer cycle of digital campaigning. We begin with some conceptual groundwork. Chapter 1 makes the case for the four-phase model of digital campaign development and describes the key characteristics of each phase. It does so by setting out the two main logics of equalization and normalization that have shaped the study of e-campaigns to date, and shows how the rotation between them forms a four-stage chronology of change. In particular, phases I and II are characterized by the move from conditions of greater openness and decentralization toward more "normalized" or unequal conditions. Phases III and IV largely repeat this pattern, with the former characterized by the swing back to more balanced and pluralized digital elections, and the latter by more emphatic return to normality, or

hypernormality (i.e., the rise of the new technocratic elites and further concentration of power in the party system). In addition to this cycle of power redistribution, each phase is also distinguishable according to a set of unique technical and strategic attributes. The chapter describes each of these attributes and the particular features of each phase in more detail.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the empirical literature on the topic of digital campaigns. In particular, we show how the past two decades of scholarship, when joined together, form a narrative of change that aligns closely to the four-phase model set out in Chapter 1. Specifically, we report how most early studies of digital campaigns, in a variety of settings, point to the period of open and even naïve experimentation that is phase I. We then show how subsequent analyses typically record a shift into more managerial approaches to web campaigning in which major parties dominate and standardized web communication tools emerge (phase II). Next we reveal how the narrative changes again, returning (albeit briefly) to adopt a more optimistic tone that highlights the interactive and community-building potential of the new web 2.0 tools (phase III). Finally, we document how the narrative of more recent studies points toward a reassertion of normalization, as central elites assert themselves and major parties dominate (phase IV). We argue, however, that the new tools required to run these data-intensive campaigns, along with the new skill set and apolitical background of those recruited to deliver the campaign, have added a significantly different twist to the earlier reinforcement logic.

As well as providing a more "joined-up" historical narrative of the study of digital campaigns, Chapter 2's review produces a more detailed picture of each phase and a clearer idea of how the model applies "on the ground." Finally, Chapter 2 offers some preliminary evidence as to where certain countries now sit in the evolutionary cycle. In particular, we can see where the fourth and most advanced mode of digital campaigning, which focuses on direct voter mobilization, appears to be most developed.

Chapter 3 follows up on the impressionistic conclusions of Chapter 2 to take a more empirical and systematic look at where developments in digital campaigning are most and least advanced globally. Using data from a recent cross-national survey, the chapter compares rates of online voter mobilization among 19 democracies and divides countries into four tiers of activity. These rankings are then systematically explored in a multilevel analysis that includes a range of contextual and individual-level explanatory factors. The findings reveal a significant degree of variance among countries' levels of online mobilization, with some usual suspects confirmed as leaders in this regard, as well as some unexpected nations emerging as strong performers. Overall the analysis indicates that political institutions and technological diffusion matter in terms of

driving forward this new mode of election contact and the wider cycle of digital campaigning.

The last set of chapters—Chapters 4 through 7—build on and extend the insights from Chapter 3 by taking an in-depth look at developments in digital campaigning in four countries that were included in the large *N* analysis of Chapter 3: the United Kingdom, Australia, France, and the United States. The selection of cases is driven by pragmatic considerations to a large extent. Each of the four nations scrutinized has featured prominently in the empirical literature reviewed in Chapter 2. As such, they provide the richer historical narrative necessary to track changes in the supply and demand for digital campaigning over time. From a theoretical perspective, however, these countries also provide an interesting mix of the institutional characteristics that are likely, *ceteris paribus*, to affect the pace of online campaign innovation and voter mobilization efforts.

First, in terms of their electoral systems, all four countries rely primarily on single-member and plurality/majority methods to elect their national politicians. This is significant in that such systems tend to produce a more personalized or "candidate-centered" style of election campaigning (Carey and Shugart, 1995; Dalton et al, 2011). This is a factor that some scholars have linked with more intensive and advanced forms of web campaigning (Zittel, 2015; Anstead and Chadwick, 2009). France and the United States stand out further in that they conduct regular presidential elections. These are typically high-profile mobilizing events, and one might expect that the greater levels of offline campaign intensity they generate would spill over to the online environment and spur on the use of digital tools by candidates. Finally, in terms of party system size, there are also differences between the cases that lead to some interesting and mixed predictions about the pace of innovation. The United States constitutes the "ideal" two-party environment, while Australia, the United Kingdom, and France constitute a range of increasingly multiparty environments. While a smaller party system may accelerate the process of adoption, as two well-resourced parties compete for the "median" voter, a larger party system might also stimulate change as the technology opens up new possibilities for smaller players to compete.

Based on this very simple overview of our cases, therefore, one might expect to find the United States riding the crest of the digital wave, with France not far behind. Australia and the United Kingdom would be more likely to bring up the rear. This ordering may change, however, across the phases of development. In particular, in the initial stages of experimentation when the technology is cheaper and more accessible, a multiparty environment is likely to see a faster pace of adoption. As resources become more important, however, systems dominated by larger parties promote faster adaptation, particularly during the transition into the more scientific and data-intensive phase IV methods.

The mix of comparative analysis and case studies that this book provides allows us to examine these propositions in more depth. Specifically, we can first systematically test the impact of regime-level characteristics and socio-structural factors on the intensity of the later stages of digital campaigning across countries in Chapter 3. Then, through the case studies we can look at the nature of progress within individual nations over time. This enables us to see how linear the nature of developments are across the four phases and, if there are changes in the pace of activity, whether this correlates with the characteristics of the party system.

In addition to allowing for a closer look at the role of context in encouraging or hampering the development of digital campaigns, the case studies develop the analysis in several other ways. First, from a descriptive perspective, we can describe the histories of digital campaign development in each nation in more detail, and compare their progress using our four-phase model. Are their trajectories more or less similar? What point has each country now reached within the cycle? Second, as part of that narrative we can expose more clearly the role of supply-side or organizational factors in the process of development. In particular, we are able to examine more closely the role that parties have played in driving incorporation of the new digital tools. Have the major parties consistently led the way, or have minor parties played a key role? If so, which ones and when?

The third advantage the case studies provide is the opportunity to look in greater depth at the movement across the four phases from "below" (i.e., from perspective of the voters and party supporters). How have popular uses of the technology changed during elections, and have they moved in step with elite provision? Has the audience for the digital campaign become more activist as the parties have shifted to embrace more community-building initiatives? Which parties have been more aligned with their supporters in this regard? Finally, through close analysis of these four cases we can also dig deeper into the drivers and impact of online voter mobilization examined in Chapter 3. Who is being reached by these new methods? New voters or the already mobilized? What evidence exists to indicate that use of such tactics can make a difference to the election outcome in terms of shaping voters' choices at the ballot box?

Before beginning our investigation of these questions, there is one last piece of definitional groundwork that needs to be completed. The focus of this book is on mapping and analyzing global trends in digital campaigning and how they have culminated in the rise of a new campaign elite. It is important early on that we specify what we mean when we refer to the "digital campaign." What is included and what is excluded? To date, a wide range of terms have been used to describe this new form of electioneering, including labels such as "cyber," "internet," "web," "online," and "e-campaigning." While such terms do succeed in denoting this distinctive new mode of campaigning, they also suffer to varying

degrees from being somewhat time- or technology-bound. Perhaps more importantly, on conceptual grounds these labels tend to reduce or narrow the foci of study to a particular set of "objects" or platforms that parties have produced in order to wage an electoral campaign. The emphasis is on a discrete and bounded entity that is *the* online or web campaign—an outward interface or performative construct that voters "see" and can engage with if they choose to.

By using the term "digital campaigning," we deliberately seek to broaden the concept out from a focus on the "front end" of operations to include the wider range of the less visible activities, personnel, and infrastructure (both hardware and software) that lie beneath this outward exterior or "interface." This more expansive approach, we argue, is necessary to ensure that research on the topic remains relevant and accurately reflects how praxis has, and is, evolving. While a vital part of a party's digital campaign remains its outward-facing or public "shopfront" (i.e., websites, email, and social media profiles), this forms an increasingly small tip of a much larger binary underpinning ecosystem. By using the term "digital campaign" we thus encompass and document the changes in this externally consumed component, as well the growing body of technological, computing, data, and scientific expertise that underlies it.

1

The Four-Phase Model of Digital Campaign Development

This chapter sets out the core argument of the book, which is that over the past two decades digital technology has moved from the margins to the mainstream of campaign operations, and in doing so has fundamentally changed how elections are fought and won. This process of transformation, we argue, can be broken down into four main phases of development:

Phase I : Experimentation
Phase II: Standardization and Professionalization
Phase III: Community Building and Activist Mobilization
Phase IV: Individual Voter Mobilization

In the sections that follow, we describe each of the phases in more detail, identify their key differences, and show how they cumulate in a transformative shift in campaign practice. Before doing so, we reflect more broadly on the structural nature of the four-phase model, and how the evolution it describes compares with earlier periods of media adoption by campaigns.

The idea of an initial phase of experimentation, followed by standardization and professionalization in digital campaigning, would not seem to depart too radically from an understanding of how parties have adapted to new communication technologies in the past, such as radio and television (Swaddle, 1988; Selnow, 1998; Norris, 2001). We argue that the later phases of community building and individualized voter mobilization are more particular and indeed unique to digital campaigns' evolution. This distinctiveness is more immediately evident in phase III. While the arrival of previous media may have enhanced activists' voices and increased connectivity among the grassroots, the networked nature of the internet and particularly social media exponentially increases the opportunities for this type of intra-organizational participation and communication. For some it even leads to a new "co-production" or "citizen-initiated" model of

campaigning that radically challenges (albeit briefly) modern campaigns' centralized management (Johnson, 2011; Lilleker, 2013; Gibson, 2015).

With regard to phase IV, again the harnessing of new media to help mobilize voters is hardly revolutionary in the annals of campaign development. However, our argument here is that the level of precision and personalization that digital tools and data bring to the process is far beyond what was possible for television advertising and even direct mail. Voter targeting, as some scholars have argued, moves from the "micro" to the "nano" level in terms of tailoring message content to the individual. This new scientific approach, along with the expertise this brings to standard GOTV efforts, introduces a wholly new *modus operandi* to mobilizing voters, and to the management of campaigns more generally.

The development of digital campaigning is also distinguished from earlier periods of media adoption by its cyclical or rotational nature. A key question posed by scholars of internet campaigning since its inception has been whether it has made electoral communication and party competition more "equalized" or "normalized"? We explain these arguments in more detail in the following. In brief, however, the former condition is one in which the networked and decentralized structure of the internet is seen to promote the empowerment of grassroots voices and to spread power to previously marginalized actors. Normalization captures the response by established elites to constrain their power loss, and to exploit the new medium to reinforce their dominance. The findings from this literature have shown that online election campaigning, in differing national contexts, swings back and forth between these two end states. The first such shift occurred as web 1.0 technologies entered the scene and pushed practice in a more open direction. This was then followed quite rapidly by a pushback by the major parties and a period of normalization. A second web 2.0 powered a move toward pluralization, which was again countered by an even more emphatic reassertion of centralized elite control. This rotation between these two power logics forms a key component of our four-phase model. Their theoretical origins are discussed in greater detail in the next section of the chapter. The overall four-phase model of change is summarized in Table 1.1 later in the chapter.

Theoretical Perspectives on the Internet and Campaign Change

While much of the evidence used to construct the four-phase model of digital campaign development is inductive in nature and is based on a review of findings from the secondary literature, the dynamic element at its core draws on earlier

theoretical discussions about the future form of "e-democracy." In particular, we draw on the work of a group of scholars—the "e-pluralists"—who first articulated the two main power "logics" or end states of equalization and normalization. These arguments emerged from an early period of intense speculation and visionary debate about the impact of the internet on modern political systems.

For a number of these early writers, the new wired world presented an opportunity to remake and revolutionize modern democracy. For some, the technology would enable the return to older and purer forms of democracy in which citizens could deliberate and make decisions without the interference of elected officials (Arterton, 1987; Schwartz and Oram, 1996; Dertouzos, 1997; Becker and Slaton, 2000; Clift, 2000, 1997; Dahlberg, 2001). Communitarians such as Howard Rheingold were particularly excited about how the internet would "challenge existing political hierarchies" and enable a new system of "citizen-based democracy" to emerge in which citizen power was the driving force (2000: xxix). More libertarian-minded scholars were equally enthused, envisioning how the internet would lead to a dismantling of the machinery of governance in favor of more direct forms of citizen rule (Budge, 1996; Dyson, 1997; Grossman, 1995). Taken to its extreme, "being digital," some argued, might well lead to the entire "evaporation" of the nation-state (Negroponte, 1995).

Other scholars were equally radical in their predictions, although the outcomes they foresaw were much less positive. Mark Poster (1995) and later Cass Sunstein (2001) raised the specter of a post-democratic system dominated by growing political division, isolation, and extremism. Similarly pessimistic scenarios were issued by those concerned about the growth of "Big Brother" style government and the surveillance state. Under this new digital panopticon, dissent would be silenced and citizen rights and liberties eroded (Barber, 1997, 1998; Street, 1997; Knopf, 1999; Akdeniz, 2000; Akdeniz et al., 2001; Lessig, 2000).[1]

While differing markedly in their understanding of what was to come next, therefore, there was clearly broad agreement among these scholars that entry into the internet age was likely to undermine the current system of representative democracy. Given this focus, it was not surprising that the debate made virtually no reference to the future state of elections and political campaigns. Such an exercise was essentially the intellectual equivalent of rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Amid these more apocalyptic scenarios, however, there were a number scholars who took a more "institutionalist" approach to understanding the impact of the new media and argued for a less technologically determined "solution" to democracy's current problems. For such writers, the democratic state, while showing signs of wear and tear, was unlikely to be drastically reshaped or flattened by the new wave of technological change. Instead, we would see a process of more incremental reform and renewal.

A "Third Way"? E-Pluralism and the "New Jeffersonians"

Opting for this "third" way between democratic boom and bust were a number of largely US-based scholars who saw the internet as a pluralizing force that would produce a more porous and open political system (Abramson et al., 1988; Kapor, 1993; Browning, 1996; Corrado and Firestone, 1996; Bimber, 1998). Their accounts were based primarily on what were seen as the unique structural properties of the internet and its very low entry costs. Such factors, they argued, rather than sweeping away current societal institutions, would actually put pressure on them to become more responsive to citizen demands. Major players in business, the traditional media, and government would inevitably face increasing competition from smaller and previously marginalized groups in society. This new interactive and decentralized communication network would open up an entirely new space for mass production and consumption in which "size" no longer mattered.

The rapid proliferation of interests and increased competition arising from the spread of internet use across society was likely to be particularly evident in the political arena (Bonchek, 1995; Corrado and Firestone, 1996; Rash, 1997; Bimber, 1998). According to Corrado and Firestone:

> the most basic feature of this technology is that it will allow individuals more easily to find others who share their interests or views and communicate with them . . . this will mean the inevitable growth of new political groups . . . many of which would transcend geographic or political boundaries. (1996: 12)

Similarly for Rash (1997), a likely consequence of the new "politics on the nets" was "more groups" and "a greater number of views . . . helping [to] determine policy" (178). Established organizations and institutions were also expected to undergo major internal restructuring as existing management hierarchies came under pressure from similar decentralist forces. According to Abramson et al. (1988), the new media could help US political parties open up to more debate and input from a wider range of "demographic, geographic, interest and issue groups," particularly during the nomination process (121).

Applying the logic of these "new Jeffersonians" to the dynamics of the campaign sphere, therefore, the most likely outcome was that elections would become noisier and more crowded occasions in which smaller players would gain greater prominence. It is also possible to envisage the softening, if not weakening, of the governance structures surrounding campaigns as a newly empowered

grassroots began to challenge the dominance of the professional consultants and central elites who had held sway at the end of the twentieth century (Norris, 2000; Farrell and Webb, 2000).

While the establishment of this new "electronic commonwealth" was viewed as a positive development by its proponents, they were ready to acknowledge its potential downsides. Bimber (1998) in particular talked about the emergence of a new form of "accelerated pluralism" in society. This intensified form of group-centered politics, he argued, could lead to "a more fragmented polity dominated by unstable issue publics" (156). For Rash (1997), such concerns were somewhat premature in that he worried more about the longer term sustainability of the new liberalized polity. He argued that the resources required to keep pace with technological developments would soon outstrip the capacity of smaller groups and political "start-ups" to compete, leading to "the uneven spread of the technology in tactical terms" (178).

Corrado and Firestone (1996) echoed these concerns, pointing out that a fragmented media environment was likely to reduce electoral competition in the longer term. The push toward developing ever more innovative niche-marketing techniques would escalate the resources required to run an effective campaign and price the smaller parties out of the electoral market. Internally, the new trends would increase the "centralization of internal campaign organization," concentrating yet more power in the hands of senior political advisors and consultants (108–9).

Thus, rather than yielding to the advance of direct democracy or disappearing under the weight of an Orwellian state, political campaigns, according to these scholars, were likely to experience something of a renaissance as the internet era took hold. Elections would become more open and accessible spaces, particularly for previously minority and marginal players. This pluralistic environment, however, was not likely to last very long. Time would see the major parties and established elites reassert control and further reinforce their power base. This predictive logic, as we shall see in the next chapter, has provided the interpretative framework for much of the subsequent study of digital campaigns. In particular, it has underpinned the notions of "equalization" and "normalization" that have dominated the field and informed its key conclusions.

Four Phases, Two Power Logics

The model of campaign change set out in this book starts from the e-pluralists' premise that the arrival of the internet prompts a shift toward more equalized and pluralistic political conditions. This trend is then countered or normalized,

as the established players begin to perceive the benefits of the new technology and deploy it to further their own interests. In the context of campaigns, this means we expect the electoral system to become a more open and competitive space as parties start to adopt tools like email and the web. This quickly changes, however, as embedded political structures begin to see the benefits of the new tools, and preexisting power relationships re-emerge.

Taking this two-step process of campaign change, we make two further theoretical tweaks that convert it into our four-phase model. First, rather than viewing this process as a one-time transition from equalization to normalization, we argue that it is more accurately regarded as a pendulum swing between these two poles. With the benefit of two decades of hindsight, it is clear that the equalization to normalization cycle recurred following the entry of a new suite of second-generation web tools around the turn of the millennium. As such, we have at least four phases of development marking this ebb and flow to date, with an initial period of web 1.0 equalization to normalization followed by a second web 2.0–led cycle.

Our second "twist" to the e-pluralists' logic is to extend it conceptually and to specify more clearly where, how, and when the shift from equalization to normalization takes place with regard to the key areas of campaign activity. In particular, we argue that movement between these two states occurs within three distinct but interlinked domains of practice:

  (i) systemic;
 (ii) intra-organizational;
(iii) extra-organizational voter communication.

Equalization and normalization at the systemic level refer to increasing and decreasing levels of inter-party competition. At the intra-organizational level, the terms apply to the extent of power held by grassroots activists and supporters versus central elites. Finally, with regard to voter communication, they describe a situation in which campaigns either seek to exploit the participatory feature of the medium and create a more inclusive dialogue with voters (equalization), or one in which they revert to the familiar top-down broadcast model of information dissemination (normalization). As the phases advance, we argue, the spaces in which equalization and normalization take place, or at least are looked for, extend from (i) to (iii). Thus in the move from phase I to phase II, discussion centers on the increase and decrease of inter-party competition. As we move on to the later phases, the lens widens to examine how far the technology is promoting grassroots empowerment versus centralized control, as well as bottom-up dialogue with voters or top-down targeted messaging. We discuss these trends in more detail in the following.

The arena in which equalizing or normalizing trends are most typically observed, and the one that features most heavily in the e-pluralists' accounts, is the systemic level, and specifically the intensity of inter-party competition. Equalization occurs when the major and minor parties have a more balanced or equal voice in terms of being heard by the electorate. Normalization sees the reassertion of the larger parties' communicative dominance. The second and increasingly popular area of digital campaigning in which equalizing and normalizing tendencies are witnessed is at the intra-organizational level. Equalization here refers to the use of the internet by internal actors to promote a redistribution of power downward and outward to the grassroots. Normalization is the reversal of this tendency and the concentration of more power into the hands of central elites. The third and final arena of campaign activity in which these terms are frequently invoked is that of voter communication. Both equalization and normalization are understood in more relational terms in this context: the former describing whether parties and candidates are exploiting the interactive properties of the technology to allow for a more bottom-up dialogue and "equalized" conversation with the electorate; the latter denoting that these actors are simply replicating the top-down approach used in the broadcast media and promoting a more managed and elite-controlled style of communication.

Having broken down the notions of equalization and normalization into their component parts and having specified more clearly what each means in practical terms, we can now join them back together to envision what each "state" would look like if fully realized in a digital campaign. Equalization would see increased competition between a large and diverse set of candidates who would communicate their messages freely to voters, unfettered by centrally controlled media editors. This opening up of the electoral system would be matched by an internal decentralization of power as the lines between organizational elites and grassroots blur and even potentially disappear. At the voter level, parties would pursue an inclusive and genuinely interactive communication strategy. Citizens would be given meaningful opportunities to engage in dialogue and discussion with candidates over their policy stance and ideas, as well as with each another, during the campaign.

By contrast, if normalization is fully realized, the level of electoral competition drastically decreases, as only the biggest and best-resourced parties can survive. Internally, greater powers accrue to an elite group of highly technically skilled operatives. These new tech-gurus would take over running all aspects of the campaign, with very little input from activists on the ground and possibly from the candidates themselves and traditional party campaign managers. Communication with voters and supporters would be highly regulated, and any interactivity would be conducted in a controlled and instrumental manner that is entirely concordant with campaign needs.

Both of these scenarios are of course ideal types. Digital campaigning, as the literature review that follows makes clear, has never reached a fully equalized or normalized state. That said, what is evident from that review is that this binary framework has formed a very useful and resilient heuristic for scholars in understanding the key shifts and developments in digital campaigning over time.

Changes in the Organizational Capacity and Strategic Ends of Digital Campaigning

In addition to oscillating between these two ends of a power spectrum, the technological and strategic resources involved in running a digital campaign have also changed and expanded over time. That expansion, we argue, can be similarly understood as falling into four distinct phases. In the following we define those areas of expansion, first with regard to the increases in the technological and organizational capacity of parties, and second in terms of their strategic understanding of the medium.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

On technical grounds there has clearly been a significant growth in the sophistication and functionality of the digital tools available to, and used by, campaigners. More specifically, in the first decade of adoption, digital campaigns were fought primarily with "web 1.0"–style tools such as home pages and email. While initially usage was highly individualistic, as practice moved on, more standardized tools such as "web in a box" and home page templates emerged. The creation and spread of new web 2.0 and later social media technologies reintroduced the possibilities for candidates to carve out a more individualized presence. More significantly, they increased the opportunities for more interactive communication with voters and also among activists. The new social networking platforms in particular offered the opportunity for independent grassroots organizing and mobilization that formed the basis for a new type of virtual community building. Innovations did not end here, however. Perhaps the most significant technical advances in digital technology, from the campaign's perspective, came in the second decade of the new millennium with the move into the era of "big data," cloud computing, and predictive modeling. These new tools significantly increased the capacity of campaigns to mobilize voters at an individual level, allowing them to amass and merge large quantities of personal data and design an entirely new, scientifically driven model of individualized micro-targeting.

These increases in the technological capacity for conducting a digital campaign have been accompanied by growth in both the size and prominence of the organizational sub-team responsible for its conduct. In the earliest days, the number of people involved in web-related operations in parties numbered less than the fingers of one hand and were typically located in the IT department. Within one election cycle, however, they were usually working as part of the communications and marketing team. Following this merger, their next step up the organizational hierarchy would be recognition as an independent self-contained unit within the management structure. This promotion would give them a seat at the "top table" of campaign management, rivaling that of other sub-teams such as field operations and fundraising. The next, and perhaps final, advance in their status comes with their elevation to overall control of operations. At this point, the digital team assumes direct control over campaign decision-making. As the size and range of expertise of the team expand, it becomes necessary to create subdivisions. This sees the core preexisting team split off to form a new sub-team dealing with the public interface side of the campaign (i.e., the website, social media platforms, and email programs). In addition, new sub-teams are formed to manage the vastly expanded data-collection and processing needs of the campaign.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS

Increases in the technical and organizational competence of parties to wage digital campaigns are paralleled by an increased awareness, among those in charge, of their strategic value and purpose. As internet use has spread among the electorate, the opportunities it offers to widen parties' support base and convey a modernized image to the electorate have become more apparent. This sharpened focus is evident in three main areas of campaigns' strategic operations. First, those directing the campaign are much clearer about the main purpose or primary goal of their efforts. Second, and relatedly, there is a stronger awareness of who the target audience(s) are. Finally, there is a better understanding of what response or "action" is required from those audiences.

Initially, when very few voters were online, there was no external pressure on parties to do very much in any of these domains. A laissez-faire strategy dominated and there was very little sense of purpose. Those parties and candidates that did go online did so largely to avoid being labeled as technophobic or "out of touch" with modern trends. This lack of vision persisted across much of the first decade of web campaigning. Site designers sought to improve the look and feel of sites, but content lagged behind. There were some limited attempts to exploit the new medium to reach particular groups of voters, and sites took on

an increasingly niche-marketing role, with special pages being created for certain segments of the electorate, such as young people and overseas voters. Journalists were seen as a particularly important group to reach, with new "press centers" being installed on most home pages. Attention shifted to the transposing of mass media content into the web environment. Sites became more like media hubs or archives for storing press releases and campaign ads. Despite demonstrating a clearer understanding of the purpose of the web campaign, however, the role of the audience was still largely passive and "reading" about the campaign remained the main mode of voter response.

As audiences started to grow, parties and candidates started to see the medium in a more proactive and dynamic light. This shift in thinking received a significant boost with the arrival of the new suite of participatory "web 2.0" tools. Digital campaign content was no longer regarded as something for the electorate to passively consume, but rather as a means for mobilizing supporters to help spread the campaign message, thereby reaching a wider electorate. Audience engagement moves from a "reading" mode to one of "redistribution" whereby supporters become nodes for spreading the parties' digital content through their own online networks.

Not content with mobilizing their base, however, campaigners become increasingly eager to leverage the technology to make more direct and persuasive contact with individual voters. The opportunities presented by the growth in the size and quality of their databases make this increasingly possible. Undecided voters become the main target audience of the digital campaign, with their primary mode of engagement now being to "receive" particular campaign content and messages. There remains an element of interactivity in the process, however, in that there is an expectation that they will also return information to the campaign by supplying their personal data.

Summarizing the Four Phases of Digital Campaigning: The Möbius Loop

Drawing together the various elements in the process described in the preceding sections produces a model of campaign change that is both linear or "progressive" in nature and cyclical. In visual terms, one might invoke the analogy of the möbius strip, or loop, to capture this rotational movement. Movement across the phases involves, on the one hand, an increase or "stepping up" of the resources and the importance given to the digital campaign. This progression, however, is accompanied by movement back and forth between two end points, or poles—the first being a condition of greater plurality and openness, and the

second, one of power concentration and top-down elite control. The defining features of each phase and the overall mode are captured in Table 1.1. Here we describe each of the four phases, breaking each one down according to the same eight features of the digital campaign, as shown in Table 1.1.

Each of the phases is given a number and a more descriptive label. The former indicates the chronological and progressive nature of the phases; for example, phase I is both earlier in the cycle and more "immature" than the later phases. The latter is designed to capture the dominant ethos or rationale driving digital campaigning among the key actors in what Foot and Schneider (2006) would describe as the "electoral web sphere."

Running down the left side of the table are the key criteria that we use to differentiate the phases. We start with the dominant power logic associated with each phase (i.e., equalization or normalization). This is disaggregated into the three arenas of campaign activity highlighted earlier in which these logics are most clearly observed—inter-party competition, intra-organizational communication, and external voter communication. The next set of criteria focus on the capacity and resources associated with each phase of digital campaigning. These include the tools and technologies used to wage the digital campaign and the structural location of the team established to deliver it. The final set of features used to mark out each phase centers on the strategic foci of the digital campaign—namely, its primary goal or clearest objective, the target audience, and desired and preferred mode of engagement or response from that audience.

While it is tempting to derive some causal implications from the table and use it to specify the key drivers behind the shift into a new phase, its ambitions are inevitably more descriptive and summative in nature. Technological developments are clearly critical in enabling new digital strategies to emerge (Bosetta, 2018); however, organizations need to be able to "see" the value of those innovations in light of their current priorities and goals. Despite its lack of theory-building aspiration, Table 1.1 does aspire to have analytical merit. In particular, the möbius loop model of change that underlies it provides the organizing framework for the literature review that follows in Chapter 2, and structures each of the case studies we report in Chapters 4 through 7.

In terms of the literature review, we show how the questions posed and conclusions reached by studies of digital campaigns over space and time broadly follow the four phases of development. The model then becomes a template to compare developments across four individual nations over a 20-year period. The result is highly instructive, revealing an interesting pattern of conformity and variance across countries. Most nations appear to have followed a similar pathway, but they have done so at a different pace. Some nations, such as the United States, are consistently ahead of the curve. Others, like Australia, appear to have seen a burst of initial momentum followed by a long period of stasis

Table 1.1 **Four Phases of Digital Campaigning**

	Phase 1 Experimentation (1992–1996)	Phase 2 Standardization and Professionalization (1997–2003)	Phase 3 Community Building and Activist Mobilization (2004–2011)	Phase 4 Individual Voter Mobilization (2012 onward)
Dominant "Power" Logic	Equalization	Normalization	Equalization	Normalization
Power Distribution — Inter-party competition	Pluralistic	Major party dominant	Pluralistic	Major party dominant
Intra-organizational	Localized—low scrutiny but limited candidate activity	Nationalized—local activity increases, templates post hoc scrutiny	Localized—grass roots and citizens as co-managers	Nationalized and localized—Digital teams coordinate locally organized groups
Communication Mode	Top-down with sporadic, random interactivity	Top-down, information-centered, static, controlled feedback	Bottom-up, action oriented, dynamic, two-step	Top-down, micro-targeted personalized extractive

Capacity and Strategy				
Tools	Email and web 1.0	Email and web 1.0, RSS, WPA, e-newsfeeds, audio-visual	Web 2.0/social media/ activist hubsites	Cloud computing, big data, analytics and experiments
Organizational location	IT/computing unit or outsourced to a volunteer	Campaign/comms team/outsourced to professionals	Independent unit operating alongside other teams, seat at head table	Digital team/director driving strategy, sub-teams formed
Primary goal	"Me too"	Transposition of offline media content and re-broadcasting	Mobilizing the base	GOTV and personal data extraction
Target Audience	Anyone who happens to visit	Media Journalists	Supporters/Activists/ Members	Undecided/floating voters
Voter Response	Read	Read	Redistribute	Receive and supply

and inertia. Still others, such as France, have followed a different and contrasting path of early sluggishness followed by a rapid escalation into the latter phases of activist and voter mobilization. Finally, the United Kingdom has taken what we might label as the slow and steady approach, being neither an early bird nor a late bloomer.

DATA SOURCE SUMMARY

The reasons behind these different trajectories are explored through both a large *N* comparative analysis (Chapter 3) and a series of in-depth case studies using original and secondary national data sets (Chapters 4 through 7). Full details of the data sources and measures used in each of the chapters are provided in the appendices.

For the comparative analysis in Chapter 3, we relied on the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) Module 4 data set. The CSES is a post-election survey that is conducted by participating countries, typically as part of their national election study. The surveys span a set time period. Module 4 was fielded during elections held between 2011 and 2015 and was selected for this study given its focus on the theme of online mobilization. In particular, it included a battery of items that measured whether and in what way respondents were contacted by political parties, and indirectly by friends and family, during the election. Methods included SMS, email, and the web, along with more traditional offline methods such as phone mail and in person (see Appendix 3.1 for the full text of the survey items). At the time of this analysis, Module 4 was in its second release, providing data on online mobilization for 17 countries (specifically we used the Second Advance Release [2.0], March 2015). Additional data was obtained for the United Kingdom from the 2015 British Election Study (BES). The post-election mail-back component of the study (fielded as part of the face-to-face cross-section survey) included the Module 4 questions. This made it possible to include the United Kingdom in the descriptive stage of the analysis, and to benchmark its levels of online mobilization internationally, as well as in relation to our three other case studies.

In addition to the United Kingdom, three other countries were selected as case studies for the book—Australia, France, and the United States. The substantive reasons for their selection and the light they shed on the role of national context in shaping digital campaign developments are discussed in more depth in subsequent chapters. They were particularly useful for our analysis on empirical grounds since they each provided a series of relevant campaign data sets that allowed for in-depth cross-national and over time comparison of changes in the

supply and demand of digital campaigning.[2] Specifically, from the supply side, national party and candidate websites in all four countries had been content analyzed using a standardized index applied during national elections held over the period 2010–2012. The index was designed specifically to measure the extent to which digital campaigns had started to shift into the more strategic third phase of community building and activist mobilization. Through the data generated, it was possible to not only compare the efforts made by parties within countries to promote a more participatory and citizen-initiated model of campaigning, but also to make some cross-country comparisons to assess which nations were displaying the most effort in this regard, and how far into the four-phase cycle they were. More details on the index and variable construction are provided in Appendix 4.1.

On the demand side, a bespoke data set was produced in three of our four cases (the United Kingdom, Australia, and France) that measured citizens' level of interest and active involvement in national digital campaigns during the same time period (2010–2012) (Gibson, 2013). The same module of questions was fielded either as part of a wider omnibus or a national election study. The results are instructive in revealing the extent to which parties' efforts to mobilize activists and voters via their sites proved to be successful. The results also allowed us to compare the levels and modes of public engagement with the digital campaign across countries. While not directly comparable, similar questions were sourced from the 2012 American National Election Study (ANES), which helped to extend the analysis to the case of the United States.

In addition to these directly comparable data sets, we used a wider range of national election studies and other campaign surveys to measure change over time in citizens' engagement with digital campaigns across the four cases. Selection of these additional data sources was determined by the extent to which they provided variables that mapped onto the three key modes of engagement associated with our four phases—namely, reading, redistribution, and receiving. For the United Kingdom, we added data from the 2005 "Campaigning in Cyberspace" Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) project and the 2015 British Election Study, also funded by the ESRC (see Appendix 4.2 for full details). In Australia, we supplemented the analysis with data from the 2013 Australian Election Study (see Appendix 5.1 for full details). In the French case, we were able to use data for 2007 produced by CEVIPOF Sciences Po, Paris, by the L'Institut Français d'Opinion Publique (IFOP) (see Appendix 6.1 for full details). Finally, for the United States, we combined the 2012 ANES data with findings from the Pew "Internet and American Life Project" campaign studies of 2004 and 2008 (see Appendix 7.1 for full details).

CONTRIBUTION AND LIMITATIONS

Through this combination of comparative and national analysis and blend of primary and secondary supply-side and demand-side data sets, this book is able to provide a unique overview of the evolution of digital campaigning across and within countries. Specifically, we can provide a "big picture" perspective on the macro-level institutional, political, and socioeconomic factors that affect how fast and far nations have moved through the four-phase cycle of digital campaigning. We then drill down to the national level to show how richer historical and cultural factors have played a role in shaping the pace of innovation, as well as influencing organizations and individual voters. Through our case studies we are able to show how parties, their supporters, and national electorates have responded to the challenges and opportunities presented by the advent of digital technologies. Furthermore, given the comparability of data available for these four countries, we can assess the extent to which these findings vary or hold up across different contexts.

Thus, while clearly not covering all aspects of the move of digital technology from the margins to the mainstream of campaigns globally, this book does offer one of the most comprehensive insights into this process to date. That comprehensiveness lies in the length, breadth, and depth of the analysis that is undertaken. Timewise, this book presents an overview of developments in digital campaigns covering two decades. Breadthwise, our review of the literature provides a summary of international developments in digital campaigning to date, which we then supplement with an original multilevel cross-national analysis of the extent and contextual correlates of digital campaigning in recent elections. Finally, from a depth perspective, we accompany these broader aggregate-level findings with a more nuanced picture of changes in the supply side and demand side of digital campaigning within four individual countries. Using a series of purpose-built data sets and national election studies, we chart the increasing commitment of parties and candidates to undertaking online campaign activities and the response of voters. Although each of our case studies operates as a stand-alone analysis, the consistent application of the four-phase model to parse out and describe developments over time means it is possible to make some useful comparisons of the pace of change and levels of popular engagement.

While highlighting the unique perspective and rich data that this book brings to the study of digital campaigning, it is also important to acknowledge its limitations—the most obvious of these being that a temporal model of digital campaign development cannot fully describe the evolution of web campaigns across all, or perhaps even the majority of, individual countries. As a generic "one size fits all" framework, it loses nuance and accuracy when applied to real-world cases. The phases serve as conceptual "phenotypes" that are designed to

distill and link together a series of critical technological, strategic, and organizational dimensions of digital campaign practice. How these traits play out in practice in terms of preferred platforms, the nature of the communities that are built, and the micro-messaging that is delivered is context dependent.

Furthermore, while we expect the order or sequencing of the phases to hold across countries (i.e., phase I will precede II and II precedes III), the dates ascribed to them in Table 1.1 are meant to be indicative, not definitive. These time periods signify when a given phase is considered to be in a dominant or ascendant position in broad global terms. The evolution of digital campaigning in some nations may fit quite neatly into the chronology specified, but this will not be the case universally. Some countries that come later to digital campaigning, for instance, may bypass the experimental phase and "leapfrog" directly into the later, more sophisticated phases of use. Countries that share the same starting point may display different rates of development. This variance is underlined by our case studies, where we see how similarly advanced industrial democracies differ in the length of time parties take to experiment and standardize their use of the new tools, and when they begin to move into more strategic mobilizing uses of the technology.

The case studies also serve to highlight a further important qualification to the application of our model, which is that it does not apply *in toto* to most countries. Many countries have not yet entered, or are only on the cusp of phase IV. We attempt to explain the reasons for this differential development and pace of change in the analysis of Chapter 3. Here we show very clearly that there is considerable variance in the levels of online voter mobilization across countries. We go on to show how levels of technological and societal development, along with the political and electoral incentive structures, have determined these patterns of growth.

Finally and relatedly, while our framework suggests distinct phases, their edges are—in reality—not as sharp as the model suggests, and there is inevitable "real world" overlap and seepage. This porosity is perhaps most observable in the technologies assigned to each phase. If we take the case of blogs or "web logs," for example, despite being part of the new "web 2.0" suite of tools, they actually first emerged in the late 1990s, well before the community-building and activist-mobilization phase that we associate with social media. Similarly, while email came to the fore during the experimental phase, it has continued on to power some of the most precise scientific appeals of phase IV.

From a strategic perspective, the goals of activist and direct-voter mobilization, which we equate with phases III and IV, also motivated campaigns in earlier phases. Certainly, the candidacy of Jesse Ventura for the Minnesota governorship in the late 1990s was seen as a highly effective example of political community building online (Hindman, 2005). Candidates and parties also made

attempts at online micro-targeting through tailored web pages, and encouraged tactical voting through "vote swapping" websites before 2012. If we narrow the lens to examine progression through the phases by individual parties, the borders between phases arguably become even more blurred. As our case studies reveal, there are differences in the pace of change and innovation between left- and right-wing parties, and between the major and minor players. While some may be ahead of the developmental curve, others lag behind.

Given these rather extensive qualifiers, it is clear from the outset that mapping the chronology of a country's pathway through the four phases and its current point of development is something of an inexact science. That said, it is the ambition of the book to try to do just that, for at least four major democracies using varying methodologies. The next chapter begins that process by presenting impressionistic evidence culled from the empirical literature on the adoption of digital campaigning at the national and international level. Chapter 3 tackles this question using a more systematic and original approach that aims to measure and explain levels of online electoral mobilization occurring in our four countries, and elsewhere in comparable elections. This forms a proxy measure of entry into phase IV of digital campaigning (i.e., direct voter mobilization).

The remaining four chapters take these top-line statistics and global ranking of countries' online mobilization levels and employ a mixed-method approach to probe their differences and similarities. This involves first presenting a rich historical narrative and overview of the particular factors in these countries that have shaped their progress in digital campaigning. This qualitative analysis is supplemented by a more standardized analysis of changes in web campaign outputs over time, using the secondary literature and a web content analysis index. The index is applied to national parties' and candidates' campaign sites during their shift into the more strategic phase III mode of community building and activist mobilization. Finally, we present a comparable range of national survey data that looks at the changing patterns of demand among the electorate for digital campaigning, and the extent to which this fits with what we have learned in the prior section about changes in its supply. Through this combination of sources, we provide a unique, comprehensive comparative picture of the movement of digital technology from the margins to the mainstream of campaign practice.

2

A Review of the Literature

From Experimentation to Mobilization

This chapter reviews the growing body of literature that has emerged on the subject of digital campaigns since their inception in the mid-1990s. In particular, it shows how, when viewed cumulatively and with the advantage of hindsight, these studies form a historical narrative that identifies four distinct phases of development.

Phase I: Experimentation (1992–1996)

> . . . we just jumped and hoped that we would get down all right.
> —Danish Liberal Party Web Campaign Manager (1997)[1]

An important, if somewhat obvious point to make in charting the history of digital campaigning is that the use of computers in elections is not a new phenomenon. While not documented in extensive detail, particularly from a comparative perspective, the process of diffusion is generally seen as beginning in US elections in the early 1960s. In particular, it was the Democratic Party's Simulatics project that pioneered the use of computer technology for voter targeting (Janda, 2015; Issenberg, 2012; de Sola Pool et al. 1965; Burdick, 1964). In the decades that followed, both major parties continued to use computers to simulate and forecast electoral behavior and also to expedite their more mundane information-processing tasks. It was really only in the mid-1990s, and particularly following the development of the World Wide Web (WWW), however, that computers started to be used externally for public communication.

According to most reports, the first attempt at digital campaigning occurred during the 1992 US congressional elections when Jerry Brown, the former governor of California, experimented with sending email messages to his supporters

in his bid for a Senate seat (Janda, 2015). The first official campaign websites emerged a little later, with a trickle of national parties launching home pages during 1994. The following three years saw a flurry of activity as parties fell like dominoes into cyberspace (Gibson, 2004).

In terms of why they were there, the opening quote from a Danish party web manager in describing his organization's reasons for going online nicely captures the curiosity-driven and experimental approach that most political actors took toward the internet at this time. Certainly, the content and design of most of the sites established during this period support the idea that the parties lacked a clear rationale and purpose for their digital campaigns. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 reveal the rather spartan look and feel of the home pages of some of the major European left-wing parties at the time. The UK Labour Party site appears to be particularly underdeveloped given that the next general election was just six months away. Their right-wing counterparts were no more advanced, however. Some years later, a leading UK politician and campaign director for the Conservatives openly acknowledged the "homemade" feel of his own party's site during these early years.[2]

In the United States, a country that is widely seen as driving innovations in campaign technology, the picture appeared to be surprisingly similar. Studies of the web campaigns conducted in the 1996 US presidential election reported

Figure 2.1. The UK Labour Party home page (November 1996). *Source*: Internet Archive: https://web.archive.org/web/19961109025623/http://www.labour.org.uk/
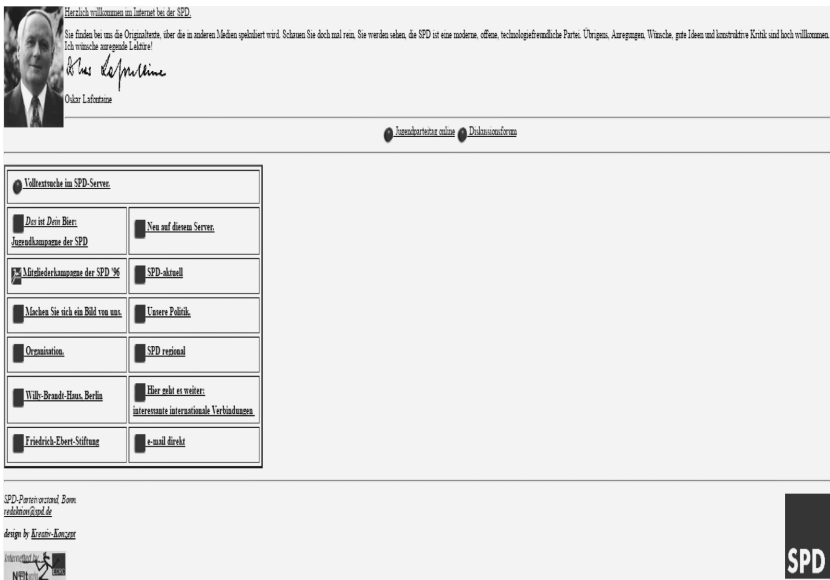
Figure 2.2. German Social Democratic Party (SPD) home page (December 1996).
Source: Internet Archive

that, with the notable and ironic exception of the septuagenarian Bob Dole, most sites were of poor quality and showed very little imagination (Epstein, 1996; Stone, 1996; Hall, 1997; Reavy and Perlmutter, 1997; McKeown and Plowman, 1999). Moreover, like their European party counterparts, US candidates and their managers were seen as lacking a basic understanding of the value of the new medium. According to Stromer-Galley (2014), such efforts were little more than token gestures and were not designed to last beyond the current electoral cycle (24). To support her contention, she pointed to the highly confusing array of web addresses and URLs for the sites, most of which did not include the candidate's name and so were unlikely to be recalled by voters very easily. Selnow's (1998) account of the 1996 campaign was similarly critical about the lack of clear reasons candidates had for going online, leading him to label it the "me too" web election. Those who launched a site, he argued, did so simply because they "want to climb on board the bus with everyone else" (88). It was the fear of being left behind, or perhaps more importantly of being seen to be left behind, therefore, that formed the dominant incentive for web campaigning during this period.

Details about the resources committed by parties to their web campaigns at this time are sketchy to nonexistent for most countries. The evidence that does exist comes largely from interviews with party officials, and shows that investment in digital technology and teams was minimal. While Dole and some of the

other US candidates bucked the trend to employ professional web developers (Stromer-Galley 2014), most parties used their IT staff and resources to support their web efforts (Gibson and Ward, 1998; Ward and Gibson, 1998; Hoff and Lofgren, 1997). Among the smaller parties, operations were even more rudimentary, usually comprising a single individual or "web master" who managed the entire operation and who was often an unpaid friend or family member.

One unintended but important consequence of this low-key approach to web adoption by campaigns was that it opened the way for smaller parties to compete. Based on their study of the UK's "first internet election" in 1997, Gibson and Ward (1998) concluded that while radical change was not in evidence, neither was it possible to conclude that "politics as usual" was carrying on in cyberspace:

> the smaller parties are indeed holding their own in terms of their web sites' appeal. Far from leaving the minor parties in the dust the internet appears to be doing more to equalize the exposure of party ideas to the electorate compared to other media. (22)

Scholars of extremist politics were also quick to point out the inherent advantages that the net offered to smaller organizations on the ideological fringe, particularly those on the far right (Whine, 2000; Gerstenfeld et al., 2003). Such parties, they argued, had a stronger incentive to establish a presence online, given that it provided a new direct and unfiltered channel to reach existing and new audiences, and to build up wider national and international organizational networks (Ward et al., 2008b; Copsey, 2003).

The evidence in favor of equalization, however, centered largely on changes at the systemic level and shifts in inter-party competition during this early phase. Any intra-organizational power redistribution stemming from the spread of internet technology was minimal to nonexistent. This was due in large part to the limited adoption of the new media at the lower echelons of the party and among the grassroots. The earliest reported levels of adoption among candidates and local parties in the United Kingdom from 1997 indicated that again only a tiny minority—around 5 percent—were online (Auty and Nicholas, 1998; Ward and Gibson, 1998). Even in the United States, where levels of state- and local-level adoption were among the healthiest, candidates still had a patchy presence online. An academic survey of campaign activity during the 1996 election cycle reported that less than one in five candidates in Senate, House, and gubernatorial races had a website (D'Alessio, 1997).

In terms of equalization in our third arena of interest—external voter communication—there was also little sign of any significant change. Among the citizen body, rates of internet adoption during this experimental phase were low,

with most countries struggling to report even 5 percent of citizens as online in 1996.[3] This clearly limited the capacity of parties to stimulate a more interactive national campaign. The evidence from Figures 2.1 and 2.2 certainly suggest the major parties took very little interest in offering opportunities for dialogue and focused mostly on providing static, text-based content. Even Dole's "beacon" site (shown in Figure 2.3), which was praised for its stronger voter appeal, only allowed visitors to interact with the site content, rather than directly with the candidate or campaign in an interpersonal manner.

That said, there were some signs that parties recognized the potential of the web to increase two-way communication with the public. Some sites presented a range of email addresses that allowed users to target messages directly to particular branches, and even to individual people within the party organization. The UK Liberal Democrats, for example, promoted the email address of its party leader, Paddy Ashdown, on its home page. It is not clear how responsive parties were to the emails they received. Anecdotal evidence suggested that at least some major parties were treating them seriously. The Swedish Social Democrats, for example, reportedly hired staff to help answer all emails personally in the 1998 parliamentary elections. In addition, they hosted over 70 online Q&A sessions with politicians during the campaign (Gibson et al., 2003b: 19)

Figure 2.3. Dole/Kemp home page (November 1996). *Source*: Internet Archive: http://web.archive.org/web/20160616160314/http://www.dolekemp96.org/main.htm

Overall, therefore, early digital campaign efforts were sporadic and tentative. Parties and candidates were motivated to go online by a mix of curiosity and the fear of being left behind. The resources devoted to their online activities were typically limited, or in some cases nil. Activity, where it did occur, was concentrated largely at the national level, with local actors proving more circumspect about investing their scarce resources in the new media. Some attempts at fostering a more open dialogue with and among voters were in evidence; however, the "web 1.0" environment largely encouraged parties to engage in a more top-down information-centric campaign. Despite, or perhaps ironically because of this reticence to invest in their web presence, the narrative of equalization at the party-system level took hold. As the major parties in particular perceived little obvious strategic gains in this niche medium, the "bar" to entry was lowered and the smaller players were able to maintain parity in terms of the quality of their online offerings. The equalization that occurred was thus due more to default or accident than design.

Phase II: Standardization and Professionalization, 1997–2003

> . . . dragging the old media into the new.
> —Phil Noble, *Netpulse Special Report* (2002: n.p.)

Early amateur forays into cyberspace were short-lived. The pressure of the electoral cycle and increasing internet access among the electorate meant parties soon started revamping and modernizing their online presence. While websites and email remained the dominant tools of combat, parties (particularly the larger ones) increasingly turned to commercial companies to design and manage their content and platforms. The result was convergence to a more visually appealing graphical interface that was easier to navigate through the addition of menu buttons and home page icons. The upgrade and standardization in parties' online offerings can be seen in Figures 2.4 and 2.5, which show the redesigned UK Labour Party and German Social Democratic Party (SPD) home pages as they appeared in the lead-up to national elections in 2001 and 2002, respectively.

As well as being more content rich than the versions shown in Figures 2.1 and 2.2, the sites have a more professional look and feel that is aligned with the party "brand." Both sites feature a side or top menu bar, and buttons linking out to a press or media section and a series of options to join, shop, and donate to the party. This increasing sophistication and stronger marketing appeal was also a sign of how far control over the web campaign had shifted out of parties' technical support teams and into the hands of their PR and communications unit.
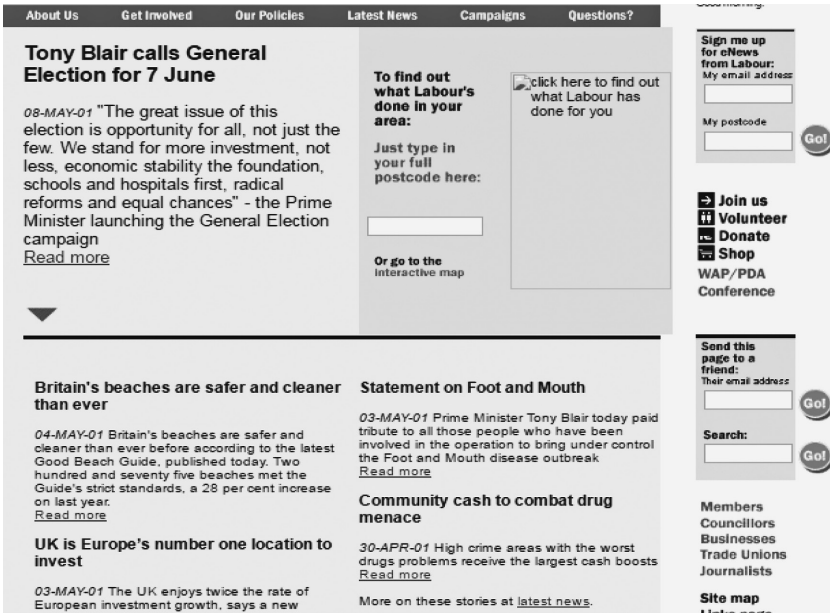
Figure 2.4. The UK Labour Party home page (May 2001). *Source*: Internet Archive: https://web.archive.org/web/20010520110505/http://www.labour.org.uk/

Figure 2.5. German Social Democratic Party (SPD) home page (October 2002). *Source*: Internet Archive: https://web.archive.org/web/20021006111214/http://www.spd.de/servlet/PB/menu/1009319/index.html

In addition to qualitative changes in the style and structure of the web campaign, phase II also sees a notable expansion in the overall volume or amount of activity taking place. An audit by Norris (2001) at the turn of the millennium reported that some type of online presence had become almost universal across party systems in Europe and North America. At the subnational level, adoption had also increased, although it was much patchier. As late as 2002 it was reported that up to one-quarter of candidates competing for a US House of Representative seat still lacked a web presence (Davis and Owen, 2008: 96). Furthermore, the level of commitment shown by those to maintaining their web profile remained very low. A report issued by Web analytics firm *RightClick* in 2002 found that only around one-quarter of major party sites in House and gubernatorial elections were actually updated on election day.[4]

Despite the growing investment in web campaigning, there remained a widespread view that parties and candidates had still not developed a clear understanding of the advantages offered by the new medium (Davis et al., 2002). There was a more concerted focus on online fundraising, although this was arguably prompted by changes in campaign finance regulations rather than any internal decision-making.[5] The dominant approach among campaigners was to play it safe by limiting interactivity and migrating offline content such as press releases and television ads onto their sites. Such a lack of ambition became the focus of increasing criticism from academic and industry observers. Phil Noble, the editor of *Netpulse*, a popular online newsletter covering digital campaigns and elections, was highly dismissive of the lack of imagination shown by candidates in 2002. The efforts, he argued, amounted to little more than "putting a new television camera in front of a radio newsreader behind a microphone and calling it TV" (Noble, 2002: n.p.). Looking back on this period, Bruce Bimber (2014) echoed Noble's core complaint, arguing that up until 2004 web campaigns in the United States "had indeed been largely an amplified version of traditional politics" (133).

Empirical analyses of web campaigning beyond the United States and the United Kingdom in the late 1990s provided further support for the view that campaigns lacked a clear goal. Coding schemes, designed to measure and compare parties' and candidates' performance, were widely applied across national elections. The results revealed a consistent picture of static and information-heavy sites with limited opportunities for interaction (Roper, 1998; Trechsel et al., 2003; Conway and Dorner, 2004). In their comparative overview of activity through to the mid noughties, Gibson and Ward (2009) found that ". . . an astonishingly formulaic picture of adaptation" had emerged in internet campaigning. There was an almost compulsive focus on "information dissemination and the migration of offline content to the online environment" and a profound neglect "of the unique interactive features of the medium" (93). It is thus

perhaps no surprise that it was around this time that the terms "virtual billboard" (Sadow and James, 1999; Stromer-Galley, 2004), "electronic pamphlet," and "e-brochureware" (Foot and Schneider, 2002) started to appear in the academic lexicon of digital campaign research. These labels perfectly evoked the anodyne and conservative approach taken to the web by political actors.

Application of the new coding schemes also served to dispel any notion that the equalization of party competition detected during phase I was gaining momentum. Subsequent studies of British parties' online campaign sites during the 1999 European elections and 2001 and 2005 general elections all pointed to an increasing gulf between the online campaigns of the major and minor parties (Gibson and Ward, 2000a; Ward and Gibson, 2003; Jackson, 2007). Other studies across a range of established democratic polities, such as New Zealand, Australia, Finland, Germany, and Canada, revealed a similar growing imbalance in the quality of parties' online efforts (Roper, 1998; Carlson and Djupsund, 2001; Gibson and Ward, 2002; Conway and Dorner, 2004; Schweitzer, 2005; Gibson et al., 2008; Small, 2008; Ward et al., 2008a).

It was the work of Margolis et al. (1997, 1999) and particularly that of Margolis and Resnick (2000), however, which proved most influential in resetting expectations for a more equalized future political system. Their analysis of the impact of the internet on American parties, media, and business organizations was pivotal in claiming that a process of "normalization" was now underway. The "frontier" spirit that had taken hold online in the early days, they lamented, was now "fading fast . . . [as] political, economic, social and recreational life on the Net for the mass public is increasing designed and guided by professionals" (Margolis and Resnick, 2000: 4).

Even when chinks in the normalization narrative did emerge, they were almost always treated as exceptions to the rule. Studies of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Australia, for instance, all pointed to the "surprisingly" strong performance of Green parties, particularly with regard to the interactivity and participation opportunities provided on their sites (Ward and Voerman, 1999; Newell, 2001; Tkach-Kawasaki, 2003). Furthermore, the explanations provided for these deviant cases normally centered on their having a preexisting culture of decentralization and grassroots empowerment. This meant that any innovation or "equalization" tendencies in use of the medium were seen as a spontaneous or involuntary response by the party in question, rather than as a deliberate strategic attempt to harness the medium's unique properties.

Thus, by the turn of the millennium, a new era of more standardized and professionalized digital campaigning appeared to have taken hold across established democracies. This second phase was marked by the growing reliance of parties on professional consultants and increasing investment in their digital presence.

The new commitment resulted in the gap between large and small parties widening, and an end to the talk about a likely leveling of the communications playing field that had emerged in phase I. Despite this increased commitment and growing consensus among parties that the internet mattered, exactly how and why remained something of a "black box." Campaigns thus increasingly converged on a model of sleekly designed, but largely static and generic, content. The focus was primarily on playing it "safe" and translating existing content and appeals from other media into the online space, rather than identifying and harnessing its unique properties.

Phase III: Community Building and Activist Mobilization (2004–2008)

> The Internet is tailor-made for populist, insurgent movement. Its roots in the open-source ARPAnet, its hacker culture, and its decentralized, scattered architecture make it difficult for big, establishment candidates, companies and media to gain control of it.
> —Joe Trippi, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* (2004: 102)

Findings of normalization in levels of online competition and the mode of voter communication persisted for much of the first decade of the new millennia. Studies in a variety of national contexts repeatedly showed a decisive gap opening up between the larger and smaller parties' web presence and a continuing emphasis on top-down communication (Vedel and Koc-Michalska, 2007; Robles-Estrada et al., 2008; Strandberg, 2009; Schweitzer, 2008, 2011; Lilleker et al., 2011). Given the support that these findings provided to the e-pluralists' predictions of a return to politics as usual, and the reinforcement of existing elites, one might expect the story of digital campaigns to end here, at least with regard to any further major power shifts. However, from the middle of the new decade, fresh evidence began to emerge which indicated that the momentum toward equalization was not entirely dead.

Speculation was triggered initially by the growing popularity of a suite of more "user-friendly" tools that had developed in the aftermath of the dot.com collapse in 2001. Collectively labeled as "web 2.0" technologies (O'Reilly, 2005; Anderson, 2007),[6] the new software was heralded as reviving the ethos of the web as a dynamic, decentralized media that was open to all. Archetypal tools like blogs and social networking sites such as Facebook were seen as revolutionary in the extent to which they ceded power to ordinary users to create, share, and promote new forms of content. The result was a new "architecture of participation" that promoted a radically different model of networked communication

production and distribution beyond the reach of the traditional broadcasters and press (Chadwick, 2008; Gueorguieva, 2008; Castells, 2009).

Excitement about the democratizing effects of web 2.0 traveled far beyond the electoral sphere and indeed beyond the Western world (Lotan et al., 2011; Howard and Hussain, 2013). In campaign terms, however, discussion quickly settled again on questions of pluralization of party systems and opportunities for more two-way voter communication. Platforms such as Facebook and Meetup provided a multiplicity of cheap channels to recruit activists and engage with those "hard to reach" sections of the electorate that had tuned out from mainstream media and politics. Studies conducted across a wide range of national contexts in Europe, Oceania, and Latin America served to confirm the appeal of the new social web for the smaller parties in particular (Carlson and Strandberg, 2008; Gilmore, 2012; Gibson and McAllister 2011; Samuel-Azran et al., 2015; Koc-Michalska et al. 2014; Hansen and Kosiara-Pederson, 2014; Dolezal, 2015).[7]

It was in the internal arena, however, where expectations of a shift toward equalization now started to emerge perhaps most strongly. The newly devolved ecology of communication meant that ordinary supporters had the opportunity to self-organize and promote their preferred candidate without the need for central resources or HQ intervention (Gibson, 2015; Lilleker and Jackson, 2010; Gibson et al., 2013; Vergeer et al., 2013). Although there had been some notable attempts by candidates and parties to build up networks of activist support using the internet,[8] it was in the US presidential election cycles of 2004 and 2008 where this co-production model came to fruition on a national scale. At the forefront of this effort was Howard Dean, the little known governor of one of America's smallest states, Vermont. Under the direction of his IT-savvy manager Joe Trippi, Dean succeeded in building up a dense network of highly committed digital volunteers, or "Deaniacs," who catapulted him to early frontrunner status in the Democratic primaries.

From the start of the campaign, Trippi had understood that the "open-source . . . decentralized, scattered architecture" of the internet meant that it is "tailor-made for a populist, insurgent movement" such as Dean's (Trippi, 2004: 102). It was, however, Dean's supporters' use of social media and particularly the Meetup.org platform to self-organize into local teams that proved the critical factor in building his success. Through this interface the campaign was able to tap into a huge swell of grassroots support and to connect that online enthusiasm with offline action. Such an approach revived the type of personalized electoral communication that Lazarsfeld et al. (1948) had identified over half a century ago in their two-step flow model. For some, it heralded a new mode of campaigning centered on ". . . a new form of political community building" (Johnson, 2007: 140). Rather than following the

typical "command and control" structure that had dominated campaigns in the latter decades of the twentieth century, supporters and members were now central actors in disseminating and creating the campaign message (Trippi, 2004; Williams and Tedesco, 2006; Colville, 2008; Gueorguieva, 2008; Teachout and Streeter, 2008; Kreiss, 2009, 2012; Lilleker and Jackson, 2010; Gibson, 2015).

Where Dean led, others soon followed. Despite his early exit from the race, Dean's rapid rise had shown the value of social media as a means of activist recruitment, and his techniques were quickly co-opted by his rivals (Stromer-Galley, 2014: 98). It was Republican George W. Bush's digital team that proved most adept in developing Dean's legacy. Their "Personal Precinct" program offered a new online nationwide volunteer management system that allowed individuals to "join" the campaign and earn points by undertaking a range of officially recognized activities to help the candidate locally. The highest performers were then rewarded by a public listing on the campaign "leader board" pages (Turk, 2012). Bush's team thus understood, as had Dean's advisors, the power of the technology to engage and empower the grassroots and to build a sense of ownership and community around the campaign. Unlike Dean, however, they also understood how to incentivize and direct that energy toward the core goal of winning the election. Through what was essentially an "in-house" version of Meetup, they made it possible for central HQ staff to monitor and channel the activities of the new recruits.

It was the perfection of this blended model of grassroots input and top-down direction that defined the digital strategy of Illinois senator Barack Obama in 2008 (Stromer-Galley, 2014: 104). Guided by *Blue State Digital*, the online agency formed out of the ashes of Dean's implosion, the campaign managed to effectively link Obama's community organizing experience with the power of the new medium to deliver local activism at an unprecedented national scale. Central to delivering this new form of networked campaigning was *MyBO*, a purpose-built volunteer-management tool designed by Chris Hughes, the cofounder of Facebook. Launched in Spring 2007, *MyBO* was unique in merging the community element of a social networking site with the functionality of Meetup. Registered members could join groups and interact online through messaging and personal blogs. They could also receive training and tools to allow them to engage in more purposeful tasks such as canvassing voters, holding events, and raising funds online (Harfoush, 2009). The daily updates on volunteer activity and success generated through *MyBO* were then used to update field operations and ensure a more efficient deployment of campaign resources. This heightened the reach and prominence of the digital face of the campaign and ensured that the team itself now moved up the organizational hierarchy

from its position in phase II. Those managing the web side of operations now secured a seat at the top table. This elevation brought them eyeball to eyeball with established units like field, media relations, and fundraising in the battle for resources.

While it reached its fullest expression in the Obama campaign of 2008, the new "outsourced" model of digital campaigning was not confined to North America. In South Korea several years earlier, Roh Moo-hyun, a little known legislator, had launched a successful bid for the South Korean presidency in 2003, fueled through his "Nosamo" network of online activists (Kim, 2006; Qiu, 2008). Roh was even belatedly labeled the "Asian Howard Dean" by observers, given the strong similarities in their style of digital campaigning.

Beyond presidential systems, parties in parliamentary systems also appeared to be waking up to the activist mobilization properties of the new social media tools. Among party scholars, discussion focused on the possible emergence of a new "cyber" or "networked" model of party, which featured a more decentralized structure and empowered grassroots (Heidar and Saglie, 2003; Löfgren and Smith, 2003; Margetts 2006). While not necessarily gaining full expression in the real world, key features of the new prototype were observed among certain parties, particularly the smaller players. In Italy, for example, the Radical Party was singled out for its experimental uses of the new technologies to recruit supporters and develop a national public profile (Kies, 2004). Other countries witnessed the formation of new virtual parties, such as Senator Online in Australia, that were committed to using the internet to run an entirely new type of member-driven organization (Chen, 2013). In Norway, Kalnes (2009) identified what he termed the "e-ruptive" consequences of web 2.0 technologies for parties, which involved a lowering of the threshold for participation among grassroots supporters and sympathizers.

Enthusiasm for the newly devolved model of campaigning also spread to the major parties. A number of mainstream left- and right-wing players in the United Kingdom, France, Australia, and Scandinavia launched copycat versions of *MyBO* following Obama's victory in 2008. The sites—which typically used the "My" prefix (e.g., "MyConservatives" or "MyLiberals")—were clearly designed to emulate their US predecessor. Beyond their similarity in look and feel, however, they shared the core purpose of recruiting non-members to the cause. Through the sites, interested individuals were registered as supporters and then were charged with a series of official tasks such as canvassing and organizing fundraisers and rallying events. The result was a new citizen-initiated model of campaigning (CIC) that fundamentally challenged the traditional hierarchy and boundaries of parties as member-based mass organizations (Lilleker and Jackson, 2010; Gibson, 2015; Karlsen, 2013).

Despite their interest in activist mobilization internally, the moves by major parties into the web 2.0 space ultimately prompted a revival of claims of normalization in systemic terms. Bespoke *MyBO*-type sites were typically beyond the financial reach of most smaller parties and independent candidates. In addition, it was clear that although some powers were passed downward and outward to supporters through these platforms, central monitoring was key to really making the two-step flow model work. In practical terms, even if smaller parties were making stronger efforts to campaign with "free" forms of social media, and were found in some cases to receive a disproportionate electoral benefit (Gibson and McAllister, 2011; Gilmore, 2012, it was still the case that the major players gained the lions' share of attention in terms of likes and follows (Larsson, 2017). Moreover, it was clear that despite Dean's, Roh's, and even Obama's status as "outsiders" within their own parties, they were very much part of the mainstream political order.

Within campaign communication, the normalization narrative returned as analyses of parties and candidates' actual use of web 2.0 were undertaken. Hopes for a richer and deeper dialogue with voters were dashed as studies consistently reported a top-down approach being taken to the new platforms, and very few genuine attempts at interaction with citizens (Graham et al., 2013; Murchison, 2015; Druckman et al. 2014). According to Stromer Galley (2014), most US presidential candidates, including Obama and even Dean, had failed to fully grasp the two-way communicative opportunities of the medium. Instead, they had resorted to what she called a form of "controlled interactivity," a form of two-way communication that allowed for debate, but only on certain "safe" topics. Subjects that might produce more meaningful debate and even disagreement were studiously avoided.

Thus, while phase III did register a pushback against the long march toward normalization of phase II, particularly at the organizational level, mounting evidence suggested that this did not permeate across the layers of campaign activity. It was clear that minor parties had not seen a reversal in their fortunes and genuine dialogue had not yet broken out between elites and the masses. Campaigns were, however, clearly doing more to enable supporters to talk among themselves, and to help them spread the word about a candidate or party within their online networks. This cascaded approach to campaign communication helped revive a two-step flow model of voter persuasion associated with an earlier, more vibrant era of community-based campaigns (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948). In strategic terms, the focus of digital campaigners had switched to mobilizing their base. Supporters and activists were now the key targets for their efforts. Rather than passively consuming content, as in the two previous phases, visitors to websites were now being prompted to circulate and redistribute material through their networks.

Phase IV: Voter Mobilization (2012–present)

> The world of politics . . . is now done by Martians.
> —Peggy Noonan, *Wall Street Journal* (2011)[9]

The move into the fourth phase of digital campaigning constitutes perhaps its biggest step forward to date. This is the point where digital technology finally takes center stage and assumes responsibility for the core task of voter mobilization. This is not to say that GOTV (get out the vote) objectives had been absent in earlier phases. Scholars of campaigns and elections had been speculating for some time on the voter targeting potential of the new medium (Norris, 2000; Plasser, 2000; Plasser and Plasser, 2002; Farrell and Schmitt-Beck, 2002).[10] Phase II had seen several attempts by parties to exploit the "narrowcasting" capabilities of the web by developing content for particular audiences, such as young people, female voters, and journalists. Other more explicit vote-getting initiatives such as "vote-swapping" sites had also been promoted by smaller parties to encourage the strategic exchange of ballots with ideological allies in a bid to unseat or deny victory to a common "enemy."[11] Finally, phase III, as the previous section revealed, was defined in large part by digital campaigners' efforts to develop a new two-step or indirect model of voter mobilization through online channels.

While these initiatives were clearly designed to increase parties' and candidates' electoral support, they also faced some significant challenges with regard to their precision and inherent passivity as mobilization tools. Voters needed either to find the sites themselves or to be connected in some way with the campaign through their online social networks in order to gain exposure to the mobilizing messages. Connecting with that all-important pool of undecided voters that could help swing an election outcome was thus a matter of luck and random exposure, rather than coordinated intent. In phase IV these uncertainties and inefficiencies are essentially removed from the process as a new set of highly accurate "scientific" methods are introduced for pinpointing and mobilizing these latent pockets of support.

The shift in focus to more micro (or even what some termed "nano") targeting of the electorate during phase IV is matched by an intensification of efforts to "pull" more detailed information about individual voters into the campaign. While websites had previously gathered personal details about visitors through newsletter sign-ups and feedback forms, during the fourth phase, such requests become more frequent and intrusive. Methods range from pop-up surveys and "landing pages" that directly ask users about their voting intentions and geographical location, to demands for Facebook or Twitter account information to access certain content. Once collected, the new data are immediately added to

the parties' voter files to be pored over and dissected by newly appointed teams of computer and behavioral scientists. The results of these analyses are then fed back into the micro-targeting process in order to produce yet more accurate online and offline voter contacts.

The expertise and technical support required to deliver phase IV campaigning produces a massive expansion in the budget and personnel allocated to digital. This growth in staff numbers sees an increasing differentiation and specialization in the roles they perform. Long-standing "public" facing jobs such as home page and email management remain core activities but are now joined by the new "back-end" analytics and infrastructure development tasks. Beyond any restructuring in size and shape, however, perhaps the biggest changes in the campaign organization occur within the higher echelons of management and the culture of decision-making. The importance of field experience and intuition in campaign planning are increasingly diminished as a new set of social, data, and information scientists introduce a more data-driven approach to understanding and predicting voter behavior, which forms the basis for key decisions in field operations, media advertising, and fundraising efforts (Issenberg, 2012; Nickerson and Rogers, 2014; Anstead, 2017). The "Martians," as Peggy Noonan describes this new alien breed of campaign operatives who arrived on the US election scene in 2012, have indeed landed.

In structural terms, the central marker of phase IV is the rise of the digital team to the apex of the organization. The director assumes the role of overall campaign manager, ousting the more seasoned old-style "politicos" who were typically drawn from the field side of operations. At the same time as their power increases, their identity as a discrete subunit within the campaign organization becomes blurred. While they remain in charge of the "web" campaign *writ large* (i.e., maintenance of the online interface and platforms to interact with voters), the role of digital expertise now diffuses out into other areas of operation. Digital now plays a role in decisions over media advertising, GOTV efforts, and fundraising. The distinction between online and offline campaigning effectively now disappears as the former subsumes the latter to deliver a new science of voter mobilization.

Stepping back to profile the changes occurring during phase IV in the three broader "power" domains of campaign activity identified in Table 1.1 in Chapter 1, it is clear that the pendulum is once again on the move. At the systemic level, the resources required to run such a highly data-intensive mode of campaigning means that levels of inter-party competition return to a more normalized state of affairs. The bigger parties are the only organizations that are realistically capable of developing and running these complex voter-management systems. At the intra-organizational level, national-local relations show a similar shift toward normalization as the new tech gurus take control over key decisions.

That said, however, the valuable new reach and resources created through the local volunteer groups formed in phase III may lead them to resist full centralization. One possible outcome of this tension is the emergence of a new "franchise" style of party organization that comes to the fore, particularly during election periods. Under this new model, central party staff retain control over the allocation of resources and direct the campaign effort nationally. Meanwhile, local groups gain considerable autonomy over tactics and implementation of those plans, through their access to a new suite of purpose-built online resources.

Finally, the third "power" domain of elite-voter communication also sees the shift back toward a more normalized top-down conditions. Two-step communication flow is still encouraged, but now it is more precisely controlled, targeted, and monitored, using specialist apps and smart software. Voters are understood essentially as the recipients of these micro targeted messages, and interaction is for the purposes of extraction of personal information, rather than the promotion of dialogue and participatory engagement.

PHASE IV DIGITAL CAMPAIGNING IN PRACTICE?

To date, phase IV digital campaigning has yet to emerge in most countries, let alone operate as a norm. Given its reputation for electoral innovation it is not surprising, however, that the United States is seen as a leading nation in this regard. While there had been ongoing attempts by the Democratic National Committee (DNC) to institute a more "data-driven" style of campaigning within the party over the preceding decade,[12] it was the presidential election of 2012 and particularly the efforts of Barack Obama that first really put the new *modus operandi* of electioneering on the national and international news radar. According to most observers, the campaign was a "game changer" for digital, elevating it into a pivotal position within the wider decision-making hierarchy. Post-election media reports contained extensive coverage of the radical overhaul of campaign hardware and software that took place and the new laser-like focus on seeking out and mobilizing undecided voters.[13]

Academic experts were in agreement that the 2012 US election marked a watershed moment, not just for digital campaigning, but for electioneering practice more generally. For Vaccari (2013), 2012 signaled the ultimate "commodification" of online campaigning, the point when the practice finally became aligned and subsumed into the main purpose of electioneering—voter mobilization. Bruce Bimber (2014) agreed, arguing that

> Obama's digital media strategy . . . meant that there was no "online campaign" or "Internet campaign" that stood in distinction to the "offline" campaign. There was a single campaign pursuing traditional campaign

goals in a way that aggressively exploited the communication environment associated with digital media. (134–135)

In practical terms, one of the clearest indicators that the United States, and specifically the Democrats, had entered phase IV by 2012 could be seen in the dramatic growth of the digital team, which increased almost threefold in size compared to four years earlier.[14] Along with this expansion in staff, there was an emergence of new specialist sub-teams—tech and analytics. It was this development and particularly the job advertisement to recruit employees for the latter that prompted Peggy Noonan's claims of an alien takeover of US politics.

The end result was a voter mobilization effort that achieved an unprecedented level of individual granularity and precision—according at least to the post-election confessions of those who helped to deliver it. Forecasts of the vote split at the precinct level were reportedly accurate to within less than one percentage point, down to the town hamlet level in New Hampshire.[15] The campaign's efforts at micro-targeting via email also reached a new and unprecedented level of accuracy, according to Sasha Issenberg, allowing the Obama team to locate individual Democrat voters amidst a previously unnavigable aggregate sea of red Republican voters.[16] Inevitably, questions have been raised since the election as to the real efficiency of Obama's data-crunching machine and how far it actually secured his victory (Sides and Vavreck, 2013).[17] Taking these criticisms on board, however, it does seem that the US Democrats' claims to be one of first parties to have entered phase IV are entirely legitimate. We probe these developments in greater depth in Chapter 7, and return to take a closer look at how far these practices became embedded post-2012, in the concluding chapter.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has reviewed the literature on digital campaigning since the field of study emerged in the mid- to late 1990s. It has shown that, cumulatively, the work forms a narrative that identifies four main phases of development—experimentation, standardization and professionalization, community building and activist mobilization, and most recently, individual voter mobilization. While the borders of the phases are fluid, there are key changes in the physical and technical infrastructure used to support and run the campaign and the level of strategic thinking that, we argue, break down in a stepwise manner. At a more abstract level, each phase can also be associated with a gravitational pull toward one of two dominant power "logics"—equalization or normalization.

Whether all countries will cycle through all four phases and reach the point of data-driven individualized voter mobilization is open to question. However, what is evident is that if the phases are sequential and the process of adaptation and innovation set out in Table 1.1 continues, then countries are likely to end up in an even more normalized condition, or what we are calling a state of *hyper-normalty*. This is a campaign environment in which the major parties are the only ones realistically capable of running a competitive campaign, in which central elites control overall strategy, allowing some role for local activists to shape local tactics, and communication with voters is personalized via algorithms and any interaction is entirely instrumental, with the goal of extracting further data. A key twist on this process is that the intra-organizational concentration of power does not lead to a reinforcing of conventional political consultants and experienced politicos and activists within the campaign hierarchy. Instead, it is bringing to the fore a new breed of *apoliticos*: individuals who are drawn from the tech industry, and who have expertise in data management and analytics and ideally a background in computing and behavioral sciences, but who lack significant exposure to elections and campaign experience.

Having now outlined the key phases in digital campaigns' development, the next chapter turns to examine the question of which countries have moved most rapidly through the cycle, and what might help to explain the varying pace of development that we observe.

3

Digital Campaigning across Space

The Role of Technological, Political, and Institutional Context

(W I T H   R O S A L Y N D   S O U T H E R N)

Chapter 1 set out the core theoretical argument of this book—that digital campaigning has occurred in four main phases—with the most recent transition bringing the shift into a new state of *hypernormality* in which major party dominance is secured, and a new power or *apolitical* elite sit at the heart of campaign management. Chapter 2 put some flesh on the bones of this argument by showing how the findings from national studies of digital campaigning over time align with the four-phase model, and provided some preliminary evidence about where we are seeing the most advanced phase IV mode emerging. This chapter switches the focus from examining developments in digital campaigning over time to those occurring over space. How do nations compare in terms of their location within the evolutionary cycle, and why do some countries appear to be progressing faster than others?

Measuring how far and fast countries have progressed through the four-phase cycle is of course not a straightforward task. Tracking the extent to which digital campaigns meet the criteria listed in Table 1.1 in Chapter 1 is difficult for one country, let alone for multiple cases. Identifying a smaller set of "critical" criteria on which national campaigns can be compared is thus a necessary first step in this process. We focus specifically here on the demand-side characteristics of each phase, given their greater amenability for purposes of international calibration and comparison. Levels and modes of voter engagement with the campaign can be measured relatively easily with relevant cross-national survey data. Measures of the internal power distribution and primary goals of political organizations, as well as specifics about the location and size of the digital team, are considerably harder to ascertain with any precision. Given that we are particularly interested in comparing rates of progress through our four-phase cycle, we can further constrain the analysis to examine indicators of the shift into the

demand side of phase IV of digital campaigning (i.e., the extent to which voters have "received" online contact during recent national elections).

Who Has Entered Phase IV?

To map the extent of online contact[1] occurring across countries, we make use of a unique international data source—the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). The CSES is a post-election survey that is fielded in national elections over a fixed time period, and includes a series of standard questions about political attitudes and behavior.[2] The study has a set of core questions and a variable thematic component that changes over time. Module 4, which was fielded in elections between 2011 and 2015 in participating countries, focused on the theme of mobilization and includes a battery of items that measure whether respondents were contacted during the campaign by political parties (direct) or by friends and family (indirect). The contact is also divided according to whether it was online or offline. The online mode is split further into three main types—email, SMS/text messages, and web-based methods, including social networks/micro-blogs such as Facebook and Twitter. Offline forms of contact are also split into three types—face-to-face canvassing, phone, and mail (see Appendix 3.1 for the full text of the survey items).

At the time of this analysis, module 4 of the CSES was in its second release and included data for 17 countries. In addition, the 2015 British Election Study (BES) had been released and included the CSES module which had been fielded in the post-election mail-back/web completion survey component. This meant the mobilization data were available for the case of the United Kingdom, although they were not integrated into the CSES. As such, it was possible to include the United Kingdom in the descriptive stage of the analysis. Its addition was important, since it meant that all four case studies examined in subsequent chapters could be compared to one another, and ranked internationally on their levels of digital mobilization.

Table 3.1 presents the basic frequencies for the different modes of contact across the 17 countries included in the CSES data set, and for the extra case of the United Kingdom.[3] The figures are the percentage of those receiving a particular mode of contact as a proportion of the sample or population as a whole. The results are reported by country and by year of election.

Columns three and four Table 3.1 report the main variables of interest for this chapter, which are the proportion of citizens that received any online contact from the party or informally through their networks. Column five reports the total proportion of the sample that received either direct or indirect online contact. For comparison purposes, we report the frequencies of direct contact by the parties through more traditional offline modes (i.e., face to face and mail/telephone) in

Table 3.1 Online and Offline Campaign Contact or "Receive Mode" by Country (% of Population)

Country	Election Year	Online Direct	Online Indirect	Total Online	Offline Direct	F2F Mail/Phone	Total Direct	Sign-up Online
Australia	2013	8	8	14	4	56	59	5
Austria	2013	6	3	8	9	15	17	6
France	2012	5	6	10	2	6	10	7
Germany	2013	7	2	8	11	52	56	4
Greece	2012	24	16	31	25	28	37	6
Ireland	2011	2	2	4	43	17	49	5
Iceland	2013	15	10	23	15	23	32	12
Japan	2013	2	2	3	9	29	32	3
Mexico	2012	14	8	18	24	23	41	9
Montenegro	2012	4	2	5	15	8	21	7
New Zealand	2011	10	9	16	14	70	75	5
Poland	2011	2	2	4	4	4	7	3
Serbia	2012	9	3	11	15	26	30	1
Switzerland	2011	6	4	7	7	25	27	na
Taiwan	2012	24	7	27	8	35	50	11
Thailand	2011	0.3	0.2	0.5	13	0.6	15	3
United States	2012	17	23	34	8	35	37	10
United Kingdom	2015	12	6	16	21	48	55	7

columns six and seven. We again cumulate the preceding columns to report the proportion of voters receiving any type direct contact from parties and candidates (i.e., online or offline) in column eight. The rates of online sign-up by voters to receive party and candidate alerts and e-news by country are reported in the final column. This variable is useful in terms of showing prior levels of interest in the online campaign. More importantly, perhaps, it provides a more accurate picture of the overall level of genuine or "net" online mobilization that is occurring within a country. Given the lack of national email or mobile phone contact lists, it is difficult for parties to make unsolicited attempts to contact voters in the same way they can do using offline methods. Online contacting is thus more likely to be reported by those individuals who have already signed up to follow a party or candidate via social media or for email/SMS alerts. Once we take into account that prior sign-up, it becomes easier to assess what proportion was unsolicited.

Viewed together, these variables paint an interesting picture of variance and similarity in the amount of different types of contact occurring across countries. Comparing the rates of offline to online contacting, we can see that the latter is typically much less common than the former. This is particularly the case if we look at the rates of mail and phone contact. The situation for face-to-face contacting is more even, with most countries seeing similar rates of online and in-person contact occurring. In a few nations, such as Taiwan and the United States, rates of online contact far exceed those of face-to-face. However, in Ireland the situation is reversed, with respondents reporting much higher rates of personal contact compared with digital methods.

Comparing the rates of online contact reported in Table 3.1, it is clear there is considerable variance in the amount of online contacting that is occurring across countries. Looking at rates of direct online contact by parties, the table shows that almost one-quarter of the population in Greece and Taiwan received some kind of digital message about their vote from the parties or candidates in the lead-up to the election. This compares to a low of less than one percent in the case of Thailand. Iceland and the United States follow in reasonably close proximity to the two top-performing nations, with 15 percent and 17 percent, respectively, of their electorates having receiving official e-contact. The United Kingdom and Mexico rank somewhat lower, but still report around one in ten of their population as having experienced some type of digital mobilization by parties during a recent election campaign.

There is a fairly sizable group of countries that fall into a middle band of direct online contact, with between 4 and 10 percent of the population receiving some kind of e-stimuli from parties. Interestingly, when we look at the corresponding rates of sign-up by voters to receive online contact from the parties, there does not appear to be any direct parity, beyond the case of Austria. Typically, online sign-up rates are lower than levels of direct online party contact. This is interesting in that it suggests that, on average, parties are reaching out beyond their base to voters who have not shown a prior interest in hearing from them.

Most notable in this regard are the United States, Taiwan, and Greece, where the total amount of online contact is at least double the rate of online sign-up. In five countries, however, the opposite holds true: there are more people reporting that they had signed up for party updates than actually received contact. This is most pronounced in Thailand, where around 10 times more people reportedly signed up to receive campaign information than were actually contacted online. While the gap in most cases is small, the disparity does indicate there were several countries in which parties were failing to fully exploit their own email lists.

Overall, Table 3.1 reveals that levels of indirect online contact are typically lower than direct forms. The exception here is the United States, where rates of this type of informal online exchange actually exceed those of formal party mobilization. While we do not know the content of that exchange, and particularly whether it involved the passing on of campaign information, such findings suggest that the two-step flow model of digital mobilization is more established in the United States than is the case elsewhere.

More generally, the frequencies reported in Table 3.1 are important in confirming that countries vary in their intensity of online campaigning and in the extent to which informal attempts at online persuasion occur in national elections. We use these findings to group countries into levels of digital mobilization. Specifically, we divide the rates of contact into four tiers based on the maximum and minimum rates of total online contact reported in the penultimate column of Table 3.1. The results of this ranking are shown in Table 3.2.

The top tier contains those countries in which at least 20 percent of the population received some kind of online electoral contact, either from the parties themselves, or mediated through their social networks. Four countries meet this criterion—the United States, Greece, Taiwan, and Iceland. Dropping down a notch, we find that both antipodean democracies—Australia and New Zealand—make it into the second tier. as do Mexico, the United Kingdom, and Serbia. France just edges over the 10 percent threshold, based on levels of direct and indirect online contact during its 2012 presidential election. The third tier, which includes those countries where between 5 and 10 percent of the population have received some type of online contact, is quite heavily dominated by the northern European democracies of Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. Finally, the lowest rates of online contact are seen in tier four countries. This includes a somewhat random mix of older and newer democracies from varying geographic regions.

Before moving on to try to ascertain what might help to explain this ordering of nations, we provide some additional insight into the rates of contact observed by breaking down the online contact received across countries into its three component parts—email, SMS, and web/social network. The results are shown in Table 3.3, and are interesting in that they point to a different pattern of contact within the top-tier nations.

Table 3.2 **Rates of Online Mobilization by Country**

TIER 1 (20% or more receive direct/indirect online contact)

- United States
- Greece
- Taiwan
- Iceland

TIER 2 (From 10% up to 20% receive direct/indirect online contact)

- Mexico
- New Zealand
- United Kingdom
- Australia
- Serbia
- France

TIER 3 (From 5% up to 10% receive direct/indirect online contact)

- Austria
- Germany
- Switzerland
- Montenegro

TIER 4 (Less than 5% receive direct/indirect online contact)

- Ireland
- Poland
- Japan
- Thailand

Source: Based on findings from "Total Online" contact column of Table 3.1. CSES Wave 4 (2nd Release); UK BES 2015 (see Table 4.2 for further details)

In particular, we find that the vast majority of contact occurring in the case of Greece and Taiwan is via SMS. At least one in five voters in Greece and Taiwan received some type of mobilizing text message from the parties or candidates. Within the United States, the story is somewhat different. Here we find that email is the most common channel that candidates and parties use for online mobilization, along with the web and social networking sites. Iceland is more of a hybrid case, with both email and text messaging proving popular. This differentiation among countries in the channels utilized for dissemination of messages across the top-performing countries is interesting in that it reveals that digital campaigning at its most pervasive does not necessarily follow a "one size fits all" model. Technological capacity and voters' existing preferences for digital communication are likely to play a role in shaping how those messages are distributed. Furthermore, the differences observed raise questions about the relative efficacy and power of email and social network contacting versus text messages.

Table 3.3 **Mode of Direct and Indirect Online Contact or 'receive mode'
by Country (% of Population)**

Country	Year	Online Direct Contact Mode			Online Indirect Contact Mode		
		Email	*SMS*	*Web/SNS*	*Email*	*SMS*	*Web/SNS*
Australia	2013	5	1	4	1	1	7
Austria	2013	3	2	3	1	1	3
France	2012	4	1	1	3	1	4
Germany	2013	5	0	4	1	1	1
Greece	2012	9	21	10	5	10	10
Ireland	2011	1	2	0	1	1	0
Iceland	2013	10	9	6	3	2	8
Japan	2013	1	1	1	0.4	2	0.4
Mexico	2012	6	10	7	2	4	4
Montenegro	2012	1	3	2	0.3	1	1
New Zealand	2011	7	1	5	3	1	7
Poland	2011	1	0.4	1	2	1	2
Serbia	2012	1	8	2	0.9	2	1
Switzerland	2011	5	1	2	2	0.3	2
Taiwan	2012	3	21	4	2	3	3
Thailand	2011	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1
U.S.A	2012	15	4	9	11	4	17
United Kingdom	2015	9	2	5	1	2	5

Sources: CSES Wave 4 (2nd Release); UK BES 2015 (see Table 4.2 for further details)

Explaining Levels of Online Voter Mobilization

Having profiled the variance in levels of online mobilization occurring across several democracies during comparable recent national elections, the question then arises of how we explain these findings. A quick eyeballing of the rankings does not yield an immediate answer. While a majority of nations in tiers one and two of Table 3.2 report high rates of internet use among their populations, Greece does not.[4] Institutionally, the cases are also quite varied. Tier one contains both two-party and multiparty systems, as well a mix of proportional

representation (PR) and plurality electoral systems. The campaign environment also differs quite markedly among the top tier countries. Candidates and parties in the United States and Taiwan enjoy quite liberal regimes in terms of controls on their advertising and expenditure. Greece and Iceland, by contrast, impose stricter spending limits on parties and offer state-subsidized rather than paid media airtime.[5]

To help explain the variance in online contacting observed in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 and, by proxy, those factors most conducive to entry into phase IV digital campaigning, we adopt a more systematic approach. Specifically, we fit a multi-level regression model to the CSES data set, which means the units of analysis—voters—are treated as individuals (level 1) nested within groups, in this case, countries (level 2). To build our explanatory model, we combine the insights from two relevant, but largely disconnected bodies of comparative literature. The first includes studies that have attempted to explain variance in digital campaigning across countries from a supply-side perspective. The second is a larger and more established corpus of work that has focused on explaining rates of voter mobilization and reported party contact among the electorates of different nations.

COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS

The literature examining differences in the extent and style of web campaigning across countries is limited, but increasing. The first major study was conducted by Norris (2001), at the turn of the millennium. Taking a large *N* approach, she compared the presence and content of party websites across 179 countries in mid-2000. Her explanatory model included a range of party characteristics, along with a number of aggregate indicators that measured countries' levels of socio-economic, human, and technological development. Her findings were important in showing that societal factors and particularly technological advancement helped explain how active and particularly interactive parties were online.

The increase in party websites after the millennium meant that subsequent comparative research focused more on the interesting questions of how parties campaigned online, rather than simply explaining rates of adoption. Attention shifted from the broader socioeconomic environment to the political context and the institutional configuration of the polity. Anstead and Chadwick (2009)[6] were among the first to look these structural factors, identifying the party system as one of the main causes of differences in web campaigning across countries. Through a small *N* comparison of the United Kingdom and the United States, they argued that the more "stratarchical" or decentralized mode of party organization in the latter, along with its more liberal campaign finance rules, had permitted a much faster rate of diffusion and innovation of digital technology

during elections. Together, these factors generated an environment in which candidates functioned as political entrepreneurs, building "start-up" organizations for each election and drawing in a massive number of volunteers and donations. The internet was the ideal campaign medium to use in this context, given its fast, networked, and personalized qualities.

The view that institutions mattered for innovation in web campaigning was supported by Davis et al. (2008) in their editorial overview of the findings from online elections in 12 different countries. Looking across the assembled cases, they concluded that the presidential candidate-centered systems of the United States and Chile provided the best environment for internet campaigning to develop. By contrast, party-centered parliamentary democracies were less open to the new media and the more personalized political appeals it promoted (Davis et al., 2008). The authors also speculated on whether the more commercialized and consumer-driven media systems in the United States and Chile encouraged heavier use of the internet by both candidates and voters. The medium might appeal as a more direct and less "noisy" channel for both providing and accessing political information.

Despite the persuasive case that these impressionistic and small *N* accounts put forward to show differences in web campaigning across countries, larger cross-national investigation did not support their conclusions. Studies of both the 2004 and 2009 European Parliament (EP) elections found that macro-level political factors explained very little of the variance observed between political campaign sites and particularly use of web 1.0 versus web 2.0 features (Foot et al., 2007; Vergeer et al., 2012). Subsequent analysis of party elites' views on web campaigning from 12 EU member states confirmed a lack of national differences in terms of what they saw as its value and purpose. The only slight difference that emerged was that campaigners in the newer democracies were somewhat more likely to favor Facebook compared to those reporting a longer electoral experience (Lilleker et al., 2014).

Outside the European Union, Vaccari's (2013) seven-nation analysis of parties' and candidates' web and email use over a four-year period (2006–2010) found that systemic factors had a stronger impact. In particular, he found that PR and higher voter turnout were linked to the production of richer web campaign content. Conversely, lower rates of turnout and voter trust were associated with greater email responsiveness by parties. These differences, he argued, showed that where parties enjoyed higher rates of popular support, they were more likely to focus on producing a quality product for their visitors. However, where they were viewed more negatively, they tended to deploy resources in a more proactive manner to encourage familiarity and participation. Despite the greater prominence of macro-level variables in explaining the

patterns of web campaigning in Vaccari's analysis, his overall conclusion was that they remained secondary in significance to party-level effects. The "selective adoption of specific digital applications by political actors," he argued, remains "rooted mostly in organizational rather than systemic considerations" (Vaccari, 2013: 115).

The lack of variance in web campaigning revealed by these studies is perhaps not too surprising given the uniformity in practice that previous chapters have indicated was developing at this point. The early noughties were a time when phase II was in the ascendant, and professionalization and standardization were the *modus operandi* for web campaign managers. Added to this is the methodological consideration that most of these studies were conducted during EU parliamentary elections, which are widely seen as less important or "second order" events (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Parties were arguably less likely to invest time and resources into developing their campaign presence compared with "first order" national elections. Notably, the one study that did actually analyze web and email use in national election campaigns found a stronger effect for systemic characteristics.

A final, and possibly even more compelling, reason for the apparent lack of country-level variance identified by these accounts is that all of them focused on the supply side of the equation (i.e., websites and email content). Convergence among party elites on a new set of campaign practices is, according to "contagion theory," not an unusual occurrence (Matland and Studlar, 1996). Indeed, one might expect this type of diffusion and mirroring to be more likely to occur in response to a global technology like the internet. Had these studies looked instead for variance in the demand side of activity (i.e., voters' experience of the digital campaign, which is the primary concern of this chapter), then it is likely that a more nuanced and differentiated picture would have emerged. Certainly, this is a conclusion that is supported by the comparative literature on voter mobilization more generally. It is thus to this body of work and its key findings that we now turn.

COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF VOTER MOBILIZATION

Efforts to explain campaign contact and voter mobilization, as one might expect, preceded the arrival of the internet. Indeed, investigation of parties' efforts to "get out the vote" (GOTV) has a relatively long history in political science, stretching back to the experimental work of Harold Gosnell in the 1920s (1927). Until recently, however, much of the work focused on a single case—that of the United States (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Gerber and Green 2000, 2008). The work also focused largely on contact as an independent variable, and its

effects on voters, rather than as a dependent variable and the drivers behind it. Despite some significant methodological differences in approach, most studies pointed to two very clear and consistent conclusions. First, contacting voters is effective in increasing turnout. Second, face-to-face methods are much more effective than other less personal tactics, such as direct mail or phone canvassing, in getting voters to the polls.

Comparative work began in earnest in the early part of this century as international data sources began to emerge. Having shown the impact of contacting on turnout so convincingly in single-nation studies, questions invariably arose as to whether it could help explain cross-national patterns in voting behavior. Initiatives such as the Comparative National Election Project (CNEP) study and module 2 of the CSES provided scholars with the tools they needed to address these questions. Their findings were important, first, in underscoring the key finding that contact matters for turnout. However, they also broke new ground in demonstrating the extent of variance in the practice across countries (Magalhães, 2007; Karp et al., 2008; Karp and Banducci, 2011; Dalton et al., 2011; Karp, 2012; Magalhães et al., 2015). In one of the first large *N* analyses of elections held during the 2001–2004 period, Karp and Banducci (2007) reported a gap in contact rates of over 40 percent between the "top" performing nation, Ireland—where over half (56.3 percent) of respondents were contacted during the campaign—and Spain, where just 5.8 percent of individuals reported receiving any electoral stimuli. The figures measured all forms of contact, since this earlier wave of CSES did not differentiate according to mode.

Such revelations switched the focus on contacting from an independent to dependent variable, and explanatory models were developed to account for the differences observed. These models included a range of institutional, cultural, and socioeconomic variables similar to those that had been deployed by the cross-national analyses of web campaign production discussed earlier. The results revealed a much stronger role for system-level characteristics, however, with citizen orientations and governance structures emerging as key determinants of mobilization rates (Karp and Banducci, 2007; Karp et al. 2008; Dalton et al., 2011; Karp, 2012).[7] Specifically, countries with higher rates of turnout, single member districts (SMD), or preferential voting systems and two large centrist parties, typically saw the highest rates of contact. Such conditions, it was argued, increased GOTV efforts since it maximized the likely "pay-off" of such activities for the larger parties in terms of "poaching" one another's voters. Where there was a wider range of smaller parties and more polarized electorates, the likelihood of such conversion was seen as much lower.

Toward an Explanatory Model of Digital Mobilization

Joining these two literatures together provides the basis for developing and testing a comparative model of digital mobilization, which is the central goal of this chapter. In particular, the findings from the mobilization studies are central in showing that party contact varies significantly across countries, and that these patterns are linked to structural as well as cultural aspects of the polity. We would thus expect this to carry over into studies of digital contact. The comparative analyses of elite adoption of digital tools revealed much less cross-national variation; however, where systemic effects were detected, their impact ran counter to what had been observed in the mobilization studies. Specifically, Vaccari (2013) found that parties were significantly more likely to invest in their digital campaign content under proportional electoral rules rather than plurality or first past the post systems. Furthermore, cultural features such as higher levels of citizen political engagement, which had been positively associated with parties' offline mobilization activities, appeared to have a less intuitive and even inverse relationship with parties' use of some more interactive digital campaign tools. Thus, while our explanatory model is based primarily on the theory and findings from the voter mobilization literature, we do consider the potential for differences in the direction of and impact of certain independent variables.

Following the approach taken in previous studies, we start by specifying the "baseline" or capacity-related factors that are likely to determine the amount of digital mobilization occurring in a country. This leads us to measure three "standard" indicators of human, economic, and political development. Societies with higher levels of human and economic capital are more likely to have the infrastructure and levels of literacy required for modern GOTV activities to take place. In addition, those countries with a longer track record of stable democratic rule and a history of free and fair elections will have parties that are more experienced in running campaigns and mobilizing citizens. The fourth "baseline" indicator we include is technological, and measures the extent of internet use among the population. In order for citizens to receive online contact, they need to have access to the medium.

Alongside these "necessary" conditions for digital mobilization to occur, a number of politically relevant characteristics are expected to help increase its frequency. First, the political culture of a country is seen as important, and particularly whether a positive orientation exists toward governing authorities and the system more generally. The expectation of the mobilization literature is that a more politically engaged electorate will increase mobilization efforts by the parties since they perceive a more receptive audience for their GOTV

messages. Indicators typically used to capture engagement are voter turnout rates and levels of political trust and interest in society. Of course, a possible counterargument that can be made here is that lower levels of engagement, and particularly sudden declines in turnout, could spark increased efforts by parties to get voters out to the polls. Such a response was supported by Vaccari's (2013) cross-national analysis of parties' use of email during election campaigns. Levels of existing political engagement are thus expected to have a significant impact on the extent of digital mobilization; however, the direction of the effect is left unspecified.

Given the findings from prior studies, regime characteristics are expected to play a major role in determining levels of digital mobilization. Electoral systems are expected to be particularly relevant, with effects varying according to whether they are based on preferential voting SMD, or PR methods in which voters choose from a party list. *Ceteris paribus*, preferential systems are expected to generate higher rates of contacting since they encourage, or even necessitate, that individual candidates cultivate a personal vote and name recognition. The more personalized mode of communication provided by websites and social media profiles arguably increases these incentives even further. That said, and again based on the findings from Vaccari's analysis (2013), it may be that the more equalized environment of PR increases the incentives for the smaller parties to campaign online, given its relatively low cost. As such, while we expect the electoral system to significantly predict rates of digital mobilization, we are agnostic about which type is most effective in doing so.

The electoral cycle, type of contest, and presence of compulsory voting are also expected to affect the rates of digital campaign contact. A higher frequency of elections is likely to produce a faster cycle of innovation and investment in voter contacting overall, particularly in new methods. The type or level of election being contested is also expected to matter. Presidential contests are likely to increase rates of voter mobilization, over and above other types of national elections. Such races have the highest status and profile for voters and typically see the biggest turnout. Investment in mobilization is thus likely to yield a higher return for parties. Again, given the opportunities that the digital medium provides for personalized campaigning, one might expect presidential elections to see a particularly high investment in online mobilization. Finally, compulsory voting is likely to increase all efforts to contact voters, including those using the internet. Given that the odds of contacting someone who will actually vote are obviously higher in countries where voting is mandatory, the potential benefits of voter mobilization efforts are correspondingly increased.

In terms of the party system effects, these are likely to be seen in two main and interrelated dimensions—size and ideological dispersion or spread. A multiparty environment with a wide spread of ideologically opposing parties is, in

principle, likely to prompt high levels of campaign contact. However, as noted, the findings from comparative studies of traditional modes of voter mobilization have consistently challenged this logic, finding that centrist two-party systems are in fact more likely to see higher rates of contacting. Given the empirical evidence reported by Vaccari (2013), linking PR systems to higher web campaign intensity, we retain the expectation of a positive relationship between the number of parties and their level of ideological spread, and the extent of digital voter mobilization. A third and final aspect of the party system that scholars of comparative voter mobilization have argued is an important predictor of contact rates is its overall strength. Extending the logic used to argue for preferential voting effects, the case is made that where party organizations are weak and conversely candidates dominate, contact will increase given campaigns' need to cultivate a personal following and support base.

The final "layer" of explanatory variables modeled here relates to the campaign environment itself. Perhaps the most obvious and self-explanatory of these is the competitiveness of the contest. The closer a race is, the more the contestants are likely to try to galvanize support, and hence, the higher the levels of voter mobilization will be. The rules governing campaign finance and expenditure are also expected to play an important role, with less regulated systems expected to see a higher rate of voter contacting. Such systems provide parties with more resources and freedom to undertake GOTV drives. Of course, tighter spending restrictions might also make parties more eager to exploit the new digital channels given their cheaper cost. As such, we may see an inverse or negative relationship between financial caps and online contacting in particular. The controls governing campaigns' access to the media are also likely to affect the level of voter outreach during an election—again in mixed ways. More restrictive regimes (i.e., those where commercial advertising is prohibited and state-subsidized media are the main channel for parties to communicate their message) are expected to increase the incentives for parties to develop their own direct channels to talk directly to voters. However, it is also possible that access to a paid media environment could increase attention to digital contacting since this allows for the cross-promotion and recirculation of the audiovisual material produced for these other markets.

Beyond these "usual suspects," a further layer of regulation in the area of data protection and privacy is now arguably becoming necessary to include in studies of voter mobilization and particularly those dealing with digital targeting of messages. To develop this point, we draw on Bimber's (2014) study of the 2012 US presidential election in which he noted that the level of personalized communication that occurred during this campaign was "not mirrored in other countries at this point." A key reason for the disparity, he argued, was that "privacy regulations prevent parties and candidates in many countries from engaging in the

practices undertaken in the U.S., especially in 2012" (132). Effectively, American candidates now enjoy an unmatched capacity to drill down and micro-target the electorate through their extensive and increasingly rich voter files. The rapid spread of smartphones and uptake of platforms like Facebook and Twitter provide a new and very amenable conduit for this new type of individualized contacting. The capacity to build and use these growing stores of data on citizens is thus becoming a critical factor to consider in explaining cross-national patterns of "receive" mode in any format, but particularly for digital messaging. A measure of the extent of countries' data privacy and protection rules is therefore an important new parameter to add to our explanatory model.

Table 3.4 presents a summary of the explanatory model of digital mobilization developed to this point. Specifically, it lists the independent variables we are testing by category or layer of explanation, proceeding from the baseline prerequisites through to the more fixed and variable political characteristics. For each variable, we indicate whether we expect a positive or negative impact on digital mobilization based on our review of the extant literature. Where the literature gives conflicting or unclear expectations, we place a question mark next to the variable.

TESTING THE MODEL

The core data set used in this analysis is the CSES module 4 (release 2.0). As well as providing data on the level of receive mode across countries (i.e., our dependent variable), CSES provides a range of individual- and macro-level variables that map onto the explanatory model set out in Table 3.4. Where there are gaps in the CSES, we turn to other international data sources. Full details of the data sets used and variables operationalization are listed in Appendix 3.2.

Dependent Variable

Since we are using multilevel modeling with voters (level 1), nested within countries (level 2), the dependent variable—receive—is measured at the individual level. Specifically, we combine responses to the CSES questions of whether a voter received online political contact from a party or through the voter's social networks to create a new binary variable of "total online contact" (see Appendix 3.1 for full details of question wording of each component). This ensures that we include the official contact coming directly from the parties, as well as the mediated or two-step flow that is particularly associated with phase III.

Independent Variables

Our model specifies both the systemic and individual-level characteristics that are likely to determine receipt of online campaign contact. With regard

Table 3.4 **Explanatory Model of Comparative Digital Mobilization**

Societal development

- Human development (+ve)
- Economic development (+ve)
- Political development/institutionalization (+ve)
- Technological development (+ve)

Political culture

- Voter turnout (?)
- Political trust (?)

Electoral system

- Candidate centered (i.e., preferential SMD) (?)
- Frequency of elections (+ve)
- Presidential election (+ve)
- Compulsory voting (–ve)

Party system

- Size (+ve)
- Ideological polarization(+ve)
- Strong (–ve)

Campaign context

- Competitiveness of the election (+ve)
- Spending limits (?)
- Paid advertising (?)
- Subsidized/state-provided media (?)
- Data protection laws (–ve)

to individual-level variables, we are limited to the standard CSES socio-demographic and political indicators. Based on the findings from prior research on comparative mobilization (reviewed earlier) we expect that age, sex, trade union membership, education, income, and level of partisanship will be associated with receiving campaign contact. We add the online sign-up variable to this profile. This variable is unique to module 4 and, as discussed earlier, is likely to be highly correlated with receiving online contact. Including it on the left-hand side of the equation, therefore, allows us to take into account this endogeneity, and thereby generate a "cleaner" measure of the influence of the other independent predictors.

   At the aggregate level we use a range of sources to measure the variables listed in Table 3.4 for the countries included in the analysis.[8] We begin with the baseline conditions, specified as levels of human, economic, and political development. They are measured using the UN index of Human Development scores, GDP

per capita at the time of the election in question, and age of democracy, respectively. The fourth baseline variable—level of technological development—is measured as the number of internet users per 100 of the population, and as the natural log of this figure. The logarithmic transformation was applied, given that the original values of variable were quite negatively skewed, with over 80 percent of countries having above 50 percent of the population online. After the transformation, the data were smoothed to reduce a disproportionate impact of the lower values on the outcome variable.

To measure the political culture or democratic "health" of a country, we used two aggregate measures of political engagement. The first was attitudinal and measured the proportion of respondents who said they were "very" or "somewhat" interested in politics in each country. Since CSES data lacked an appropriate question, the figures were calculated from a combination of the World Values Survey (WVS) wave 6 (2010–2014) and the European Social Survey (ESS) round 7 (2014). Both sources were used to avoid the problem of missing data since no single survey covered all of the countries included in this analysis. The item on political interest was the most comparable and relevant attitudinal measure available across the two surveys in terms of the question stem and response categories. The second aggregate measure of engagement was behavioral and measured average turnout in a country during the post–World War II period. Given that we know some countries had compulsory voting systems in place, we added this variable to the model as a control.

The electoral system was operationalized as a binary variable based on whether the country operated a PR system or a preferential SMD model for its legislative or parliamentary elections. An indicator of the average number of candidates per electoral district or district magnitude was included. This provided an additional test as to whether a personal or party vote was driving levels of mobilization. Binary variables were used to indicate if the election in question was for the presidency, and whether compulsory voting was in operation. Finally, a measure of the number of months since the last national election was included as a test the impact of a faster electoral cycle.

The fourth layer of explanation—the party system—was modeled using three variables. The first of these was the size of the system, which was measured through the effective number of electoral parties (ENEP) as recorded in the CSES macro file. Second, the level of ideological polarization of the party system was measured using Dalton's formula based on the average left-right placement of parties in the CSES micro file. Finally, we included an indicator of the strength of the party system, which was based on the extent to which it was considered as party- or candidate-centered (Carey and

Shugart, 1995). For this we used scores on the index produced by Johnson and Wallack (2012). See Appendix 3.2 for full details of the sources and variable computation.

The fifth and final bloc of variables measured the impact of the campaign context and regulatory framework surrounding it. The competitiveness of the campaign was measured by the margin of victory (in percentage terms) for either the leading party or presidential candidate in the election under analysis. Controls on spending and media advertising were taken from information contained in the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) Political Finance Database. Specifically, we coded countries according to whether they imposed caps on election spending, and whether free or subsidized media advertising was provided to parties and candidates. Finally, to measure controls over parties' use of citizen data in campaigns, a five-point additive index was created using the DLA Piper Data Protection Laws fact book. This included indicators of whether the country has an official chief information officer or data commissioner, whether it mandates and enforces data-protection laws, and how far it has regulated online privacy. For full details of index construction, see Appendix 3.2.

Before undertaking the analysis, a number of adjustments were necessary to ensure the modeling was as robust and reliable as possible. The first and most important of these was to enter the macro-level independent variables in a selective and sequential manner. Given the relatively small set of countries we had available at the time of analysis, we could not test all the level 2 variables identified in Table 3.4 in a single model. We thus tested the impact of each bloc consecutively and selected the most significant predictive variables to include in a final or cumulative model.

A second major modification was to exclude Switzerland from the analysis due to missing data. Specifically, the online sign-up variable data, which we considered a vital control variable, were not included in the Swiss study. This reduced our overall country N to 16, which remains within the range of an acceptable number of level 2 units.[9]

Because the outcome variable is binary, we used logistic multilevel modeling. The analyses were performed with STATA 12, using maximum likelihood estimation[10] and with fixed slopes and intercepts. We opted to fix these parameters given that we had no *a priori* grounds to expect that the impact of the independent variables (either individual or systemic) would vary significantly in strength or direction across countries. Also, fixing these parameters improved the efficiency and robustness of our model estimation since it reduced the number of coefficients that it was necessary to estimate.

Findings: What Factors Are Driving Phase IV of Digital Campaigning?

In the following, we present the results of the analysis and draw out their implications for the drivers of digital campaigning. In particular, we start to build a profile of the factors that seem most likely to facilitate a country's entry into phase IV. The first set of results are reported in Table 3.5, where we show the findings for the five separate explanatory blocs. Each model includes the same range of individual-level predictors and dependent variable, but varies the explanatory group or bloc of independent variables.

Looking first at the individual-level factors, we can see a common pattern across all the models in terms of the demographic and political profile of the online contactees. Gender is important, with men being more likely to be targeted than women. Education has a consistently strong effect in that those with the highest levels of education are up to 10 times more likely to receive online contact than those with no qualifications. Age is also important, with younger people being significantly more likely to receive political contact via digital channels. This runs counter to the findings from studies of offline and more traditional forms of mobilization, and suggests that parties may be engaging new voters through digital channels. This "youth" effect is countered to a degree by the fact that both union membership and partisanship are positively and significantly associated with receiving online contact. Both of these characteristics are more typical of older voters. Finally, as one might expect, the online sign-up variable has a very strong and positive coefficient. Having signed up to receive party messages makes someone around 5 times more likely to report online contact. The fact that the other independent variables remain significant after controlling for its effects, however, is important. It suggests that the parties are managing to reach beyond their "usual suspects" (i.e., their existing online support base).

Model 1 presents the results for the baseline or societal development group of variables. None of the variables is statistically significant at the .05 level, although the log of internet use comes close, hovering at just above the 0.10 level.[11] Such results suggest that the intensity of digital campaigning is not directly dependent on the overall socioeconomic performance of a nation or the longevity of its democratic experience. The extent of internet use within society and levels of technological take-up within the wider populace, however, may have some effect on the level of online contacting taking place.

Findings from the second explanatory bloc of political culture variables (model 2) are more compelling, with one variable—political interest—emerging as statistically significant. Interestingly, its effect is negative, indicating that, in line with Vaccari's (2013) conclusions about email responsiveness,

Table 3.5 **Five Preliminary Logistic Regression Models Predicting Online Contact**

	(1) Social Development	(2) Political Culture	(3) Electoral System	(4) Party System	(5) Campaign Context
Female	0.89 (0.04)***	0.89 (0.04)***	0.89 (0.04)***	0.90 (0.04)*	0.89 (0.04)***
Union Member	1.13 (0.07)*	1.13 (0.07)***	1.14 (0.07)***	1.16 (0.07)*	1.14 (0.07)*
No Quals (Ref)					
Early Childhood	0.73 (0.47)	0.73 (0.47)	0.73 (0.47)	0.24 (0.19)	0.73 (0.47)
Primary	2.78 (1.29)*	2.78 (1.30)**	2.78 (1.29)*	1.37 (0.72)	2.78 (1.29)*
Lower Secondary	3.20 (1.48)***	3.12 (1.48)**	3.20 (1.48)**	1.14 (0.60)	3.20 (1.48)**
Upper Secondary	4.47 (2.07)***	4.47 (2.43)***	4.47 (2.07)***	1.66 (0.86)	4.48 (2.07)***
Post-Secondary	5.22 (4.42)***	5.23 (2.76)***	5.25 (2.44)***	1.99 (1.05)	5.23 (2.43)***
Some Tertiary	5.92 (2.76)***	5.93 (3.29)***	5.95 (2.77)***	2.28 (1.20)	5.95 (2.77)***
Bachelor's	7.12 (3.30)***	7.12 (3.30)***	7.13 (3.30)***	2.74 (1.42)*	7.11 (3.29)***
Master's	9.25 (4.31)***	9.26 (4.31)***	9.30 (4.33)***	3.52 (1.83)*	9.26 (4.31)***
Doctoral	9.73 (4.61)***	9.71 (4.61)***	9.78 (4.64)***	3.73 (1.98)*	9.69 (4.60)***
Age	0.98 (0.00)***	0.98 (0.00)***	0.98 (0.00)***	0.98 (0.00)***	0.98 (0.00)***
Online Sign-up	4.78 (0.30)***	4.77 (0.30)***	4.77 (0.29)***	4.83 (0.00)**	4.77 (0.29)***
Close to Party	1.68 (0.09)***	1.69 (0.09)***	1.69 (0.09)***	1.71 (0.26)***	1.69 (0.09)***

Continued

Table 3.5 **Continued**

	MODEL				
	(1) Social Development	*(2)* Political Culture	*(3)* Electoral System	*(4)* Party System	*(5)* Campaign Context
UN Dev Index	0.99 (0.00)				
Log internet use	**1.85 (0.80)˜**				
GDP per cap	0.99 (1.27)				
Age of Regime	1.00 (0.00)				
Interest in pol		**0.96 (0.02)***			
Avg Turn		1.01 (0.02)			
Comp Vote		1.06 (0.52)			
Electoral system			**0.48 (0.21)˜**		
Months last elect			0.98 (0.01)		
Pres Elect			**5.30 (2.42)*****		
Comp Vote			1.21 (0.42)		
District Mag			0.98 (0.05)		
ENEP				1.00 (0.00)	
Polarization				1.07 (0.26)	
Party Cent				0.62 (0.17)	
Party Cap Spend					0.75 (0.34)
Free Sub Med					1.49 (0.98)
Margin <2% (Ref)					
2%–3%					0.46 (0.32)
4%–10%					0.75 (0.53)
>10%					**0.15 (0.11)*****
Data Privacy					0.92 (0.16)

Table 3.5 **Continued**

	MODEL				
	(1) Social Development	*(2)* Political Culture	*(3)* Electoral System	*(4)* Party System	*(5)* Campaign Context
N Individual (Groups)	22,640 (16)	20,845 (16)	22,640 (16)	22,640 (15)	22,640 (16)
Constant	0.002 (0.00)***	0.090 (0.14)	0.063(0.05)***	0.131 (0.17)	0.09 (0.08)***
Chi²	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Random Eff Paras	0.92 (0.17)	0.90 (0.17)	0.74 (0.14)	0.98 (0.19)	0.77 (0.15)

Note: N of 16 is due to exclusion of Switzerland which did not include the sign-up question which formed a key control variable. The N of 15 for the party system model is due to exclusion of Taiwan which did not ask the Left-Right party placement question required for the calculation of the polarization score.

Source: CSES Wave 4 (2nd Release); Significance levels *** = ≤.001, ** = ≤.01, * = ≤.05; ~ = ≤.10
Dependent variable—Online contact (direct and indirect).

digital mobilization appears to occur more frequently in countries where citizens are less positively disposed toward politics. This relationship could be explained in one of two possible ways. First, one could argue that it indicates the perceived weakness and lack of effectiveness of digital campaigns. Essentially, where parties find themselves facing a losing battle to persuade voters, they are more likely to resort to cheaper online means. A more positive interpretation, however, is that where parties perceive more disconnection from politics among the electorate, they invest more in newer methods to signal a shift from "politics as usual." Either way, the findings are somewhat surprising given the widely accepted view among scholars of mobilization that it is generally geared toward the more engaged and easily persuadable voters.

The findings from model 3 provide some of the strongest evidence for macro-level effects on the rates of digital mobilization. The variable indicating whether the election in question was a presidential race emerges as one of the most significant predictors of receiving online contact in any of the models tested. These higher profile and more personalized elections, as expected, provide a strong stimulus to internet-based forms of voter contact. Beyond the nature of the office being contested, the only other coefficient in the bloc that approaches statistical significance is the electoral system. Again, in line with the findings of Vaccari (2013), it appears that online campaign contact is intensified by PR

systems. Even taking into account the weakness of the relationship, the finding is still important in further supporting the idea that the dynamics driving online contact differ from those shaping prior offline mobilizing efforts. Attempts at voter persuasion through these more traditional methods were typically more common within preferential voting systems.

The variables measuring the impact of the party system (model 4) appear to be uniformly unimportant in predicting online contact. This is somewhat surprising, particularly with regard to the size variable given the long-standing association of internet technology with a more diverse and equalized party environment. Given the findings of model 3, such a finding could be seen as confirming that it is the incentives of the electoral system that matter most to stimulating digital contact, rather than simply the number of parties competing. When smaller parties have a more realistic prospect of gaining office, they invest the resources required into online voter outreach. The results from model 5, which examines the impact of the campaign variables, are similarly non-compelling, with one clear exception—the competitiveness of the race. If an election was highly one-sided (i.e., the margin of victory was more than 10 percent), this resulted in significantly less online voter contact than in those races where the gap was smaller than 10 percent.

The fact that the regulatory environment has no apparent impact on rates of digital contacting is somewhat surprising. The lack of impact of the rules on spending and advertising is perhaps more easily explained, given the relatively "immature" status of the internet as an election technology, and its consequent immunity from regulations designed for an earlier media era. The lack of any impact for the data privacy index is, however, less easy to account for, and suggests that some revision and refinement of the measure may be required. In particular, as currently defined it does not capture the controls on political organizations' use of voters' personal data, which are likely to differ from those associated with commercial and nongovernmental entities. In addition, there may be a gap between the official standards governing how individuals' data are handled, and the extent to which these rules are enforced and implemented. This disjuncture is something we explore further in the case studies that follow.

Based on the preceding analyses, we extracted five macro variables that are significant or of close significance in explaining levels of online mobilization. This includes the log of internet use, levels of political interest, whether the election was presidential, the electoral system (preferential vs. PR) and margin of victory. These five predictors were then carried forward to our final multilevel model. Table 3.6 presents the results of that consolidated analysis.

As we might expect, the individual variables continue to behave in the same manner shown in the previous models. The macro effects also remain largely consistent, although there are some changes in the strength of their effects, mostly in

Table 3.6 **Final Logistic Regression Model Predicting Online and Offline Contact**

	Online	Face to Face	Mail/Phone
Female	0.89 (0.04)***	0.87 (0.04)***	0.99 (0.02)
Union member	1.13 (0.07)*	1.34 (0.08)***	1.33 (0.05)*
No Quals (Ref)			
Early Childhood	0.73 (0.47)	1.32 (0.52)	1.38 (0.33)
Primary	2.78 (1.29)	1.72 (0.58)	2.14 (0.38)***
Lower Secondary	3.21 (1.48)**	1.56 (0.53)	2.33 (0.41)***
Upper Secondary	4.50 (2.07)***	1.80 (0.60)	2.81 (0.49)***
Post-Secondary	5.25 (4.44)***	1.77 (0.61) ~	3.04 (0.55)***
Some Tertiary	5.99 (2.76)***	1.85 (0.63)~	3.41 (0.62)***
Bachelors	7.15 (3.31)***	2.04 (0.68) *	3.29 (0.59)***
Masters	9.32 (4.34)***	2.45 (0.85) ***	3.94 (0.72)***
Doctoral	9.73 (4.61)***	2.38 (0.89) *	3.40 (0.67)***
Age	0.98 (0.00)***	1.00 (0.00)	0.99 (0.00) ***
Sign-up	4.77 (0.30)***	1.88 (0.14)***	1.81 (0.11)**
Close to Party	1.69 (0.09)***	1.64 (0.09)***	1.62 (0.05)***
Pres Elect	5.20 (2.70) ***	5.15 (2.28) ***	12.84 (10.28)***
Margin <2% (Ref)			
2%–3%	0.26 (0.13)*	0.27 (0.13)***	0.13 (0.11)*
4%–10%	0.22 (0.13) **	0.33 (0.16)***	0.07 (0.07)***
>10%	0.23 (0.11) ***	3.34 (1.38)***	1.35 (0.99)
Elec system	0.45 (0.20)~	0.12 (0.05) ***	0.30 (0.21)~
Log Internet Use	1.64 (0.38)*	0.88 (0.17)	1.12 (0.39)
Interest in Pol	1.00 (0.02)	0.98 (0.01)	0.98 (0.02)
N Individual (Groups)	22640 (16)	22640 (16)	22640 (16)
Constant	0.01 (0.02)***	0.333(0.47)	1.193 (2.98)
Chi^2	0.00	0.00	0.00
Random Eff Paras	0.55 (0.11)	0.46 (0.09)	0.84 (0.16)

Source: CSES Wave 4 (2nd Release); Significance levels *** = ≤.001, ** = ≤.01, * = ≤.05, = ≤.10

an upward direction. Most notably variables measuring the closeness of the race are now even more significant and their effects are more fine-tuned. Thus, while a very uncompetitive race still sees the least effort by parties to engage in digital mobilization, an exceptionally close race (where there was less than a 2 percent margin of victory for the winner) does produce a significantly higher investment of resources. Interestingly, the increased and more nuanced effect of electoral competitiveness is accompanied by a reduction in the impact of political interest, which is now no longer significant. The coefficient for the log of internet use is also boosted, and is now significant at the .05 level. Similarly, the effect of a PR electoral system increases, although it remains on the margins of significance. The main effect, however, still centers on the presence of a presidential election. The coefficient indicates that voters in these elections are five times more likely to be contacted online than voters in nonpresidential elections.

Summary and Conclusions

The empirical aims of this chapter were twofold: first, to identify where the fourth phase of digital campaigning is emerging most strongly in global terms; and second, to understand why some countries were more actively embracing this new style of campaigning than others. To investigate these questions, we compared countries on the extent of internet-based contact that voters reported receiving from parties and through their social networks during an election campaign. For this purpose we used comparative survey data from module 4 of the CSES. Receipt of targeted digital messages, as Chapter 1 made clear, is an important demand side indicator of phase IV "data-driven" campaigning. The findings largely endorsed the impressions generated through the literature review in the previous chapter. Specifically, the United States emerged as a leading nation in terms of the frequency of online voter contact, although this occurred in large part through social networks and indirectly, rather than direct messaging from the parties and candidates. There were other strong performances by some of the more "wired" countries in Southeast Asia and Northern Europe. By contrast, Thailand, a young democracy with very low technological capacity, had almost zero capacity for digital campaigning. Among these more intuitive findings, however, there were also a few notable surprises. This included the location of several affluent and established democracies, such as Germany and Japan, toward the tail end of the distribution. Conversely, the top-tier position of Greece proved somewhat puzzling given its lack of profile in the wider literature on digital campaigning.

To help interpret the results, a systematic analysis of the individual and contextual factors associated with higher rates of digital mobilization was

undertaken. The results of this exercise were revealing on a number of counts. At the individual level, it was clear that there are certain types of voters who are more likely to receive online contact during the campaign. This included, perhaps most obviously, those who had already signed up to receive this type of stimuli. Beyond these self-selection effects, however, factors such as being male, younger, and more highly educated were also significant in increasing the likelihood of receiving online contact. Being attached to a political organization, such as a party or a trade union, further increased the possibility of experiencing this type of mobilization. With the exception of age, therefore, the results suggested that parties were not reaching a new and more under-mobilized segment of the population with their digital campaign efforts. Closer analysis of whether this pattern holds up for individual nations is undertaken in the country-specific chapters that follow. At the system level, the results were significant in showing that higher rates of online contact are linked with the institutional configuration and a certain level of technological prowess. Countries with very competitive presidential elections and a more wired citizenry are typically most encouraging of this new type of mobilization.

Such conclusions are of interest for this chapter. First, they help to shed some light on the factors that encourage higher use of digital mobilization tactics by parties, and thus by proxy, entry into phase IV campaigning. In addition, they clearly challenge the findings of earlier cross-national analyses of web campaigning which had concluded that it was largely unaffected by systemic factors. Once we examine web campaigning from the voters' experience or the demand side, however, we can see that its intensity and preferred mode do vary across countries, and that this variance is explicable by reference to the wider political context in which it occurs. Finally, we also show that the systemic and individual-level factors associated with online contact differ in subtle, but significant ways from those that associated with offline mobilization.

NEXT STEPS

While the analysis presented in this chapter goes some way to explaining advances in digital campaigning, and specifically a country's entry into phase IV, it clearly faces limitations. From a purely methodological standpoint, it is evident that the multilevel models tested here explain only a limited proportion of the overall variance in the dependent variable.[12] Furthermore, the sample size in terms of number of level 2 units or countries included in our multilevel model meant that it was not possible to test all the macro-level variables simultaneously. Subsequent releases of the CSES data will offer the opportunity to test a more fully specified model.[13] Even with a larger number of countries included, however, the analysis is still likely to face the omitted variable problem. The level

of internet use in a society, for example, though a useful proxy for the degree of familiarity and openness of citizens to using the technology, does not fully capture the broader cultural propensity to use it for political purposes. This might help to explain Greece's very high rates of digital contact, despite having a lower level of internet usage overall. Similarly, parties' long-standing historical associations with certain types of campaign media, such as direct mail or television, may create a path dependency that accelerates or reduces their willingness to use internet tools. Measuring and modeling these traits for a small number of countries is challenging; converting them into reliable and comparable indicators to insert into larger N cross-national analysis is nigh on impossible.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the data provide only a snapshot of current levels of digital contact across countries. To base our conclusions about a country's entry into phase IV and the extent of digital campaign innovation occurring on this one measure in time is clearly placing a lot of pressure on one aspect of what we have argued is a multidimensional phenomena.

In the chapters that follow, we attempt to address these gaps by providing a more detailed historical account of digital campaign developments in four of the nations examined here. Specifically, we examine one country from the top tier of mobilization—the United States—and three countries that occupy consecutively lower positions within tier two—Australia, the United Kingdom, and France. In each case, we start by assessing how far each country's ranking aligns or conforms to the "ideal" macro conditions identified in this chapter. The correspondence (or lack thereof) with our expectations provides the basis for a more nuanced account of the conditions surrounding the growth of digital politics in that particular country. In particular, we look for those factors that appear to have played a role in constraining or accelerating the uptake of new media in campaigns.

We then document developments in digital campaigning in more detail in these nations over time, working forward to show the changing nature of internet use by parties and candidates in successive elections. We do so through the lens of our four-phase model. This provides both a rich understanding of key developments in digital campaigning in each country, and a framework for comparing the pace and nature of that process of change. How far do developments in these four countries align with the generic cycle outlined in Chapter 1, and where does each now sit, in evolutionary terms?

The case-study approach also allows us to take a closer look at changes in the supply and the demand dimensions associated with each phase. In particular, it is possible to investigate the role of parties in driving the cycle. Are some parties keener to embrace the new techniques and push into phase IV than others? Does this vary with size, incumbency, or ideology, and is this the same across countries? On the demand side, the case studies allow us to build a more

nuanced picture of the changing nature of voters' engagement with the digital campaign, based on the response modes outlined in Table 1.1. We can measure when citizens started to switch from simply reading about the campaign online, to undertaking redistributive activities, and the extent to which they have been targeted by digital campaign messages over time. Do these changes at the mass level correspond to changes in the patterns of supply? At the party level, are differences in approach to the medium reflected "on the ground"? If leftist parties are more active in promoting online community-building, for example, are their supporters more likely to engage in more redistributive activities?

In short, the case studies allow us to drill down below the "top-line" impression of Chapter 2 that digital campaigning has evolved through four phases, to see how well this holds up at the individual-nation level. We are also able to supplement the quantitative findings from Chapter 3, identifying the factors driving these developments, with a more nuanced qualitative understanding. Beyond the institutional and technological context, what other less measurable factors help to drive innovation in digital campaigning in a nation?

4

The Slow Burner

Digital Campaigning in the United Kingdom

In this chapter, and the three that follow, we examine developments in digital campaigning in more detail at the level of the individual nation. These case studies serve several purposes. First, they allow us to trace developments in digital campaigning in a "real world" context over time and thereby validate our four-phase model of change. Second, they show how particular events, parties, and politicians have played a role in driving that process of change. Finally, they allow us to map and compare the responses of the electorate to developments in digital campaigning. To what extent do changes in the demand side of the equation map with supply? Do we see a progression in the mode of voter engagement from "read" to "redistribute" and "receive," as the four-phase model suggests? Is this movement across the board, or is it concentrated among certain party supporters? What evidence exists to suggest that online campaigning can make a difference to parties' and candidates' electoral fortunes?

The United Kingdom as a Context for Web Campaigning

The United Kingdom provides a useful starting point to explore and validate our four-phase model of web campaigning in more depth. As an established democracy with a significant majority of the population online, it meets the baseline technological requirements that Chapter 3 showed were important in driving digital campaigning. Figure 4.1 charts the growth in internet access within the United Kingdom since 1997 and reveals how usage had reached a critical mass within just two electoral cycles. After 2005, rates of use begin to level off, with almost universal coverage achieved by 2015. As Figure 4.2 reveals, much of the growth in recent years has occurred via broadband, with mobile broadband subscriptions
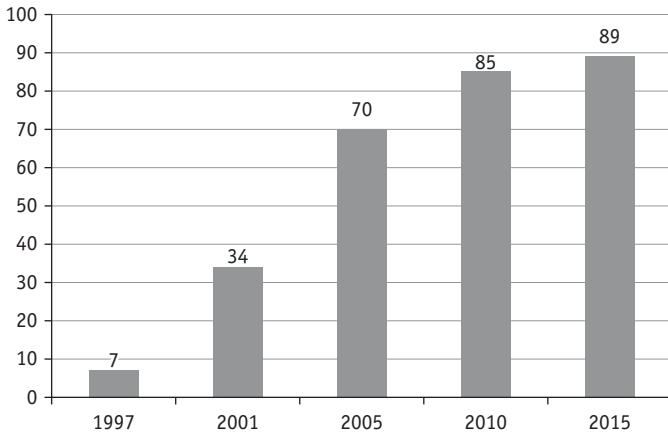
Figure 4.1. Growth of internet use in UK general elections, 1997–2015 (% of population using the internet). *Sources*: 1997–2010: World Bank, "Internet Users (per 100 people)," http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2?page=1; 2015: Office of National Statistics (ONS) Statistical Bulletin, "Internet Users," http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_404497.pdf
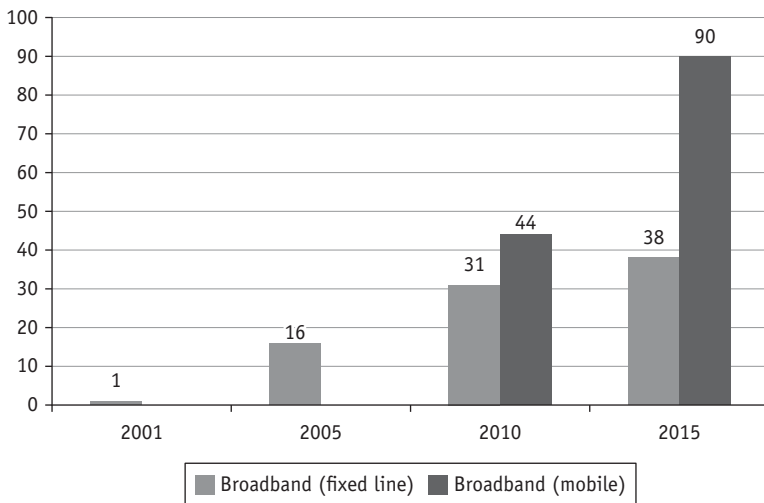
Figure 4.2. Growth in broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants) in UK general elections (2001–2015). *Source*: OECD historical fixed and mobile broadband penetration subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants). Figures are from 4th Quarter (rounded to nearest %). http://www.oecd.org/internet/broadband/41551452.xls https://www.oecd.org/sti/broadband/1.5-BBPenetrationHistorical-Data-2016-12.xls (Figures for mobile are available only from 2009 Q4 onward.)

expanding dramatically after 2010. By 2015, OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) figures show the extent of use in the United Kingdom was almost equivalent to one for every person in the population.

Despite having a supportive technological environment, as Table 3.2 in Chapter 3 reports, the United Kingdom is not in the top tier of nations when it comes to rates of digital mobilization. This is not particularly surprising given the findings from the previous chapter. As a parliamentary democracy with a plurality-based electoral system, the United Kingdom does not meet the structural criteria that were associated with higher intensive rates of digital campaigning.

There are other, more "localized" aspects of the UK electoral system that arguably also dampen campaigners' enthusiasm for the new media. Most notably, there is very strong commitment among British parties to more tra-ditional methods of voter outreach. Elections are typically dominated by "old style" door-to-door canvassing, or "knocking up" the vote at the local level (Whiteley and Seyd, 2002; Denver and Hands, 1997, 1992). This remained the case even after the advent of television and growing centralization in par-ties' management of the campaign. This long-standing attachment to more personalized canvassing methods has meant that British elections are typi-cally highly labour-intensive affairs. The role of technology has largely been one of supporting the main "ground war" effort, rather than forming a voter interface in its own right. Denver and Hands's (1997) in-depth analysis of local campaigning during the 1992 general election was highly instructive on this point, showing how, even at the end of the twentieth century, these atti-tudes persisted. According to their results from their survey of local electoral agents, the main benefit of personal computers was to take the "drudgery" out of campaigning and perform the "routine tasks" such as preparing the lists of voter names and addresses for the canvassing effort (51).

As this chapter goes on to reveal, this view of technology as a "supplemen-tary" tool has undergone a substantial revision in the United Kingdom as par-ties have moved more fully into the internet era. The historical commitment to a more "hands-on" style of voter mobilization, however, is clearly likely to have slowed the adoption of these newer, more remote forms of contact, such as email, SMS, and social media messaging. In the sections that follow, we describe that process of inertia, adoption, and growing enthusiasm in more detail.

Phase I: Experimentation (1994–1997)

The United Kingdom was one of the first countries where parties' adaptation to the internet during and outside of election periods became a subject for

systematic analysis (Gibson and Ward, 1998; Ward and Gibson 1998; Gibson and Ward 2000b). According to these early accounts, the first moves by parties to establish websites took place in the mid-1990s, with the period leading up to the election of 1997 seeing a flurry of adoption. By polling day, just over 30 parties were recorded as having a site, up slightly from 28 the year before (Gibson and Ward, 2000b: 115–16). The idea that an "internet election" was about to occur was widely anticipated in the press, and by the parties themselves. Paddy Ashdown, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, went so far as to proclaim that the web was "the future of communications and information" and would help to create a society that was more "democratic, open, and in which power is as decentralised as possible."[1]

Despite this initial optimism and excitement, a surprisingly large number of minor parties resisted the move into cyberspace. A review of parties' online presence during the campaign found that at least one-third of those competing did not have a national site. Of those that had entered the fray, at least two parliamentary parties—Plaid Cymru and the Social and Democratic Labour Party (SDLP)—failed to produce any election-specific pages on their sites (Ward and Gibson, 1998). Even the two major parties, the Conservatives and Labour, failed to create simple and easy to find domain names.[2]

In terms of content, the sites were rudimentary, although there were some signs of experimentation with interactivity, particularly among the smaller parties. The Liberal Democrats, for example, provided a plethora of email addresses across their home pages, including a personal appeal from leader Paddy Ashdown for visitors to get in touch. For the most part, however, sites were used as static "repositories" for information, and little use was made of their two-way communication facility or capacity for real-time response to events (Ward and Gibson, 1998). The lack of content signaled a broader lack of understanding among the parties about their reasons for being online. Indeed, according to close observers of the election, the main motivation for launching a site was the fear of being left behind (Jackson, 2007; Ward and Gibson, 1998: 95).

Organizationally, the resources directed to the digital campaign were minimal. Although a small number of parties engaged the services of an external web company, the majority made use of existing staff who mixed it in with their other duties. Surveys of party officials at the time revealed that only one party—the Northern Irish Democratic Unionists (DUP)—had conducted any analysis of their audience using traffic statistics (Gibson and Ward, 1998). At the local level, activity was virtually nil. What did exist went largely unnoticed by central party staff, with post-election interviews revealing the lack of any formal procedures for reviewing or approving sub-national sites (Gibson and Ward, 1998).

One year after the 1997 election, a comprehensive survey of party activity revealed that sites had largely fallen into disuse, with some parties failing

to maintain any type of web presence post-election (Auty and Nicholas, 1998) At the local level, there continued to be a dearth of provision. A 1998 survey of intra-party sites in the United Kingdom reported only around 5 percent of local parties were online and that just 4 percent of members of Parliament (MPs) had an individual website (Gibson and Ward, 1999). The advent of the 1999 European Parliamentary election stimulated a modest burst of activity. However, the amateur approach persisted, with non-intuitive URLs and broken or missing links proving commonplace. Both Plaid Cymru and the SNP actually took their sites offline for significant periods of time in the weeks and even days before the election for redevelopment purposes. Even among the major players, there were signs that the medium was still seen as something of an afterthought. Labour, in particular, failed to list its website address in any of its offline campaign material or election broadcasts. Given that the site was subsequently revamped and relaunched in time for the party conference later that year, such an omission may have also helped to avert attention from its rather underwhelming quality (Gibson and Ward, 2000a).

Phase II: Standardization and Professionalization (2001 and 2005)

While 1997 may have been heralded as the first "internet election" in chronological terms, the election of 2001 was seen as the first realistic opportunity for the internet to have an impact on the campaign and the election outcome.[3] Internet use (as shown in Figure 4.1) had increased significantly to around one-third of the population, and there was a growing buzz around its power to appeal to younger voters. There was also a growing awareness among the parties of its potential to help their campaigns in more marginal constituencies (Ward and Gibson, 2003: 193).

In practical terms, the election of 2001 saw a shift by parties toward a more professionalized model of web campaigning. The three main parties all employed external agencies to develop and maintain their sites, following a competitive tendering process. Overall, it was estimated the parties spent around one million pounds on their new media efforts (Crabtree 2001: 8). Internally, the human resources devoted to the e-campaign increased compared to 1997 levels, particularly for the two biggest parties. Labour and the Conservatives each had four full-time staff working on their web campaigns, with several more temporary personnel drafted in from external agencies. In the case of the Conservatives, a further 24 people were added to the core team. The Liberal Democrats reported

a much smaller scale deployment, with one full-time Internet campaign manager managing two volunteers and two agency staff (Bowers-Brown and Gunter, 2002: 171). Beyond the three big parties, there was a renewed push by the remaining stragglers to get online, and several of the more prominent minor parties launched dedicated election sites, albeit several days after the start of the official campaign (Ward and Gibson, 2003).

Websites remained the centerpiece of the campaign, and email sign-up facilities started to appear as a way for voters to keep in touch with party news. Some parties also provided an option for voters to sign up to RSS feeds and mobile access to their sites via wireless application protocol (WAP) and personal digital assistant (PDA) technology. The appearance of sites was upgraded and more closely integrated into the party's brand and use of other media and public relations channels (Auty and Cowen, 2001; Bowers-Brown and Gunter, 2002). Domain names were streamlined and became more intuitive. The address *www.conservatives.com* was established as the primary URL for the Tories' home page. In a further sign of the mainstreaming of the digital medium, the major parties began to use their sites to criticize the opposition, with Labour focusing on Tory policy weakness, while the Conservatives launched personal jibes against prominent Labour and Liberal Democrat politicians (Auty and Cowen, 2001: 347).

Design-wise, a common template began to appear. This included an extensive use of frames and menu bars to divide up the content and help visitors find what they were looking for. Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show the updated, more structured, look of the Liberal Democrats' and Conservatives' sites as they headed into the general election of 2001. In terms of content, journalists formed a key audience, with most parties setting up some type of news or media center to host press releases. There were also sections containing profiles of leaders, as well as policy and conference information. Participatory opportunities were rare, and what was offered tended to be of the "controlled" variety (e.g., feedback forms, games, and search tools, rather than being interpersonal). One notable exception to this was the Liberal Democrats' live webcast interview with its leader, Charles Kennedy, who participated in an online question-and-answer session (Auty and Cowen, 2001; Gibson et al. 2003).

Despite the lack of opportunities for genuine interaction on parties' home pages during the election, there was growing evidence that they were beginning to see the value of the new medium for supporter communication and mobilization. Member-only areas were developed and "action" buttons encouraged people to sign up as volunteers or make a donation. Early attempts at indirect, or two-step mobilization, were led by Labour, which developed a range of emails and text messages for supporters to distribute. The vote-getting properties of
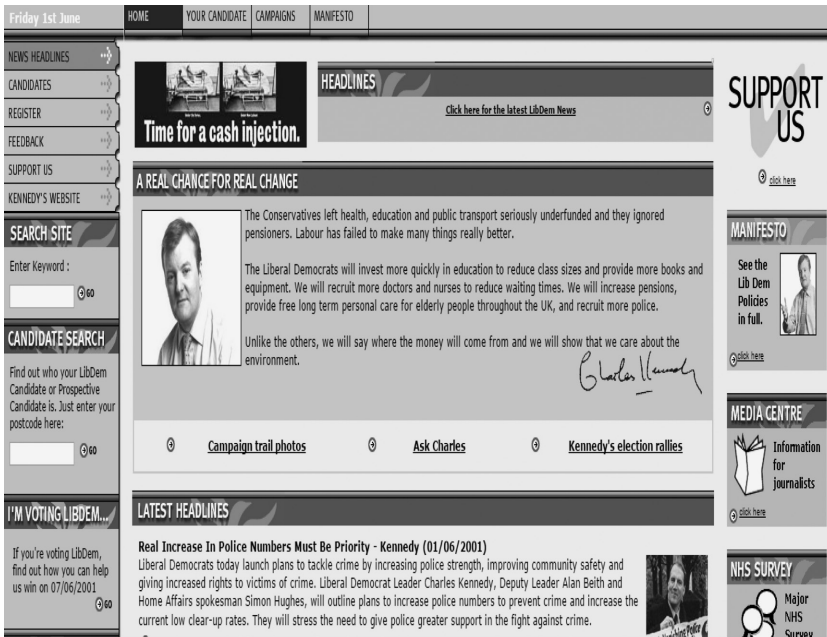
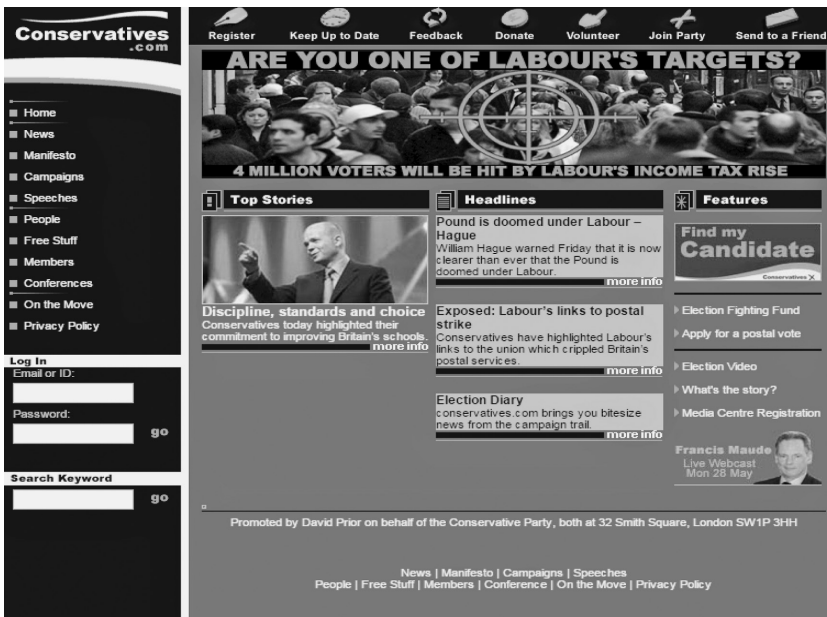*Figure 4.3.* The UK Liberal Democrats Party home page (June 2001). *Source*: Wayback Machine: http://web.archive.org/web/20010601170822/http://www.libdems.org.uk/

Figure 4.4. The UK Conservative Party home page (May 2001). *Source*: Wayback Machine: http://web.archive.org/web/20010525234331/http://www.conservatives.com/

the medium were also now starting to be explored, albeit somewhat tentatively. Labour went after the youth vote, launching *Ruup4it.org*, an independent campaign site that focused entirely on younger voters. The Liberal Democrats went one step farther, making explicit pleas for tactical voting by their supporters by providing links into vote-swapping sites. A simple correlational analysis by Gibson and Ward (2003) revealed a higher frequency of web campaigning in the more competitive seats, suggesting that candidates were beginning to take the medium more seriously as an election tool.

These efforts were, in reality, a drop in the wider ocean of party indifference. Local-level activity had increased since 1997, but use of the web remained a minority pursuit. Only a quarter of sitting MPs were found to have a website in the lead-up to the election, and there remained a majority of constituencies in which zero online campaigning took place. According to the audit by Gibson and Ward (2003) of the 539 English constituencies, only around one-quarter of candidates from one of the three main parties competing could lay claim to having some type of web presence, and of those that did set up sites, a majority failed to update them at all during the campaign. Perhaps even more telling was the fact that none of the national parties (with the exception of Labour) managed to update their sites on election day itself (Auty and Cowen, 2001).

More generally, it was clear that parties still lacked a firm understanding of the benefits of the internet as a campaign tool (Coleman, 2001a: 680). If the 1997 election had been largely about staking a claim to turf in cyberspace, the 2001 election centered on cultivating and improving their new piece of virtual real estate—the primary aspiration or target being to bring it up to the standards required for existing "broadcast" media channels. This view was reinforced by post-election reports of a lack of "buy-in" at senior levels within the Labour Party over the value of the web.[4] Indeed, several years later, after leaving his post as chief media advisor to Tony Blair, Alastair Campbell freely confessed to never having using the internet during his tenure at Number 10. Perhaps less surprisingly, Blair himself and Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott were also happy to disclose their "technophobic" tendencies to the media.[5]

Four years later, a new wave of optimism arose that this would be "third time lucky" for the UK parties in terms of getting an effective internet campaign off the ground (Jackson, 2007). Expectations were high, given this was the first election in which a majority of voters were online (see Figure 4.1). Also broadband access now exceeded dial-up for the first time, which meant that voters could enjoy a much faster and richer web experience.[6] Among the parties, there were encouraging signs of new interest and investment in the medium. Almost all parties now had some type of online presence, and an increasing number

were making use of a new type of interactive digital platform—the weblog, or blog (Francoli and Ward, 2008; Gibson et al., 2013). In what was perhaps the strongest sign of a new strategic direction in their use of the medium, the Conservatives launched their online recruitment tool, "Conservatives Direct," in the year before the election. The new platform was designed specifically to attract new activists and volunteers to help them target marginal seats (Ward et al., 2008). Not to be outdone, Labour reported that 50,000 people had signed up to their new national "supporters network" through their website since 2001. This influx, they claimed, had helped them raise as much as £100,000 in email donations since the last election.[7]

Despite these reasons to expect a significant shift of gears by 2005 and entry into a new more activist-oriented phase of digital campaigning, closer inspection of the parties' efforts concluded that the narrative of normalization persisted. One study reported that less than a quarter (24%) of the 107 parties competing had actually launched an explicit e-campaign (Jackson, 2007). Among the parties that did make an effort, the verdict was lukewarm at best (Stanyer, 2007). For one seasoned observer of British e-democracy, the sites were little more than "dreary e-versions of the throwaway paper brochures of yesteryear" (Coleman, 2005: 5). The emphasis remained on static "vertical communication," with freshly updated news and press releases seen as a "centerpiece" (Ward and Gibson, 2008: 11).[8] While some of the minor parties did gain special mention for their more serious attempts to promote a two-way dialogue through discussion boards, attempts to convert that discussion into action were thin on the ground (Gibson and Ward, 2005; Jackson, 2007; Ward et al., 2008). Despite the main parties' bid to increase their online volunteer networks and email lists, there was little evidence that made any extensive use of them. The Liberal Democrats were most active on this front, sending a total of 17 emails to voters during the course of the campaign (Jackson, 2007: 257). In what can be seen as perhaps the most telling gap in performance, none of the parties launched a YouTube channel, despite the platform having been established three months earlier.

At the local level, although activity reportedly increased, the lack of commitment and interest was still palpable. Estimates by Ward et al. (2008) were that, at best, two-fifths of candidates (37%) had developed some type of personalized web presence, a 10 percent rise from 2001. Among local parties, the picture appeared to be even more dire. Work by the New Politics Network (NPN) in the year prior to the election was damning in its conclusions about the state of local parties' online presence. According to the authors, "most local football fan clubs have more sophisticated and better maintained websites than their equivalent local parties" (Runswick et al., 2004: 10).

Phase III: Community Building and Activist Mobilization (2010)

The fourth time around, anticipation for an election breakthrough by the internet again started to build.[9] Facebook and Twitter had now emerged on the scene, joining YouTube as the most popular social media platforms among voters. Facebook was seen as a particularly important arena for the parties to occupy, given its estimated 23 million UK users.[10] The runaway success of tech-savvy candidate Barack Obama in the US presidential election of 2008 served to increase the pressure and expectations on UK parties to show their digital prowess, particularly in terms of exploiting the mobilizing power of the new medium. For their part, both major parties had taken steps to improve their credentials for online public engagement since 2005. The Conservatives had funneled major resources into a new interactive video channel centered on their new leader—*WebCameron*—which was launched to great fanfare at their 2006 annual conference. As well as introducing the relatively unknown David Cameron to the wider public, the site was also designed to signal his more open and accessible style of leadership. This was also part of a wider push by the Tories to soften their public image and rid them of the self-imposed label as the United Kingdom's "nasty" party.[11] Labour opted for a less personalized "face" for their online engagement strategy, launching a new virtual policy discussion platform—*Let's talk*—in early 2006, shortly after the election. As its name suggested, the site was designed to initiate wider discussion between the party and the public about the party's future direction and policies.

In addition to these in-house efforts at promoting more voter interaction, both major parties and most of the minor players started to make use of social media well in advance of the 2010 election. The Greens proved to be the early adopters of Facebook, setting up their pages in late 2007. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats followed suit in early 2008, while Labour brought up the rear, launching its site in August 2008 (Bartlett et al., 2013). Twitter handles were also set up from mid-2007 onward, and here Labour was very much at the forefront of the action. The party designated MP Kerry McCarthy as its official "Twitter Tsar," her main mission being to guide and support candidates and leaders in their use of the micro-blogging site (Newman, 2010: 26). Several official hashtags, such as #mobmonday and #labourdoorstep, were established prior to the election to help coordinate supporters' online and offline activities. Even self-confessed techno-phobe Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott joined the social media fray, setting up a personal blogspot, *Go4th*, to support Labour's bid for a fourth term.

Home pages also underwent significant overhauls, with a much greater emphasis given to content that promoted direct action rather than static downward information dissemination. Calls to volunteer and donate featured prominently, and significant sums were spent revamping existing electronic voter canvassing tools.[12] The remodeling of the Conservatives' main website, *Conservatives.com*, alone was estimated to have cost around a quarter of a million pounds (Crabtree, 2010). All the parties now made much greater use of email lists compared with 2005. There were claims that together the two main parties had collected around 800,000 addresses. Messages were tested for their effectiveness, and it was estimated that the parties raised one million pounds in response to their online fundraising pleas (McGregor, 2010). The Conservatives were regarded as particularly adept in this regard, with one email from William Hague estimated to have generated £100,000 in one day (Newman, 2010: 24).

Arguably, the most visible sign of UK parties' entry into phase III was their launch of several "home-grown" versions of Obama's social networking site *MyBarackObama.com*, otherwise known as *MyBO,* in the year before the election. As with the original, sign-up was quick and simple, requiring just an email address, postal code, and password. While such ease of access would not be anything particularly unusual for US voters, it marked a much greater departure in practice for the UK electorate. British parties, like many of their European counterparts, operated a system of formal membership. The arrival of these virtual networks meant that now anyone with a modicum of interest and an internet connection could become officially affiliated with the party, and undertake campaign activities on its behalf.

Among the parties, Labour made the first foray into virtual community building and activist mobilization with the launch of *LabourSpace* shortly after the 2005 election. This was an online platform that was open to both members and non-members and allowed people to sign up and then find ways to take action to help the party promote its priority policy areas. This was followed by more issue-specific platforms, such as *Eds Pledge* which focused on environmental policy, and *Back the Ban* which sought to prohibit fox-hunting. These efforts culminated in 2009 in the conversion of their members-only internal social network—*Membersnet*—into a public platform that anyone could join. Having the existing infrastructure in place clearly made the roll-out of a *MyBO*-like site a fast and largely painless technical exercise. Sign-off on the decision to do so, however, needed to come from the top, and was given after a series of trips by leading party officials to the United States during 2008, particularly visits to the Democrats' campaign headquarters (Straw, 2010; Anstead and Straw, 2009). Despite this trigger, the switch did not bring about any radical changes in the look and feel of the site, which retained its name and commitment to the Labour "brand," as Figure 4.5 reveals.

Figure 4.5. Membersnet (May 2010). *Source*: Author's archive.

The Conservatives' move into *MyBO* territory marked more of a new direction for the party. The launch of *MyConservatives.com* in September 2009 constituted the most explicit effort by any party to copy the Obama original, both in name and overall visual design. This "foreign" or imported quality, combined with criticisms that its rollout had been rushed in time for the election, prompted accusations that it was largely a promotional stunt (Ridge-Newman, 2014: 32). Its designers, however, were eager to stress that the site formed part of a deeper commitment within the party to use digital tools to broaden its appeal and widen its activist base. The "Online Communities" team that led the initiative, according to Ridge-Newman (2014), saw the site (and *WebCameron*) as symbolizing a new spirit of "cyber toryism" that was designed to give ". . . a greater and more independent voice . . . [to] . . . ordinary Conservative participants" (Ridge-Newman, 2014: 115). While *MyConservatives.com* had shallower roots than *Membersnet,* it was clear that it formed part of a wider push by right-wing activists to use online tools to exert influence on Conservative party leaders. Sites like *Iain Dale's Blog Spot* and *ConservativeHome* had become increasingly popular as fora for the grassroots to congregate and debate Conservative party policy (Gibson et al., 2013).

In addition to the efforts of the two main parties to embrace the new opportunities for online activism, there were also some signs of phase III among the minor players. The most notable of these came from the Liberal Democrats, who

launched their supporter hub, *LibDemACT,* shortly before the 2010 election, as shown in Figure 4.6.

According to party headquarters, the goal of the site was to build a "Liberal Democrat supporting community . . . that extends beyond the formal boundary of party membership . . . and is open to non-members as well as members."[13] Take-up among their supporter base appeared to be relatively healthy, with over 300 groups formed by the end of the campaign. Its success was, however, somewhat overshadowed by the popularity of an unofficial Facebook supporter group that called itself *Rage Against the Machine.* Established in the aftermath of Nick Clegg's stunning success in the first televised leaders' debate, the group's avowed purpose was to rage against the United Kingdom's unfair electoral machine, which prevented smaller parties from gaining a proportional share of parliamentary seats. The group became the focal point for absorbing the wave of interested citizens who wanted to promote the Liberal Democrat cause. The group attracted in excess of 160,000 members at its peak. Such numbers were notably well beyond those who had joined groups on the *LibDemACT* site[14] and far exceeded the party's official membership figures (Newman, 2010: 28).

Among the fringe players, the far right British National Party (BNP) proved most active in developing a *MyBO*-style social networking site where members and non-members could congregate and plan activities. As was the case for the other parties, their bespoke platform, *forum.bnp.org.uk,* involved a simple

Figure 4.6. LibDemACT (May 2010). *Source*: Author's archive.

registration process. Once signed in, users could join groups and local campaigns as well as interact on various discussion fora. Although no overall figure was reported on the total numbers registered, group sizes indicated that levels of membership were equal to, if not in excess of, those seen on the main parties' sites.[15]

Other parties that lacked the resource or time to develop a bespoke social network relied more on open platforms like Facebook and free software to coordinate and mobilize their supporters and volunteers. The Greens were notably active in this regard, which was perhaps no surprise given they were the first party to use Facebook to create events and promote their campaigns. The return on their early investment, however, did appear to be somewhat disappointing for them if one looks at the final tally of likes during the election. The Greens received just under 8,000 likes by election day, which was around one-tenth of the number received by the major parties and significantly lower than their far right rivals, the BNP (Lilleker and Jackson, 2011: 133). Of the other, more prominent minor parties, the biggest surprise was perhaps the UK Independence Party, UKIP, which placed very little emphasis on mobilizing its base and community building online. The main site had relatively few calls to action and its presence on Facebook was virtually non-existent (Lilleker and Jackson, 2011: 141).

A more systematic effort to compare these attempts at online community development by the parties was conducted by the author during the 2010 election (2015). Using an index designed to measure the phenomenon of citizen-initiated campaigning (CIC), she ranked the online activist platforms developed by each of the main parties as well as the Liberal Democrats and the BNP in the 2010 campaign. CIC was defined as "a practice . . . in which digitally registered supporters who are not necessarily members make use of online tools created by the party or candidate team to campaign both online and offline on its behalf" (5). The particular activities making up CIC were allocated across four action areas:

- community building;
- mobilizing internal resources (i.e., funds and other volunteers);
- mobilizing external resources (i.e., the electorate, "getting out the vote");
- message development and distribution.

For each function, a simple additive index was constructed that captured whether key features enabling this particular activity were present, scored as "1," or absent, scored as "0." If the features were missing on the CIC site, but available on the home page, they were counted toward the overall totals since the goal was to measure a party's overall CIC effort. The findings of the analysis and key features for the three main parties and the BNP are reproduced in Table 4.1. A full

Table 4.1 **UK Parties' Citizen-Initiated Campaigning Scores, 2010 General Election**

	Liberal Dems (LibDemAct)	Conservatives (My Cons)	Labour (Membersnet)	BNP*
Community Building				
Profile				
Photo	√	√	√	√
Biography	√	√	√	√
Why joined	√	—	√	—
Set up/join groups	√	—	√	√
Set up blog	√	—	√	—
Set up Wiki	√	—	—	—
Email/message system	√	√	√	√
Externally promote profile	√	—	√	—
Subtotal (additive 0–8)	8	3	7	4
Resource Generation				
Personal fundraising	—	√	√	—
Promote membership	√	—	√	—
Sign up as local organizer	—	—	—	—
Sign up as candidate	√	—	—	—
Organize/add event	√	—	√	—
Vote leaders to attend events	—	—	—	—
Subtotal (additive 0–6)	3	1	3	0
Voter Mobilization				
GOTV offline				
Access phonebank	—	√	—	—
Sign up for f2f canvassing	√	√	—	—
Sign up to discuss with network.	—	—	√	—
Leaflets download	√	—	—	na
Externally promote event	√	√	√	—
GOTV online				
Send email	—	√	√	—
Post to Facebook	—	√	√	—
Post to Twitter	—	√	√	—
GOTV phone app	—	√	√	—
Email forward to editor	√	√	√	√
Start e-petition	—	—	—	—
Subtotal (additive 0–11)	4	8	7	1

Table 4.1 **Continued**

	Liberal Dems (LibDemAct)	*Conservatives (My Cons)*	*Labour (Membersnet)*	*BNP**
Message Production				
Message creation				
Policy email forward/ customize	—	—	√	—
Poster/leaflet create/ customize	√	—	—	—
Policy input/feedback	—	—	√	—
Message distribution				
Web banners/ads download	√	√	√	√
Posters/leaflets download	√	√	—	√
Email/share policy docs	√	—	√	—
Newsfeed to website	√	—	√	√
Share blog posts externally	—	√	√	√
Link to SNS profile	√	—	√	—
Link to Twitter account	√	—	√	√
Import email contacts	√	√	√	—
Subtotal (additive 0–11)	8	4	9	5
Overall Score (0–36)	23	16	28	10
Standardized Score (0–100)	65	41	71	26

√ = feature present on campaign site ; — = feature not present; na = not accessible.

Note: The British National Party (BNP) site was internal to their home pages not as a separate/ independent platform. Standardized scores are calculated by transforming each sub-index into a 0–100 range and then averaging the scores. See Appendix 4.1 for details of variable definitions.

description of the features and indicators used to measure them are provided in Appendix 4.1.

Perhaps the most striking finding to emerge from the table is the confirmation that it was the mainstream left that led the push toward this new phase in web campaigning. The overall standardized scores for Labour and the Liberal Democrats sites, reported at the bottom of the table, reveal that a majority of the key features of CIC were present on the sites, while the majority were in fact missing for the Conservatives. Beneath these top-line findings, the community-building and message-dissemination aspects of CIC emerge as the particular areas of strength for Labour and the Liberal Democrats. The Conservatives, by contrast, put most of their effort into mobilizing voters, outperforming all

other parties on this dimension. The more instrumental orientation of the site and its emphasis on "results" were signaled very openly by the producers of *MyConservatives.com*. Upon entry, users were presented with a message informing them that the main purpose of the platform was to increase the party's electoral support, rather than promote internal dialogue and discussion.

A further significant finding to emerge from Table 4.1 is the mixed evidence it provides in support of the normalization thesis. The BNP, as the most marginal party, clearly had the weakest site. However, the Liberal Democrats were very serious contenders in the CIC stakes. Furthermore, beneath the overall performance measure, the BNP's emphasis on community building and message co-production was stronger than that of the Conservatives and closer to the scores of the mainstream left.

Based on the empirical evidence available regarding impact, it seemed the left's investment paid off in terms of the impact of the sites. According to figures supplied by Labour, 35,000 people had registered with *Membersnet* by the end of 2010 (Newman, 2010: 25), a figure that had doubled by the end of following year.[16] Estimates given by the Tories of sign-up rates to *MyConservatives* pointed to a much lower figure of around 10,000 registered users by the end of the campaign (Ridge-Newman, 2014: 30). The low take-up was no doubt linked to a lack of adoption at the constituency level. Reports were that a significant minority of local parties (over 200) were not actually making use of it during the campaign to sign up extra supporters. Given the relatively short period of time the facility had been operational, however, it was, as Ridge-Newman (2014) argued, perhaps somewhat premature to consider "cyber-toryism" to be an entire failure.

Given their greater success of their online supporter hub, it was not surprising that Labour also claimed victory in their broader goal of indirect voter mobilization. According to the party's own research, it managed to triple the number of face-to-face contacts since 2005, yielding a grand total of 450,000 door-to-door visits. Independent post-election analyses questioned this ebullience, however, suggesting a more modest success rate for *Membersnet* than Labour had claimed. Analyses of self-reported contact in the 2005 and 2010 British Election Study (BES), in particular, failed to show a significant spike in Labour's level outreach in the latter election (Gibson, 2015; Aldrich et al., 2016).

The Conservatives were less forthcoming in estimating the precise voter impact of *MyConservatives*, reporting only that 390 constituency-level campaigns were active users of the site (Ridge-Newman, 2014: 19). Academic work by Fisher et al. (2011) was generally positive about the impact of their data-driven targeting efforts, arguing that the technology—and particularly the new electoral database MERLIN—had given them an edge in the more marginal seats. The extent to which that success could be attributed to the data gained through *MyConservatives* was also questioned, however, given the criticisms

that emerged later over its lack of integration into MERLIN (Ridge-Newman, 2014: 34).

Despite the likely over-claiming on each side, there was a growing consensus among journalists and researchers that a divide was now emerging between two main parties in their approach to digital campaigning. The Labour Party was essentially seen as pioneering the phase III mode by focusing on activating its grassroots, promoting two-step flow of communication, and indirect mobilization (Crabtree, 2010; Newman, 2010; Gibson et al., 2010; Painter, 2010). In doing so, its digital practice was seen as aligning with the party's wider strategy for 2010, which was to make this a "word of mouth" election (Newman, 2010: 25). Sue MacMillan, the party's new media director, had even gone on record during the election to say that her main objective had been to build online community, as a means of generating more offline activity (McGregor, 2010: 36).

By contrast, the Conservatives were regarded as having adopted a much more utilitarian and market-oriented digital strategy, which was designed to catch the floating voter (Newman, 2010; Painter, 2010; Gibson et al., 2010). The party invested heavily in advertising on popular platforms such as Facebook and Google and tools for optimizing search engine visibility. According to Nic Newman (2010), one of the architects of the BBC online news service, the party devoted more resources to its online marketing effort than the other parties combined. The switch over to MERLIN meant that they also upgraded their "in-house" targeting capacity. Although these initiatives did show that the party regarded direct voter mobilization as its priority, whether this equated with a leap into the laser-like precision and scientific approach of phase IV–style digital campaigning was heavily doubted (Ridge-Newman, 2014; Crabtree, 2010)

In organizational terms, it did seem that the major parties at least had progressed beyond the configuration associated with phase II. The numbers of full-time personnel that both were prepared to dedicate to their internet operations had increased significantly to those seen in 2005. By 2010, the Conservatives' core team had expanded to eight, while Labour had recruited seven full-time staff to its new media office (Gibson et al., 2010). Beyond this, the minor parties clearly struggled to commit similar resources, although the Liberal Democrats' increase to three full-time digital staff was arguably a bigger growth in relative terms.[17] As well as expanding in size, the digital teams also increased in prominence and status within the campaign hierarchy. The specialized new media units were now largely recognized as independent sub-teams who provided direct input into the top tier of campaign planning.[18]

At the local level, activity rose again, and this time, the increase was substantial. Results from a post-election survey of constituency agents for the two main parties and the Liberal Democrats by Fisher et al. (2011) found that websites were now deemed to be at least as important for the campaign as leaflets and

mainstream media coverage. Southern and Ward's (2011) comprehensive audit of constituency web campaigning confirmed these findings, revealing that for the first time a majority of candidates from all three parties had an independent web presence (i.e., more than simply pages on national party sites). This wider coverage did not extend to the minor parties, however, with UKIP, the Greens, and the BNP candidates on average more likely to not have a personal website than to operate one. That said, Southern and Ward (2011) also measured parties' social media presence and found a stronger parity in provision, especially with regard to the use of blogs.

The commitment to genuinely interactive uses of these new tools, however, remained limited to a very small minority of candidates. It was a minor party, the Liberal Democrats, who performed best in this regard, with up to one-third of its candidates reportedly having engaged in dialogue with their followers on Twitter (Southern and Ward, 2011). The existence of a partisan divide in attention to social media during the election is supported by the findings of Fisher et al. (2011). In a post-election analysis of survey data from local constituency agents, they found that respondents from major parties saw more value in websites compared with social media platforms and newer contact modes such as texting. While not conclusive, such findings suggest that 2010 saw some evidence of an equalization between the parties in terms of their use of the newest campaign tools.

Overall, therefore, it did appear that the 2010 digital campaign saw some sincere efforts by parties to harness the community building and activist mobilization activities associated with phase III. This push was led largely by parties on the center-left, who were among the first and most active to develop social networking platforms and explicitly recognize the power of the two-step flow model of online to offline communication. The right appeared more focused on the next stage of direct voter mobilization. How far each approach paid off is, as the evidence presented earlier has revealed, somewhat unclear. In final section of this chapter we return to this question through a more systematic analysis of voters' response to the digital campaigns over several elections, including that of 2010.

Phase IV Moves to Individual Voter Mobilization (2015)

Before turning to examine evidence about patterns in the demand side of UK digital campaigns, we conclude this review of the supply side of web campaigning with some observations on the 2015 election. If 2010 saw the implementation

of a phase III–style redistributive approach to digital campaigning, what signs of phase IV can be detected five years later?

The divergence in the digital strategy of parties in 2010 does not appear to recur in 2015, with all the main parties demonstrating a clear focus on mobilizing the electorate, and targeting floating voters through websites and social media advertising. Digital teams increased in size, and key operatives in the Obama campaigns—Jim Messina and David Axelrod—were hired by the Conservatives and Labour, respectively, as strategic advisors. There was a new emphasis on squeezing out voters' personal information and online contact details to help build bigger email lists and populate networked databases.[19] For the Conservatives, efforts centered on expanding and strengthening their existing in-house resource, MERLIN, which was seen to have at best a patchy record of success since the last election.[20] Labour, by contrast, made use of the commercially available campaign software *Nation Builder*, which was customized and integrated with their new and improved in-house voter management system, *Contact Creator*. It was the Liberal Democrats, however, who took perhaps the biggest step forward into big data campaigning, recruiting the services of US campaign tech specialists, the Voter Activation Network (VAN), to help them build up their voter lists and more effectively target their messages.[21]

In addition to their internal software and hardware revamps, parties were also now very eager to exploit social media channels. The Conservatives, in particular, maintained and intensified their use of Facebook for promotion of their message. Media reports estimated that the party had spent up to one million pounds on advertising on the platform in the year leading up to the election.[22] In addition, the pattern of spending confirmed vote maximization to be the key goal of the digital campaign, with highly competitive seats such as Newark receiving a much larger chunk of the budget than places such as Clacton, where the party was unlikely to win (Fisher et al. 2015).[23]

Judged simply by the number of likes received, it would seem that the Tories' focus on Facebook paid off. Their party pages and Cameron's own site each hovered around the region of one million, an exponential rate of growth compared with 2010. By contrast, Labour and Ed Miliband struggled to reach the half million mark.[24] The story on Twitter was rather different, however. While the overall numbers of followers were lower than on Facebook, Labour managed to maintain a clear lead over the Conservatives during the campaign, peaking at around 220,000 by election day. This total was around a third greater than the Conservatives achieved, who had around 150,000 followers by the close of polls. Although it is of course difficult to prove any causal relationship from these numbers, the surprise victory of the Conservatives does show it to be a more accurate barometer of the electorate's sympathies.

In place of online community building, the parties now concentrated more explicitly on presenting their home pages as a "one stop" shop for direct mobilization and data extraction from visitors. A key innovation in this regard was the addition of landing pages that preceded entry into the main sites. These pop-up pages confronted visitors with a short survey designed to find out whether they would be voting, and if so, whom they would vote for. Additional requests then appeared, asking for further information about where the visitors lived, what their views were on various party policies, and for their email address. In the case of Labour, the survey questions continued for up to 10 further pages and included appeals to donate, volunteer, and share the site URL with friends. While it was possible to skip the survey, the button enabling the user to go straight to the main site was typically not prominently displayed on the sites. Although initially the practice appeared on the two major parties' sites and also on UKIP's home page, by the close of the campaign it had spread, with both the Greens and the Liberal Democrats adopting this more interrogative approach. Figures 4.7 and 4.8 show the landing pages for the two major parties during the campaign.

Elsewhere, appeals for visitors to supply parties and candidates with their Facebook and Twitter credentials proliferated. Some parties even required the entry of an individual's social media account details in order to access certain sections of the site. The Conservatives, for example, made their "share the facts" feature and also parts of their manifesto available only after linkage of Facebook
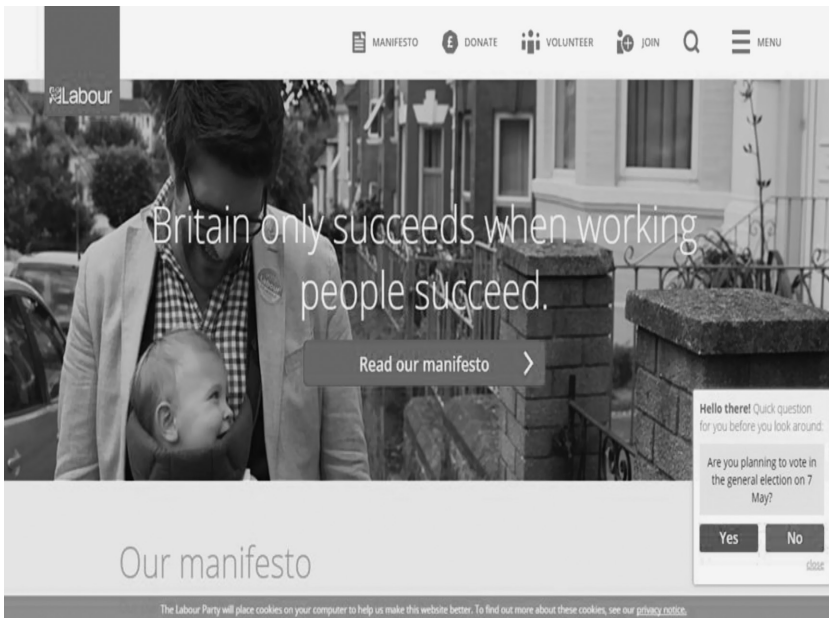
Figure 4.7. The UK Labour Party landing page (May 2015). *Source*: Author's archive.

Figure 4.8. The UK Conservative Party landing page (May 2015). *Source*: Author's archive.

or Twitter profiles. This more intrusive and interrogative nature of the election sites in 2015 was underscored further by the new prominence given to parties' data privacy policies, which were now regularly referred to as users browsed through their contents.

This more aggressive colonization of social media by the major parties at the national level was replicated and reinforced at the local level. Work by Southern and Lee (2015) showed that while levels of online constituency activity remained fairly comparable to 2010 among both the major and minor parties, with around 9 in 10 candidates having some type of web presence, the preferred mode of campaigning had shifted quite substantially. In particular, the reliance on social media among major party candidates was now much higher, while their use of individual home pages had dropped significantly. Furthermore, levels of interaction occurring on social media platforms had actually increased. The majority of candidates on Twitter were found to have used it to engage with voters at some point during the campaign. According to Southern and Lee (2015), this compared with less than one in five during 2010.

Such changes were interesting on a number of grounds. First, the growing dominance of the major parties on social media platforms suggests a tilt back toward normalization at the systemic level, with the bigger players now claiming terrain in the social networking landscape. Second, while it might be tempting to see the increased interactivity as a sign that candidates had become more

committed to engage with voters more meaningfully in their social spaces, the actual nature of the interactions taking place were not known. Candidates' increased proclivity to respond to voters' concerns may simply have embedded the "controlled interactivity" mode identified by Stromer-Galley (2014) and others. It might also be reflective of the shift by parties toward the instrumental "extractive" mode of voter engagement synonymous with phase IV.

Overall, therefore, much of the evidence gleaned from the 2015 general election suggests that phase IV campaigning was at a latent stage. Although digital teams had expanded significantly in their size and centrality, they still formed a fairly small cog in the campaign machine, and certainly had not moved into the nerve center of operations. There was little evidence of their internal differentiation into specialist sub-teams, such as the data analytics and software engineering units that had emerged under Obama in the United States. Post-election evaluations of the parties' efforts to engage with "big data" campaigning, while not entirely dismissive, were largely unconvinced that they had the resources or indeed ambition to engage in the level of scientific micro-targeting that had been seen in the United States.[25] According to mainstream media reports, the parties still saw social media tools in static rather than dynamic terms. They were more likely to use them as tools for documenting and reporting on the election, rather than "weaponizing" them to target voters.[26]

Based on developments in the supply side of digital campaign, therefore, it does seem that digital campaigning in the United Kingdom had moved through the four phases set out in Chapter 1. An initial burst of experimentation had been followed by a lengthier period of standardization. Parties had converged on a more professionalized and static approach to their web "shopfronts," but lacked a clear strategic end or target audience in mind. After 2005, there was a shift into phase III–type activities as the parties invested in building digital supporter networks to help revitalize their base and reconnect with members. This trend was most pronounced among the mainstream left. Among the mainstream right, greater priority was given to the vote-maximizing aspect of the new medium and the combining of a more inclusive "broadcast" approach with attempts to make micro appeals to voters on social media. This early push by the Conservatives into phase IV–style campaigning was further accelerated in 2015 as targeting of the general public via social media advertising intensified. However, across the board, parties showed more interest in building up their stores of information on individual voters in order to engage in a more precise campaign of direct mobilization.

In the section that follows, we switch to examine this process of evolution from the demand side of the situation. To what extent did the progress on the supply side resonate among voters in terms of their experience of digital campaigning?

The View from Below: Mapping Digital Campaign Cycles in the UK Electorate

The analysis now shifts to look at how the public has responded to parties' and candidates' digital campaign efforts. Can the patterns of change and innovation recorded in elites' use of the technology be detected in the electorate's experience of web campaigning? Have UK voters moved on from simply reading web campaign content, to redistributing it, and increasingly now to receiving it in the form of digital messages? Finally, and more specifically, are the parties' strategies reflected "on the ground"? To what extent are the patterns of innovation and "leadership" identified among the elite actors in the earlier sections actually detectable among their activists and voters?

READING, REDISTRIBUTING, AND RECEIVING THE WEB CAMPAIGN OVER TIME

To examine the demand for web campaigning over time, we make use of three main data sources covering the 2005, 2010, and 2015 elections. For 2005 and 2010, we use two "bespoke" survey data sets that were produced as part of grant-funded projects on which the author served as a principal or co-investigator. These surveys were designed to measure citizens' use of online technologies during the campaign and thus included a comparatively rich set of items that allow us to measure the three main modes of engagement—read, redistribute, and receive.[27] For 2015, we rely on two surveys produced from the British Election Study. The first was wave 5 of the internet panel run by YouGov. This was fielded during the campaign and included a wide variety of items about individual political uses of the internet that could be used as measures of the read and redistribute variables. The second was the post-election mail-back component of the random probability survey, which included the CSES module on online contact. The CSES module included measures of both direct and indirect "receive" mode—which was not the case for the YouGov survey. It was also the basis for the results reported in the United Kingdom in Chapter 3.

Table 4.2 presents the results of this initial mapping exercise. Specifically, it shows the extent to which the three modes of voter engagement with e-campaigns have occurred in UK elections since 2005. For reference purposes, we present the proportion of the electorate that had internet access in each election. This is done in order to contextualize the results, by providing the total size of the population that potentially could have undertaken each mode of activity in any given year.[28]

Table 4.2 **Voter Engagement in UK Digital Campaigns, 2005–2015**

| | | Mode of Engagement | | | | | |
| | | Voter as Audience—READ | | Voter as Activist—REDISTRIBUTE | | Voter as Target—RECEIVE | |
Year	Internet use	Online news	Camp. sites	Sign-up/Download	Share/Exchange	Party (Direct)	F&F (Indirect)
2005	53%	15.5	1.8	0.8	1.5	2.7	1.7
N = 1,937	N = 1,033	(28.9)	(3.4)	(1.4)	(2.8)	(5.1)	(3.2)
		READ 15.5 (28.9)		REDISTRIBUTE 0.6 (1.2)		RECEIVE 4.2 (8.1)	
2010	75%	28.7	15.0	6.3	8.5	2.6	15.1
N = 1,960	N = 1476	(38.1)	(20.6)	(8.4)	(11)	(3.4)	(20.1)
		READ 31.5 (41.9)		REDISTRIBUTE 3.0 (4.0)		RECEIVE 16.1 (21.4)	
2015	86%*	51.1	15.3	2.1	12.8	11.8	5.5
N = 30,725		(59.4)	(17.8)	(2.4)	(14.9)	(13.6)	(6.4)
		READ: 51.5 (59.9)		REDISTRIBUTE: 1.7 (2.0)		RECEIVE: 16.3 (18.9)	

* Internet use figures are from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Statistical bulletin "Internet users: 2015," https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/bulletins/internetusers/2015. Estimates are based on UK adults (aged 16–24) who used the internet over the first quarter of the year January–March. The 2015 YouGov panel study was an online survey; thus it was not possible to calculate internet use for the population as a whole. The CSES module was conducted offline but did not include an internet use question. All population estimates for read, redistribute, and receive were calculated using the ONS figure of 86% as the baseline. See note 28 for further details of the calculation.

Figures are % and reported for overall sample and internet users in parentheses.

Sources: 2005 and 2010 were modules in national face-to-face omnibus surveys conducted by NOP (2005) and BMRB (2010); 2015 wave 5 (campaign wave) of the British Election Study (BES) Internet Panel Study conducted by YouGov used to calculate read and redistribute. Mail-back CSES component of pre- and post-election random probability survey used to calculate receive. Survey weights applied. See Appendix 4.2 for further details of surveys and variable definitions.

In presenting and describing these results, there are a number of methodological caveats that first need to be issued. The most obvious of these is that the specific measures used to create the variables of interest inevitably differed across surveys. Our approach to maximizing their comparability was to first specify a generic set of activities associated with each mode, and then identify those variables in each survey that most closely captured them. Thus, to measure engagement in the first category—reading—we focused on two sets of activities. The first was use of the internet to access election news and information in general, and the second was the more specific act of visiting an official web campaign site. The variables that most closely corresponded to these activities were used to create the aggregated variable "read."

For redistribution, we also combined two types of online activities; however, we imposed the restriction that both had to be performed, rather than either one, for an individual to have engaged in this response mode. The first indicator was whether a respondent had signed up to assist a party or campaign or to receive news or information from them. The second was whether the respondent had shared or exchanged any election information with others. Finally, the measure of receive follows the approach of Chapter 3 in that it measures (where possible) the receipt of campaign information from parties and candidates (direct) and through more informal means, for example, one's social networks (indirect). Full details of the surveys measures used to capture each mode, along with the demographic and political attributes used in the tables that follow, are provided in Appendix 4.2.

Bearing in mind these caveats about comparability, a clear finding to emerge from Table 4.2 is that the proportion of the electorate engaging in all three modes of engagement has increased over time. This holds for the population as a whole, which one might expect given that overall levels of internet usage have increased. More significantly, however, it is also true for the internet-using population (shown in parentheses), which controls for that increased access. Across the modes, it is clear that the more passive mode of reading (i.e., paying attention to the online campaign) is the dominant mode of engagement over all three elections. It has also been among the fastest growing, having almost doubled between campaigns. By contrast, redistribution and receive, while they have also grown over time, are still engaged by only a minority of the electorate. This is particularly the case for redistribute, which is the least engaged activity of the three. It does appear, however, that the sharing content component of this variable has increased significantly across the 10-year period.

Looking from election to election, there does appear to have been a significant jump in all types of engagement between 2005 and 2010, with some modes more than trebling in frequency in this period. This step change confirms our understanding that web campaigns were a low priority for the parties until 2010.

At this point, we see a noticeable expansion in voters' modes of engagement with the web campaign, and particularly a rise in the amount of redistributive or phase III–type activity occurring. The numbers accessing campaign sites, signing up for email news, and using party-provided tools increased quite substantially, although they still do not come close to being a majority activity among the electorate. The rise in levels of interest in the web campaign is perhaps one of the most notable features of the 2010 election, with around one in seven voters claiming to have visited an official candidate- or party-produced site, compared with only 2 percent in 2005. In addition, there was a similarly sized jump in the numbers receiving online messages about the election from friends and family. These patterns of increased engagement are supportive of the notion that 2010 saw a shift toward a more community-building and citizen-initiated model of web campaigning.

By 2015, the figures reveal an interesting if somewhat uneven pattern of growth since 2010. Read and redistribute modes are measured using wave 5 of the YouGov BES Internet panel which was conducted during the campaign. This study has a much larger N than any of the other surveys; however, the sample is drawn from internet users only. Given this lack of a baseline to calculate proportions for the voting population as a whole, we substituted the Office for National Statistics (ONS) figure of internet use among the UK adult population during the first quarter of 2015 as our baseline (86 percent). The first and most obvious conclusion to draw from these results is that the proportions of people who were reading anything about the election online rose substantially again in 2015. However, this growth is concentrated among those reading general news sources, rather than among those looking at official campaign material, which appears to have plateaued. Equally notable is the drop in levels of redistribution of political party content.

Closer inspection reveals that much of this fall is due to the drop in sign-up levels in 2015, which was around three times smaller than in 2010. While this may reflect the decreased popularity of the official party-produced CIC platforms in 2015, it is more likely to be a methodological artifact, and due to the more conservative measure of sign-up used in the BES survey. Previous measures, taken from bespoke ESRC project data sets, had equated a number of "softer" actions, such as signing up for official e-news bulletins, downloading political organizations' material, or following them on Twitter or Facebook as measures of "sign-up." The measure used in 2015, however, expressly asked whether an individual had signed up/registered to help a party or candidate with their campaign.[29] This is likely to have depressed the total amount of sign-up being reported. Certainly, the other more comparable measure of redistribution—sharing political content online—did not appear to have undergone a similar decline. Indeed, by 2015 this type of activity had increased by around a third, from 8.5 percent of

the population to just under 13 percent. It is possible, therefore, that we would not have seen such a sharp drop in redistribution in 2015 if a less restricted measure of sign-up had been available.

Finally, the figures for receive point to an increase over time in overall levels of contact, with around one in six of the population reporting some kind of online contact about their vote in 2015. However, closer inspection of the ratios of direct to indirect mode reveal a more mixed pattern of rise and fall. In particular, it would seem that the number of voters receiving official party messages has increased over time, and that this activity saw a particularly marked expansion in 2015. Just over one in 10 voters reported receiving some kind of online contact from a party or candidate during this election. While the overall extent of receive remains low relative to read, therefore, there does seem some tentative evidence from the voters' side that the United Kingdom was moving closer toward digital campaigning focused on direct voter mobilization.

The figures for indirect contact reveal a less linear pattern, with 2010 seeing a peak in messages from friends and family—rising to just over 15 percent of voters. This then dropped to around one in 20 by 2015. This reversal of fortunes for indirect contact is rather surprising given the growth in content sharing noted earlier in 2015. Also, while it might be the case that the parties were shifting to concentrate on direct contact in 2015, this growth would not necessarily lead to a decline of the two-step indirect mode associated with phase III. If anything, the latter should also continue to rise as the two work in tandem. As with the redistribute variable, suspicion falls on methodological inconsistency across the surveys, and the use of a more conservative indicator of indirect contact in the 2015 study. For 2010, the available item simply asked whether respondents had received any campaign-related messages online from people they knew. In 2015, however, the item was somewhat more specific, asking whether someone they knew had tried to persuade them to vote for a particular party or candidate.

READING, REDISTRIBUTION, AND RECEIVING BY PARTY

Having mapped trends in UK voters' response to digital campaigns over time, we turn to look at the partisan affiliation of those involved in each mode, to see how far this conforms to the supply-side picture presented earlier. Table 4.3 compares the intensity of engagement in each mode of activity across election by party identification and for those declaring no party affiliation.

In 2005, the question referred to the party that an individual "tended to support," while in 2010 and 2015 it measured identification more explicitly, or the party that a respondent felt closest to. The figures are calculated for internet users only, which allows for greater comparability of the figures over time and across the parties. The first column of the table reports the levels of internet use

Table 4.3 **Party Supporters Engagement in UK Digital Campaigns, 2005–2015 (Internet Users Only)**

Election Year and Party	Internet Access	READ	REDISTRIBUTE	RECEIVE Direct (Party)	RECEIVE Indirect (Friends & Family)
2005					
Labour (N = 809)	49.3	31.6	1.0	4.9	3.0
Cons (N = 343)	53.5	29.3	1.0	4.3	2.7
LibDem (N = 285)	59.3	29.1	1.8	3.7	5.5
Other (N = 107)	59.2	35.7	3.7	5.6	0
DK/No Party (N = 240)	59.2	21.5	1.4	5.6	2.8
2010					
Labour (N = 308)	72.1	41.2	3.9	3.6	25.0
Cons (N = 323)	74.3	39.3	3.1	3.7	13.6
Lib Dems (N = 231)	79.7	48.5	7.4	4.3	27.3
Other (N = 118)	77.6	23.9	6.8	4.2	18.8
DK/No Party (N = 417)	76.5	32.5	1.9	2.2	17.0
2015					
Labour (N = 5,934)	—[*]	58.2	2.6	15.9	9.1
Cons (N = 5,342)	—	62.4	1.1	13.4	4.8
Lib Dems (N = 1,720)	—	64.8	2.4	13.1	3.4
Other (N = 1,891)	—	67.6	4.8	15.4	6.4
DK/No Party (N = 5,227)	—	50.1	0.3	8.3	6.2

Mode of Engagement spans READ, REDISTRIBUTE, and RECEIVE (Direct (Party) and Indirect (Friends & Family)).

N refers to the full sample and the internet access figures are the % of that total who reported being online. The figures for Read, Redistribute, and Receive are % of the online party identifiers who engaged in these activities.

[*] Internet access by party was not available for 2015 due to the YouGov survey having been conducted online (i.e., it excluded non-internet users). The CSES module was conducted offline but did not include a basic internet use question. The proportions for internet users were calculated using the ONS estimate of 86% of UK adult population accessing the internet in first quarter of 2015. See Table 4.2 note [a] for source information.

Sources: see Table 4.2 and Appendix 4.2 for full details of surveys and variable definitions. Survey weights applied. The 2015 Receive figures are from the CSES module, sample Ns were Labour 489, Cons 516, Lib Dems 106, Other 223, DK/No Party 219.

for each group of identifiers. To simplify the presentation, we use the summary versions of the read and redistribute variables presented in Table 4.2. For receive, however, we maintain the distinction between contact as party based, which is seen as a marker of phase IV digital campaigning, and indirect, which occurs via friends and family, and which is seen as more of an indicator of the type of two-step flow communication associated with phase III.

The results are interesting in that they show a fairly similar level of internet use among the parties. Labour supporters are slightly less likely to be online, and the Liberal Democrats and the minor parties are among the most wired. If we turn to our attention to particular modes of activity, we see an interesting picture of both continuity and change time over time. As one might expect, read is the dominant mode of engagement among all party supporters across all elections. Differences across parties are again not particularly pronounced, although there does seem to be slightly stronger propensity among Liberal Democrat and minor party supporters to pay attention to the campaign online, particularly in the most recent election.

Turning to redistribution, the overall figures confirm that parties' efforts to build online communities and recruit non-member activists into their campaign operations have generally reaped very small rewards. Even using the more generous measures from 2005 and 2010, it is still the case that no party had more than around 8 percent of their supporters engaging in the type of citizen-initiated campaigning that sites like *Membersnet* and *MyConservatives* were promoting. That said, there was an upswing in activism between 2005 and 2010 (when more comparable measures were used). This increase offers some support to the argument presented in the supply-side analysis that the general election of 2010 marked a shift by the parties into the third phase of digital campaigning.

If we compare the levels of redistribution across the parties, we see some interesting and unexpected results. First, looking at the three main parties, it seems that both Labour and the Liberal Democrats enjoy a small but increasing advantage over the Conservatives. Thus, the argument made earlier of a stronger performance by the mainstream left in mobilizing its base and pushing digital campaigning into phase III would seem to garner some support. That said, it would seem that it is the fringe players who are the best at mobilizing their supporters to redistribute their campaign content. While their greater success on this front may be explained in part by the fact that a higher proportion of their supporters are online, it may also be due to their earlier experiences in using open source and "free to use" social media platforms. Certainly, the findings provide corroborating evidence of the effectiveness of spaces such as Facebook and Twitter as tools for activist coordination. Based on these findings, they appear to have rivaled, if not actually outperformed, the more expensive party-produced platforms in 2010.

The last two columns of Table 4.3 examine the changes in receive mode among party supporters over time. From these results, we can see that rates of contact are typically higher than among the public as a whole, as we might expect.[30] However, they are still confined to a minority of individuals. Overall, most party supporters in the United Kingdom do not receive digital messages directly from campaigns during elections. Among those that do, it seems that there is a relatively balanced distribution across all parties, with the minor players again holding a slight edge over their more prominent rivals. The distribution of indirect contact over time is less evenly balanced. Through to 2010, Liberal Democrat and Labour supporters were most likely to receive some type of online election stimuli from people whom they knew. By 2015, however, Labour moves to the fore, with almost one in 10 of their supporters reporting an experience of indirect mobilization during the campaign. By contrast, Conservative supporters are among the least likely to have received this type of contact in any election. Coupled with their weaker performance in the direct mobilization stakes, these findings cast some doubt on claims for a Tory dominance in its levels of digital voter outreach by 2015. They do, however, provide support for the view that mainstream left-wing parties were the most active digital campaigners and were particularly important in promoting the phase III era of two-step communication and mobilization of the base.

In a final step, we drill down into the figures for receive mode in order to more fully assess the success of parties in mobilizing voters and see if this has changed over time. In particular, we profile the demographics and political characteristics of those who have received both forms of online contact over time. Do we see a widening of the population receiving these messages, beyond the highly engaged partisan? Are the targets for parties' online messages beginning to resemble those pursued by offline tactics, indicating the mainstreaming of online contact by campaigns? Furthermore, to what extent is the receipt of these messages associated with a greater propensity to actually turn out?

Table 4.4 presents distribution of sex, age, education, and vote-choice characteristics for those individuals who reported receiving various types of political contact during the campaign. The percentages should be read column wise within each category. Thus, in 2005, 56 percent of those receiving direct contact were male, and in 2015 this had fallen to 53 percent. Similarly, the proportion of 18–34-year-olds receiving direct contact had dropped by 2015 from 46 percent to 40 percent, while those over 55 had increased from 14 to just under a third of those reporting such contact. To help highlight the particularities of the segment of the population receiving online contact, we compare their demographics to the sample as a whole, and in 2010 and 2015 (given additional data availability), to those receiving offline contact. Offline contact includes all modes that are not internet based (i.e., face-to-face, telephone, and mail).

Table 4.4 **Socio-Demographic and Political Correlates of "Receive" Mode in UK General Elections, 2005–2015**

	2005			2010				2015			
	Online Direct	*Online Indirect*	*All*	*Online Direct*	*Online Indirect*	*Offline Direct*	*All*	*Online Direct*	*Online Indirect*	*Offline Direct*	*All*
Sex											
Male	56	59	48	67	57	46	49	53	53	48	51
Female	44	41	52	31	43	54	52	47	47	52	49
Age											
18–34	46	39	29	36	46	26	29	40	63	27	29
35–54	40	46	36	44	38	37	36	31	29	35	34
55+	14	15	35	20	17	38	36	29	8	39	37
Education											
16 yrs or less	26	19	57	31	23	46	46	24	12	35	39
17–18 years	21	13	19	16	17	20	19	24	38	20	18
19 years+	42	56	20	47	43	28	29	53	50	45	44
Student	11	13	4	6	17	7	7	—	—	—	—

Table 4.4 **Continued**

Vote	2005			2010				2015			
	Online Direct	*Online Indirect*	*All*	*Online Direct*	*Online Indirect*	*Offline Direct*	*All*	*Online Direct*	*Online Indirect*	*Offline Direct*	*All*
Cons	—*	—	—	36	22	32	31	40	21	41	33
Labour	—	—	—	31	39	29	32	33	52	31	32
LibDem	—	—	—	28	29	27	25	7	8	10	7
Other	—	—	—	6	8	10	10	19	20	18	14
DK/Not sure	—	—	—	0	2	1	2	1	0	0	14

Figures should be read as column % within each demographic / political variable. They show the proportion of individuals within each of the groups that reported online and offline contact by parties. The "All" column reports the frequencies of the demographics within the sample as a whole. Cells may exceed 100% due to rounding.

*Vote choice variable missing in the 2005 survey.

Sources: See Table 4.2 and Appendix 4.2 for full details of surveys and variable definitions. Survey weights applied.

The findings are interesting in that they indicate a broadening of the target audience for direct online contact between 2005 and 2015. The evidence shows that recipients were slightly less likely to be male and were somewhat older by 2015. The educational bias appears to intensify, however, with those from a higher educational background receiving a greater proportion of online contact from parties over time. In terms of changes in the demographic audience for indirect contact, the figures suggest a similar reduction in the gender bias. The figures for age and education, however, reveal that early divides have increased markedly over time. By 2015, almost two-thirds of those receiving some type of online indirect contact during elections were in the youngest age group, compared with just under half in 2005. Educationally the profile is much more biased toward those with tertiary education compared with 2005, even more so than for direct contact. A comparison of the demographic profile of those receiving either type of online contact with the recipients of offline contact is very instructive, in that the latter typically corresponds much more closely to the sample distribution on all counts. Such findings suggest that online contact has become the channel for different types of voter mobilization, one that reaches into a new, younger, and more interconnected elite.

When we look at the relationship between receiving online contact and voting, the story seems to divide into two narratives. The pattern of vote choice among those who received direct contact in both 2010 and 2015 looks relatively similar to the population as a whole, and to those who received offline contact, although it is notable that the Conservatives were more popular among those who were contacted online by campaigns in both elections. Such findings suggest that, at best, this type of stimulus had a reinforcing effect on vote choice, and perhaps gave a slight advantage to the Tories. The voting preferences of those who received indirect online contact, however, are quite different, with the Labour Party receiving a much larger and disproportionate share of the votes among those contacted in this way in both 2010 and 2015. Just over half (52 percent) of those who received this type of contact voted Labour in 2015, while less than quarter of those receiving indirect messaging voted Conservative. The disparity is quite striking and becomes even more so when one compares it with the voting patterns of the population as a whole, as well as those received other types of contact. While of course it is difficult to conclude any causal effect of indirect contact on vote choice based on these findings, they are certainly suggestive that this type of two-step contact benefited Labour much more than their right-wing rivals.

Conclusions

The arc of digital campaign development in the United Kingdom appears to fit quite well to the model set out Chapter 1. An initial period of experimentation

prior to the 1997 election was then followed by an elongated period of standard-ization and professionalization in which parties lacked an obvious strategy for their web campaigns, other than talking "down" to the voters through websites. The voters responded in turn, by engaging largely in passive "reading" of the campaigns through to 2010.

Significant declines in membership levels and the growing popularity of social media prompted parties to explore more seriously the interactive poten-tial of the internet and to build up their stocks of online supporters. By 2010, a new understanding had emerged of the internet as a medium for two-step flow and indirect communication with voters. Messages flowed out from the party through its activists and then out to the wider electorate. This new strategy of online mobilization appeared to be most prominent among the mainstream left, and several of the minor parties. From the data available, it does appear that the approach paid dividends, with Labour clearly generating substantially more electoral support from those contacted in this networked manner.

In 2015, the commitment to this more informal method of online mobiliza-tion continued, although the parties began to pay more attention to developing methods for directly targeting a wider swath of voters with digital ads. These efforts, however, appeared to fall somewhat short of expectations in that they reached only a small minority of the public. Taking such limitations into account, it does appear that the Conservatives were the most obvious beneficiary of these methods at the ballot box. Should the current slow but steady pace of digital innovation continue in the United Kingdom, therefore, we would expect to see the parties' efforts at online voter mobilization to show a significant advance, in both scope and precision, in coming elections. Whether the advantage that accrues to Labour and the smaller parties from indirect forms of online contact, and to the Conservatives from direct contact, is maintained is an area for future investigation.

5

The Early Bloomer

Digital Campaigning in Australia

This chapter presents the second of our four case studies and focuses on developments in digital campaigning in Australia. Following the structure of the previous chapter, we start by comparing Australia's position in Table 3.2 (in Chapter 3) to where it should be, based on what we now know about the institutional and technological environment that is most conducive to digital campaigning. If the reality falls below or above our expectations, why is this the case? What additional features of the Australian campaign landscape need to be considered when explaining the parties' prowess? The second section of the chapter embarks on our core task of mapping the history of web campaigning among Australian parties, and investigating how far that evolution follows the four-phase model set out in Chapter 1. How experimental and equalized was use of the internet in the early days? Has there been a narrowing by Australian parties to focus their web campaigns on activists and then on swing voters in more recent election cycles? As part of this review, we identify the key actors in this process. Which parties have been most instrumental in driving these changes along? Finally, we turn the lens on voters' involvement in the e-campaign. Has the electorate changed in how they consume and respond to parties' efforts over time, and do these patterns align with changes we have observed at the supply side? Which parties' supporters are most active and mobilized in redistributing digital content? Who is most successful in reaching their voters online, and to what extent are parties now finding a new audience for their message?

Australia as a Context for Digital Campaigning

Australia is a particularly interesting and helpful case to examine at this juncture of the book. Like the United Kingdom, Australia is a parliamentary democracy

and does not conform to the model of competitive presidential elections that the analysis of Chapter 3 identified as prompting more active digital campaigning. Australia also shares a long history of preferential voting in elections to its lower House, another system-level trait associated with a lower intensity of web campaigning. Unlike the United Kingdom, however, Australia operates a more proportional system for elections to its second chamber, the Senate, where smaller parties are regularly represented. Finally, internet adoption among the Australian public is one of the most rapid and widespread in global terms. Figure 5.1 shows how take-up rates in Australia got off to a very quick start and expanded rapidly.

By the late 1990s, around one-third of the citizenry were online, and by 2001 this had risen to over half of the population. By contrast, the United Kingdom only reached this point by the middle of the decade (see Chapter 4, Figure 4.1), placing Australia at least one electoral cycle ahead in terms of the reach of the technology among voters. The figures for broadband access confirm this pattern of accelerated growth in internet usage in Australia, particularly with regard to mobile access. Figures from the OECD, reported in Figure 5.2, show that while the number of fixed subscriptions remained relatively static after 2010, the number of dedicated mobile subscriptions grew significantly. By 2013, the number of accounts exceeded one per head of the population. This was a rate not matched in the United Kingdom, even by 2015.
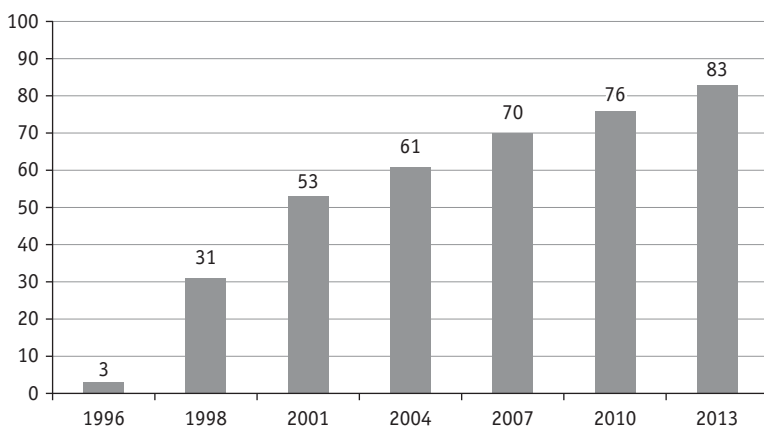
Figure 5.1. Growth of internet use in Australian federal elections, 1996–2013 (% of population using the internet). *Sources*: 1996–2001; 2007–2013: World Bank, "Internet Users (per 100 people)," http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2?page=1 Internet; 2004: G. Byrne, L. Staehr, S. Spencer, and A. Jenkins, "Current Internet Use in Australia: A Closer Look at the Digital Divide," *Proceedings 17th Australasian Conference Information Systems*, 2006, http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/apcity/unpan046583.pdf
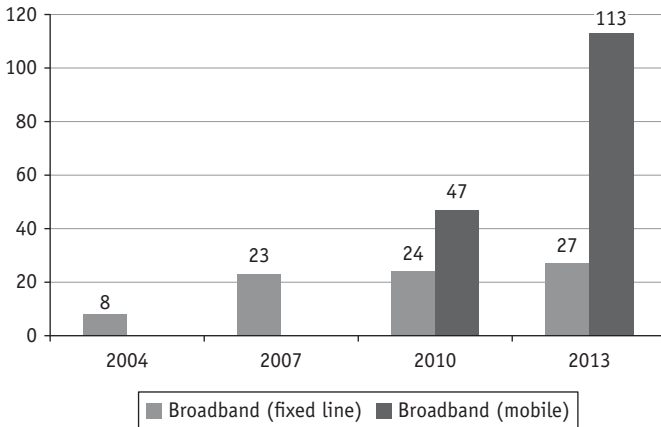
Figure 5.2. Growth in broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants) in Australian federal elections, 2004–2013. *Sources:* OECD historical fixed and mobile broadband penetration subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants). Figures are from 4th Quarter (rounded to nearest %). http://www.oecd.org/internet/broadband/41551452.xls and https://www.oecd.org/sti/broadband/1.5-BBPenetrationHistorical-Data-2016-12.xls (Figures for mobile available only from 2009 Q4 onward.)

Given this more favorable institutional and technological context, we would expect Australia to be ahead of the United Kingdom in its rates of online voter contacting but to fall somewhat short of the levels seen among presidential democracies such as the United States and Taiwan. A quick review of Table 3.2 (in Chapter 3) shows that this expectation is partially supported. Fourteen percent of the Australian electorate reported receiving some kind of online mobilization in 2013, a level that places it squarely in the middle of tier two nations. It is, however, situated slightly below the United Kingdom among the tier two countries. One of the main reasons for this lower ranking is no doubt due to the fact that the CSES data are based on reported contact during the 2015 UK general election, which was two years after the Australian data were collected. As we shall see from the following discussion, however, timing of the data collection is only one factor to consider when explaining the lag in Australian parties' online campaigning.

DATABASES, E-DEMOCRACY, AND THE TYRANNY OF DISTANCE

A quick glance at the political communication landscape of Australia reveals that, for the most part, it offers an appealing environment for the growth of online campaigning. Australian parties are typically among the most advanced in the use of electronic and computerized voter-management tools. This has largely taken the form of investment in voter databases and direct mail

campaigns (Young, 2010). Although Australia operates a very restrictive data privacy regime,[1] political parties and government agencies are exempt from its provisions.[2] This exemption, combined with their privileged access to a well-maintained electoral roll (a product of compulsory voting), has meant the two main parties in particular have been able to build and maintain very accurate voter records.[3] Since the 1980s and the advent of mass computing, they have increasingly exploited their advantage in this regard by supplementing the basic electoral roll information they hold with electronic data from local representatives' offices, and commercial and marketing lists (Howard and Kreiss 2009).[4] The end result has been the development of two highly sophisticated databases—*Electrac* and *Feedback!*—that have been used extensively by Labor and the Liberals, respectively, to conduct large-scale direct mail campaigns (van Onselen and Errington, 2004a; van Onselen and Errington, 2004b; van Onselen and van Onselen, 2008; Mills, 2014).

Australian parties' interest in online campaigning has been spurred on further by the federal government's commitment to making information and communications technology (ICT) an integral part of the political process. One of the earliest markers of this interest came with the opening of the new "state of the art" Parliament House in 1988. The building was one of the most modern and technologically advanced of its kind in the world. The upper chamber, the Australian Senate, was very eager to show its e-democracy credentials and became one of first legislative bodies to grant e-petitions the same status as those signed by hand. It also pioneered the recognition of electronic submissions for committee hearings. By the late 1990s, these initiatives had started to take effect, and the new petitioning method proved increasingly popular among citizen groups lobbying for policy change (Magarey, 1999). State governments soon followed suit, with both the Victoria and Queensland parliaments commissioning high-profile official inquiries into how digital technology could be used to improve the governing process.

This growing interest and expertise in wiring up the political process led external experts on the subject, such as Steven Clift, to declare Australia one of leading nations in the global e-democracy movement (Clift, 2002). While some analysts have since questioned the extent of genuine citizen empowerment that these initiatives delivered (Bishop and Anderson, 2004; Flew, 2005; Chen et al., 2007), Australia's status as a leader in e-government and online service provision is largely uncontested (West, 2008). In 2014, the United Nations' global ranking of countries on its e-government development index (EGDI), for example, put Australia in second place, with only South Korea scoring higher.[5]

A final spur to parties' enthusiasm for digital campaigning in Australia is the geographic circumstances in which it occurs. In principle, the sheer size and sparsely populated nature of many constituencies means that standard

canvassing methods are very costly and impractical to implement beyond the inner and outer metropolitan areas. New methods that help campaigners overcome this "tyranny of distance" problem would thus be likely to hold considerable appeal. While these advantages took some time to filter through, given the digital divide that initially emerged between rural and urban Australians, they did become increasingly obvious. Successive government made extensive efforts to roll-out out internet and broadband access to the 'bush', which meant that by 2010 the gap in usage had all but disappeared.[6] Given that a significant proportion (44 percent) of the constituencies classified by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) as rural or provincial were also classified as marginal in 2013,[7] the incentives for the parties to commit significant resources to online voter contacting in these more remote areas clearly only strengthened over time.

Phase I: Experimentation (1994–1997)

Given the benefits and encouragement that Australian parties faced in adopting the new medium, we would expect them to make relatively rapid progress through the developmental cycle. This certainly appeared to be the case in the early years, although activity came largely from one side of the political spectrum—the left-wing Australian Labor Party (ALP). According to a statement published on its website in 2000, the ALP was one of the first parties to set up an online presence worldwide. Having unveiled a prototype at its annual conference in September 1994, the official site was formally launched in July 1995.[8] In a clear sign of the maturity and understanding the ALP brought to the principles of net communication, the party gave it the intuitive and memorable site address of www.alp.org.au, which it has retained to this day.

Elsewhere, uptake was more sluggish. The Liberals, the main right-wing party, were notably slower off the block, launching their site almost one year later, in 1995. In contrast to the ALP, and as a way of confirming their discomfort with the new medium, they generated the highly unmemorable and non-user-friendly URL for the site: www.adfa.oz.au~adm/liberal.html. By 1996, most of the minor parties had followed suit, including the left-wing Democrats and the Liberal Party's smaller, rurally based coalition partner, the Nationals. Among the Greens, activity followed the more federalized structure of the party, with three of the more prominent state Green parties (West Australia, Tasmania, and Queensland) all launching sites in advance of the national party.[9]

While levels of investment varied, none of the parties was prepared to commit extensive resources to start-up web efforts. Most relied on donated services provided by members and party loyalists. The Liberals, for example, assigned

the task of setting up and running a site to an individual volunteer.[10] The ALP also relied on voluntary labor, but took a more coordinated approach and established an interstate working group of members who collaborated for around a year to develop the site.[11] This early lead by Labor in online campaign preparation was reflected in the media coverage of the 1996 election. *The Australian*, a major national newspaper, reported that the ALP had, in the eyes of one expert observer, produced "easily the best presented, organised and up-to-date site of all the parties."[12] Content-wise, visitors could download an audio clip of the party president and a "Howard Unplugged" button presented viewers with a series of policy contradictions attributed to the prime minister. Despite its interactive gimmicks, however, the site's primary focus was on downward communication and one-way content dissemination. According to the Labour sources quoted in *The Australian* piece, the main objective was providing the community with ". . . another medium for obtaining information when, and as, they want it."[13]

The level of sophistication evident in the ALP site can be seen in Figure 5.3. The home page has an uncluttered façade and a prominent and easy-to-use menu. There is a consistent use of font and the party logo throughout the site. Its clean design and informative quality arguably give it the stature of a phase II standardized and professionalized campaign site.

Figure 5.3. The Australian Labor Party home page (October 1996). *Source*: Wayback Machine: http://web.archive.org/web/19961027214312/http://www.alp.org.au

Figure 5.4. The Australian Liberal Party home page (November 1996). *Source*: Wayback Machine: http://web.archive.org/web/19961109121927/http://www.liberal.org.au/

The ALP site formed the exception to the rule, however. The Liberals' site, shown in Figure 5.4, was much more in the experimental vein, combining a sparsity of content with a lack of navigational tools and heavy emphasis on text rather than graphics.

The smaller parties' offerings were similarly crude in design, although they did not necessarily see this as a barrier to realizing any equalization rewards. Post-election interviews with the "web masters" for the Greens, the Democrats, and the Nationals showed a clear commitment and understanding of the leveling power of the internet for them, and the new opportunities it offered for extending their reach into their core electorates of young and also rural voters.[14]

Phase II: Standardization and Professionalization (1998–2007)

The lead-up to the federal election of 1998 saw added momentum take hold as the ALP, in particular, demonstrated that it was taking the medium very seriously. A dedicated "email response team" was established to ensure that any queries from the public were quickly, and personally, responded to. The party also experimented with live webcasting for their campaign launch in Brisbane and dedicated a section of their site to video content. This early recognition of the importance of visual content online and the rise of YouTube by Labor was matched by their anticipation of the blogging craze. Party leader Kim Beazley made daily diary entries on the site. Perhaps the clearest signal of the fast-moving nature of developments, however, was the production of a number of

phase III–style mobilizing tools in the form of downloadable shareable banners and e-postcards to allow volunteers to spread the campaign message.

These efforts appeared to pay off in terms of attracting public attention. According to the party's own records, the average number of hits on their national site jumped from around 11,000 in 1996 to 2 million by 1998,[15] an increase that "far outstripped the increase in internet connectivity." Even if each hit did not directly correspond to an individual voter, this rapid escalation of interest in a country with 11 million voters was impressive. For some in the party, the new exposure and reach generated by the technology constituted a game-changer, and meant that no major political party will enter an election in the future ". . . without focusing on the Internet as an election tool."[16]

The great leap forward, however, did not happen. Indeed, viewed in retrospect, 1998 appeared to be an early high watermark for digital campaigning in Australia. Instead of moving swiftly onto activist mobilization and community building, the parties, including the ALP, entered a prolonged period of standardization after the election. The focus was on playing it safe, "broadcasting" information, and avoiding any US-style overt efforts to recruit and mobilize supporters online (Gibson and Ward, 2002). Given the highly fertile environment for digital campaigning that Australia seemingly presented, this "freezing effect" was particularly puzzling. A more detailed examination of the Australian case and a detour into developments in digital campaigning at the state level provide some evidence to help explain the parties' newfound restraint.

A HALT IN THE PROCEEDINGS

The surprise defeat of the right-wing governor of Victoria, Jeff Kennett, in 1999 ranks as probably the most humiliating and public implosion of a web campaign, prior to the fall of Howard Dean in early 2004. Kennett declared his affinity with the internet early in his campaign, setting up a highly personalized website—*Jeff. com*. Unfortunately, the site rapidly became a source of embarrassment for him, as it was repeatedly lampooned by journalists, who touted it as a symbol of his Melbourne-centric elitism, and remoteness from ordinary voters (Chen, 2013). To add insult to injury, the spoof site *Jeffed.com*, set up by a former staff member, soon overtook the official site in popularity and remained a thorn in the governor's side during the course of the campaign.[17]

Kennett's highly visible virtual drubbing clearly dampened enthusiasm for online campaigning in the lead-up to the 2001 federal election. Despite a few headline-grabbing online stunts, such as the ALP's *Political Big Brother* site which allowed users to vote out unpopular Liberal front-bench politicians, the parties' efforts were seen as disappointing, constituting little more than a series of "electronic brochures aimed at wide audiences" (Chen, 2013: 26). The results of a

pre-election survey of party web managers confirmed this "safety first" approach, with information distribution being widely endorsed as the main benefit of having an online presence (Gibson and Ward, 2002). This lack of ambition at the national level was replicated and magnified among state and local actors. A study of the online presence of the two major parties and the Greens at the state level in the months preceding the 2001 federal election revealed take-up to be very patchy (Gibson and Ward, 2002). All three parties were missing one or more of their branches online. Those that did maintain a presence followed the broadcast model of their federal counterparts and offered very few interactive features. Candidates' presence was also sporadic. Reports from the 2001 Australian candidate study (ACS) revealed that just under two-fifths (37 percent) of respondents maintained a personal website during the election. Closer inspection revealed that the overall figure masked a pattern of normalization with just under half of major party candidates online (49 percent) compared to less than a third of their smaller rivals (30 percent) (Gibson and McAllister, 2006).

The election of 2004 saw little advance on 2001 according to most observers, particularly among the major parties.[18] According to Chen, the sites were "largely passive in character with little in the way of interactive components . . ." (Chen, 2004: 3). Among the minor parties, the narrative was more positive, with the Greens and the Democrats both seen to have run "significant" online campaigns.[19] This included a very "sticky" anti-government site, *Democracy4Sale*, launched by the Greens, and the clever use of viral email to mobilize their activists.[20] The ACS results for 2004 appeared to confirm this push by the minor parties to exploit the medium with figures showing growth in the number of minor party candidates online and a closing of the gap with the major parties. Closer inspection of the evidence, however, revealed this growing parity was actually the result of a slight drop in major party online presence, rather than a minor party acceleration (Gibson and McAllister, 2006). As one close observer of Australian e-politics put it, the truth of the matter was that the major parties were still largely indifferent to the value of the web and had yet to "see the online environment as the site of significant and meaningful electoral competition (Chen, 2005: 120).

At first sight, the 2007 election appeared to signal an end to the caution and stasis that had held sway for the past decade. Almost three-quarters of the population now reported access to the internet, and perhaps more importantly, broadband use had quadrupled. This was also the first election in which the new social media platforms of Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube featured. The latter proved particularly popular among voters, leading some commentators to dub it the "YouTube election" (Crook, 2007).[21] Labor again led the way, expanding its new media team into double digits and ensuring an active presence and healthy following on popular social media spaces.[22] Perhaps the most telling sign of the

party's new boldness for digital campaigning came with the launch of its new leader's website, which used the catchy self-titled URL *Kevin07.com*.[23] With the painful memories of Kennett now clearly banished, this highly personalized site built for Kevin Rudd was, according to most observers, the "standout" site of the election and its "real heavy hitter," attracting national and international media attention. Reports from the election were that it had racked up almost half a million unique visitors during the course of the campaign (Crook, 2007; Australian Centre for Public Communication [ACPC], 2008; Miskin, 2008).[24]

As well as helping to introduce Rudd to the Australian public, the site was designed to create a buzz, particularly among younger voters. According to one insider, the site marked the parties' shift away from the static model of web campaigning pursued in earlier years to a more dynamic one focused on "building networks of communities."[25] For Chen (2013), Labor's effort marked a ". . . shift in the role of digital media from a peripheral element of the overall campaign, towards a more central role in the planning and execution of campaign strategy" (28). It also demonstrated that Labor was now ready to return to the "riskier," but potentially more rewarding territory of "presidential" style web campaigning that had been pioneered by Jeff Kennett in 1999.

Further signs of a pivot into a new phase appeared with the formation of Australia's first virtual party, Senator Online. Organized and run entirely through the internet, the party showed how digital technology could be used as an infrastructure and tool for mobilizing activism. In addition, some of the more established smaller parties were proving themselves as highly adept at using social media as an organizing tool (Chen, 2008b; Chen and Walsh, 2010; Gibson and McAllister, 2011). Results from the 2007 ACS revealed that although the major parties once again clearly held the advantage in terms of running personal sites, Green candidates were much more adept at exploiting web 2.0 technologies. Additional analysis by Gibson and McAllister (2011) extended these findings to show how adoption of such tactics also held dividends at the ballot box. In particular, the authors found that Green candidates who had campaigned using web 2.0 tools enjoyed a significantly higher vote share than major party candidates that had done so. While the causal mechanism behind the Greens' success remained unclear, the authors speculated it was possibly due to their stronger online activist networks and higher rates of indirect mobilization.

Challenging these seemingly transformative trends were several counterweights, however—the first and most obvious of these being the performance of the mainstream right. As in previous campaigns, the Liberals got off to a slow and somewhat embarrassing start. The party faced widespread ridicule as Prime Minister John Howard made his ill-fated debut on YouTube, greeting

viewers to the 24-hour channel with a mistimed "Good evening." Facebook and Twitter proved similarly challenging for the Howard and received scant attention from the campaign in terms of content and updates (Crook, 2007). In addition, with the exception of the Greens' dynamic use of Facebook, the national e-campaigns of the smaller parties were regarded as having failed to build on the momentum gained in 2004 (ACPC, 2008). The widespread use of YouTube by candidates and parties did little to convince observers that a genuinely more dynamic approach to e-campaigning was underway. Indeed, the runaway popularity of the video channel among candidates, compared with other web 2.0 tools during the campaign, was attributed to its similarity with television and radio broadcasting, and capacity to attract mainstream media coverage.[26] According to Chen (2008a), most party and candidate YouTube channels were not open to comment and mainly featured repurposed television advertisements. The final nail in the coffin of the claim that 2007 was a step-change election, however, came with a post-election analysis of Labor's effort, and particularly the *Kevin07* site. A report issued by Australian Center for Public Communication (ACPC) questioned the extent of genuine change that it had prompted in digital campaigning. Underneath the shiny web 2.0 exterior, the authors argued, things were not very different from 2004. *Kevin07*, they argued, was simply a "traditional controlled communication campaign, albeit on a new platform" (ACPC, 2008: 30)

While the election of 2007 restored some momentum to Australian web campaigning, it did not prove to be the game changer that the pundits had anticipated. Parties, with perhaps the exception of the Greens, still seemed to remain locked into a standardized model of repackaged mainstream media content, dressed up with eye-catching but ultimately superficial mechanisms of engagement.

Phase III: Community Building and Activist Mobilization (2010)

The digital campaign of 2010 was a much more muted affair than 2007. Kevin Rudd, the subject of much of the previous web mania, had become a liability for the ALP and was dispatched by an internal coup shortly before the campaign began (Gibson and McAllister, 2011). The switch into *Kevin10* thus never materialized. This lack of outward glitz, however, appears rather ironically to have been a shield for some deeper and more significant shifts occurring within the parties, in particular their new focus on digital technology as a community-building and activist-mobilization resource.

The most visible marker of this new approach came with the launch of Obama-style *MyBO* hub sites by both main parties. According to its own press release, Labor was first out of the blocks, launching *Labor Connect* about a month before polling day. In the statement, the party heralded the site as the "first social media platform purpose built for an Australian political party." Perhaps even more telling, given the claims made by those behind the *Kevin07* campaign, was that it was presented as an exciting "first step" for the ALP in using the new technology to "strengthen ties to the community." The site instantiated the citizen-initiated campaign (CIC) logic that had emerged elsewhere by providing a platform for the party to "form direct relationships" with members and supporters (i.e., non-members) that would allow the latter, in particular, to increase their "collaboration" in party affairs.[27] Following the model of its US and UK counterparts, *Labor Connect* offered similar opportunities for virtual community building, resource generation, and message dissemination. Users were allowed to set up and share their personal profiles, to join or start groups and organize events, and to share GOTV messages with their wider networks. Like UK Labour, the ALP also split their CIC content across multiple platforms. *Labor Connect* served as the main site and focused heavily on mobilizing activists. Efforts at harnessing supporter input into policy formation were channeled through a separate site—*ThinkTank*—which was seen as an "ideas incubator" and tool for crowdsourcing opinion on future policy direction for the party.

The Liberal Party's version, *MyLiberal.com*, also emerged shortly before the election. Its launch was a much more low-key event than had been the case for *Labor Connect*. Despite its more muted entry into the election arena, however, its establishment was a sign that the Liberals were looking more seriously at how digital technologies could help them organizationally and electorally. Their decisive defeat in 2007 and widely derided web performance had prompted a major internal review of their organizational strength and operational practices.[28] The reform program that emerged focused on boosting membership levels, and increasing their appeal among younger voters, given their aging support base. A key step to achieving this, according to the report, was through "a major internet blitz." The first phase of this began in April 2008 with the launch of an online platform that was designed to promote greater dialogue between the party elders and younger members. The *My.Liberal* site formed the next phase of the new digital program. As the name indicated, the site replicated the model of CIC sites seen elsewhere. Registration was open to members and non-members, and once logged in, users were able to set up a personal profile and were given a personal dashboard that recorded their activity. Unlike *Labor Connect*, however, the main focus of *MyLiberal* was on connecting supporters to local candidates and campaigns, rather than offering a space for networking, discussion, and community building.

LEVELS OF CITIZEN-INITIATED CAMPAIGNING

To probe these impressions more systematically, the sites were subject to a detailed content analysis using the CIC index that had been applied to the UK parties' hub sites in Chapter 4. Sites were scored on the extent to which they enabled supporters to engage in, or co-produce, four core campaign activities—community building, resource generation, voter mobilization, and message production. The results are reported in Table 5.1. They make for interesting reading in that they confirm the impression that Labor was more focused on promoting community building on its site. Somewhat more surprisingly, however, Labor also had a slight edge over the Liberals in promoting supporter involvement in their GOTV efforts, although neither party was highly active in this regard. Opportunities to help in mobilizing resources for the campaign were largely absent from both sites, as were chances for crowdsourcing party messages. Use of the sites for two-step communication was more prevalent, with multiple prompts given to supporters to forward campaign emails and social media posts to their networks.

Overall, the results of Table 5.1 confirm the ALP's stronger commitment to phase III digital campaign goals. Viewed in the light of the results from Chapter 4, however, it seems that neither party had a strong interest in using its digital campaigns to promote activist mobilization and community building. In the United Kingdom, at least two of the four campaign sites contained up to two-thirds of the content of the CIC index. In Australia, neither party managed to include more than half of the items on their sites. The presence of compulsory voting may help explain the more spartan nature of the sites, particularly the lower provision of incentives to help with GOTV activities. The complete failure by both parties to use the sites to recruit local organizers to run events or help to promote membership, however, is more surprising. It may be that the federal nature of party organization in Australia plays a role here. Unlike in the United Kingdom, party membership is managed at the state level (McAllister, 1991). Any move toward a system of national online affiliation might be seen as threatening the authority and autonomy of the state parties.

While the smaller parties did not create official *MyBO*-style hub sites, they did devote significant time and resources to phase III–type initiatives in 2010. The Greens again stood out in terms of their intensive use of social media and email at the local level to mobilize activists and spread the party message. The Victorian Greens were among the most active of the state parties in this regard, focusing their efforts on Melbourne, where the local candidate Adam Bandt was seen as the best hope for breaking the two-party stranglehold on lower house seats. Bandt, who went on to win, was quick to point to the importance of social media in securing his victory, particularly the organizing power it provided.

Table 5.1 **Australian Parties Citizen-Initiated Campaigning Scores, 2010 Federal Election**

	MyLiberal.com	*Labor Connect*
Community Building		
Profile		
Photo	√	√
Biography	—	√
Why joined	—	√
Set up/join Groups	√	√
Set up blog	—	—
Set up Wiki	—	—
Email/message system	—	√
Externally promote profile	√	√
Subtotal (additive 0–8)	3	6
Resource Generation		
Personal fundraising	—	—
Promote membership	—	—
Sign up as local organizer	—	—
Sign up as candidate	—	—
Organize/add event	—	√
Vote leaders to attend events	—	—
Subtotal (additive 0–6)	0	1
Voter Mobilization		
GOTV offline		
Access phonebank	—	—
Sign up for f2f canvassing	—	√
Sign up to discuss with social network	—	—
Leaflets download	—	√
Externally promote event	—	√
GOTV online		
Send email	√	—
Post to Facebook	√	—
Post to Twitter	√	—
GOTV phone app	—	—
Email forward to editor	—	√
Start e-petition	—	—
Subtotal (additive 0–11)	3	4

Table 5.1 **Continued**

	MyLiberal.com	Labor Connect
Message Production		
Message creation		
Policy email forward/customize	—	—
Poster/leaflet create/customize	—	—
Policy input/feedback	√	√
Message distribution		
Web banners/ads download	—	—
Posters/leaflets download	—	√
Email/share policy docs	—	√
News feed to website	√	—
Share blog posts externally	√	√
Link to SNS profile	√	√
Link to Twitter account	√	√
Import email contacts	—	—
Subtotal (additive 0–11)	5	6
Overall Score (0–36)	12	17
Standardized Score (0–100)	33	47

√ = feature present on campaign site; — = feature not present;

  Standardized scores are calculated by transforming each sub-index into a 0–100 range and then averaging the scores. See Appendix 4.1 for details of variable definitions.

Looking back on the election, he noted that the extensive use of tools like Facebook "early on" in the campaign had "helped us continue engagement with our volunteers and supporters" and to recruit help from outside of the constituency as well.[29] More importantly, such an approach allowed the party to carve out a new, more democratized approach to the online campaign, which, in the words of another candidate, was "not about control and command" but about harnessing grassroots momentum.[30]

  Evidence from the 2010 ACS provided fresh evidence of the Greens' aptitude for social media campaigning. A clear majority (62 percent) of candidates reported having a social network profile, compared with less than half (48 percent and 49 percent, respectively) for the Coalition and Labor candidates. Furthermore, and perhaps even more importantly, the Greens continued to be the only party that managed to convert its social media activities into increased support on election day (Gibson and McAllister, 2015). This increased prominence and success on the web 2.0 campaign front was matched by a sharp decline in web 1.0 competitiveness. Use of personal home pages dropped again

among Green candidates to less than one-third (31 percent). By contrast, candidates from the two main parties exhibited a new enthusiasm for personal sites, with 83 percent of Liberal-Nationals and 69 percent of Labor contenders reporting they had run one during the election. According to Gibson and McAllister (2015), however, unlike the Greens, their efforts failed to deliver significant electoral benefits.

One final development in 2010 that signaled not only the arrival of phase III–style digital campaigning in Australia, but also the lack of mainstream party engagement with it, was the success of the online activist group GetUp! Established in 2005 as a response to the Liberal Party's sweep of both houses of the federal parliament in 2004, GetUp! billed itself as a left of center, nonpartisan movement dedicated to giving ordinary citizens a new way to challenge government policy. Following the example of *MoveOn.org* in the United States and *38 Degrees* in the United Kingdom, GetUp! pioneered the use of email and online petitions to lobby for progressive policy changes. The group focused particularly on areas of particular interest to younger voters, such as electoral registration rules, same-sex marriage, and climate change. While they had intervened in the 2007 election to help sway support for favored candidates, the 2010 election saw them adopt more direct tactics based around Obama's *Organizing for America* initiative. In particular, they used the web and emails to recruit volunteers into a training program—*Camp GetUp*—which was designed to teach participants the new arts of viral messaging and online to offline community building (Vromen and Coleman, 2011, 2013). According to GetUp!'s own post-election report, their efforts were highly successful. During the campaign, they estimated they had signed up around 7,000 volunteers, who had then gone on to contact over 200,000 voters and enroll over 10,000 new voters.[31] Comparable figures on the impact of *Labor Connect* and *MyLiberal* were not available from the two main parties. It is unlikely that their success exceeded that of GetUp! in terms of generating support. Indeed, assuming the numbers to be accurate, it would seem that the key players driving Australian digital campaigning out of its long period of standardization and into activist mobilization were in fact those at the fringes of the party system.

Phase IV: Moves toward Individual Voter Moblization? (2013)

Despite the evidence indicating that Australia's two main parties had fought shy of embracing phase III digital campaigning in 2010, expectations that 2013 would see a breakthrough into phase IV surfaced early on. Figures on

usage certainly helped to bolster expectations. As Figure 5.2 (reported earlier) revealed, between 2010 and 2013 rates of mobile broadband access doubled, creating a situation where the number of individual subscriptions actually exceeded the population as a whole.

Headlines began appearing at the start of the year posing the question, "Will big data change the 2013 election?" Other news reports made explicit reference to the recent US election, noting that the major parties' importation of Obama-style methods meant that "Australia's first big data election looms."[32]

Campaign insiders also appeared to share in the expectation that 2013 would see a step-change in campaigns' use of technology. Stephen Mills, a former speechwriter for Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke, who became a historian of Australian election campaigning, argued that 2013 would definitely see the parties embracing the new data-driven era.[33] The extent to which social media profiles and email addresses could enhance the precision and scale of their micro-targeting efforts, he contended, would not be underestimated by senior campaign staff (Mills, 2014). Practitioners were equally optimistic, arguing that Australia's use of compulsory voting, rather than slowing down the adoption of the new mobilization tools, was in fact likely to speed it up.[34] Knowing for sure who is going to turn out, according to Michelle Levine, the director of Roy Morgan Polling in Australia, removes much of the uncertainty from forecasting models, and improves their robustness as methods for finding and persuading latent or undecided supporters. With the fresh data sources now available from online profiles and internet-based interactions to add to their knowledge of the electorate, the Australian parties were likely to be in an even stronger position to pinpoint, and unlock, those more elusive pockets of support.

Not all observers were as convinced that the parties were ready to unveil the new scientific model of voter mobilization that the US Democrats had promoted a year earlier. In practical terms, the parties lacked the scale and type of resources necessary to engage in the type of big data operations seen in the United States. There was also a residual question mark over the perceived utility of web campaigning among senior party staff. This was particularly acute for the Liberals, who still bore the scars from the fallout of the Kennett debacle. Beyond the humiliation that his defeat meted out to the party, however, it also prompted questions about the intrinsic value of the medium as a tool of voter persuasion. Federal director Lynton Crosby and official pollster Mark Textor both openly cautioned candidates against placing too much faith in the internet as a tool for undecided voters. According to Textor, who went on to serve as a key election strategist for the party in 2010 and 2013, the key take-away from Kennett's failure was not the perils of over-personalization on the web, but overrating the internet as a campaign medium. Unlike television, radio, and direct mail, the internet lacked an "intrusion mechanism," leaving voters free to avoid political

messages.[35] While the push power of the new media clearly increased substantially once social network platforms emerged, and made sharing information easier, the self-selection bias that Textor had identified also persisted, leading to the emergence of new problems around "filter bubbles" and "echo chambers" (Bruns, 2019; Quattrociocchi et al., 2016).

In addition to lingering doubts about the effectiveness of the internet as a vote-gathering medium, there was also concern that a stronger adherence to data privacy in Australia would act as a brake on parties' exploitation of the new practices. Despite their privileged access to government-held data, it was expected that politicians would want to avoid any perception among the voters that they were "watching them."[36] Certainly, the state-level elections that took place immediately prior to their federal counterparts had failed to show signs of a breakthrough for the new tactics. Bruns and Highfield's (2013) analysis of the parties' use of Twitter in the 2012 Queensland state election concluded that although the ALP maintained its advantage over the Liberals, there was little evidence they had used it strategically "to affect electoral outcomes in any direct way." There was very little evidence of any direct voter interaction or attempts at persuasion by candidates through their twitter feeds. Furthermore, any exchanges that did occur took place largely among the "converted" (i.e., small subset of highly engaged partisans or political "junkies") (688).

Although much of the political talk and headlines focused on whether Australia was ready for a US-style data-driven campaign, the real story of the 2013 digital campaign was the continuing success of GetUp! The online activist organization maintained its efforts to build up its online community and engage voters through two-step communication. According to the group's annual report, they had registered over half a million supporters (630,000), with over 9,000 of these counted as "core members" in terms of making regular donations. In 2013, they unveiled their "most ambitious election program" to date, which included several new tactics, specifically designed to reach less politically engaged individuals. This included a "ground-breaking" Facebook app and a "neighbour-to-neighbour" enrollment program. The new methods, combined with their ongoing volunteer recruitment program, led to a significant boost in GetUp!'s outreach activities; they estimated yielded a total of 3 million voters contacted.[37]

Overall, the weight of opinion and evidence suggested that phase III digital campaigning was the dominant *modus operandi* in the 2013 federal election. However, the main actors driving this more devolved model of electioneering were not the usual suspects. It was the smaller parties and particularly nonpartisan actors who were most committed to promoting the new style of supporter-led digital activism. The bigger parties, by contrast, remained wedded to their more static, standardized, and safer approach. The next section of the chapter

re-examines these developments with evidence drawn from the voters and party supporters. There is a focus particularly on the patterns of engagement between 2010 and 2013. To what extent do activities among the electorate reflect those of elites and particularly among parties' supporters?

To investigate these questions using the approach adopted in the previous chapter, we measure and compare levels of our three main modes of engagement—read, redistribute, and receive—over time and across parties. We then probe the rates of direct and indirect contact received by voters in more depth. In particular we look at the demographic and political makeup of those being reached by the digital campaign and see how this differs from the profile of those contacted by more traditional methods. To what extent is digital campaigning allowing the Australian parties to reach a new audience?

The View from Below: Mapping Web Campaigning Cycles in the Australian Electorate

Table 5.2 reports the levels of read, redistribute, and receive mode based on the findings from the 2010 and 2013 Australian Election Studies (AES). The data series starts in 2010, as this was the first study to include the range of items needed to measure the three main modes of engagement. While this lack of a longer time series reduces the scope of our analysis in terms of tracking change and stability among the electorate, we do gain significant insight into the two elections that, according to our supply-side analysis, saw the most change in practice.

A first glance at the findings from Table 5.2 reveals a lack of any marked change in public consumption of digital content. Such stability is not too surprising given the short time period that is covered. Typically just less than half of Australian voters sought out news and information on the campaign in 2010 and 2013. Comparing these findings with those from elections in the United Kingdom (Table 4.2 in Chapter 4), there appears to be quite a lot similarity in the levels of general interest with the digital campaign.

If we look at the extent of redistribution occurring, this is also similar to the situation in the United Kingdom. Such activity was confined to a small minority of the population, and exhibited a pattern of small but incremental growth. In 2010, just over 2 percent of internet users reported having both signed up to receive official online campaign content and shared campaign content within their networks. This increased slightly in 2013 to just over 4 percent. Closer inspection of the component activities of redistribution reveals that sharing content was typically more common than signing up for party or candidate updates.

Table 5.2 **Voter Engagement in Australian Digital Campaigns, 2010–2013**

		Mode of Engagement					
		Voter as Audience—READ		Voter as Activist—REDISTRIBUTE		Voter as Target—RECEIVE	
Year	Internet use	Online news	Camp. sites	Sign-up/Download	Share/Exchange	Direct (Party)	Indirect (F&F)
2010	83%	41.6	7.8	3.5	8.6	1.9	—
N = 2,061		(49.8)	(9.4)	(4.2)	(10.3)	(2.2)	—
		READ 42.5 (50.8)		REDISTRIBUTE 2.0 (2.4)		RECEIVE (—)	
2013	88%	46.1	12.1	6.8	10.0	7.9	7.6
N = 3,810		(52.5)	(13.9)	(7.8)	(11.4)	(9.1)	(8.6)
		READ 47.0 (53.7)		REDISTRIBUTE 3.8 (4.4)		RECEIVE 13.9 (15.9)	

Figures are % and reported for overall sample and for internet users in parentheses

Sources: 2010 and 2013 Australian Election Studies (AES); see Appendix 5.1 for further details of surveys and variable definitions. Survey weights applied.

Turning to levels of receiving, we do see some interesting patterns of change across the two elections that bear correspondence to the preceding discussion of elite-level activity. In particular, although we have no measure of indirect online contact for 2010, it is clear that levels of direct contact did increase quite sharply in 2013. This supports the view that Australian parties were becoming successful in migrating their direct mail efforts online.

Table 5.3 presents an insight into the partisan distribution of those engaging with and receiving digital campaign messages. This shows that all parties were able to reach a large majority of their supporters with their online campaigns. It

Table 5.3 **Party Supporters' Engagement in Australian Digital Campaigns, 2010– 2013 (Internet Users Only)**

Election Year & Party	Internet Access	READ	REDISTRIBUTE	Mode of Engagement Direct (Party)	RECEIVE Indirect (Friends & Family)
2010					
Liberal (*N* = 746)	75.7	51.2	1.8	2.2	—
Labor (*N* = 783)	80.2	49.8	2.3	2.9	—
Nationals (*N* = 66)	75.8	38.0	6.0	2.0	
Greens (*N* = 121)	96.7	58.1	5.1	2.6	—
Other (*N* = 59)	89.8	56.6	3.4	7.5	—
No Party (*N* = 283)	89.0	56.0	2.0	0.8	
2013					
Liberals (*N* = 1345)	86.9	51.5	2.1	8.7	8.0
Labor (*N* = 1358)	86.2	56.2	4.6	7.8	8.3
Nationals (*N* = 144)	77.9	46.8	0	6.4	7.3
Greens (*N* = 236)	97.0	70.8	16.4	22.6	16.4
Other (*N* = 165)	86.6	58.9	17.1	17.8	13.2
No Party (*N* = 661)	93.7	53.2	2.3	6.6	8.2

N refers to the full sample, and the internet access figures are the % of that total who reported being online. The figures for Read, Redistribute, and Receive are % of the online party identifiers that engaged in these activities.

Sources: Australian Election Study 2010 and 2013; see Appendix 5.1 for further details of surveys and variable definitions. Survey weights applied.

was the Greens, however, that occupied the leading position in this regard, with almost universal uptake of the internet among their supporters. Furthermore, Green partisans are among the most avid consumers of election news online. Seventy-one percent of Green online partisans read news about digital campaign in 2013, which is significantly higher than for any of the other parties as well as the online electorate more generally (see Table 5.2).

The levels of redistribution across party supporters makes for even more interesting reading in that again it is the minor parties that are most active in this regard, and particularly so in 2013. This confirms the perception formed by the preceding supply-side analysis of the lower level of commitment by the major parties to virtual community building. In general, levels of engagement in this more active type of sharing of party content hover between 2 and 5 percent of supporters for the two larger parties, a rate that is similar or even slightly below the national average reported in Table 5.2. Among the smaller parties, however, the rate is considerably higher, with almost one in five of Green supporters having redistributed campaign content among their networks in 2013. The rate for supporters of "other" minor parties is even higher. While we do not have a measure of affiliation to GetUp! in the AES, their origin as opposition to the mainstream governing parties make it likely that their supporters are identifying as "other." This would help explain what appear to be very high rates of redistribution among this group. Such a finding would also support GetUp!'s claims of a significant increase in their rates of voter contact during the 2013 campaign. Similarly, for the Greens, the high level of involvement of their supporters in spreading the word online during the campaign would help to explain Gibson and McAllister's (2011) finding of an apparent electoral advantage for the party in its use of web 2.0 tools.

Turning to the partisan distribution of campaign messages, the final two columns of Table 5.3 report the extent to which supporters had received online contact during the campaign, either directly from the parties or via their social networks. The results show an increase in the rates of online contact across all parties between the two elections; however, again it is the smaller parties that are the most effective in getting their message out to their supporters. In particular, by 2013, almost one-quarter of Green partisans reported receiving online contact from the party. By contrast, less than 10 percent of Labor or Liberal supporters received such communication. Rates of online indirect contact (i.e., political messages coming from friends and family) were slightly less unevenly distributed between the major and minor parties, although the latter still enjoyed a clear lead.

Looking into the partisan distribution of the receive mode across the two years is also useful in unpacking and challenging the claims highlighted earlier that 2013 heralded the entry of Australia into phase IV era of digital campaigning.

Certainly all parties increased their capacity to reach the supporters online over the two elections. However, the biggest increase occurred among the least well-resourced actors. This suggests that the spike in receive levels noted in Table 5.2 was unlikely to have been driven by importation of the big data analytics modeling labs pioneered in the United States. Instead, it looks like the sharp increases in voter contacting that occurred in 2013 resulted from the smaller parties, and particularly the Greens, connecting more with their voters directly, and with their core supporters, thereby intensifying their two-step communication flow to the electorate.

The final step of the voter-level analysis is presented in Table 5.4. This shows the breakdown of the sociopolitical characteristics of those who received online direct or indirect campaign contact, and compares them to those who experienced offline modes (i.e., mail, face-to-face, or phone contact).

The results show similarity to those from the UK analysis reported in the previous chapter (see Table 4.4). Both forms of online contact are more commonly reported by those with higher levels of education and social status. Age-wise, the pattern appears to have changed for direct forms of contact, with younger voters receiving less digital messaging from parties in 2013 compared to 2010. For indirect contact, we don't have corresponding figures for 2010; however, the rates for 2013 show a strong bias toward the younger cohort, with just under half of those receiving this type of contact being in the 18–34 age bracket. Finally, with regard to gender, there appears to be an increased tendency for online direct contact to be received by men. By contrast, in 2013, women were more often the target of indirect online modes of campaign contact. Overall, the results suggest that the parties are not widening their reach into the electorate via digital methods of mobilization, at least insofar as their own efforts extend. These are received largely by the "usual suspects." The two-step or mediated version, however, does appear to reach beyond the already mobilized, and extends parties' reach, particularly with younger voters.

In terms of political characteristics, the results are intriguing in that they reveal the online advantage enjoyed by the Greens in communicating with their core supporters and activists, extending into the wider electorate. The final row of the table reveals that among the voters who received direct online contact, the Greens' support was three times greater than in the country at large. Labor, on the other hand, and the Liberal-National coalition partners reaped no gain from their e-campaign contacting efforts. Indeed, they both received less support among those who were contacted by parties or candidates online than among the electorate as a whole. Labor appeared to have a somewhat better level of support among voters that experienced online indirect contact, However, again the Greens were clear winners in this regard. While these results do not offer conclusive evidence that the Greens' digital campaign increased their vote share,

Table 5.4 **Socio-Demographic and Political Correlates of "Receive" Mode in Australian Federal Elections, 2010–2013**

	2010			2013			
	Online Direct	*Offline Direct*	*All*	*Online Direct*	*Online Indirect*	*Offline Direct*	*All*
Sex							
Male	48	48	49	52	45	47	48
Female	53	52	51	48	55	53	52
Age							
18–34	56	24	27	29	47	25	26
35–54	18	36	37	42	43	37	35
55+	25	41	36	29	11	38	38
Education							
Up to secondary	39	28	31	18	22	26	27
Diploma	21	37	37	28	23	33	34
Higher education	41	34	32	54	55	41	35
Social Class							
Upper/middle	72	56	54	66	72	57	53
Working	28	37	39	28	24	36	38
None	0	7	7	6	4	7	9

Vote

Lib-Nat Coalition	41	44	43	36	34	42	42
Labor	36	39	38	26	33	32	31
Greens	21	13	12	21	15	9	8
Other	3	2	2	13	13	12	12
Informal/not voted	0	3	5	4	5	6	7

Figures should be read as column % within each demographic / political variable. They show the proportion of individuals within each of the groups that reported online and offline contact by parties. The "all" column reports the frequencies of the demographics within the sample as a whole. Cells may exceed 100% due to rounding.

Sources: Australian Election Study 2010 and 2013; see Table 5.2 and Appendix 5.1 for further details of surveys and variable definitions. Survey weights applied.

and self-selection effects cannot be ruled out, the disparity in the support they received among those contacted online compared with other parties certainly lends gives credibility to claims that they ran the most successful online mobilization effort in 2013.

Summary and Conclusions

Australia presents an interesting case to study when seeking to understand the comparative evolution of digital campaigns for several reasons. First, it does appear that developments have followed the four-phase model outlined in Chapter 1; however, progress was not necessarily as linear or steady in nature as in the United Kingdom. Instead, advances have been more spasmodic, with an initial burst of innovation and enthusiasm, led primarily by the mainstream left. This was then followed a prolonged period of stasis and standardization as parties retreated into the safety of static web content and managed interactivity. While the causes of this retrenchment are clearly complex, one early event appears to have been particularly influential. The shocking defeat of the Liberal state governor Jeff Kennett, following a much-mocked web campaign, sent a clear warning shot to the parties about the potential damage that a badly judged e-campaign could do to their electoral fortunes. According to Peter Chen (2013), it took almost a decade before Australian politicians were prepared to invest seriously in digital campaigning again, especially in the more personalized "presidential" style that seemed to drive innovation.

The frenzy generated by *Kevin07*, Labor's 2007 online campaign effort, and the launch of the two main parties *MyBO*-style social networking sites in 2010 suggested that Australian digital campaigning was back on track, and accelerating toward phase IV. Closer investigation of these initiatives, however, raised questions about the extent to which they really signaled any great leap forward. *Kevin07* was seen as an exemplar of "managed interactivity." Certainly, the evidence "from below" suggested that it was only by 2013 that digital campaigning was succeeding in engaging activists and supporters. Furthermore, and perhaps most significantly, it appears from both supply-side and demand-side analyses that these efforts were led primarily by the smaller parties and the nonpartisan campaigners GetUp! Only a very small minority of major party supporters were actually found to have engaged in any CIC-relevant activities.

The fact that the minor parties emerged as the strongest promoters of phase III digital campaigning in Australia underscores its association with a swing toward a state of greater equalization and the redistribution of power down toward the grassroots. The prowess of the smaller players in promoting direct

online mobilization in 2013 suggests this narrative continued, but also raises something of a challenge to our ideas of phase IV being one of *hypernormality* and rise of the "machine-led" micro-targeting. Clearly, the smaller parties in Australia had found a means of exploiting social media to communicate with their core support base and directly with voters that exceeded the ambition or skill of their larger counterparts. Whether they were able to maintain this advantage in successive elections is an intriguing and important question for future research to explore.

6

The Late Bloomer

Digital Campaigning in France

Our third case study shifts the analysis onto new political terrain and examines developments in digital campaigning in the more personalized environment of a French presidential election. As in the two previous chapters, we begin by examining France's suitability as a context for digital campaigning. We do so using the results of the cross-national analysis of Chapter 3 as the framework for that assessment. Where does France "sit" in comparison to other countries in terms of its current rate of digital mobilization? How far does that position correspond to what we might expect, given its institutional setting and level of technological development? Finally, are there "local" factors, specific to the French context, that might affect parties' and candidates' enthusiasm and capacity for digital campaigning?

The chapter then shifts the focus to examine developments in French digital campaigning over time, and locates these recent trends in a wider historical perspective. Applying the framework set out in Chapter 1, we trace parties' adaptation to the internet, and assess how far, and fast, they have progressed through the four-phase evolutionary cycle. Looking first at supply-side developments, we use the extant literature to chart changes in the goals, tools, and organizational infrastructure that French parties have used to wage their digital campaigns. Can we see a similar transition to that which occurred in our earlier cases? Was an initial experimental push online followed by a long period of stasis and professionalization, and then a burst of community building and activist mobilization, as happened most notably in Australia? Or, have the advances in digital campaigning been more incremental and linear, as in the United Kingdom? What signs are there that the parties are now moving into phase IV and adopting a more targeted and data-driven strategy of voter mobilization? Who is leading that charge, and who is lagging behind? Again, do the patterns of activity seen across the parties match with those observed in the previous two cases?

The final section of the chapter shifts the lens to examine changes in the demand side of digital campaigning. We look at how far, and in what ways, the French public have responded to parties' offerings over time. Has there been a shift from voters passively "reading" about the digital campaign to actively engaging with it and "redistributing" its contents across their networks? Do these trends map onto the ebb and flow of elite activity documented in the earlier section of the chapter? Do certain parties have a more active supporter base than others? Finally, are the parties succeeding in reaching a new audience with their online campaigns, and what evidence is there that it works, in terms of influencing their vote choices? To address this second set of voter-led questions, we analyze national survey data collected during the presidential elections of 2007 and 2012.

France as a Context for Digital Campaigning

As one of the world's leading democracies, France is clearly an important country in which to examine developments in digital campaigning. France also forms a particularly useful case for analysis at this point in the book, given that it offers a "bridge" between the two countries just analyzed and the United States, which follows. Like the United Kingdom and Australia, France operates a parliamentary system of government that relies on strong national parties, which, if elected, implement a governmental program based on their campaign manifestos. In common with the United States, however, France regularly elects a powerful national chief executive who holds office for five years and can challenge the wishes of majority party in parliament, if they are from the opposing side. Since the mid-noughties, both of the two main parties also moved to adopt US-style primaries to select their presidential candidates. This switch has enhanced the personalized nature of the contest, and its prominence as a political event.

Given that the results of Chapter 3 identified presidential elections as one of, if not the main, driver behind higher rates of online voter mobilization, we might thus expect France to assume a leading position, ahead of the United Kingdom and Australia, in the intensity and maturity of its digital campaigning. A check on the country rankings reported in Table 3.2 of Chapter 3, however, counters this expectation. The table ordered countries according to their rates of online voter mobilization, using data from Module 4 of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). France is at the bottom of tier two nations, below both the United Kingdom and Australia. To help explain its weaker performance, we turn first to the findings reported in Table 3.6, which showed that several other macro-level variables were significant in predicting rates of online mobilization.

These included the presence of a proportional electoral system and a higher level of internet use among the citizenry.

Based on these criteria, we begin to understand why France might not rank as highly as one might expect in terms of the intensity of its digital campaigning. French national elections use a two-round majoritarian system, which is one of the least proportional methods for allocating votes to seats in international terms. It is on the second count of internet use by the electorate, however, that France most obviously struggles to provide a conducive environment for digital campaigning. Rates of internet use have traditionally been much lower than is the case for most other advanced industrial nations. Indeed, from the mid-1990s to the early part of the twenty-first century, France consistently reported one of the lowest internet adoption rates of any country in the developed world (Villalba, 1999, 2003).

We can see this sluggishness in Figure 6.1, which reports the proportion of the population that were online during presidential elections since 1997. Rates of adoption over the time period are significantly lower than is the case for any of the other countries examined in this book (see Figures 4.1, 5.1, and 7.1 for comparable statistics from the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States). That said, by 2012 France had clearly begun to make up for lost time, and adoption levels had moved into line with those of other nations. Use of broadband (shown in Figure 6.2) also appears to have grown at a rate comparable to that seen elsewhere (see Figures 4.2, 5.2, and 7.2), with more than half of the population reporting fixed access by 2012.

While explaining the prolonged failure of the internet to penetrate French society is beyond the remit of this chapter, we can point to a number of likely
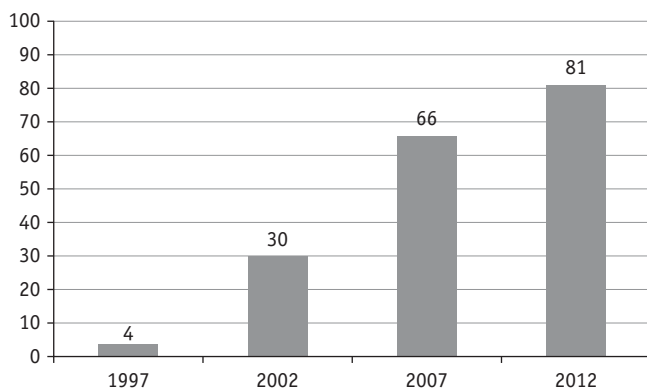
Figure 6.1. Growth of internet use in French presidential elections, 1997–2012 (% of population using the internet). *Source*: World Bank, "Internet Users (per 100 people)," http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2?page=1
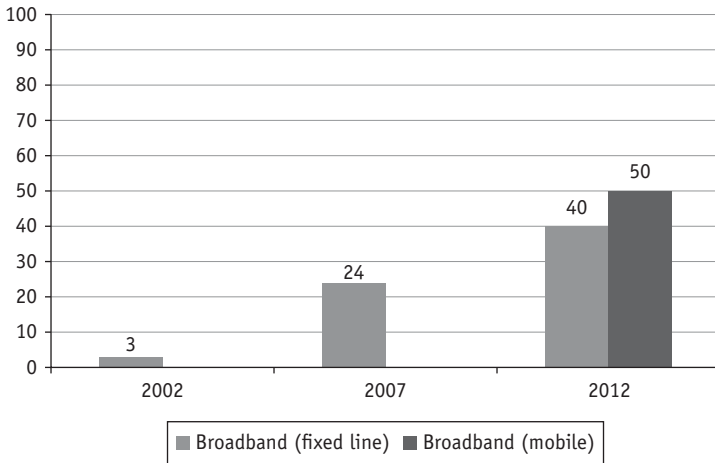
Figure 6.2. Growth in broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants) in French presidential elections, 2002–2012. *Source*: OECD historical fixed and mobile broadband penetration subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants). Figures are from 4th Quarter. Available at http://www.oecd.org/internet/broadband/41551452.xls and http://www.oecd.org/sti/broadband/1.5-BBPenetrationHistorical-Data-2015-06.xls (Figures for mobile available only from 2009 Q4 onward.)

reasons for the inertia. First, on cultural grounds, some observers have pointed to a strong distaste among French citizens toward the intrusion of this globalized and linguistically anglicized media into their lives (Bratten, 2005: 519). A more obvious practical explanation for the lag in take-up, however, is that the public already had extensive access to a "home-grown" version of the internet in the shape of *Minitel. Minitel* was a government-funded national computer network that was developed in the late 1970s by what eventually became French Telecom (Breindl and Kuellmer, 2013; Kellerman, 2006). The service used the telephone network to connect French homes to local terminals and provided access to a wide range of government and commercial services. It proved very popular, serving approximately 25 million subscribers, or just under half of the population, at its peak during the 1990s.[1] Although usage declined thereafter, it was only in 2012, with the onslaught of social media, that the government conceded the internet had "won," and *Minitel* was, finally, switched off.

Despite the rapid escalation of internet use in France in recent years, and particularly in broadband access, the presence of *Minitel* has clearly affected investment in both public and private web services. The impact on digital campaigning was particularly significant. According to Lilleker and Jackson (2011), the late arrival of the web resulted in "French parties and candidates being an election cycle behind their Anglo-Saxon counterparts" (57). We investigate the case for this assertion in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

In addition to these more technical factors that have impeded web campaigns' progress in France, parties also face a series of regulatory controls on their electoral communication, which are likely to have slowed the pace of innovation. The first, and most obvious, of these relates to the duration of the official campaign period. French presidential campaigns are among the shortest among established democracies. Candidates typically have just a couple of weeks before the first of the two rounds of voting to promote themselves and their policies to the electorate. In addition, three months before the ballot, all forms of paid commercial advertisements, through the press, via posters, phone calls, or by any audiovisual means, are prohibited.[2] These pressures on the "air time" available to them means that campaigns are arguably more likely to "default" to tried and tested modes of contact, rather than investing in newer and unproven methods.[3]

As well as imposing strict limits on how long candidates can campaign, the authorities also exert significant control over who is heard, and what is said, during this period. French law requires that all public service radio and television channels (France Télévision, Radio France, and France Médias Monde) give equal air time to all the presidential candidates and their supporters. The rules are strictly enforced by the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (Supreme Audiovisual Council; the CSA).[4] In 2000, this rule was extended to include a requirement that broadcasters also provide "equitable access" for political parties that were not represented in Parliament (Vedel, 2005). Given that one of the main benefits of the new media over the "old," according to the e-pluralists, was that it provided a more open and "equalized" space for the expression of political opinions, one can see how the French media rules might actually have reduced the incentives for parties, particularly the minor players, to develop an online presence.[5]

A final regulatory factor to bear in mind when assessing the slower pace of digital adoption by French campaigners is the extent of state control that has typically been imposed on voter contacting, particularly more targeted modes, both during and between elections. These restrictions stem from an adherence to the French Republic's core principle of equal treatment of citizens before the law. Public and private institutions are prohibited from gathering and using any personally identifying information about citizens that could be used for purposes of discrimination. This applies to a wide range of social characteristics, such as race, religion, and ethnicity, as well as political views. These principles were first enshrined into French law in 1978 in relation to electronic marketing, when French authorities enacted the Information Technology, Data Files, and Civil Liberty Law. The law imposed strict controls over the use of computerized databases by public and private bodies. A key provision was that any files containing individuals' names and personal information had to be registered with the Commission Nationale Informatique et Libertés (CNIL). Furthermore, the

collection and preservation of these data required the express consent of those mentioned in the file, and this was strictly enforced. In the case of voter registration data, access was highly restricted and made available only by request within individual municipalities. Its use by parties was heavily circumscribed.

The upshot of these regulations has been that the French parties have faced significant legal and normative barriers to building up the type of large voter files and email lists that have powered online campaigns elsewhere. Interestingly, the introduction of the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR),[6] which is seen as reinforcing and extending the French framework to other member states,[7] is expected by some observers to have a "chilling effect" on the development of the new forms of data-driven campaigning emerging across North America (Bennett, 2016). Given the extent to which these laws have shaped French campaign practice and voter expectations over several decades, it is thus not too surprising that any chilling effects were felt here first.

Of course, a key question that emerges from these observations is why the national data privacy variable used in the multilevel analysis of Chapter 3 failed so emphatically to explain the variance in online contact across countries. If this regulatory framework is important in accounting for parties' use of new media to contact voters, then it seems strange that it made no difference to the patterns of use we observed. Closer inspection of the index's construction in light of the French case suggests that some extension and revision to it may be required in future analyses. In particular, the five-point index covered only the presence of regulatory agents and rules in a nation, rather than the extent of compliance with those rules by political parties. Furthermore, it did not capture the broader cultural views on the extent to which citizens' personal information should be available for political and commercial actors to use in their marketing and outreach. Such norms are clearly likely to influence campaigns' proclivity to engage in direct online voter mobilization, and thus while difficult to quantify, some attention should be paid to how they can be incorporated into the modeling of the regulatory framework surrounding elections.

In the next section of this chapter, we map out the history of French digital campaigning in more detail. Using a combination of secondary literature and original findings from the application of our CIC index, we track how campaigns have changed at the supply side and how far this can be understood using the lens of our four-phase model. How has the particular combination of contextual factors highlighted earlier affected parties' progress compared with other countries? According to Lilleker and Jackson (2011), the slower pace of internet adoption meant the French parties lagged at least one electoral cycle behind their counterparts in other advanced democracies in their online electioneering activities. Is this indeed the case? How long did French campaigns linger in the experimental phase before moving on to embrace a more standardized and

professionalized mode of operation? When and where did the first moves into phase III–style community building occur? Finally, which party, if any, has taken the lead in importing the new more scientific approach to voter mobilization? Once the problem of internet access was resolved, did the presence of presidential elections mean that the pace of development picked up? And, if so, who led that charge?

Phase I: Experimentation (1994–1997)

Although the time lag in mass internet use may have affected the pace of change in digital campaigning in France, it does not appear to have delayed its actual onset. Studies of the early years of French parties' and candidates' use of the web are limited, but suggest that movement online started in the mid-1990s. This is similar to the trends observed in the United Kingdom and Australia (Villalba, 1999, 2003; Bratten, 2005). Unlike the United Kingdom and Australia, however, the initial entry into cyber-campaigning in France did not come from one of the major parties. Instead, it was a smaller and then very marginal party, the far right Front National (FN), that made the first foray into cyberspace in 1994. According to Bratten (2005), the FN's move was part of a wider strategic agenda promoted by its leader, Jean Marie Le Pen, to bypass what he saw as a highly biased mainstream media and reach out to his supporters directly.

While Le Pen's claims appear to challenge the argument advanced earlier that the new media held less appeal in the French party system, due to the more balanced nature of coverage provided by the "old" media, it was actually not until 2000 that the rules on "equitable access" for non-parliamentary parties—which would include the FN—were introduced. Furthermore, according to most accounts, Le Pen consistently portrayed the mainstream media as an enemy of the party, and part of a wider corrupt political elite that was seeking to silence or misrepresent its voice in French society. As such, the new media provided a very welcome development for the party, in terms of offering a new means for communicating with supporters, and appealing directly to new voters (Stockemer, 2017; Quinn 2000).

The FN, however, were not alone in their early enthusiasm for the web. The French Greens were also vocal supporters of the internet as a means of boosting their political fortunes. Unlike the FN, however, the Greens concentrated more on the internal democratizing potential of the new medium within the party. A statement posted on the inaugural home page overtly celebrated the internet as a tool for empowering the grassroots. Although it is tempting to see

the party as offering a highly prescient insight into the community-building and activist-mobilizing power of the medium that we associate with phase III, the main goal for the party at this time was seemingly just to prompt greater internal debate and discussion—to generate what they saw as a "true place of exchange" for members and supporters, rather than a platform to galvanize into action (Villalba, 1999:10).

Elsewhere in the party system, the "me too" logic dominated. According to Villalba (2003), most of the other French parties, wanted "simply to remain visible in cyberspace" (125). The next 18 months saw the familiar domino effect in terms of digital campaign adoption. The National Assembly and presidential elections of 1997 provided the main pressure points for parties move online (Villalba, 1999, 2003). The signs of experimentation were also widely in evidence in terms of the design and delivery of parties' home pages. There was a heavy emphasis on text-based content, as well as a random and confusing array of fonts and colors. Some of this early handiwork can be seen in Figure 6.3, which contains a screenshot of the Greens home page from 1997. Despite having a well-developed strategic understanding of the web, the party had clearly not yet managed to translate this into the visual domain.

Figure 6.3. French Greens home page (October 1997). *Source*: Wayback Machine: http://web.archive.org/web/19961219160639/http://www.verts.imaginet.fr/

Phase II: Standardization and Professionalization (1998–2007)

Following this initial push online, the decade that followed saw a prolonged period of standardization and stasis in web campaigning in France. While the lull in proceedings followed the pattern seen in the previous cases, the causes of the inertia appeared to be rather different. Whereas in Australia the slowdown was more of an internal party response to a very public early failure of web campaigning, in France, it appeared to be due to external drivers, or the lack thereof. The very slow uptake of email and the World Wide Web among citizens meant that expectations about voters' appetite for online campaigning remained low (Villalba, 2003; Lilleker and Jackson, 2011; Greffet, 2013).

1998–1999

As was the case for parties elsewhere, the first flurry of anarchic website production was followed by a period of extensive revamping and upgrading. According to Villalba, the "proper development of the party sites" really began with the regional elections of 1998 and the 1999 European Parliamentary (EP) elections (1999: 6). The EP elections in particular were seen as a turning point, with all the major and key minor parties having established a home page by this point. At the sub-national level, parties' and candidates' online presence also grew, and national sites started to include links to regional branches.

Visually, sites had a more streamlined and less cluttered appearance, and greater use was made of hyperlinks to embed and organize content. One-quarter of the parties competing in the EP elections reportedly had even gone to the lengths of hiring a consultant to help them develop their sites (Villalba, 2003). In keeping with the broadcast quality of phase II, interactive features such as chat rooms and discussion forums were rare. Even the more automated forms of interactivity, such as donation or joining facilities, were in limited supply. Some of the smaller parties, particularly those on the left, however, did appear to challenge this trend. Most notably, the Greens and the French Communist party (PCF) gained special mentions in post-election analyses for their promotion of the participatory properties of the new medium (Villalba, 1999: Appendix 1, Table 1).

Despite these notable advances, pockets of amateurism and even explicit disinterest in web campaigning persisted across the party system. According to Villalba (2003), a minority of the parties competing in the EP elections (around five) still had no home page. Of those that had launched a site, most lacked an intuitive and easy to remember URL and a small number (six) actually failed to

reference to the campaign on their home pages, or through a dedicated election site (see Villalba, 2003: Table 6.1, 128–129). Even the FN, which was regarded as something of a trailblazer in the experimental phase, ran into technical problems that meant their site was inaccessible for around a month prior to polling day. Perhaps most telling, however, was the fact that almost all of the parties failed to make any mention of the alliances that had formed to fight the election on their home pages. For Villalba (2003), omission of this vital voter cue underscored the reality that most of them still failed to see the web campaign as part of the "real campaign."

2002

If 1998–1999 marked a transitional or midway point between the early phases of the digital campaign cycle, the 2002 presidential election saw French parties move firmly into the second phase. As was the case for the United Kingdom a year earlier, the mood was expectant, with leading politicians, including future Socialist presidential contender Francois Hollande, pronouncing that the race would see the internet take center stage (Villalba, 2003:127). All parties now had a web presence (Greffet, 2001; Villalba, 2003), and the French public, while still not embracing the internet as widely as their counterparts in other democracies, had experienced one of the fastest growth spurts, bringing access levels to around a third of the French electorate (see Figure 6.1). As well as bringing the remaining stragglers into the internet era, 2002 ushered in a more stylish and professional looking set of web campaign sites. Figures 6.4 and 6.5 show the Socialist and Green parties' home pages just before and after the 2002 legislative elections.

The figures show the parties as now adopting the more structured approach to site design that is characteristic of the second phase. Content was divided and layered according to sub-menus, and a more creative use was made of graphics, hyperlinks, and multimedia features. The emphasis remained on the downward dissemination of news and information, although there were attempts to offer it in a more dynamic format. Reinforcing the reputation as internet pioneers, the FN launched the first partisan online news channel—Le Pen TV. Opportunities for site interaction also increased, as parties offered sign-up facilities for e-news and online membership, and almost all of the parties started to compile and use email lists to reach out to their supporters (Villalba, 2003). Some attempts were even made to use them for activation purposes. The FN again led the way here. Following Le Pen's surprisingly strong performance in the first round of voting, the party added a feature to its site that allowed visitors to auto-generate an email of support that they were then encouraged to send out manually, to their

Table 6.1 **French Presidential Candidates Citizen-Initiated Campaigning Scores, 2012**

	Tous Hollande	*Comité de Soutien 2012*	*NS Connect*
Community Building			
Profile			
Photo	√	√	√
Biography	—	√	—
Why joined	—	—	—
Set up/join groups	√	√	—
Set up blog	—	√	—
Set up Wiki	—	—	—
Email/message system	√	√	—
Externally promote profile	√	√	√
Subtotal (additive 0–8)	4	6	2
Resource Generation			
Personal fundraising	—	—	—
Promote membership	—	—	√
Sign up as local organizer	√	—	—
Sign up as candidate	na	na	na
Organize/add event	√	√	√
Vote leaders to attend events	√	—	—
Subtotal (additive 0–5)	3	1	2
Voter Mobilization			
GOTV offline			
Access phone bank	—	—	—
Sign up for f2f canvassing	√	—	√
Sign up to discuss with social network	√	—	—
Leaflets download	—	—	—
Externally promote event	√	√	√
GOTV online			
Send email	√	—	√
Post to FaceBook	√	—	√
Post to Twitter	√	—	—
GOTV phone app	√	√	√
Email forward to editor	—	—	—
Start e-petition	—	—	—
Subtotal (additive 0–11)	7	2	5

Table 6.1 **Continued**

	Tous Hollande	Comité de Soutien 2012	NS Connect
Message Production			
Message creation			
Policy email forward/customize	√	—	√
Poster/leaflet create/customize	√	—	—
Policy input/feedback	—	√	—
Message distribution			
Web banners/ads download	√	—	—
Posters/leaflets download	√	—	—
Email/share policy docs	√	—	√
News feed to website	—	—	—
Share blog posts externally	—	—	—
Link to SNS profile	—	—	—
Link to Twitter account	—	—	—
Import email contacts	√	—	√
Subtotal (additive 0–11)	6	1	3
Overall Score (0–35)[a]	20	10	12
Standardized Score (0–100)	58	33	34

Standardized scores are calculated by transforming each sub-index into a 0-100 range and then averaging the scores. See Appendix 4.1 for details of variable definitions.

[a] The maximum raw score on the CIC index was 35 for French sites (1 point lower than for the United Kingdom and Australia). This was due to dropping the "sign up as a candidate" variable from the resource generation sub-index, as this was not applicable for the French presidential sites.

networks. The FN also ran a series of webcast Q&A sessions with key candidates, including one with Le Pen himself (Bratten, 2005).

Although the FN clearly retained its status as an innovator in digital campaigning, it formed something of an outlier. In-depth analysis by Villalba (2003) of the 2002 campaign concluded that for the most part, "online partisan representation . . . remained quite conventional." Digital content was largely recycled from other media channels and had "no impact . . . on the key functions" that the parties carried out in the election (Villalba, 2003: 135). This was particularly evident in relation to voter interaction, which parties made very little effort to promote online. At best, he concluded, they opted for a form of "supervised participation," a notion that corresponds to that of "controlled interactivity" identified by Stromer-Galley (2014) as characteristic of parties and candidates in this post-experimentation phase. Reinforcing this critique, Serfaty (2002) noted

Figure 6.4. The French Socialist Party home page (May 2002). *Source*: Wayback Machine: http://web.archive.org/web/20020523180652/http://www.parti-socialiste.fr

Figure 6.5. The French Greens home page (August 2002). *Source*: Wayback Machine: http://web.archive.org/web/20020523180652/http://www.parti-socialiste.fr/

that the web in 2002 had served more as a "show room" for political elites than as a genuine "chat room" for mass debate and engagement (149).

2007

The presidential election of 2007 saw a marked growth in the prominence of web campaigning in France. Internet use had doubled since 2002, meaning that for the first time a majority of citizens were now online during a national election. The intervening years had also seen a referendum held on the European constitution in which internet technologies and particularly blogging tools had been used extensively. This exploitation was particularly prominent by those on the "no" side of the argument, who felt their views had been marginalized by the mainstream media. Given that the constitution was ultimately rejected by the public, and the "no" side won, the case for online campaigning clearly became stronger as the presidential election approached (Maarek, 2015; Lilleker and Jackson, 2011; Bousquet, 2009). Campaigns responded by taking a more adventurous approach to the using the medium. Several candidates launched their own online TV "news" channels, and there were several highly publicized attempts by the parties to set up virtual headquarters in the animated fantasy computer game *Second Life*.

Beneath the headline-grabbing initiatives, candidates also began to use the technology to develop a more collaborative and citizen-centered (if not citizen-initiated) model of campaign production. According to most observers, it was Socialist candidate, Segolène Royal, who took the lead in promoting this co-production approach. Like Howard Dean in the United States, Royal stressed her "outsider" credentials and laid claim to the internet as a key weapon in her bid for the nomination. Her candidacy gained a significant boost following the party's decision to lower its annual joining fee to just 20 euros in the lead-up to the primary election. The influx of new younger and tech-savvy members helped to shift the balance of support in Royal's direction (Pène, 2012; Vaccari, 2008a). Royal capitalized on her popularity with this new pool of supporters by launching an innovative online discussion forum *Désirs d'Avenir* in 2006. The site invited supporters to join and put their own "desires for the future" of France up for debate within the Socialist Party (PS). It was quickly surrounded by a dense network of independent bloggers, which became known as *Ségoland*. This linkage of official and unofficial digital platforms added a critical viral element to her campaign communication, and ensured that she stayed closely connected with her grassroots supporters.

While Royal's tactics appeared to work in the short term and secured her the nomination, they proved less effective in the general election. Despite her stronger digital credentials at the outset, Royal did not manage to translate that

advantage into victory. One of the reasons for this, according to post-election analysts, was her failure to sustain the open and participatory model of engagement she had pioneered (Lilleker and Jackson, 2011). An increasing gap opened up between her interactive online rhetoric and the actual practice of the campaign. There was a significant "downsizing" of supporter engagement activities as the election approached (Vaccari, 2008a). Post-election scrutiny of the content of Royal's online communication revealed that it had a similar, if less unapologetic, "monologic" quality to that of her right-wing rival, Nicolas Sarkozy. Her repeated use of the pronoun "we," and the multiplicity of voices that surrounded her online presence in the shape of *Segoland,* helped to create a strong sense of grassroots involvement. However, in reality, genuine opportunities for active involvement and co-production by her supporters were largely absent (Lilleker and Malagón, 2010). The view that the digital campaign, and particularly Royal, had failed to deliver on her early participatory promise was summed up neatly by Darras (2008). His analysis of the internet campaigns of the candidates concluded they had simply served to reinforce the "*majeste*" of the political class as the "representatives of the people" (104).

Despite the buzz the 2007 French "Netcampagne" had generated, therefore, the more considered verdict appeared to be that things had not really moved on very much since 2002. For Vaccari (2008a), the 2007 election demonstrated that France was "still at an intermediary stage" in its use of online campaigning ". . . especially in terms of participation tools" (1). The internet was still a "minor medium" in comparison with other communication channels (Darras, 2008, 104). The narrative of normalization also persisted in discussions about levels of inter-party competition during the campaign. Several studies of the quality and content of the minor party candidates' efforts in 2007 concluded that they had fallen even further behind their larger rivals since 2002 (Koc-Michalska et al., 2014; Vaccari, 2008a; Vedel and Koc-Michalsaka, 2009).

Phase III: Community Building and Activist Mobilization (2012)

While 2007 saw the presidential candidates dipping their toe into the pool of online activism, the 2012 election saw the first real drive to use the technology to mobilize their supporter base. For regular observers of French online politics, this election saw the first truly "web 2.0" campaign (Giasson et al., 2014), and represented "a substantial change in approach" from previous elections (Koc-Michalska et al., 2014: 226). Social media tools were widely used, and there was a genuine shift from the "vertical" communication logic that had dominated

internet use in earlier elections to a more "horizontal" style, which focused on peer-to-peer interaction.

As in 2007, it was the mainstream left that took the lead. From 2010, Socialist party candidate Francois Hollande and his team set about importing the tools and techniques that had been developed and deployed so successfully by Obama in 2008.[8] Under the direction of Vincent Feltesse, Blue State Digital was appointed as campaign consultant. Feltesse also hired the services of a new French-based online consultancy firm— Liégey, Muller Pons (LMP). Liégey, Muller Pons, as the name suggests, was formed by three tech entrepreneurs. All three had studied in the United States and had observed at close quarters the Democrats' 2008 campaign. On their return to France, they decided to set up a new firm with the explicit mission of introducing Obama's new digitally powered mass-canvassing model to French parties and European party systems more generally.[9]

These efforts formed a happy alliance with ongoing "renovation" activities taking place within the PS following the election of Martine Aubry as First secretary in November 2008. Under Aubry's direction, the party had initiated some fundamental reforms designed to import Obama-style practices into PS campaign operations. This included the revival of its local-level organization and field activities and the establishment of a digital strategy department, headed by Valerio Motta. According to Pène (2012), the new team consisted of at least 10 staff, making it by far the largest such unit among French parties at the time. The equivalent unit in the right-wing Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) consisted of just three people, while the smaller Greens dedicated one full-time staff member to their online operations.

A key plank of the PS's digital strategy was to build up an online supporter network that would include both members and a larger group of interested individuals who stopped short of joining the party, but wanted to help the Socialist cause. Following the *MyBO* model, *La Coopérative Politique*, or *La Coopol*, as it became known, was launched in January 2010 for a total cost of around 300,000 euro.[10] According to Benedict Thieulin, the developer of the site and former advisor to the Royal campaign in 2007, *La Coopol* was designed to be "a Facebook for the left" in France. It formed a new "community-building platform" that gave ordinary supporters the opportunity to affiliate with the party and help during elections, without taking out formal membership.[11] According to the party, the site proved to be very popular, with around 40,000 registered users after one year of operation. Forty percent of those registered were reportedly non-members. Activity levels also appeared to be healthy, with around 2,500 groups on the site during the first year of its operation, although only a handful of them had more than a thousand members.[12]

Hollande built on these efforts, investing heavily in his online presence and reportedly employing a staff of 35 to run his digital campaign by election day.[13]

Furthermore, while official estimates of expenditure on the digital campaign totaled just over half a million euros, informal estimates, provided by campaign insiders, indicated that spending on online communications was closer to two million euro, or 10 percent of the entire budget (Koc-Michalska et al., 2014: Pène, 2012). The centerpiece of this investment was *Tous Hollande*, an online platform designed to recruit supporters who would then go on to power the field operations. While some reports likened it to *MyBO*, Obama's 2008 social network site, *Tous Hollande* was distinctly less community oriented in its content and appeal. Rather than seeking to build up a participatory Facebook style space for group formation and discussion, however, as *MyBO* had done, the main emphasis was on recruiting supporters to spread Hollande's message and help get voters to the polls.

The publicly stated goal of *Tous Hollande* was to sign up 150,000 volunteers who would then go "porte à porte" to 5 million households. To facilitate this mass canvassing effort, visitors to the site were greeted by a landing page that immediately called on them to "Agir pour le changement"—to act for change—and presented them with a series of prominent invitations to donate, join a local event, or become an "ambassador" for the campaign. After signing up, the new recruits were encouraged to register and report their progress to campaign headquarters using *TousHollande Terrain,* a platform designed by the campaign team to collate and monitor field operations during the election (Liégey et al., 2013; Pons, 2018). As the election approached, attempts to promote a two-step flow model of voter mobilization via the site intensified. The volunteering option was redesigned to target efforts on those districts where socialist sympathies were high, but voter turnout low. The strategy was driven by a detailed analysis of prior turnout across districts and a randomized field experiment conducted at the start of the campaign. This more scientific and data-driven approach to voter mobilization was new to the French system, and constituted a direct attempt to import and mirror the tactics that were being honed and perfected in the United States (Pons, 2018).

By 2012, the mainstream left thus appeared to be fully committed to phase III digital campaigning in terms of using the technology to mobilize their base. They also showed a growing interest in the use of phase IV–style tactics, and the new science of individual voter mobilization. The PS was of course not alone in shifting to adopt more strategic uses of the technology. The UMP, the Greens, the Democratic Movement (or MoDEM), and the New Centre all established partisan social-networking platforms by the end of 2009 (Pène, 2012).

The UMP's *Les créatures du possible* was designed to provide a new channel for ordinary voters to become involved with the party, and act, as its name implied, as the co-creators of political ideas and projects. Unlike its left-wing counterpart, *La Coopol,* the explicit goal of the developers was to bypass party "militants," and

create a new and bigger network of more moderate partisans, The site failed to gain traction among the wider base of UMP supporters, however, and was dismantled after just one year of operation.[14] According to the party's own reports, it had attracted only around 15,000 users since its launch, less than half the number reported for *La Coopol*. While the lack of compelling content was cited as a key reason for its failure, the deliberate exclusion of party activists was also seen as a major design flaw. A common feature of *La Coopol* and *Membersnet* UK—which were among the most successful examples of these activist hubsites—was that they had started life as a members-only resource and had then expanded to allow non-members to join. This mix of old and newer participants provided both the critical mass and fresh momentum that were important to sustaining these platforms in the longer term.

Undeterred by the UMP's failure to build a new network of online support for their 2012 campaign, Sarkozy's supporters launched a more personalized version prior to the election. In 2010 their Facebook page—*Le Comité de soutien*—was established with the goal of providing a "support committee" for the President's re-election bid. The page proved to be very popular and was launched as an independent site in August 2011. In a bid to absorb some of the momentum generated by *Le Comité de soutien,* the UMP established its own official version—*NS Connect*—creating a link to it from Sarkozy's campaign home page *La FranceFort*. Despite his rather late official entry on the digital campaign scene, Sarkozy made up for lost time by investing heavily in his presence once there. Expenditure records showed that around 5 percent of his total budget, or up to one million euros, was devoted to the online component of his re-election campaign. This was double the amount he had spent in 2007, and exceeded by some margin the expenditure recorded by other candidates, including Hollande (Koc-Michalska et al., 2014).

Despite his greater investment and the initial traction gained by *Le Comité de soutien*, closer inspection of Sarkozy's official and unofficial supporter platforms with *Tous Hollande* revealed that the latter performed best. Using the CIC index that was applied to party sites in the UK and Australian 2010 election campaigns (results reported in Tables 4.1 and 5.1), we compared the three sites on the range of opportunities offered to supporters to engage in community-formation activities and co-production of the campaign. The results are reported in Table 6.1.

The table reveals that *Tous Hollande* offered more of the CIC items than either *Le Comité de soutien* or *NS Connect*. In total, *Tous Hollande* contained over half of the items on the index, while the UMP's official platform and the independent Sarkozy site each delivered only slightly more than one-third. A closer look at the performance on each of the sub-indices reveals that *Tous Hollande* outperformed Sarkozy's official site, *NS Connect*, on all four areas of activity—community building, resource generation, GOTV, and message dissemination—and

outperformed *Comité de soutien* on three of the four sub-indices. A particular strength of *Tous Hollande* was its provision of opportunities for supporters to help with message production and distribution (i.e., two-step communication). Interestingly, the only area in which the right performed better was that of community building. *Le Comité de soutien* outscores *Tous Hollande* by some margin in terms of the opportunities it provides for supporters to interact and network with one another. Although *NS Connect* is the least competitive of the three sites, its strongest functional emphases are promoting voter-mobilization activities and resource generation. Neither of the two pro-Sarkozy sites are strongly oriented toward enlisting supporters' help with message creation or distribution.

While the results of the CIC index admittedly provide only a snapshot of each parties' focus and priorities in the 2012 digital campaign, the findings of Table 6.1 suggest that the PS and Hollande ran the most integrated digital campaign in 2012. *Tous Hollande* acted as the main point of contact for the campaign and provided both a community hub and a resource to galvanize and organize local activists. The UMP's campaign was more fragmented, comprising Sarkozy's official home page, *France Forte*, plus his party-run supporter site, *NS Connect*, and the more organically driven grassroots *Le Comité de soutien*. This disaggregation meant that the CIC tasks were distributed across platforms, making it difficult for Sarkozy to develop the same critical mass and sense of a "joined-up" community that Hollande inspired.

Viewed in comparative perspective, the findings reported in Table 6.1 show some interesting similarities and contrasts to the findings from previous chapters. In all three countries, it is parties on the left that appear to be leading the move into phase III campaigning. The overall score achieved by *Tous Hollande* is actually slightly lower than that of UK Labour's *Membersnet* in 2010, but slightly higher than the ALP's *Labor Connect*.[15] Closer inspection of the results, broken down by index, reveals some important additional nuances to this ranking, and the varying functional emphases of sites across countries. In particular, we can see that Hollande's site promoted more of the activist mobilization elements of CIC, while the Australian and UK sites placed more emphasis on community-building activities. There were no facilities, for example, on *Tous Hollande* for supporters to start a blog or to provide a personal testimonial to explain why they were supporting Hollande. These were, however, prominent features on both the Labour Party and ALP platforms.

Such differences, while they may be reflective of a more ruthless focus by the PS and particularly Hollande's team on winning, are also likely to be indicative of the transitional nature of digital campaigning in France at this time, and the shift toward more instrumentalist phase IV goals. There was no doubt a desire by Hollande's digital team to build the type of community spirit that had inspired the "Deaniacs" and the creators of *MyBO* in the United States, and their own

party-based *La Coopol*. However, the idea of community building for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end, was coming under question. The key focus now was to realize the external or "real world" value of the community built by this type of activist mobilization, by channeling these activists to take offline action and GOTV.

While none of the candidates reported the sign-up figures for their CIC sites, or total voter contacts made through their CIC platforms, the proxy statistics that were available to gauge interest indicated they were of limited appeal to the French public. According to a report from *TechPresident*, Hollande's team collected 650,000 addresses by the end of the primary election in October 2011,[16] which equated to around 1.5 percent of the voting-age population.[17] It is perhaps significant that the figure was not updated by Feltesse during the course of the campaign, and was clearly well below the 13 million, or 6 percent of US eligible voters, that Obama had collected by the end of 2008.[18]

Subsequent analysis by Vincent Pons, who had been a key member of Hollande's digital advisory team, LMP, provided further evidence to suggest that the CIC sites had failed to spark significant public engagement with the campaigns. Reviewing the results from an internal survey of almost 2,000 PS canvassers who had gone "porte à porte" during the campaign, he found that most of those who reported using *Tous Hollande* to support their efforts were already party members. According to his study, only a small minority (just over 10 percent) of those who signed up with *Tous Hollande* had never previously been involved with a campaign. For Pons, this failure to draw in new activists via the digital campaign platform sharply contrasted with Obama's success in 2008 with *MyBO,* the effectiveness of which he had been able to observe at first hand during his work on the Democrats' online campaign (Pons, 2018).

Beyond the production of CIC sites, 2012 also saw the expansion of candidates' presence across social media platforms. Use of Twitter and Facebook was ubiquitous, although in a nod to the early days of website experimentation, some of the fringe candidates failed to set up a profile (Koc-Michalska et al., 2014). As with the establishment of his personal supporter network *NS Connect*, the launch of Sarkozy's official profiles on key social media platforms came after that of his main rivals. His Twitter site went live on February 15, 2012, the day he announced he was beginning his official re-election campaign. While the delay in launching his profile to coincide with the announcement of his candidacy was no doubt a deliberate move to maximize the impact of both initiatives, it underlined an ongoing ambivalence in his relationship with the new media. During his presidency, Sarkozy had gained a reputation as an opponent of net freedoms after he spearheaded several policies that were designed to crack down on digital piracy and copyright infringement (Sarkozy, 2011; Breindl and Kuellmer, 2013; Nastasia, 2014).[19]

Despite the question marks that appeared to hover over Sarkozy's commitment to free speech on the internet, the strategically timed release of his Twitter profile appeared to work and it quickly gathered momentum, attracting over 40,000 followers after its first day of operation. By election day, this had increased to just under 300,000. This was just slightly lower than the total achieved by Hollande, who had opened his account over one year earlier. Sarkozy himself wasted no time in using the channel, adopting what one critic called a "machine gun" approach to his Twitter feed. According to one report, Sarkozy (or his advisors) sent around 50 tweets per day during the campaign. Hollande, in comparison, sent less than half that number. Both candidates stood in sharp contrast to Obama, however, who had kept his daily rate of tweets well in the single digit range. Quantity was also not a substitute for quality. The tweets that emanated from both camps were seen as bland, lacking in interactivity, and were rarely sent by either candidate personally.[20]

Performances on Facebook were stronger. Sarkozy in particular enjoyed a commanding lead over Hollande, with over half a million Facebook likes by election day. A key element of his success was the addition of a timeline to his profile. This was a purpose-built app developed by his digital team and installed with special permission from Facebook. It was designed to promote interactivity among users of the site by allowing his supporters to share their videos, comments, and photos with other users and with the candidate. The timeline feature gave Sarkozy a distinct edge over Hollande in terms of the reach of his campaign, particularly to younger voters. By establishing a space for supporters to congregate and exchange ideas on Facebook, Sarkozy was essentially taking his campaign out to the people, rather than simply waiting for them to visit his purpose-built community platform. Whether he was able to convert this online advantage into "real world" votes was the question. Based on his following across both main social media platforms, he was still only reaching around one percent of the total electorate directly. Furthermore, a significant proportion of those people were likely to be supporters of his campaign already, having chosen to join his network. Certainly, the fact that he lost to Hollande suggested that his internet popularity was not enough to carry him over the line to victory. That said, the indirect reach of his campaign, particularly through his large Facebook following, should not be underestimated. We return to the impact of the candidates' indirect online mobilization on their electoral support in the final section of this chapter.

While the candidates' investment in their CIC sites and social media profiles clearly increased, this was not the case for other more "standard" components of their digital campaign production. Analysis of the presidential candidates' main home pages in 2012 by Koc-Michalska et al. (2014) revealed that, despite improvements in their technical quality since 2007, sites were actually less

content rich than in the earlier election, particularly in terms of their interactive opportunities. Controlling for an expansion in site features over time, the authors found that the proportion offering users the opportunity to submit comments had dropped from just under half in 2007 to less than a third in 2012. The use of discussion facilities had disappeared entirely. Judged through the lens of their conventional home pages, one may be tempted, therefore, to see French parties' digital campaigns as moving even further into managed or controlled interactivity and one-sided communication. Given the wider context of platform expansion, however, the results suggests a more nuanced story of substitution and transference of both resources and functionality.

One additional byproduct of the reduced investment by parties in their home pages and increased use of social media was a boost in the online performance of some of the smaller parties (Koc-Michalska et al., 2014). Despite the absence of some of the fringe candidates on Twitter and Facebook, several of the more competitive minor parties saw the 2012 election as something of a watershed or breakthrough moment in their effective use of the medium. The Greens, in particular, spent significantly less on their online presence in 2012 compared with 2007,[21] but regarded their digital campaign as much more successful. According to the digital director, a key element of this success was the decision to divert resources from standard web-marketing tools to social media and particularly to the development of a network of "cultural creatives." These were volunteers who helped design innovative content, such as animations and videos that were designed to go viral, and build up a wider network of supporters. This approach was arguably a more authentic version of message co-creation and distribution than that practiced by either of the two major parties. It also appeared to be far more cost-effective. The Greens' digital campaign staff estimated that the party's cultural creative network helped generate an email list of 60,000 contacts and donations of 150,000 euro.[22]

The View from Below: Mapping Web Campaigning Cycles in the French Electorate

We now switch to examine the response of the French public to the online campaigns of presidential candidates over time. In particular, we seek to establish the extent to which voters have undertaken our three modes of engagement with parties' digital campaign content—reading, redistributing, and receiving—during recent elections. How far do changes at the mass level correspond with those we observed earlier at the elite level? As in our previous chapters, data to measure citizens' online political activities at the level of granularity we require here are not available for all the elections included in the supply-side analysis.

Our analysis is thus confined to the two recent presidential election campaigns of 2007 and 2012.

In 2007, we can map the frequencies of two of our three modes of activity among the electorate using a pre-election online survey conducted by the Centre for Political Research, Sciences Po (CEVIPOF). While we can create some measures of "read" and "redistribute" that are comparable to those used in our other country studies, and to those available for 2012, we do not have a measure of "receive" in 2007 (i.e., the rates of online contact of voters). In addition, because it was an online survey, we are able to calculate estimates of the modes of engagement only for internet users, not for the population as a whole. In 2012, we use data from a translated version of the same "e-campaign" module that was fielded in the 2010 UK and Australian parliamentary elections. This makes the figures for read, redistribute, and receive for France in 2012 directly comparable to those reported for the United Kingdom and Australia in those elections. The questions for 2012 were fielded as part of the post–French National Election Study (FNES), which is a probability face-to-face sample of just over 2,000 adults and includes both internet users and non-internet users. Further details of the surveys and variable construction are provided in Appendix 6.1.

Table 6.2 shows the basic frequencies of the three modes of engagement between 2007 and 2012. A quick glance at the findings reveals that the numbers engaging with digital campaigns were considerably higher in 2007 than in 2012, and that this difference holds even after controlling for internet use (i.e., comparing the figures in parentheses).[23]

This pattern clearly challenges the findings from the two previous chapters, both of which had shown that the rates of popular engagement in online elections were increasing over time (see Tables 4.2 and 5.2). Closer scrutiny of the data sets reveals a number of other significant differences in the samples. In particular, we find that respondents in the 2007 survey had considerably higher levels of interest in the election than those surveyed in 2012.[24] As numerous authors have documented (Kaye and Johnson, 1999; Sanders et al., 2007; Gibson and McAllister, 2008; Dillman, 2011), this type of skew is common in online surveys and is a selection, rather than a mode, effect. Voluntary participation in any survey tends to attract respondents who are more interested, informed, and concerned about the survey topic, and who hold viewpoints that are stronger and more extreme than those of other individuals (Dillman, 2007; Cook et al., 2000; Wu & Weaver, 1997). This problem is exacerbated in online surveys, where respondents are typically recruited on an opt-in basis rather than via random selection. Given the potential bias this introduces to our analysis, we focus more on the changes in the balance of engagement among respondents within each survey over time, rather than the absolute levels of change.

Table 6.2 **Voter Engagement in French Presidential Digital Campaigns, 2007–2012**

		Mode of Engagement					
		Voter as Audience—READ		*Voter as Activist—REDISTRIBUTE*		*Voter as Target—RECEIVE*	
Year	Internet use	Online news	Candidate sites	Sign-up/ Download	Share/Exchange	Direct (Party)	Indirect (F&F)
2007	66%	44.9	29.5	3.6	17.2—	—	—
N = 1,004		(68.0)	(44.7)	(5.4)	(26.0)	—	—
		READ 45.5 (69.0)		REDISTRIBUTE 2.2 (3.3)		RECEIVE —	
2012	77%	32.9	16.1	4.8	10.6	4.6	6.1
N = 2,005	(1549)	(42.8)	(20.9)	(6.2)	(13.8)	(5.9)	(7.8)
		READ 35.1 (45.6)		REDISTRIBUTE 2.6 (3.4)		RECEIVE 9.9 (12.7)	

For 2007 the survey was online and it was not possible to calculate the population internet use. We use instead rate the 66% from 2007 reported in Figure 6.1 This forms our baseline to extrapolate the read, redistribute and receive figures. See note 23 for further details of the calculation. The 2012 survey included internet users and non-internet users; figures are reported for the overall sample and internet users in parentheses.

Sources: 2007 Internet panel "Observatoire de la Netcampagne" conducted by CEVIPOF/IFOP, April 2007; 2012 French National Election Study conducted by Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques/TNS Sofres, May–June 2012; see Appendix 6.1 for survey further details of surveys and variable definitions. Survey weights applied.

Looked at through this lens, there does not appear to have been any major shift in how voters engaged with parties' web campaigns between 2007 and 2012. "Read" is the dominant form of engagement in both years, although interest in the candidates' sites vis-à-vis online news sources appeared to drop in the 2012 campaign. Sharing political content was a popular activity across both years, exceeding sign-up to parties' and candidates' newsfeeds or social media profiles by some margin. Interestingly, the combination of the two (sign-up and share), which measures the extent of redistribution of campaign content by supporters, is the one mode that does appear to have grown in both absolute and relative terms across the two elections. This suggests that the parties' efforts to encourage this type of activity in 2012, documented earlier, had been effective in terms of cutting through and prompting a response.[25]

As the 2007 survey did not include measures of whether respondents were contacted online by the parties, or by friends and family, it was not possible to assess whether there had been any relative growth in the "receive" mode. The overall proportion of the electorate receiving any type of online contact reported in 2012 is around one in 10. We know from our comparative ranking of countries in Table 3.2 and the previous chapters' findings that this is somewhat lower than for the most time-comparable elections in the United Kingdom (2010, 16%) and Australia (2013, 14%). Furthermore, if we compare the number of voters reporting direct online contact from parties to those who had signed up for such messages, it is almost identical. This suggests that parties' use of digital contact was unlikely to be reaching new voters and thus having any genuinely mobilizing effects. We return to explore this conclusion in further detail in the following when we investigate the sociopolitical profile of those receiving contact from parties and friends and family.

Before looking in more depth at those engaged in "receive" mode in 2012, we examine the changes in the partisan distribution in the different modes of engagement between 2007 and 2012. This is helpful in probing below the topline figures presented in Table 6.2 to see how effective the parties were in engaging their supporters in the more active forms of online campaign activities. Table 6.3 reports the key findings from this analysis. The columns report the total proportion of those expressing particular partisan identification who had engaged in a particular mode of activity. We report the figures for internet users in both years to control for overall growth in internet use. As was the case in Table 6.2, given the differences in the samples across the two years, we focus on changes in the relative frequency of the different modes within the parties across elections, rather than any change in the absolute levels of these activities.

The results show that, as was the case for voters in general, the dominant mode of engagement with web campaigns among partisans is passive consumption of election material, or "read" mode, and that this holds for both elections.

Table 6.3 **Party Supporters' Engagement in French Presidential Digital Campaigns, 2007–2012 (internet users only)**

Election Year and Party	Internet Access	READ	REDISTRIBUTE	RECEIVE Direct (Party)	RECEIVE Indirect (Friends & Family)
2007					
PS (N = 260)	—	78.1	4.2	—	—
UMP (N = 187)	—	76.5	4.8	—	—
UDF (N = 113)	—	77.9	1.8	—	
Other (N = 184)	—	67.9	3.8	—	—
No Party (N = 241)	—	50.4	1.6	—	—
Average	—	69.2	3.4	—	—
2012					
PS (N = 497)	78.9	49.2	4.6	9.2	4.9
UMP (N = 472)	68.7	49.1	1.2	6.5	7.1
MoDEM (N = 131)	87.0	61.4	2.6	2.6	17.5
Left Party (N = 124)	88.6	56.9	8.3	10.0	7.3
FN (N = 155)	81.8	34.6	5.6	4.0	8.7
Other (N = 164)	83.5	70.3	6.6	10.1	18.1
No Party (N = 445)	74.3	23.1	0	0.6	4.0
Average	77.2	45.7	3.3	6.0	7.6

The header "Mode of Engagement" spans READ, REDISTRIBUTE, and RECEIVE columns.

For 2007 Internet access by party was not available due to the survey having been conducted online (i.e., it excluded non-internet users). For 2012, *N* refers to the full sample, and the internet access figures are the % of that total who reported being online. The figures for Read, Redistribute, and Receive are % of the online party identifiers that engaged in these activities. See note 24 for further discussion and explanation of the apparent sharp drop in Read over the two years.

Sources: 2007 Internet panel "Observatoire de la Netcampagne," conducted by CEVIPOF/IFOP, April 2007; 2012 French National Election Study conducted by Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques/TNS Sofres, May–June 2012; see Appendix 6.1 for full variable definitions, sample size, and survey details. Survey weights applied.

When we compare across parties, however, see that interest in the web campaign among minor party supporters was just slightly below that of the major parties' adherents in 2007. By 2012, the situation appears to have reversed, and levels of interest among supporters of the smaller parties had risen considerably above average. The FN is the exception here in that "read" rates among its supporters are lower than for other parties and similar to those without any party affiliation. Such disinterest among FN supporters is particularly surprising given the early initiative shown by the party in using the medium and the strategic value placed on it by the leadership. One possible explanation for the disparity, however, is that FN supporters heeded the words of Le Pen and were more selective in the information they accessed about the election online. These were people who were more likely to avoid the mainstream media and instead confined themselves to a more limited range of content that was supplied primarily, if not exclusively, by the FN. We return to this point in the following discussion.

Table 6.3 also reveals that, similarly to the United Kingdom and Australia, only a very small minority of supporters for any party were engaged in any redistributive activities in any election. Somewhat surprisingly, given the widespread excitement that had surrounded the PS candidate's online presence, the rates of engagement in this more active mode by supporters were quite similar across the two main parties. This provides some credibility to the criticisms of Royal that she lost that participatory impetus as the general election approached. By 2012, the situation had moved more in support of the supply-side narrative and findings from Table 6.1, with the PS and Hollande taking the lead in terms of their rates of redistribution compared to the mainstream right. While just under 5 percent of PS partisans reported this type of CIC activity, this was true for only one percent of UMP partisans.

Perhaps the most striking finding to emerge in Table 6.3, however, is the ability of the minor parties to encourage redistribution among their supporters. This is particularly evident in 2012. Fringe players, along with more prominent smaller parties on the far right and the far left, enjoyed higher rates of redistribution among their supporters than either of the two major parties. While this disparity may result from the smaller parties compensating for their inability to engage in other, more expensive ways of mobilizing their activists, it does suggest that the larger parties' investment in their dedicated CIC platforms did not pay off. The former's exploitation of cheaper social media tools seemed to have paid higher dividends. The findings are particularly interesting in that they replicate those from Australia. As revealed in Table 5.3 in Chapter 5, the Australian Greens also outperformed both the mainstream left and right parties in terms of the amount of phase III co-production activities that their supporters engaged in during the 2010 federal election.

Turning to look at the extent of online contact received by party supporters, we can see that PS identifiers were somewhat more likely than their UMP counterparts to report having received some kind of digital messages from a campaign. Almost 10 percent of those who identified with the PS (9.2), and who were online, received an SMS, email, or social network message from a party or candidate. Given the figures reported do not specify the source of the contact, it is not possible to know which party the messages were from and thus to assess who was ultimately most effective in their online mobilization efforts.

In addition to reinforcing the dominance of the PS's digital campaign in 2012, there is also evidence that the strong performance by the minor parties continued, although this is not universal. Supporters of the Left Party (Parti de Gauche, PG), a breakaway from the PS in 2009 that formed part of the "Left Front" alliance in the first round of the 2012 presidential elections, reported a higher than average rate of direct online contact. This is also true for supporters of "other" parties (i.e., the smaller and more genuinely fringe organizations). Partisan identifiers with the center-right MoDEM and the far right FN, however, reported much lower levels of digital contact by parties and candidates. Given that MoDEM supporters also recorded lower redistribution rates compared with other minor party adherents (as shown in Table 6.3), the obvious conclusion to draw is that the party was simply less active in reaching out to its activists online.

The lower rate of receive among FN supporters, however, is less easily explained by party failure, given that the levels of redistribution were comparable to those seen in other parties. One explanation for this disparity could be that the receive measure does not identify the source of the contact in terms of the party it came from, but captures overall exposure to messages received from any campaign. As such, FN supporters may be as engaged as other partisans in receiving and sharing online campaign content, but also much better at avoiding online messages from parties other than the FN. This understanding of a greater selective exposure by FN supporters to digital campaign contact aligns with the findings about their lower than average rate of reading about the campaign. Their patterns of consumption and receipt of online election material are typically narrower and more exclusive than is the case for other party identifiers.

Levels of indirect online contact among party supporters (reported in the final column of Table 6.3) tell a somewhat different and arguably even more interesting story than for direct mode, particularly for the major parties. The PS performs worst on this measure in 2012, with only around 5 percent of their supporters saying that they had received some type of online mobilization message from someone they know personally. By contrast, the UMP performs relatively well, with just over 7 percent of its supporters reporting some informal online contact about their vote. Among the minor parties, the rates of indirect

contact are even higher than for the UMP, and in some cases twice the level seen in the major parties. The jump into the lead on this measure by the MoDEM is particularly surprising given that it had one of the lowest rates of direct contact with its supporters. One possible explanation is that as a centrist party, its supporters occupy more heterogeneous political networks than those on the left or right. This median ideological position may mean they are more likely to receive a wider range of crosscutting messages, compared to the average partisan.

A second explanation for its greater success in facilitating networked communication among its support base, ironically, may stem from the party's failure to engage in this more directly and officially. MoDEM supporters are essentially taking active measures to fill the gap left by the party, in terms of maintaining regular communication with its core support base. This idea is given some support by the relationship we observe between direct and indirect contact among other parties' supporters. Essentially, where party-directed communication is higher, the rates of intra-supporter interaction appear to be lower, and vice versa. Those parties that appear to be less effective or interested in engaging in direct online contact with their supporters enjoy a higher rate of informal online contacting among their grassroots.

Overall, it would seem that the evidence of Table 6.3 aligns with the conclusions from our supply-side analysis that the Socialists outperformed the UMP in mobilizing their base online, and pushed the party system toward phase III of digital campaigning. However, it also indicates that this narrative needs extending to recognize the important role played by the minor parties in these developments. In particular, the claims by the smaller parties such as the Greens that they were effectively exploiting social networking sites to generate CIC activity is borne out by these findings. Supporters of the smaller parties emerge as the most active in digital campaigns. They tend to consume more online political content, and are more likely to spread it across their networks and to receive online communication from parties. Furthermore, their performance in this regard appears to have strengthened over time. The proportions engaging with digital campaigns, particularly in more active and strategic ways, increased more among supporters of some the minor parties in 2012 than was the case for the major parties.

In the final step of this analysis, we take a closer look at those in the wider electorate that did receive digital messages during the campaign. While it was a limited pool of voters who found themselves in this position, the question of who they were and whether those efforts produced any genuine mobilization are interesting and important to explore. To do this, we report the key demographics and vote choice of those voters who reported various types of campaign contact in 2012. We report the figures only for 2012 given the lack of variables to measure "receive" in 2007. An initial look at the frequencies in Table 6.4 reveals that those receiving online contact from the parties or via their personal networks

Table 6.4 **Socio-Demographic and Political Correlates of "Receive" Mode in the 2012 French Presidential Election**

	Online Direct	*Online Indirect*	*Offline Direct*	*All*
Sex				
Male	50	54	46	48
Female	50	46	54	52
Age				
18–34	31	46	28	26
35–54	36	34	24	34
55+	33	20	47	40
Education				
Up to secondary	21	16	35	47
Baccalaureate	20	26	15	20
Higher education	59	58	50	33
Income				
<1,000 euro	6	6	11	9
1,001–2,000	35	26	24	36
2,001–3,000	26	28	19	28
3,001–4,000	18	16	17	12
>4,000	15	24	20	12
Vote				
Hollande	44	20	40	27
Sarkozy	23	17	27	26
Bayrou	3	14	3	9
Mélenchon	13	19	9	11
Le Pen	10	16	13	18
Other	7	13	9	6
Null/spoiled	0	2	0	3

Figures should be read as column % within each demographic / political variable. They show the proportion of individuals within each of the groups that reported online and offline contact by parties. The "All" column reports the frequencies of the demographics within the sample as a whole. Cells may exceed 100% due to rounding.

Source: 2012 French National Election Study conducted by Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques/TNS Sofres, May–June 2012; see Appendix 6.2 for further details of survey and variable definitions. Survey weights applied.

were not strongly representative of the wider population on certain major socio-demographic characteristics. In particular, those reporting such contact were typically younger, more highly educated, and of higher income[26] than the average sample respondent.

Interestingly, these biases are more pronounced among those receiving contact through their online networks than from the parties. Thus, while circulation of information through informal peer-to-peer communication may have helped the smaller parties compete, it would also appear to have been confined to a small set of elite citizens. The profile of those receiving offline contact from parties (face-to-face, mail, and phone combined) corresponds more closely to the overall sample characteristics, particularly in terms of education and age. Notably, however, beyond the educational bias, the lower age and average income levels among those receiving direct online contact does suggest the new mode of official communication by candidates is reaching of a set of less engaged voters than occurs through more traditional methods.

In terms of the extent to which the contact appeared to have a mobilizing effect, the final set of rows of the table reports the voting behavior of those who were contacted via different modes, compared with the sample overall. The figures show the proportion of those within each contact category who voted for a particular candidate in the first round of the presidential election. Thus, we can see that the majority of those who reported receiving online messages from a party or candidate (online direct) voted for Hollande (44%), while just less than a quarter (23%) voted for Sarkozy. This is clearly a different pattern of support than held for the electorate as a whole, particularly for Hollande, and is repeated for offline forms of contact. Essentially, those who received some form of offline, or online, prompt from an official campaign were much more likely to have voted for the PS's candidate.

Among the group who received online indirect contact, however, the story is more mixed. Support for Hollande is much lower, and actually less than among the electorate as a whole. The gap for Sarkozy is less stark, but in answer to our earlier question about the possible ripple effect of his Facebook following, he does not seem to have gained significant electoral benefits from a two-step message flow among voters. Conversely, the minor parties do appear to have been beneficiaries of the online informal peer-to-peer communication that took place during the election. The support for Mélenchon, the candidate of the Left party, is almost twice as high among those who reported receiving some kind of online political message from a friend or family member during the campaign, compared to the electorate as a whole.

Drawing any causal conclusions from these data is difficult, given their cross-sectional nature. The findings regarding direct online contact, however, at least confirm that Hollande's digital team was the most successful in connecting with those who ultimately went on to vote for the candidate. Furthermore, given the disproportionately higher level of support that Hollande received from voters contacted by offline methods, this provides at least some *prima facie* evidence

that the party was successful in linking its online and traditional modes of voter mobilization. When it comes to indirect online contact, however, the situation appears to be reversed, with the support levels for the smaller parties being disproportionately higher among the voters who received this type of peer-to-peer contacting. Whether these informal cues mobilized additional support for nonmainstream candidates in the first round of presidential voting is difficult to tell from these data alone. The younger age profile of those receiving indirect contact, reported earlier, suggests a greater openness to peer group influence. On the other hand, the higher socioeconomic status of this group points to their having higher levels of interest in the election, and being more likely to have decided how they will vote.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown that although digital campaigning began at around the same time in France as in other established democracies, it gained momentum more slowly. In terms of our four-phase model, development effectively stalled at the standardization stage for a period of almost a decade and a half. Between 1998 and 2012, elites made increasingly positive noises but largely hollow gestures toward exploiting the interactive and mobilizing potential of the technology. By 2012, however, the parties finally began to make up for lost time, and the presidential election saw both major players launch themselves into the two-step-style mobilization efforts associated with phase III. While the mainstream left led the way in terms of the supply and demand for this new style of digital campaigning, the smaller parties proved to be particularly adept in mobilizing their base with the new tools. Using the cheaper infrastructure of social networking sites such as Facebook, they achieved twice as much reach into their supporter base, compared with the PS.

The failure of the major parties to fully exploit the community-building aspect of these new platforms, however, ironically may have signaled their focus on the more instrumental and strategic aspects of the new web 2.0 tools. In coming late to the digital campaign scene, they had an opportunity and incentive to incorporate the best of international practice. The findings drawn from both the supply- and demand-side analyses point to the fact that the primary focus of the major parties' digital campaigns by 2012 was their external reach into wider electorate. The parties, it seemed, had now finally grasped the power of social networks not only for connecting their activists, but also for organizing them, and particularly for ensuring that they helped bring voters to the polls. As leading scholars on French digital campaigns put it, the parties had at last moved from

viewing the technology as simply an "additional" election tool to an "integral" multi-platform operation (Koc-Michalska et al., 2014).

Looked at in comparative perspective, the developments in France appear to have followed a somewhat similar pattern to that observed elsewhere. The United Kingdom and Australia both experienced long periods of stasis and even stagnation in the evolution of digital campaigning at the national and local level. This was then followed by a concentrated burst of activity as the mainstream left and several minor parties advanced onto to a phase III–style approach. As in these other countries, the shift appears to be powered by different technology. For the larger parties the emphasis is on bespoke portals and official party hubs. For the smaller parties there is more of a reliance on free platforms such as Facebook and open source software such as *NationBuilder*.

While it is clear that digital campaigning as a practice has advanced rapidly in recent years in France, the same acceleration is not evident among French voters. Engagement with web campaigns, while it is growing, remains a minority pursuit. Even by 2012, only around one-third of the electorate and less than half of internet users were accessing news and information about the election online. This is noticeably lower than was the case in both Australia and the United Kingdom, where a majority of internet users were engaged in such activities in proximate general elections. Despite this greater reticence, it seems the subset of French voters who do get more involved with the campaign do so in a more active manner than is seen elsewhere. Rates of redistribution among French voters in 2012 are comparable to, if not slightly higher than, those among British voters three years later. Furthermore, it is again the mainstream left and minor party supporters who are most willing to engage in this type of two-step activity. While such findings suggest a growing strength on the left for digital campaigning, whether it produces an advantage on election day is not clear. Based on the evidence of this chapter, it would appear that the targeting and recirculation of digital campaign content is not extending parties' reach very far beyond the "usual suspects." However, among those they manage to connect with, the Socialists do appear to enjoy a distinct electoral advantage over other parties, specifically in terms of their direct messaging of voters. By contrast, the minor parties emerge as the main beneficiaries of the more viral and networked forms of digital messaging.

Whether this pattern continues is clearly an interesting and open question. The strong legal and cultural constraints on French parties' use of voter data, for both online and offline contacting, combined with the new EU-wide push toward stronger enforcement of these restrictions under GDPR, suggests that a more extensive rollout of phase IV–style data-driven micro-targeting techniques is unlikely to gain a significant head of steam for the foreseeable future. As such, it may be the minor parties that assume the reins of innovation from here,

building on their prior record of success in promoting more indirect methods of supporter and voter mobilization. Alternatively, following the normalization line of argumentation, it may be that the major parties launch a "land grab" for more terrain in this valuable new online sphere of informal influence and persuasion. Rather than spending their greater resources on more targeted Facebook advertisements and carefully crafted email appeals, therefore, the mainstream players will focus their energy and resources on manufacturing a greater supply of "authentic" organic content, and investing in the mechanics to ensure its viral spread.

7

The Trendsetter

Digital Campaigning in the United States

A truth held to be virtually self-evident is that the United States leads the way in digital campaigning. Although we have drawn on a range of countries' experiences to design the four-phase model presented in Chapter 1, the United States formed a critical case in building that framework. Its prominence in developing this narrative stems in part from the fact that developments in the United States have typically been the focal point of media and academic attention. The history of digital campaigns' evolution in the United States is thus among the most well-documented in global terms. Interest spiked most notably after the meteoric rise (and fall) of Howard Dean in the 2004 presidential election, and again after the unexpected victory of Barack Obama in 2008. In each case, the candidates' success was widely regarded as the result of their innovative use of new web 2.0 tools such as blogs, social networking platforms, and video-sharing sites. The prominence of the United States as a leader in the digital campaign stakes, however, also stems from the reality that parties around the world have explicitly sought to import and copy the practices developed there. All three of the prior case studies provided evidence of parties having sought out American digital campaigns' expertise. For some, this has involved dispatching "fact-finding" missions to the United States to directly observe the candidates' election preparations in situ. Others have brought key personnel over to their campaign headquarters to provide strategic advice. In some cases, both approaches have been adopted.

Such transference of practice is, of course, nothing new. It maintains a tradition that began in earnest during the 1980s. Indeed, so slavish was the mimicry of US techniques across democratic elections that the term "Americanization" became shorthand to describe the changes occurring globally in campaigning during the late twentieth century (Negrine and Papathanassopoulos, 1996). Though the idea that US campaign methods could be directly transplanted into other national contexts was subsequently questioned as a more adaptive process

of "modernization" was identified,[1] the view of the United States as the engine of electioneering innovation still resonates strongly within political communication scholarship (Negrine, 2015). In this chapter, we take a closer look at this claim in relation to digital campaigning. How rapidly and in what ways have US candidates and parties adapted to internet-based technologies? Is their reputation for global leadership in this domain truly warranted?

To do so, we proceed, as in previous chapters, by first describing the extent to which the United States offers an hospitable context for advances in digital campaigning. How far does it correspond to the "ideal" context for online mobilization revealed in the analysis of Chapter 2? We then document developments in the supply of digital campaigns over time, focusing particularly on the pace of change seen in presidential elections. How far do advances in the tools, content, and strategic focus of candidates' efforts correspond to the four-phase model outlined in Chapter 1? How rapidly did progression through the evolutionary cycle take, and where does the United States now sit in comparison to the countries examined in earlier chapters? Which party or parties have been instrumental in driving that progress? In the final section of the chapter, we turn to look at how US voters have responded to digital campaigns over time and the extent to which any changes in demand have corresponded to those of supply.

The United States as a Context for Digital Campaigning

Based on the findings of Chapter 3, we know that US citizens experience some of the highest rates of online mobilization worldwide. This prominence was not particularly surprising given that their political environment features several of the key traits that were found to be associated with more intense rates of digital contact. In particular, the United States enjoys regular presidential elections, which are typically hard-fought and close-run affairs. Furthermore, although the general election is decided by a combination of plurality voting and the "winner take all" logic of the Electoral College, the much longer primary season that precedes it includes numerous intra-party contests that are fought under more proportional methods. This means that US presidential elections can be seen, to an extent, as offering the more open and "challenger friendly" type of environment associated with PR, which the analysis of Chapter 3 linked with more intensive online campaigning.

Finally, the United States also provides a technological environment that, according to the analysis of Chapter 3, supports growth and innovation in digital campaigning. Americans have always been seen as "early adopters" of

new communication tools, with rates of television and radio take-up having been among the highest and fastest growing in the world (Comstock, 1978; Kellerman, 1999). As Figures 7.1 and 7.2 reveal, the United States has maintained its reputation with regard to internet adoption rates. Close to one in five of the US population (16 percent) were online for the first web election in 1996. This is a substantially higher proportion of the electorate than in any of the
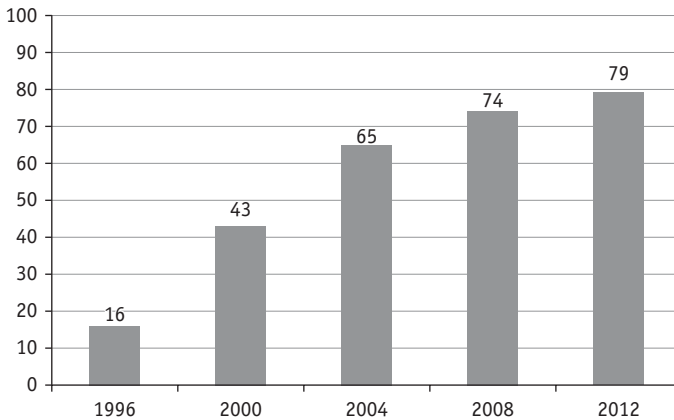
Figure 7.1. Growth of internet use in US presidential elections, 1996–2012 (% of population using the internet). *Source*: World Bank, "Internet Users (per 100 people)," http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2?page=1
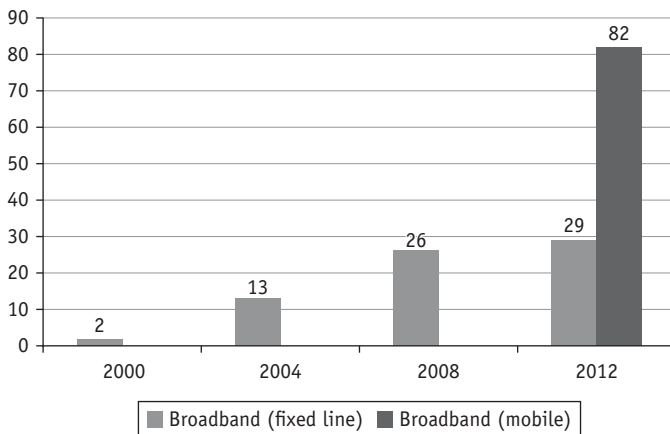
Figure 7.2. Growth in broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants) in US presidential elections. 2000 and 2012. *Source*: OECD historical fixed and mobile broadband penetration subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants). Figures are from 4th Quarter. http://www.oecd.org/internet/broadband/41551452.xls and http://www.oecd.org/sti/broadband/1.5-BBPenetrationHistorical-Data-2015-06.xls (Figures for mobile are available from 2009 Q4 onward.)

countries examined in previous chapters. The United Kingdom comes closest, with just one in 10 voters reportedly online during the 1997 election. If we look at rates of fixed line broadband access, US levels are also ahead of or comparable to those of other countries examined in earlier chapters. Notably, mobile subscriptions have surged by 2012 and put the United States close to the top of the international leader board among OECD nations.

As well as meeting these more generic macro- or system-level criteria for higher rates of digital campaigning, there are other aspects of the US political context that help to boost levels of activity and innovation among parties and candidates. In particular, the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression has, according to some observers, created a much more liberal culture of information sharing and access to voter records than is seen elsewhere. According to Bennett (2016):

> Any understanding of the US context has to begin with the overwhelming influence of the First Amendment on the communication of political speech and the raising of money to facilitate that communication. (262)

Such circumstances mean that any attempt to regulate the flow of personal information within society has to confront "very powerful [legal] arguments" against limiting that flow. For Bennett (2016), the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), passed in 2002 in the wake of the irregularities that emerged in the 2000 presidential election, was particularly instrumental in helping parties build up their enormous voter databases. The act effectively mandated states to create comprehensive computerized voter registration lists. These lists, in combination with the culture of tolerance toward electoral profiling, set the parties up in a position where, as one campaign manager later boasted, they were able to "measure everything."[2]

The importance of this more open environment for digital contacting by parties contrasts quite strikingly with the more closed context of France, discussed in the previous chapter. It also helps to further account for the failure of the data privacy index, which was our proxy measure for state regulatory controls on parties' use of voter data, to achieve significance in the analysis of Chapter 3. As noted in our discussion of the French case, the index only measures the formal requirements covering public and private organizations' use of personal data. It does not account for the broader culture of enforcement surrounding those requirements. While this was likely to have resulted in the significant underestimation of the constraints that parties faced in pursuing new strategies for online voter outreach in France, in the United States the opposite arguably holds. Here parties operate with greater license since they do so in the context of a "constitutional framework that favours the almost unfettered flow of personal data

for campaigns" (Bennett, 2016: 262). Requirements for data protection officers, consent, and criminal sanctions for breaches of privacy notwithstanding, the reality is that US campaigners at the state level have an almost unrestricted ability to gather, store, link, and interrogate increasingly vast quantities of personal voter information that are now available to them.

This preliminary overview has confirmed the United States' status as a leading nation in the digital campaign stakes, and has helped shed some light on the factors that can explain why that might be the case. We turn now to examine that reputation in greater detail, looking at developments over time through the lens of our four-phase model. How much faster did the US parties progress during the early phases of digital campaigning compared with those in the United Kingdom, Australia, and France to achieve their current rates of GOTV and direct voter mobilization? Which parties were most influential in pushing progress along? At the supply side, was it the case that US electorates were always more demanding of digital content, or has that happened later as the parties' offerings have improved? In partisan terms, who is most likely to get involved in digital campaigns, and to what extent are these efforts and more direct targeting by the parties bearing any fruit in terms of securing additional electoral support?

Phases I and II: Experimentation, Standardization, and Professionalization (1996–2000)

As discussed in Chapter 1, it is now widely accepted that the first public use of the internet in an election campaign occurred in the United States when former California Governor Jerry Brown emailed supporters in his bid for the US Senate (Janda, 2015). At the presidential level, it was Bill Clinton who took the honors, posting the content of his speeches and radio transcripts to a publicly accessible URL. Given that the pool of internet users at that time was extremely small and access required a modicum of computer skills, the site's impact was effectively next to nil. However, according to Davis and Owen (2008), Clinton's efforts constituted "the genesis of online campaigning" (95). Beyond the major parties, the smaller players also displayed a keen interest in using the new technology, with the Libertarian party being the first to launch a national party website (Margolis et al., 1997).

Although internet campaigning made its debut in 1992, it was the presidential election of 1996 that formed its real *anno domini* (Klinenberg and Perrin, 2000; Bimber and Davis, 2003). This was the year in which the first national campaign websites were launched and candidates for the presidency began to

wake up to the importance of having an internet presence. For Stromer-Galley (2014), it was the moment at which digital campaigning became embedded as a communication "genre" (38). Despite its instantiation as a tool of electoral combat, however, most candidates, even those at the national level, appeared to be unclear as to the point of their web campaign. Indeed, it was the US 1996 presidential election that prompted Selnow (1998) to introduce the "me too" label to capture the lack of purpose and ambition characteristic of sites at that time:

> Like kids who challenge each other to go first, once the first daredevil successfully crosses the stream or climbs the tree, the others feel obliged to follow. And so it was for some campaigns with Websites in 1996. (89)

Candidates' uncertainty about the reason for having a website was matched by their ineptitude in helping voters to find them online. At least two candidates neglected to include their names in their website address, and the addresses that were chosen indicated that the sites were viewed simply as temporary fixtures rather than long-term investments (Stromer-Galley, 2014: 23). Email was used in a limited manner with e-news updates available through a laborious subscription process that entailed finding the address and sending an email with a blank subject line. Rather surprisingly, given his initial enthusiasm for the medium in 1992, Bill Clinton proved to be one of the weakest proponents of web campaigning in 1996. According to Stromer-Galley (2014), Clinton and his team judged the web to be a low priority, preferring instead to rely on his White House presence until a few months prior to the general election. The address of the campaign site that was eventually launched did not actually include either the president's or vice president's names directly. Instead, the designers chose a highly unmemorable abbreviated version in the form of *www.cg96.org*. The overall commitment of resources to their web presence was minimal and they relied, at least initially, on volunteer labor, rather than paid staff. The web operatives who were recruited were nested within the IT and tech team, a move that underscored their perceived lack of relevance to the strategic aims of the campaign. Below the presidential level, signs of disinterest were even more palpable, with rates of web uptake among the two main parties' congressional candidates estimated to be between 16 and 19 percent (D'Alessio,1997; Bimber and Davis, 2003).

One exception that emerged in 1996 to challenge this narrative of experimental amateurism was the unexpectedly strong performance of Republican candidate Bob Dole, who was by far the oldest contender in the field. Despite his advanced years, Dole gained widespread acclaim for the sophistication of his online presence, the centerpiece of which was a state-of-the-art website. As has already been seen in Figure 2.3 (Chapter 2), not only did the site have an

intuitive URL, *www.dolekemp96.org*, making it easy to find, it was well designed, with a user-friendly menu bar to help navigate the contents, high-quality graphics, and dynamic content. A particularly noteworthy innovation was the presence of an interactive map that allowed users to follow Dole around the country by clicking on regional and city markers (see Figure 7.3).

Despite the apparent incongruity of septuagenarian Bob Dole running a cutting-edge new media operation, his efforts showed an early recognition by mainstream political actors in the United States of the potential value of digital campaigning. The person who was charged with running Dole's online campaign, Robert Arena, proved to be something of an early visionary (Stromer-Galley, 2014). Shortly after his appointment, Arena circulated what could be regarded as a personal manifesto for changing campaigns through use of the internet. His "New Media Blueprint" argued that the key value of the web lay in its power to draw in and mobilize supporters to help promote the candidate. Such ideas went far beyond current practice and foreshadowed the two-step activism and citizen-initiated campaigning (CIC) that was to follow a decade later with the rise of Dean and then Obama. Under Arena's stewardship, Dole even embraced an early version of CIC by providing options for volunteers to design their own campaign poster, send a personalized e-postcard to friends in support of Dole, and to download promotional tools such as screen savers and printable leaflets

Figure 7.3. Dole/Kemp 1996 site—interactive pages (November 1996). *Source*: Wayback Machine: http://web.archive.org/web/20160616195030/http://www.dolekemp96.org/interactive/interactive.html

to distribute. Although these innovations have since been overtaken and forgotten in the excitement generated by the arrival of social-networking tools, for Stromer-Galley (2014) Arena's work in this regard was seminal and constituted "*the* blueprint for digital media strategy for political campaigns" (35).

THE 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Following the 1996 election, full entry into phase II was swift. The 2000 election cycle saw both the Democratic and Republican parties step up their internet presence significantly. According to Farmer and Fender (2005), both the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the Republican National Committee (RNC) developed a national internet campaign strategy for the forthcoming elections. The DNC reportedly committed around one million dollars to establishing a new "Democrat Internet Center" (48). The RNC, in turn, increased its web team to 15, making it five times larger than the comparable unit at the DNC (Janda, 2015: 25). For the presidential race itself, all the main candidates had an online presence by the spring of 1999 (i.e., well in advance of the primary season) (Benoit and Benoit, 2000). Domain names were rationalized, budgets increased, and web campaign directors appointed with a clear line of communication to the campaign manager (Stromer-Galley, 2014). The amateur experimentation that had characterized most home pages in 1996 had largely disappeared. In its place were sleeker, more professionalized looking sites that displayed much greater uniformity in style and content (Hansen and Benoit, 2005). Visitors were now typically greeted with a logo and easy-to-navigate menu bar that provided access to a range of biographical information, news and press releases, issue positions, and information on how to get involved in the campaign.

Improvements in site quality corresponded to a growing awareness among designers of their key audience. Journalists and the mainstream media more generally were now seen as one of the main consumers of online campaign content (Bimber and Davis, 2003; Ku, Kaid, and Pfau, 2003). This growing recognition led to a more controlled and conservative approach to content creation and an embrace of the "broadcast" mode of television and radio. Sites followed a top-down "one to many" or point-to-mass model of voter communication. Home pages became little more than static vehicles to store and re-present material designed for other channels, such as press releases or TV advertisements. Notably, it was around this time that the terms "electronic brochure-ware" and "online billboard" started to emerge to describe candidates' and parties' web efforts (Kamarck, 1999, 2002; Gibson, 2012; Stromer-Galley, 2014). This more polished, but static and unadventurous approach to site creation meant that any conclusions drawn about an equalization in major and minor players' performance was largely illusory, and of limited significance (Benoit and Hansen,

2005; Gibson et al., 2003b). Challengers and those on the fringes might be providing equivalent content to that offered by incumbents and those with more resources; however, the benchmark for quality was arguably low enough that it made parity in provision almost inevitable.

Looking at congressional races, it was clear that diffusion in web campaigning had increased significantly since 1996. Figures reported by Kamarck (2002) estimated that 90 percent of all Senate and gubernatorial major party candidates now had some type of web presence. Her findings for House of Representative races showed a more modest but significant rate of growth. A third of candidates were found to be online in 1998, and two-thirds by 2000. A closer look at the quality of the sites that were produced, however, made it clear that simply having a web presence did not necessarily mean that candidates were strongly committed to using the medium. According to most accounts of campaign sites around this time, content was limited, with little attention given to updating it, or providing opportunities for user interaction (Leiter, 1995; Davis and Owen, 1998; Faucheaux, 1998; Selnow, 1998). Among the candidates that did make an effort, normalization appeared to be the order of the day, with resources and incumbency found to be the key drivers of online campaign intensity (Herrnson et al., 2007).

By the turn of the millennium, therefore, web campaigning in the United States appears to have moved squarely into phase II. As in 1996, however, there were glimpses of future trends that emerged from unexpected quarters. One of the most prominent and effective of these early net pioneers was the Independent candidate for the Minnesota governorship, former wrestler Jesse Ventura. Ventura stunned his rivals and most observers when he fought and won the 1998 gubernatorial election after running a highly effective online grassroots campaign (Hindman, 2005; Davis et al., 2009). Christened "Jessenet," the network of online activists that built up around his candidacy through email lists and discussion groups formed an early prototype of the much larger national communities that Dean and then Obama created using digital technology.

In the presidential election itself there were some flickers of a more dynamic and mobilizing approach to the medium as some of the lesser known candidates trialed some new methods to encourage volunteers to sign up as local organizers. Republican Steve Forbes was perhaps the most notable on this front, using his website to recruit "e-precinct leaders" to help run his campaign efforts locally. According to his team, the program was a huge success, with over 5,000 e-precincts established and 30,000 cyber-volunteers signed up (Bimber and Davis, 2003: 40; Stromer-Galley, 2014: 66). Forbes's ideas were picked up later in the election by his Republican rival George W. Bush, and on the Democratic side by both New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley and Vice President Al Gore. Both the RNC and DNC also moved to set up facilities for supporters to sign up as

"e-leaders" on their home pages. For Michael Turk, an internet strategist who worked on Bush's 2004 e-campaign, these initiatives, although rudimentary, "laid the framework for the sophisticated tools that would come in later cycles" (Turk, 2012: 50).

Looking even further ahead, while none of the virtual artillery and infrastructure associated with the fourth phase of digital campaigning made an appearance in this election cycle, there were some notable attempts to use the medium to directly influence voter decision-making. One of the most prominent of these efforts came from the Greens, who launched a website designed to encourage vote-swapping between their supporters and Democrats in a bid to unseat Republicans in marginal seats. Although it lacked the laser-like precision and mobilizing power associated with phase IV–style campaigning, the initiative did indicate that the parties—and particularly the minor players—were beginning to grasp the strategic power of the web for offline electoral gains. As noted in Chapter 4, similar efforts were made by the Liberal Democrats in the UK general election a year later, with a site being designed explicitly to encourage tactical voting between their supporters and Labour voters, in order to unseat unpopular Conservative MPs.

Phase III: Community Building and Activist Mobilization (2004–2008)

Despite the growing awareness among campaigners of the practical value of the web, particularly in terms of its organizing and resource generating potential, it was not until the presidential election of 2004 that its value as a mainstream election tool began to be recognized.

CITIZEN-DRIVEN CAMPAIGNING (2004)

A major impetus behind this shift in thinking stemmed from changes to the legal framework governing elections and specifically the passage of the 2002 campaign finance law. The new legislation imposed much weaker controls on internet-based communication compared with other more established electronic modes such as television and radio. In particular, the web remained one of the few areas of campaign activity where parties could spend their large reserves of so-called soft money.[3]

It was Howard Dean's bid for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2003, however, that provided the real "breakthrough" moment for internet campaigning not only within the United States, but also globally. In the relatively short period of time that his election bid survived, Dean's clever use of the internet was

seen as propelling him from relative obscurity to front-runner position. In material terms, he proved more successful in raising online funds than any previous contender. By the time he bowed out of the race in early 2004, he had raised just over 50 million dollars, with half of that total coming through internet sources (Hindman, 2005; Kreiss, 2012).[4] In human capital, he had registered half a million supporters online and prompted 70,000 volunteers in over 600 cities to set up local support groups (Hindman, 2005; Stromer-Galley, 2014).

Critical to Dean's successful exploitation of the medium was his appointment of Joe Trippi as his campaign manager. Trippi, a veteran campaigner at the national and state level, also had an understanding of technology start-ups and saw digital as the key to raising the profile of the then little-known governor from Vermont. The new manager also had an eye for talent and recruited a large group of volunteers and staffers with IT expertise. One of these new hires was Joe Rospars, who went on to develop Barack Obama's e-strategy four years later, and to cofound Blue State Digital—one of the earliest and best-known online campaign consultancy firms. Trippi's core team hit double digits in size (15) by the end of the campaign and, perhaps even more importantly, moved up in the organizational hierarchy to take a seat at the top table (Stromer-Galley, 2014). This more elevated status meant that the internet started to play a stronger role in the day-to-day running of the campaign and the conduct of major tasks such as fundraising and volunteer recruitment (Hindman, 2005). For Vaccari (2008b), it was this widening remit that constituted the real "game changing" aspect of Dean's e-campaign. It marked the point when the technology moved from being considered as simply a tool for service delivery and became part of the "backbone" of operations. For seasoned watchers of US campaigns like Larry Sabato, the events of 2003 showed the medium was now "finally living up to its promise" and shaping up as "one of the primary vehicles for both organization and coverage from now on."[5] Simon Rosenberg, president of the centrist New Democrat Network, went even further in recognizing the significance of Dean's campaign, noting that he was to the internet what "JFK was to television, and Goldwater and McGovern were to direct mail."[6]

Despite its headline-grabbing quality, the technical infrastructure employed by the Dean camp was surprisingly basic, relying essentially on a blog, a website with a dynamic fundraising baseball bat, and the free third-party software *Meetup.org*. Through the clever interweaving of these components, however, Dean was able to carry out the core campaign tasks of engaging and informing his activists, raising money, and reaching out to a wider support base. In simple terms, his online buzz carried over to offline action, and it was this integration, or merger of "mousepads and shoe leather," as Trippi termed it, that proved to be the real key to his success.

Dean's great strength, unfortunately, also proved to be his Achilles' heel. His decentralized use of the technology was vital in establishing a national network of support; however, it also meant that local groups operated largely autonomously. Group leaders were self-appointed and maintained only limited contact with central staff (Kreiss, 2012; Wolf, 2004). This lack of coordination among Dean's ground troops hampered the campaign's GOTV operations, particularly in Iowa, where it led to an influx of around 3,000 out-of-state "Deaniacs" who alienated, rather than appealed to, voters (Kreiss, 2012). This laissez-faire approach extended to the campaign's day-to-day online communication with supporters. Analyses of Dean's blog revealed a surprising lack of dialogue with users. Instead, rather like Segolène Royal, the left-wing candidate who competed for the French presidency in 2007, Dean was regarded as promoting a "parasocial" form of interactivity—the aim being to convey an image or sense of enjoying a face-to-face relationship with one's supporters, while not actually engaging in any direct and sustained manner with them (Stromer-Galley, 2014; Kreiss, 2012). This combination of a fragmented online infrastructure and the lack of continuous and authentic communication with his base no doubt contributed to Dean's loss in Iowa. However, his problems arguably highlighted the deeper fundamental tension that existed for campaigns at the time in trying to blend the new more participatory version of the internet that had been unleashed with web 2.0 tools with the practical demands of a serious bid for presidential office. Ultimately, it seems that the technology "won" and overshadowed the campaign and the candidate.[7] Or, as Joe Trippi (2004) put it, in his post-mortem on the Dean campaign, "we were not using the Internet. It was using us" (103).

As one might expect, developments in web campaigning did not end with Dean's exit from the race. John Kerry and George W. Bush both went on to build up sizable digital support teams that assumed an organizational importance equivalent to that of the more established units such as field, media, and fundraising (Stromer-Galley, 2014: 98). Both candidates also easily surpassed Dean's online donation record and generated email lists that counted subscribers in the millions, rather than the hundreds of thousands. It was the Republicans, however, that really picked up and ran with the networked model of campaigning that Trippi had developed. The release of the *Personal Precinct* platform allowed Bush to capture the energy and enthusiasm of his "netroots" in a similar way that Dean had done through his Meetups. The site allowed volunteers to sign up directly with the campaign as local organizers and undertake a series of tasks to support Bush. A range of online support services and resources were made available to help them in carrying out these activities. This included access to phone records and canvassing sheets that volunteers could download and use in a new GOTV "walk and phone" experiment. Incentives to join the scheme were further increased by the addition of a "Campaign Leader Board" to the site. This

important innovation allowed the campaign to publicly recognize and reward their most successful recruits (Milkis and Rhodes, 2009; Vaccari, 2008b).

In building up their partisan network, the Bush campaign clearly drew inspiration from Trippi's model of recruiting volunteers and outsourcing key campaign functions to them. By channeling these efforts through the *Personal Precinct* software, however, the party also added a layer of central coordination and control that meant it could vet and monitor its local operatives. The end result was the creation of a new pool of online volunteers who were explicitly aligned with the central aim of getting Bush elected. While the Republicans' victory in 2004 clearly cannot be attributed wholly, or even predominantly, to its use of digital tools, this innovative mix of top-down management and promotion of local tactical autonomy was clearly a part of its winning strategy. It was this new style of "controlled decentralism" in digital campaigning that, as we shall see in the following, formed the prototype, if not the inspiration for, developments in 2008.

CITIZEN-INITIATED CAMPAIGNING 2008

By 2008, it was clear to both candidates and their managers that the internet could unlock valuable new resources in terms of grassroots support; however, this process required careful management and direction. In phase III terminology, if 2004 was all about online community building, 2008 saw attention switch to the activist-mobilization side of the equation and how to transfer that energy into practical gains. Central in driving forward this new agenda were a group of former Dean staffers who had regrouped following his defeat to establish the online consultancy firm Blue State Digital (BSD). Hired in 2006 by Democratic hopeful, Illinois Senator Barack Obama, BSD was not only fully cognizant of value of the medium as a means of empowering activists, but also aware of the need to stay focused on the primary goal of winning the election. Their approach thus followed the Bush model of controlled decentralism, and centered on a "citizen-initiated" rather than "citizen-driven" model of digital campaigning (Gibson, 2015). To deliver on this goal, they developed a new suite of centrally provided tools that supporters could use to "meet up" à la Dean. However, critically, they were then directed to undertake specific actions for the campaign.

At the heart of these efforts was *Mybarackobama.com*, or *MyBO*, a volunteer management platform that was launched just after Obama announced he was running for office in February 2007. Built at an estimated cost of two million dollars with input from Facebook cofounder Chris Hughes (Clayton, 2010; Towner and Dulio, 2011), *MyBO* provided an official space for social networking among supporters. After entering an email address, users could set up a profile, launch a blog, and join or start a group to interact with like-minded others (see Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4. MyBO.com (March 2007). *Source*: Author's archive.

Beyond the community spirit it inculcated, however, there was a steely focus on ensuring that this enthusiasm translated into practical assistance. Volunteers were given targets, official training in canvassing, and how to access and update the campaigns' voter files. Their performance was measured through quantitative indicators that registered the frequency of their logins to the site and how many online and offline contacts they had made (Levenshus, 2010). While this combination of "top-down and p2p bottom-up organizing" as noted earlier, had already been trialed by the Republicans toward the latter stage of the 2004 election cycle, BSD added a scale and intensity to the process that transformed it into a highly effective mainstream campaign tool (Castells, 2009; Lilleker and Jackson, 2010; Gueorguieva, 2008; Montero, 2009; Kalnes, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Kreiss, 2012; Karlsen, 2013; Stromer-Galley, 2014).

Organizationally, the ascent and expansion of the digital team within the campaign hierarchy also continued. Nowhere was this more evident than in Obama's headquarters. While almost all candidates appointed a digital director or chief internet strategist (Stromer-Galley, 2014: 108) Obama's director of new media, Joe Rospars, was by far the most prominent and influential, enjoying a direct line of communication with campaign manager David Plouffe, and an unprecedented level of input to core decisions on field and finance operations (Levenshus, 2010). His team was also the biggest, peaking at 81 full-time staff by the general election, a figure that doubled if one included the volunteers working

in central and regional offices.[8] The expansion in size promoted an increasing internal differentiation of skills and expertise. Specialized sub-teams were formed, each of which had responsibilities for distinct areas of activity, such as site design, online organizing, video production, and email messaging. A further quota of around 25–30 staff were kept on "stand-by" and were drafted in to support local field offices as needed (Levenshus, 2010).

Publicly, the numbers reinforced the view of 2008 as a transformational year in US digital campaigning. Obama's email list swelled to 13 million, almost doubling the numbers achieved by George W. Bush in 2004. The number of e-volunteers recruited through *MyBO* and other platforms reportedly reached 5 million, well in excess of the 1.6 million that had signed up to support John Kerry (Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011; Costa, 2009; Milkis and Rhodes, 2009; Vaccari, 2008b). It was the growth in online fundraising, however, that provided the clearest indicator of the tectonic changes occurring in the appeal of e-campaigning. At the close of the race, media reports revealed that Obama had secured contributions of up to half a billion dollars from up to 3 million online donors.[9] This extraordinary feat meant that for the first time ever, the Democratic nominee for the US presidency could opt out of receiving public funding and the spending limits that acceptance of this money entailed. Equally significantly, his Republican rival, John McCain, was not at liberty to do the same. While much of the money that Obama raised went into television advertising, especially in the closing days of the campaign,[10] the crucial role that Rospars and his team had played in generating these vast new stores of cash through their creative email program was undeniable. According to established journalists, like Antonio Vargas at the *Washington Post,* "No other major campaign this cycle put technology and the Internet at the heart of its operation at this scale."[11]

In addition to running a highly successful official digital campaign, BSD also ensured that Obama had a strong presence across the range of new web 2.0 sites that had emerged since 2004 (Baumgartner and Morris, 2010). By election day, Obama's following on Facebook alone numbered in the tens of millions, far exceeding the total achieved by John McCain. Despite the increased opportunities for voter outreach and interaction that these new platforms provided, use of them by the campaign to involve and mobilize supporters was surprisingly limited (Towner and Dulio, 2011). Given that such reticence was unlikely the result of a lack of resources, or indeed of ambition among the digital team, speculation centered on the operational independence of the new spaces and their immunity from campaign oversight (Gueorguieva, 2008). The type of devolved organization structures that these social media tools offered opened up the possibility for another Dean-like disintegration. Certainly the low tolerance of BSD for supporter-led initiatives were soon in evidence as Joe Rospars swooped in take over a very popular, but unofficial, pro-Obama MySpace page shortly after the

Chicago senator entered the race. The site, set up by Californian Joe Anthony, was transferred over to the campaign by *MySpace* at Rospars's request and without the owner's consent (Castells, 2009; Levenshus, 2010). While Rospars later allowed those who had been disturbed by his action to vent their concerns through the official website, the incident demonstrated the level of "controlled decentralism" that occupied the heart of the Democrats' digital strategy. Joe Anthony was arguably a flower that Joe Trippi and Howard Dean would have allowed and even encouraged to bloom.

Despite the fact that Obama was a major party candidate, he was not expected to win the nomination. While it may be an exaggeration to see his victory as keeping the pluralists' hopes for equalization alive, the online campaign of 2008 did help to generate a surge in support for outsider candidates. In particular, two Republican hopefuls—Ron Paul, a Congressman from Texas, and Mike Huckabee, the former governor of Arkansas—succeeded in mobilizing an unexpectedly large cache of votes and money through their supporters' creative use of the internet. Huckabee's team mined the blogosphere to create "Huck's Army" and pulled off a surprise early victory in Iowa. The "Paulites" pioneered the "money bomb," which was a simple but highly effective fundraising technique that involved setting a date of some historical or political significance, and associating it with a monetary target for online donations. The date was then intensively promoted by the campaign as a deadline for donations.[12] The results were astounding. Paul netted a record total of 6 million dollars and 24,940 new donors in just one day, making him the leading recipient of online money by the end of 2007.[13]

Rather like Dean, however, both candidates ultimately failed to sustain their initial momentum. Paul in particular appeared to fall prey to the same centrifugal forces that beset his Democratic predecessor. His supporters became increasingly militant and active, but in a manner that occurred "primarily out of the field of vision of the campaign." Their use of disruptive tactics to bombard sites with supportive messages for Paul and attacks on opponents produced a backlash of negative publicity, and led to a series of high-profile blockings of "Paulites" from popular blog sites (Stromer-Galley, 2014: 114).[14]

Further evidence supporting the narrative of the 2008 digital campaign as a "challengers' market" emerged with the distinctly lackluster performance of the two preferred major-party candidates. Despite making promising starts, neither Hillary Clinton nor John McCain were seen as having the vision and commitment to "hardwire" the technology into their campaign as Obama had done. Clinton launched her campaign on YouTube, talking about her desire to use the web to enter into a "conversation" with the American public. McCain also saw an early boost in his fortunes with the release of his "Joe the Plumber" video that lambasted Obama's tax policies and quickly went viral.

Clinton soon relapsed into "old-fashioned broadcast" mode, however, relying on the web for top-down "image management" through the production of slick YouTube videos while supporters' voices were "relegated to secondary status" (Stromer-Galley, 2014: 130). McCain similarly lost momentum, failing to capitalize on the success of his video with prompts for supporters to act or engage with the campaign (Stromer-Galley, 2014: 131). His answer to *MyBO, McCain Space*, never came close to approximating the former's popularity and success.

Failure to engage with phase III–style digital campaigning by other mainstream actors below the national level was also widely in evidence. Studies of Senate races in 2004 revealed that take-up in general had essentially plateaued since 2000, with a quarter of contenders failing to launch a site. The deficit was particularly noticeable among third-party and Independent candidates, indicating that any national level swing toward greater equality had failed to trickle down to state and local actors (Conners, 2004). Among those candidates who had established any type of web presence, the use of community-building and activist-mobilization tools was scarce. Only around one-quarter of candidate sites featured blogs, and even fewer (16 percent) linked out to Meetup.org (Conners, 2004). Other studies of the 2004 digital campaign by Druckman et al. (2007) and Foot and Schneider (2006) that extended the analysis to include House and gubernatorial races confirmed this picture of stasis and standardization. Most candidates were found to have used the medium in a broadcasting manner to "inform" voters rather than engage them. Foot and Schneider (2006) did raise the possibility that the next election cycle might see an incorporation of some of the more "mobilizing" features that national-level campaigns had introduced. Subsequent analysis by Druckman et al. (2014) of the 2008 election cycle, however, quashed any such hopes. Their analysis, which focused particularly on the use of interactive web 2.0 technologies by congressional candidates, concluded that they were used "to a much lesser extent" than expected. Furthermore, while the authors accepted that a certain degree of inertia might explain some of the gaps in provision, they also found evidence that in many cases it was a conscious choice by front-runner candidates to avoid tools that reduced their capacity for message control.

As this wider angle lens on developments in US digital campaigns reveals, Obama was clearly more of an outlier than the norm in 2008. That said, it is difficult to deny the transformative impact of his campaign. Aside from the controlling tendencies shown toward *MySpace*, there was a genuine sense that BSD had introduced "new forms of collaboration" into election practice (Montero, 2009: 135; Stromer-Galley, 2014). For Johnson (2011), Obama's campaign presented a "new model" of online communication, one where "citizen input [was] encouraged and fostered" (26). The level of access to the inner workings of the

campaign and the amount of voter intelligence that was provided to ordinary supporters through tools like *MyBO* was unprecedented. The technology was instrumental in giving individuals the sense that they were on an "equal footing with employees, so they felt like part of the team" (Levenshus, 2010: 328). Furthermore, although the new tools and platforms were key to delivering this feeling of inclusivity and involvement, the bigger shift was arguably in the mindset and philosophy that BSD brought to the project. Even for Dean and Trippi, the focus had been on the technology and cherry picking those tasks that were most easily transferred online. Websites with dynamic baseball bats were seen as smart fundraising devices, meetups provided the venues for activist organizing, and the blog acted as a national noticeboard. The key switch that Obama introduced—and perhaps the defining moment in the evolution of web campaigning to date—was to reverse this logic and start with the campaign activities that mattered most, and then understand how the internet could be used to enhance them.

Obama's core strengths in community organizing and activist mobilization provided the foundation and driving ethos behind the development of *MyBO* and the wider program of CIC and two-step voter contacting. This interaction and reciprocity of real-world and virtual networks delivered a new model for running campaigns that, according to Castells (2009), "reprogrammed" existing communication structures. Horizontal and vertical linkages were reconfigured to create an organization that was both "local and global, interactive and centralizing at the same time" (394). Thus while Obama's core campaign objectives or philosophy remained in place, the internet brought an entirely new level of intensity and efficiency to his activity. It was, to misquote Mr. Spock, community organizing, but just not as we know it.

Phase IV: Individual Voter Mobilization (2012)

If 2008 had marked a "step change" in the role and importance of the internet in the conduct of a national election campaign (Turk, 2012), developments in 2012 constituted a quantum leap. The election of Obama in 2008 had clearly signaled to future contenders for office that digital technology needed to be at the heart of their operations. However, despite the moves by Blue State Digital to "hardwire" the internet into the inner workings of the campaign, there was still a sense that it formed a secondary channel for the core tasks of message communication and voter persuasion. According to David Plouffe, Obama's campaign manager in 2008, these activities were best left to the mainstream media, with the internet taking on the vital, but supplementary, jobs of "organizing and fundraising."[15]

Obama's historic victory in 2008 brought an emphatic end to this compartmentalized or "analog" style of thinking about the digital campaign.[16] Over the next four years, the DNC and Obama's re-election vehicle—Obama For America (OFA)—invested heavily in increasing their digital arsenal and particularly in advancing its GOTV capabilities. In doing so, they built on the growing competence in data-driven campaigning that had emerged among left-wing organizations since turn of the millennium.[17] This new approach and "upskilling" had received a significant boost with appointment of Howard Dean in 2005 as DNC chairman (Issenberg, 2012). Having learned from his own experience of running for the presidency, Dean implemented an extensive program of reform of state party infrastructure. This included an overhaul and standardization of their IT systems and voter records. A particular focus of his "50 state policy" was the creation of a comprehensive national voter file that would be shared by candidates, and continuously updated across electoral cycles (Kreiss and Welch, 2015).

Dean's work gave the Democrats and other left-leaning organizations an important head start in entering the new era of data-intensive campaigning. Democrat-supporting data and software vendors such as *Catalist* and *NGP-VAN* were quick to recognize the new market for their services, in terms of helping candidates to access, and make full use of, the new streamlined voter files. Beyond the parties, progressive nonprofit organizations and labor unions were also eager to exploit the new technologies and data sources, and improve the accuracy and efficiency of their GOTV methods and field operations. There was also a growing interest among these groups in the work of academics and particularly that of social scientists Alan Gerber and Don Green, who were seen as pioneering a new behavioral science of voter mobilization.[18] This combination of technological and scientific advances in voter mobilization efforts led to the formation of the Analyst Institute in 2007 in Washington, DC. This provided an important forum for practitioners and activists on the left, along with academic analysts, to share and exchange the latest thinking about how to increase the public impact of their campaigns.[19]

Field operations also underwent a major rethink at this time within leftist circles, as Democratic activists like Zak Exley, who had been instrumental in the rise of *MoveOn.org*, started to push for better training of staff and volunteers in the use of new digital techniques. These efforts culminated in the foundation of the New Organizing Institute (NOI) in 2005. Based in Washington, DC, the core activities of the NOI centered on running a series of "boot camps" in online organizing that would draw in progressive political activists around the country. Although its program focused on capacity building in the use of the new tools, its key message was about the value of digital as means of enhancing and scaling up "tried and tested" methods of community organizing, rather than replacing them.[20]

It was in this rapidly developing context of commercial, scientific, and organizational innovation on the left of US politics that Obama's 2012 re-election campaign was hatched. Drawing on the rich pool of digital skills, resources, and infrastructure that now surrounded the Democratic Party, his team introduced an entirely new style of campaign in 2012. Computational management practices now dominated activities in a manner hitherto unseen (Kreiss and Welch, 2015: 13). Although Obama still retained the services of a traditional "all-purpose" campaign manager with his appointment of Jim Messina, Messina was clearly on board and on message with the new "data science"–led approach, declaring early in the campaign that his goal was to "measure everything."[21] This oft-repeated phrase came to encapsulate the new *zeitgeist* of US campaign management. Indeed, it now made little sense to talk about the web or e-campaign as a stand-alone entity within the wider organization.

One very visible sign of these shifting priorities was the dramatic increase in the size of Obama's digital team. While 2008 was seen as a record-breaking year for staff recruitment, 2012 dwarfed these efforts, with the numbers hired trebling to over 300 by election day. Teddy Goff, a BSD employee and the director of Obama's 2008 online campaign in the battleground states, was promoted to the top spot.[22] As well as presiding over a much larger team of operatives, Goff also had to recruit and manage an increasingly diversified and specialized workforce, which now included up to 50 data analysts and a similar number of software engineers.[23] For most onlookers, the new arrivals elicited a mixture of curiosity and amusement. Media headlines talked about the "nerds" that had gone "marching in" to Obama's headquarters.[24] Some seasoned observers were less sanguine, however, likening their entry into the political arena to an "alien" invasion. Peggy Noonan, a former speechwriter for Ronald Reagan, was particularly critical of the new appointments. Having read an advertisement for a vacancy in Obama's analytics team, she used her column in *The Wall Street Journal* to declare that politics was now done by "martians."[25]

The significant expansion in digital personnel was accompanied by their division into specialist teams. At the center was team Digital, managed by Joe Rospars (now Obama's chief digital strategist) who provided continuity from the previous election and delivered the outward facing parts of the campaign (i.e., email programs, web design, and online fundraising). In addition, two new smaller support teams were established—team Analytics and team Tech. While the former was led by Dan Wagner, who had prior campaign experience; the latter was championed by Harper Reed, who was a newcomer to the political scene. Reed's background was in the finance industry, where he had focused on building software to enhance commercial collaboration. His appointment as chief technology officer (CTO) reshaped the structure of the campaign, in that his sub-team acted more like an independent "internet startup" within the wider

OFA organization, delivering a range of IT and data services that were "unique in the history of presidential politics."[26]

With the core teams in place by May 2011, the work now began in earnest to design a "world class" digital infrastructure that would bring a new scientific approach to voter mobilization.[27] A vital part of delivering that new model of electoral engineering involved reflecting on the experiences of 2008 and, in particular, learning from the mistakes that BSD had made. Attention quickly settled on the *Houdini* project, which was seen as a major GOTV investment that had not delivered. The main goal of *Houdini* had been to "revolutionize" the efficiency of the "ground game" by allowing for the real-time tracking of voter turnout by local poll watchers. It had suffered a spectacular fail on election day, however, as the hotline set up to transfer the local data collapsed under the weight of demand. Volunteers were left to text or call in voter codes to the local office, which were then entered manually.[28] Reviewing the problems, team Tech argued that a fundamental upgrade and reform of internal IT management systems was required to prevent the recurrence of these problems. As a result, most data services were migrated to Amazon *Cloud* services, and then dispersed and replicated in servers across the country. Regular checks on the system's robustness were carried out during the course of the campaign, through a series of simulated network outages and surges in demand.[29]

A second major area for improvement identified by Goff and his team was the suboptimal level of software and data integration that had existed between teams and applications in 2008.[30] For Clint Ecker, a senior software engineer in OFA,

> [o]ne of the biggest problems in the last campaign was that you had all these people who are out in the field, who are volunteering, who start building their own versions of these rogue tools to do the same thing over and over again. Every field office assembled its own patchwork of tools using spreadsheets or a hacked Web application to track operations. They communicated over Google groups or simple e-mail lists. This meant it was hard to keep everyone on the same page.[31]

In response to these problems, team Tech created *Narwhal*. Sitting at the apex of the cloud, this "whale" of a platform was designed to host and integrate the campaign's collection of software and data, allowing multiple users to download, upload, and modify resources on an ongoing basis and in "real time." This constant updating of records and integration of data sources provided the ideal environment for application of the new modeling tools developed by team Analytics to identify priority voters and forecast local outcomes.[32]

As well as identifying and dealing with some of the problems encountered in 2008, team Digital was also eager to enhance and build on the initiatives that had

worked well for them in 2008. In particular, the indirect or "two-step flow" model of persuasion or CIC that *MyBO* had engineered was seen as ripe for expansion. The end result was *Dashboard*, a new online platform that was designed to maximize the efficiency of the campaign's volunteer management program and its canvassing efforts. While it retained some of the community-building ethos of *MyBO*, the main aim of *Dashboard* was to sign up and move activists into GOTV operations as quickly as possible. New registrants were allocated to a local neighborhood team, typically within 72 hours after first contact, and then dispatched into the field. Armed with mobile devices, they then entered the results of their contact efforts and any vote commitments they received into their own personal Dashboards. The connection into Narwhal ensured that these data were used to update into existing voter records, ready for interrogation by team Analytics.

In addition to upgrading and streamlining the CIC platform, the Digital team took steps to improve the accuracy and precision of the mobilizing activities it generated. Two applications in particular helped with this. The first, "Call Tool," focused on fine-tuning the phone canvassing efforts of volunteers to maximize their contacts with undecided voters in battleground states. The second, a targeted sharing app developed for Facebook, was aimed at extending and sharpening the peer-to-peer exchange of campaign content among supporters. Once downloaded, it allowed the campaign to identify persuadable individuals or "priority voters" among their supporters' online networks. The supporter would then receive specific prompts designed by the campaign that they could use to target selected friends to vote for Obama. According to the campaign, this innovation resulted in 5 million additional campaign contacts among the half a million supporters who downloaded the app. Of those 5 million contacts, one-fifth reportedly acted on the prompts they received.[33]

Of course, the advances made in 2012 were extended beyond these initiatives. Team Digital was credited with creating the "most sophisticated email fundraising program ever."[34] According to FEC reports, Obama's war chest swelled from $500 million in 2008 to $690 million in 2012. A whopping $504 million of that total was reportedly generated through digital channels.[35] A significant portion of team Digital's success was attributed to their launch of "Quick Donate," which, as its name suggests, brought the ease of one-click purchasing to campaign donation. According to one post-election report, Quick Donate alone raised $115 million, $75 million of which, it was claimed, would otherwise not have been raised.[36] Other major breakthroughs included the production of a new "micro-listening" software—*Dreamcatcher*—which was designed to decode social media chatter and identify potential Obama supporters.[37]

On the Republican side, there were efforts to launch similar programs. *MyMitt* was Romney's version of *Dashboard*, and *Orca*, a GOTV program, was presented as a superior version of *Narwhal*. It was clear from the outset, however,

that Romney's campaign faced an uphill struggle to compete. Not only was he coming from behind in terms of building from scratch the digital infrastructure that Obama had had years to create, those in charge of it had to fight hard to siphon resources away from other areas of the campaign. Despite being publicly upbeat about their prospects, Romney's digital media strategist, Zac Moffat, did not enjoy the central position that Teddy Goff held within the Obama organization (Stromer-Galley, 2014: 167). In terms of the new areas of investment by the Democrats—tech infrastructure and voter analytics—Romney simply did not have the financial muscle or the time to match the pace and scale of Obama's commitments. Instead, much of his tech R&D was outsourced to commercial providers.

Making a virtue out of necessity, Moffat openly derided Obama's investment in voter modeling as an ego-driven exercise in "vanity metrics" (Stromer-Galley, 2014: 167). The limitations of the Republicans' digital operations were laid bare on election day, however, as its "star" performer, *Orca*, collapsed in spectacular style. Far from delivering the killer blow to *Narwhal*, the software proved entirely unfit for its purpose, having been rushed out of the lab just as the polls opened, without any beta testing or training for users.[38]

Just as the failure of *Houdini* had proved to be a touchstone for the Democrats in reforming their digital strategy, the crash of *Orca* served as a symbol of just how far behind the Republicans had fallen in the digital campaign stakes. Although concerns had been voiced since their loss to Obama in 2008,[39] the election of 2012, according to one insider, provided a "rude awakening" to the acute deficit that the party now faced.[40] This perception was confirmed by the RNC's post-election report, the "Growth and Opportunity Project," which sought to diagnose and improve on the failings of 2012. According to the authors, a key element of the Democrats' success lay in the "clear edge" they now held with regard to technological innovation, and particularly the extent to which they were able to link this with their field operations. By "marrying grassroots politics with technology and analytics, they successfully contacted, persuaded and turned out their margin of victory." Going further, the report argued that while some of this superiority stemmed from the Democrats' greater investment and resources in the technology, an equally critical factor was the more open "culture of data and learning" that had developed across the party during the past decade. This collaborative and collectivist ethos, they concluded, was something that the Republican Party had found more difficult to cultivate, given its more individualistic outlook and hierarchical structure.[41]

Such a frank admission of the deep problems the Republicans were now facing in running an effective digital campaign was significant on a number of grounds. First, it revealed how central the technology had become for parties in the battle to mobilize votes. Second, in the context of this book, it adds weight

to the findings from earlier chapters about the critical role of left-wing parties in pushing the cycle of change in digital campaigning, particularly with the regard to entry into the third community-building phase. The extent of these differences between the two main parties, and how they compare to the performances of parties in the United Kingdom, Australia, and France is shown more clearly in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 reports the results from the application of the CIC index to the two candidates' online organizing platforms in 2012—*Dashboard* and *MyMitt*.[42] This exercise reveals that on all counts, the Democrats' site out-performed the Republicans'. This is particularly the case with regard to voter mobilization actions and community building. On the latter front, Romney provided minimal space for supporters to meet and greet one another. Obama, by contrast, remained somewhat more in tune with the spirit of *MyBo* and its social networking origins.

Despite its stronger performance, the index also reveals that *Dashboard* did not fully exploit all the available opportunities for supporter mobilization. Taking the site's performance as a whole, we find that only around 60 percent of the potential CIC content (as measured by the index) was provided to the end-user. If we compare these results with those produced by application of the index in other countries' (see Tables 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1), we can see that US national campaigns were not necessarily the most advanced in using digital platforms to mobilize their base. In France, for example, in the same year, *Tous Hollande*, the online activist hub of French socialist candidate Francois Hollande, achieved a similar overall score to *Dashboard* (see Table 6.1). Furthermore, if one looks more closely at the specific competencies of the two sites, it appears that *Tous Hollande* actually performed better in the areas of GOTV and message distribution than *Dashboard*. It was only because of the latter's stronger emphasis on community building that it came out ahead.

Of course, it is possible and indeed quite likely that had the same exercise been carried out in 2008, we might have reached a different conclusion, at least on the comparative performance of Obama's site. *MyBO* was arguably the high watermark for CIC in the United States and indeed globally. *Dashboard*'s more spartan quality may have been due to a deliberate paring back of the site's interactive qualities, in a bid to focus supporters' energy on carrying out more externally relevant voter mobilization tasks.

Closer inspection of other aspects of the Obama's 2012 digital operation suggests a broader shift was occurring toward phase IV. In particular, digital staff now formed the nerve center of operations, designing and applying a range of specialized tools to seek out and mobilize new pockets of electoral support. In power logic terms, normalization appears to have risen to the fore. The equalizing momentum that Howard Dean had briefly injected into proceedings in

Table 7.1 **US Presidential Candidates Citizen-Initiated Campaigning
Scores, 2012**

	Dashboard	*MyMitt*
Community Building		
Profile	√	√
Photo	√	√
Biography	√	—
Why joined	√	—
Set up/join groups	—	—
Set up blog	√	—
Set up Wiki	√	—
Email/msg system		
Externally promote profile	√	√
Subtotal (additive 0–8)	7	3
Resource Generation	√	√
Personal fundraising	na	na
Promote membership	√	√
Sign up as local organizer	na	na
Sign up as candidate	√	—
Organize/add event		
Vote leaders to attend events	—	—
Subtotal (additive 0–4)	3	2
Voter Mobilization		
GOTV offline		
Access phonebank	√	√
Sign up for f2f canvassing	√	—
Sign up to discuss with f&f	—	—
Leaflets download	—	—
Externally promote event		
GOTV online	√	—
Send email	—	—
Post to Facebook	√	—
Post to Twitter	—	—
GOTV phone app	√	√
Email forward to editor	—	—
Start/promote e-petition	—	—
Subtotal (additive 0–11)	5	2

Table 7.1 **Continued**

	Dashboard	MyMitt
Message Production		
Message creation		
Policy email fwd/customize	—	—
Poster/leaflet create/customize	—	—
Policy input/feedback	—	—
Message distribution		
Web banners/ads d-load	√	√
Posters/leaflets d-load	—	—
Email/share policy docs	—	—
News feed to website	—	—
Share blog posts externally	—	—
Link to SNS profile	√	—
Link to Twitter account	√	—
Import email contacts	√	√
Subtotal (additive 0–11)	4	2
Overall Score (0–34)[*]	19	9
Standardized Score (0–100)	61	32

Standardized scores are calculated by transforming each sub-index into a 0–100 range and then averaging the scores. See Appendix 4.1 for details of variable definitions.

[*] The maximum raw score on the CIC index was 34 for US sites (2 points lower than for the United Kingdom and Australia and 1 point lower than for France). This was due to dropping both the "sign up as a candidate" and "promote party membership" variables from the resource generation sub-index as they were not applicable for the US presidential sites.

2004, and that Obama had sustained to a degree in 2008, was now fading fast. At the systemic level, competition had reached perhaps its lowest level. As the Republican's post-mortem on their 2012 electoral performance had concluded, digital campaigning (and indeed campaigning more generally) was now dominated by the Democrats to a degree hitherto unseen in US politics.

Internally, the level of top-down management and oversight under the new elites intensified. The centralized system of software and app development under *Narwhal* was highly efficient but, according to some insiders, it had a stifling effect on the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit that had given the Democrats their edge over the Republicans in the first place. For some campaign analysts, the dominance of *Narwhal* had "killed an important ecosystem for bubbling up innovation."[43] The increasing convergence of online and offline strategy also meant that the key decisions about where, who and how to mobilize were left to a small inner team of data scientists, or "the cave," as a number of media

observers had christened them.[44] While there was still some scope for local activists to exert tactical autonomy through tools like *Dashboard,* their empowerment was born more of expediency and a desire to maximize the mobilizing reach of the campaign, rather than to promote internal democracy. Indeed, with the help of *Narwhal,* volunteers' performance could now be measured, monitored, and managed in real time, allowing headquarters to control and allocate resources in an even more precise and centralized manner than ever before.

The View from Below: Mapping Digital Campaign Cycles in the US Electorate

The second half of this chapter re-examines these trends in digital campaigning from the voters' perspective. To what extent are the changes and differences identified in US parties' use of digital technology reflected within the electorate and among partisans? To what extent do we see a growing emphasis on more active modes of consumption, particularly during the Dean campaign and the first Obama campaign? Has this been concentrated primarily in Democratic supporters, or have Republican supporters kept more in step with their rivals at the mass level? Did 2012 see a significant growth in the numbers of voters receiving digital contact from the parties, or have campaigns simply become more expert at reaching those all-important swing voters? We approach the task, as in previous chapters, by mapping the levels and changes in our three main modes of voter engagement—read, redistribute, and receive—among US citizens with a range of survey data. As well as tracking changes at the demand side of US politics, we also compare the results to findings from the previous chapters to compare levels and particularly patterns of change in consumption over time.

READING, REDISTRIBUTING, AND RECEIVING THE WEB CAMPAIGN OVER TIME

To examine the demand for web campaigning among the US electorate over time, we make use of three data sets collected during the 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential elections. The 2004 and 2008 data sets were produced by the Pew Research Center as part of their "Internet and American Life" time series (now the Internet, Science, and Tech program). For 2012, we make use of the ANES pre/post-election survey that included the CSES module of items on online contact reported in Chapter 2. The switch to ANES data in 2012 provides consistency in the figures used in the earlier comparative analysis, but was also necessitated by a lack of comparable Pew data for that year.[45] All of the surveys were

conducted post-election, and drew respondents from offline sampling frames. This made it possible to compare levels of e-campaign activity among the online population to the population as a whole. Survey mode differed between Pew and ANES in that the former relied on telephone random digit dialing (RDD), while the latter used a combination of web and face-to-face methods (see Appendix 7.1 for full details).

Given that the Pew studies were designed primarily for measuring citizens' use of online technologies during the campaign, they contained a much wider range of items to measure the main categories of engagement than the ANES. These differences inevitably introduce some measurement error into the analysis, which means that, as in earlier chapters, we focus more on comparing change in the relative prominence of our three modes of engagement over time, rather than in their absolute levels. This is particularly the case between 2008 to 2012, when the switch from Pew to ANES data occurred. Table 7.2 reports the top-line findings in terms of the frequencies of the three modes of voter engagement in the digital campaign—read, redistribute, and receive (and their component or sub-measure)—across the three presidential elections from 2004 to 2012.

As one would expect, the appetite for digital politics among the electorate has grown over time. What is perhaps more interesting, however, is the extent to which it compares with the levels of attention and growth seen in the countries examined in earlier chapters. Essentially, the US public exhibits a much stronger initial appetite for online campaign material than its counterparts in the United Kingdom, Australia, and France, and has largely maintained that lead over time. Starting in 2004, we can see that up to one-third of the population had "read" something about the campaign online, which is a level that is typically achieved in other countries at least one full election cycle later. The evidence from France and the United Kingdom (see Tables 6.2 and 4.2), for example, shows that these countries reached similar levels among their publics by as late as 2010 and 2012, respectively. Within this picture, it is also notable that interest in the official campaign sites is much higher among US voters at an early stage, compared with levels seen elsewhere. The findings from Australia in Chapter 5 (Table 5.2), for example, show that even by 2013, just over one in 10 of the population reported visiting the site of a party or candidate. This was a level of interest that had been reached among the US population around a decade earlier.

The figures for the two other modes of e-campaign engagement—"redistribute" and "receive"—show an even more pronounced gap in activity levels among US voters and those in the three other nations studied so far. As with "read," the disparity is sustained over time, with "receive" rates being at least double those observed in comparable elections elsewhere. While it is tempting to interpret these differences as evidence of an American exceptionalism in web campaigning, the findings from the large *N* analysis of Chapter 3 would appear

Table 7.2 **Voter Engagement in US Presidential Digital Campaigns, 2004–2012**

		Mode of Engagement					
		Voter as Audience—READ		Voter as Activist—REDISTRIBUTE		Voter as Target—RECEIVE	
Year	Internet use	Online news	Candidate sites	Sign-up/Download	Share/Exchange	Party (Direct)	F&F (Indirect)
2004	60%	34.0	12.9%	6.6	12.2	—	—
N = 2,200		(57.2)	(21.8)	(11.1)	(14.2)	—	—
		READ 35.4 (59.5)		REDISTRIBUTE 3.2 (5.3)		RECEIVE 13.9 (25.9) —	
2008	73%	42.9	25.3	11.6	24.1	26.2	35.6
N = 2,254		(58.7)	(34.6)	(16.0)	(33.0)	(35.8)	(48.8)
		READ 46.4 (63.5)		REDISTRIBUTE 7.2 (9.9)		RECEIVE 43.1 (58.9)	
2012	89%[a]	49.1	12.9	9.9	18.6	16.2	14.3
N = 5622		(55.1)	(14.5)	(11.1)	(20.8)	(18.2)	(16.0)
		READ 51.2 (57.8)		REDISTRIBUTE 5.3 (6.2)		RECEIVE 25.7 (28.8)[b]	

[a] The 2012 ANES full sample was recruited via random probability methods but was conducted using two modes: face to face (N = 2,056) and the web (N = 3,860). The face to face (f2f) mode included the internet use question and was used to calculate the figure of 89.2% internet use in the population as a whole (N = 1,762, "weight_ f2f" applied). The estimates of the modes of engagement for internet users are calculated from the combined sample of internet users in the f2f survey (1,762) and the full web survey sample (3860), i.e, total final N of 5,622 "weight_full" was applied. The estimates of the population or full sample engaging in each mode was derived by multiplying the % reported for internet user by .892, which re-estimated them on a 0–100 scale.

[b] Figures for "receive" mode differ from those reported for the United States in Chapter 3, Table 3.1. This is due to the fact that we are using a weighted version of the full ANES sample (i.e., web and f2f respondents) for our estimates in this chapter, while the figures reported for the United States in Chapter 3 are from the CSES module 4 data

set (with "original demographic" weight applied). The CSES US sample is smaller than the full ANES version, as it only included responses to the f2f survey ($N = 2,056$). While in the case of online direct or party contact the figures are very similar (17% in Table 3.1 and 16.2% here), we do see clearer difference in the figures reported for receiving indirect or friends and family contact and total online contact received. In the CSES and Table 3.1 these figures were rounded to 23% and 34%, respectively; in the ANES sample (i.e., f2f and web samples combined) the equivalent figures are 14% and 26%. While this still puts the United States in tier one of Table 3.2 and among the top-most nations for digital mobilization, the lower estimate, particularly for indirect (friends and family) online contact, warranted closer inspection. Breaking down the ANES results by survey mode, we can see the figures from the f2f sample were comparable to those reported in the CSES (which we would expect), while the web sample estimates differ. Specifically, the figures for the ANES f2f sample for direct, indirect, and total receive are 16%, 23%, and 32%, which correspond closely to the CSES figures reported in Table 3.1, and are differences that could plausibly be accounted for by weighting differences. The same estimates from the web sample are 18%, 12% ,and 26%. Given that the web sample was twice as large as the f2f, when the two were combined the former will have a stronger effect on the overall estimates, thereby pulling them downward. We do not know precisely why the web sample figures for indirect receive mode were lower than those produced in the f2f; however, the two samples did differ on key demographics prior to weighting, and thus application of a combined weight may have had a differential impact on estimates of other variables.

Figures are % and reported for overall sample and for internet users in parentheses.

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to challenge that narrative, or at least to moderate it. Specifically, the results in Table 3.1 showed that there were similar or even higher levels of digital contact or "receive" mode reported by voters in several other countries, beyond the case studies examined in our earlier chapters. Whether these higher levels of engagement extend back in time and across all modes for these nations is not possible to determine from the CSES data set given the limited number of questions in the module overall and its cross-sectional design. The fact that comparable figures were obtained on at least one measure of activity for the United States, however, would suggest that while the US population is clearly the most political active citizenry of those studied in depth in this book, they are not necessarily the most active worldwide.

As well as allowing us to compare the United States to our other countries, Table 7.2 also permits a closer examination of changes in US voters' engagement with digital campaigns over time. As was the case for the other countries examined in earlier chapters, "read" is the dominant mode of engagement across all years and increases over time. By 2012, just over half of the population (51.2 percent) reported accessing some type of election-related content, compared with just over a third (35.4 percent) in 2004. Within this overall pattern of growth, however, we can also discern that 2008 was actually the peak year for most activities. Visits to official campaign sites in particular fell quite noticeably in 2012 from their 2008 high point. Furthermore, although levels of overall consumption of online campaign news grew among the population as a whole over the eight-year time period, by 2012 there was a very slight dip in interest levels if one controls for access and looks only at internet users. According to the table, 59.5 percent of internet users "read" something about the campaign in 2004, versus 57.8 percent who did so in 2012.

It is important to note that, as with the findings from the French case, the change in levels of citizen engagement between elections, and here particularly the drop between 2008 to 2012, may have a methodological explanation. Essentially, this corresponds with the switch from Pew to ANES data sets. The differences in sample recruitment and mode between the two studies may have led to an over and/or under-representation of more politically active respondents. Pew relies primarily on telephone RDD, while the ANES is conducted using a combination of face-to-face and internet methods. Furthermore, there are differences in the measures used by each study, with some of the ANES items being more narrowly worded than their Pew equivalents. The item used to measure sharing in the 2012 ANES, for example—which forms a critical component of "redistribute"—focused specifically on whether a respondent had sent political messages via social media. The 2004 and 2008 Pew questions asked more generally about whether respondents had shared various types of campaign

content online (see Appendix 7.1 for more details on mode and the specific wording of questions across the surveys).

Even if we accept that at least part of the explanation for the trends observed in Table 7.2 may be sample-related, the idea that 2008 formed a blip or high point in the levels of public interest and active involvement in the digital campaign clearly corresponds with the evidence from the earlier supply-side analysis. The election of 2008 was Obama's first campaign for the presidency, the year of *MyBO* and the slogan of "Yes We Can." It also generated the 13 million–strong email list that OFA had later relied on as the basis for *Narwhal* and the 2012 digital campaign. The finding that the voters' desire to engage in CIC activities had waned somewhat by 2012 would thus appear entirely plausible. Indeed, it confirms some of the earlier speculation that his digital team had switched to designing tools like *Dashboard* that were more focused on GOTV and resource-generating activities, rather than promoting more participatory and community-boosting practices.

While declines in read and redistribute modes by 2012 appear to correlate with changes in elite behavior, the dramatic drop in receive in 2012 is, at first glance, more of a puzzle. Given the massive resources that the Democrats dedicated to improving their micro-targeting precision that year, and the increased popularity of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter that actively encourage content sharing, one might have expected the rates of formal and informal contact to have risen in this election. Although methodological differences between the survey instruments and sampling methods cannot be discounted in explaining the disparity, the idea that a natural decline occurred in the frequency of digital contact between the two elections is not entirely implausible. Certainly, the lower levels of enthusiasm and momentum that surrounded Obama's candidacy in 2012 may have reduced the level of peer-to-peer mobilization. Furthermore, in terms of direct contact, the overall amount of party contacting does not necessarily provide an indication of its effectiveness. Indeed, if Obama's digital teams had significantly improved the quality and precision of their efforts by 2012, then a decrease in levels might follow due to their increased accuracy in finding those voters that really mattered to the outcome. We will return to this point when we look the profile of those contacted online in 2012.

Having examined the patterns of engagement with digital campaigns among the US electorate over time, we now break this broader picture down to look at the distribution across partisan and Independent voters. Table 7.3 contains the key findings on this question. The table reports the growth in internet use among Republican and Democrat identifiers as well as for Independents, and compares their rates of reading, redistributing, and receiving digital campaign content over the three elections. The first column shows, as we might expect, that internet

Table 7.3 **Party Supporters in US Presidential Digital Campaigns, 2007–2012 (Internet Users Only)**

Election Year and Party	Internet Access	READ	REDISTRIBUTE	RECEIVE Direct (Party)	RECEIVE Indirect (Friends & Family)
2004					
Republican (*N* = 678)	66.1	63.2	4.8	22.8	
Democrat (*N* = 731)	56.2	62.4	8.0	39.4	
Independent (*N* = 561)	63.5	59.5	4.2	19.4	
2008					
Republican (*N* = 599)	83.8	66.6	7.1	36.6	55.0
Democrat (*N* = 780)	70.2	66.7	16.5	40.0	52.7
Independent (*N* = 634)	73.2	62.5	7.2	34.7	47.0
2012					
Republican (*N* = 1,389)	92.1*	57.9	6.9	19.9	17.3
Democrat (*N* = 2,363)	86.6	58.0	7.8	19.9	14.1
Independent (*N* = 1,845)	89.3	58.8	3.7	15.8	16.5

Mode of Engagement spans the READ, REDISTRIBUTE, and RECEIVE columns; *RECEIVE* spans Direct (Party) and Indirect (Friends & Family).

Estimates of % internet access and mode of engagement survey are based on weighted data. Survey weights supplied. See Appendix 7.1 for further details of surveys and variable definitions.

* The figures for % internet access by party in 2012 are based on face to face (f2f) sample which included the internet use question (weight_ftf applied). All other estimates and *N* reported for 2012 ANES are based on the full sample of internet users in the f2f and web survey respondents (*N* = 5,622)

Sources: 2004 and 2008—Pew Internet and American Life Project data sets; 2012—ANES 2012 Time Series Study (2 wave pre-/post-election). Reported *N*s are unweighted and refer to the full sample. Internet access figures are the % of that total that reported being online. The figures for Read, Redistribute, and Receive are % of the online party identifiers that engaged in these activities.

access has increased over time for all groups. The rates of growth are somewhat lower for Democrat supporters than for the other two groups. The difference is not particularly surprising given the generally lower socioeconomic status of the party's support base. Once we control for levels of internet use, a more balanced picture of partisan usage emerges. This is particularly evident with regard to reading about the campaign. Here we see that the gap between Democrats and Republicans closes almost entirely, with both sets of partisans displaying similar levels of interest in accessing news and official information about the candidates. As we move to examine the more active and targeted modes of voter engagement among party supporters, however, a more interesting pattern of difference starts to re-emerge.

Overall, the redistribution of candidate web content is, not surprisingly, more common among partisans than Independents, and when compared to the electorate as a whole (as seen in Table 7.2). Furthermore, until 2012 it was the Democrats that held the advantage in this area of supporter activity. The election of 2008 saw a significant boost in the numbers of Democrat identifiers engaging in this new style of citizen-initiated style of campaigning. This increase matches the narrative presented earlier in the chapter about the stronger promotion of phase III digital campaigning by the left, and particularly under Obama's leadership. The subsequent sharp fall in the level of redistributive activity among Democrats in 2012 confirms the idea that 2008 constituted something of an "all time high" in terms of their capacity to actively engage their supporter base online. While the drop, as noted earlier, may result from the changes in survey method in 2012, the fact that the same decline does not happen among Republican supporters suggests there was a genuine rise and fall of enthusiasm for this type of activity among left-wing partisans.

Looking finally at the rates of receiving online contact among partisans and Independents, unlike the findings for redistribution, the peak in 2008 and subsequent decline in 2012 are universal across both sets of party supporters. What is particularly notable here, however, and again is somewhat at odds with our supply-side narrative, is the relative parity across the two parties in terms of direct contact received by voters. Despite the Democrats' widely accepted greater firepower in this area, it does not seem that this translated into their supporters actually receiving a significantly higher level of contact and communication from the campaign during the election. Furthermore, in both 2008 and 2012, the Republicans actually appear to have a slight competitive advantage with regard to informal contacting. Republican supporters report the highest "hit rate" in terms of receiving mobilization cues from their online social networks. Such findings clearly raise further questions about the presumed superiority of the Democrats' digital mobilization efforts, particularly in 2012. While it is difficult to account for the unexpectedly active strong peer-to-peer online

contacting by Republicans in these elections, it is possible that it stemmed from a realization among the grassroots of the weakness of their official party machinery. The much-publicized gap between McCain and then Romney and Obama in terms of the strength of the latter's digital operations may have had the effect of stimulating their supporters to make the most of the online tools available to them, and to go into digital battle on their candidates' behalf.

The final section of this chapter examines the question of the impact of digital mobilization in more depth. In particular, we look at who in the wider electorate received direct and indirect online contact. Is there any evidence that these newer modes of contact are reaching a different and under-mobilized audience? To what extent might they be affecting vote choice? Table 7.4 helps to address these questions by comparing the socio-demographic profile of respondents who reported receiving different types of online contact (direct and indirect) in presidential elections from 2004 to 2012 with those who received more traditional types of "offline" contact. The table also reports the vote choice for each of the different modes of contact, compared with the population as a whole.

The figures are interesting in that they reveal a picture of both change and continuity in the type of citizens who are contacted online during US presidential elections. In particular, there does not appear to be a stronger gender bias in rates of online contact, even in the earlier days of presidential campaigns. The age profile of those contacted, however, does show a clear bias toward younger people. While this skew does reduce over time for direct contact from the parties, it actually becomes more prominent for indirect forms of online contact. By 2012, older voters (i.e., those over 50) are more likely to be contacted online by parties than those under 50. This switch is quite marked over only three elections and indicates that whether by intent or accident, parties were improving their ability to reach older and more "reliable" voters with their online messaging. By contrast, rates of indirect online persuasion, which are largely out of their control, are noticeably more concentrated among younger voters.

The association of higher educational attainment and income with all types of digital contact is very strong and present across all years. College-educated individuals are much more likely to receive a digital message from a political party or from someone in their social network, compared to those who failed to graduate high school. Finally, in racial terms, we do see evidence of a bias in favor of white voters in earlier years. By 2012, this has reduced somewhat, particularly among black voters, where we see contact levels showing a closer parity to their numbers within the population as a whole.

When we turn to examine the voting profile of those experiencing online contact, an interesting pattern emerges. As the final two rows of the table reveal, until 2012, voters who experienced digital contact of any type (i.e., either from parties or their social networks) were more likely to report voting Democrat than the

Table 7.4 **Socio-Demographic Correlates for "Receive" Mode over Time**

	2004			2008				2012			
	Online (total)	Offline (total)	Total Sample	Online Direct	Online Indirect	Offline Direct (Mail)	Total Sample	Online Direct	Online Indirect	Offline Direct	Total Sample
Sex											
Male	49	48	48	53	47.5	48	49	49	45.5	47	48
Female	51	52	52	47	52.5	52	51	51	54.5	53	52
Age											
17–29	23	16	21	22	27	18	20	11	24	9	21
30–49	43	39	40	47	43	36	37	29	37	29	32
50–64	25	26	23	24	24	27	26	35	24	34	28
65+	9	19	17	8	7	18	17	24	14	29	19
Education											
Less than HS	3	11	14	3	3	9	13	6	5	8	10
HS graduate	20	33	36	23	24	35	36	21	21	26	30
Some college	30	25	24	29	29	24	23	29	32	29	30
College	47	31	26	45	43	31	37	43	42	36	29

Continued

Table 7.4 Continued

	2004			2008				2012			
	Online (total)	Offline (total)	Total Sample	Online Direct	Online Indirect	Offline Direct (Mail)	Total Sample	Online Direct	Online Indirect	Offline Direct	Total Sample
Income ($)											
<20,000	11	17	21	7	8	16	20	12	14	16	21
20,000–49,999	31	39	39	26	27	32	33	23	26	27	29
50,000–74,999	19	18	17	19	23	19	17	21	20	22	19
75,000–100,000	19	13	13	21	18	14	13	15	15	15	12
>100,000	21	13	11	27	24	19	17	28	26	22	19
Race											
White	81	78	73	75	74	75	71	75	77	77	71
Black	5	9	11	9	10	10	11	13	9	12	12
Hispanic	6	8	10	11	12	10	12	7	9	6	11
Other	8	5	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	6
Vote (President)											
Republican	48	52	52	38	43	43	42	46	52	50	46
Democrat	52	48	48	62	57	57	58	54	48	50	54

Figures should be read as column % within each demographic / political variable. They show the proportion of individuals within each of the groups that reported online and offline contact by parties. "Offline Direct" for 2004 and 2012 includes mail, phone, and face to face; for 2008 it includes only mail. The "All" column reports characteristics within the sample as a whole. Vote is calculated based on votes for Democrat and Republican candidates, excluding independent/other/non-voters. Cells may exceed 100% due to rounding.

Sources: see Table 7.2 and Appendix 7.1 for full details of surveys and variable definitions. Survey weights applied.

population as a whole. This was particularly the case in 2008, when 62 percent of those who were contacted online by a party, and who cast a vote for one of the two main candidates, voted for Obama. This figure was about 4 percent higher than among the electorate as whole (if we restrict it to those who voted either for the Democratic or Republican ticket). By contrast, just 38 percent of those who had been contacted directly by a party online and then went on to vote for a major party candidate supported Romney. This suggests that the Democrats' digital campaign was particularly effective in 2008. Further evidence to support this view can be seen if we look at the level of support that Obama received in 2008 among those who had experienced non-digital or offline types of contact. Of those reporting contact from parties by mail, 57 percent said they supported Obama, a proportion that was actually slightly below the level of support that the Democrats received within the electorate as a whole.

In 2012, the situation had clearly changed, however, with the Democrats' advantage among voters contacted online effectively disappearing. Obama's support levels among those who had received digital messages from a party were no different than among the population as a whole. Of course, it is possible that without the new forms of contacting, Obama's vote would have been significantly lower, that is, digital messaging served to shore up and reinforce existing levels of support rather than mobilizing new voters. The situation appeared to be similar for the Republicans in 2012 in that they did not see any increase in support among those voters who received some type of official contact from parties that year. For indirect online contacting, however, the story is different. Essentially, among those voters who reported receiving mobilizing messages from their friends and family networks, there was a distinct preference for Romney over Obama, compared with the electorate as a whole. Overall, 52 percent of those who had received some kind of online prompt from within their social networks and who cast a vote for one of the two main parties supported Romney. This was 6 percent more than the 46 percent of voters who supported the Republican ticket over the Democratic alternative in the wider electorate.

The findings are interesting on several levels. First, they show that despite the heavy investments made by the Democrats in 2008, and particularly in 2012, they are not necessarily the big winners when it comes to partisan or voter mobilization. There does appear to be a stronger degree of netroots mobilization occurring within the Republican support base and their voters that balances out, and even possibly counters, the more coordinated and centrally managed digital power of the left. While Romney is clearly a major party candidate, the self-confessed and objective disparity in his digital weaponry compared to the Democrats does allow for some comparison to the Australian and French situation, where minor parties enjoyed an advantage in the levels of indirect or two-step online contact during recent elections, compared with their major party

rivals. This idea of indirect online voter mobilization being the weapon of the weak is thus given some further credibility by these results.

Second, the changing demographics of the recipients of online contact over time indicates that US parties have made a conscious effort to refine and redirect their digital strategy to ensure that they connect with those who are more likely to vote. This is particularly the case with regard to age. The sharp drop in the numbers of young people being contacted by both new and old methods in 2012 suggests that parties were more successful in targeting their appeals to those segments of the electorate where they were most likely to yield a return on their efforts at the ballot box.

Finally, together these findings also permit some insight into the question posed earlier of whether the apparent decline in online contact recorded in 2012, and particularly the drop observed among Democrats, was actually the result of an increased precision and accuracy in the methods used—the "less is more" argument. The changing profile in recipients of parties' digital messaging and increased emphasis on older voters and those with a higher socioeconomic status suggests that parties had adopted a more targeted approach, and were managing to direct their messages at those most likely to turn out. The fact that neither party really saw a significant reward in terms of those contacted being more likely to support them indicates that if their efforts had any impact, it was largely a reinforcing one. That said, the party that appeared to gain most from their digital campaign in 2012 was the Republicans, with most of those gains coming through their supporter networks rather than official campaign channels.

Based on this evidence, therefore, we would have to conclude that the new digital and data-intensive mode of campaigning pioneered by Obama in 2012 failed to live up to expectations. This book is not unique in reaching this conclusion. A number of post-election analyses of Obama's campaign have reached a similar verdict. An extensive report on the Democrats' 2012 digital campaign, "Inside the Cave," produced by *engage*, a digital communications agency founded by Republican strategist Patrick Ruffini, insisted that there were internal conflicts and communication failures between the various digital sub-teams that hampered their mobilization efforts. In particular, the reliance on an in-house tech team of Harper Reed to build the tools from scratch

> meant the tools wouldn't be ready on day one, as they were with My.BarackObama.com in 2008. . . . Field Director Jeremy Bird was later open about the fact that they didn't get technology tools to volunteers early enough.[46]

Other accounts published by those on the left of the political spectrum echoed the view that the Obama campaign team had faced significant teething problems

in rolling out some of its more vaunted tools. The initial prototype of *Dashboard* had reportedly attracted harsh criticism and even scorn from the field operatives as unfit for its purpose. The reaction was strong enough to prompt threats to cease using it if it was not improved. Although changes were subsequently made that rendered the platform more user-friendly, tensions between tech and field proved to be a recurrent theme during the course of the campaign, as did conflict between the three sub-teams that Goff headed. The resulting situation clearly created a degree of inefficiency and delay to the rollout of key apps and tools that went largely unreported in the lead-up to election day.[47]

On the academic front, an article published a year after Obama's return to the White House by the editor of the *Harvard Political Review* raised further questions about the extent to which the Democrats' win in 2012 was attributable to the tech-savvy quality of their campaign. In his piece, entitled "Just How Good Was the Obama Campaign?" Frank Mace identified an emerging body of research that challenged the established view that it was Obama's data-driven methods which had won the day.[48] Pointing particularly to the work of Sides and Vavreck (2013) in their widely discussed book *The Gamble,* he reported how serious doubt had been cast on the effectiveness of Obama's data-crunching efforts and particularly whether his use of micro-targeted advertising had delivered victory. The authors followed up on their study of the election with a more explicit critique of the "moneyball" approach to campaigning that Obama had pioneered and particularly the idea that it was his use of "big data" that had really secured him victory. While they did not query the enhanced precision that his new scientific approach to modeling voter behavior delivered, they did pose the question of how much such techniques really mattered for the final outcome. For the authors:

> An election is a one-time, sudden-death contest. The election-year economy and many other things were out of Obama's and Romney's control. Moneyball can make a campaign more efficient, but cannot always help the campaign win.[49]

Summary and Conclusion

The story to emerge from this chapter is one of conformity and deviation from the cycle of digital campaign development set out in Chapter 1. In terms of conformity, the progression in US candidates' use of the technology at the national level corresponds broadly to trends observed among parties and candidates in elections elsewhere. However, the pace and scale of change render it something of an outlier. Compared to the path followed in other major established democracies,

American campaigners have moved much further and faster through the four-phase cycle outlined in Chapter 1. Indeed, it is questionable whether the United States ever really witnessed the type of amateur experimentation associated with phase I that was widely manifest in the United Kingdom, Australia, and France during their first online elections. The websites that debuted in the presidential election of 1996 displayed a degree of sophistication that took parties in other countries at least one further electoral cycle to reach.

A further similarity that this analysis has revealed between the United States and the previous case studies is the key role played by the mainstream political left in pushing forward the digital campaign cycle. While it was the Republicans who gained early plaudits for their online site design and fundraising efforts, it was the Democrats who took the reins in the post-millennial period to exploit the organizing and vote-getting potential of the new media. While Howard Dean's community-building activities captured the imagination of the media and the public, it was Obama's online campaign of 2008 that really moved the technology to the center stage of elections. Key to this transition was Blue State Digital, his technology advisors, who understood how to channel the grassroots energy Dean had generated into strategically important online and offline activities. Basing their approach on Obama's existing strengths in local organizing, they designed a two-step flow model of digital mobilization on a scale hitherto unseen.

By 2012, the focus had shifted from designing a "two-step" to perfecting a "one-step" model that centered on directly targeting those all-important undecided voters with personalized appeals. This shift was powered by an unprecedented political tech operation that, for many, transformed the nature of campaigning itself. Instead of field-informed collective intuition and guesswork being the mainstay of campaign strategy, managers now relied on data analysts and highly skilled technicians to make their key decisions. The "art" of campaigning was now transformed into something much closer to a science.[50]

Thus, by 2012 it would seem that entry into phase IV was well and truly underway in the United States, at least looking at developments from the supply side. The evidence from below, however, is rather less convincing. Overall, there does appear to be some synchronicity in the patterns of mass engagement and elite innovation. The most passive mode of citizen involvement in the digital campaign—"read"—had gradually been supplemented by more redistributive phase III–style activities, particularly among Democrat partisans. This peaked in 2008, as one would expect, given the strong embrace of CIC by Barack Obama's team. Campaigns have also increased their levels of digital communication with their partisans and voters since 2004, with the mainstream left again assuming an initial advantage in this regard. Until 2008, those who received some kind of online persuasion during the election, either directly from the party or via their

personal networks, were more likely to vote Democrat. By 2012, however, they were clearly struggling to retain any mobilizing benefits from the technology. Despite having increased their reach into those segments of the electorate most likely to turn out, those contacted online by the campaign were no more likely to support Obama than those who received no contact. Exposure to indirect contact was actually associated with greater support for Romney.

The results leave us with the possibility that Democrats' success in digital mobilization in 2008 was something of an anomaly, and that by 2012 diminishing marginal returns were setting in. Of course, only time and future research can fully address this question. Notwithstanding any lull that may have occurred in the forward march of digital campaigns in 2012, it was clear that at least one party in the United States managed to meet several of the core criteria associated with phase IV digital campaigning. In terms of its strategic goals, defined target audience, tool development, and internal power configuration, the Democrats' digital campaign aligns very closely with the criteria defining phase IV campaigning in the final column of Table 1.1 in Chapter 1, and more so than any of the other parties examined in this book. No activity within the campaign—be it fundraising, advertising, field, or opinion and opposition research—was beyond the influence of Teddy Goff and his team. As noted, it was perhaps only in the area of voter engagement that they appeared to fail to hit the mark. While they appeared to be increasingly efficient at extracting data from voters, it appears at least from the broad analysis of this chapter that they had not worked out how best to optimize that information, and convert it into squeezing out new support from the electorate. In the concluding chapter of the book, we speculate on the limits and future of data-driven decision-making in campaigns and what, if anything, lies beyond phase IV.

Conclusion

Digital Campaigns at the Crossroads

The central premise of this book is that over the past two decades we have seen digital technology move from the margins to the mainstream of political campaigning within Western democracies. This largely uncontroversial observation is accompanied by three more contestable claims that have been developed during the course of the analysis. The first of these is that this progression can be broken down into four main phases: (1) experimentation; (2) standardization and professionalization; (3) community building and activist mobilization; and finally, (4) direct voter mobilization. Each phase is defined by a distinctive configuration of tools, goals, and organizational resources and a proximity to one of two ends of a power continuum—equalization or normalization. While most nations have not advanced through all four phases, this trajectory, we argue, provides a useful heuristic for understanding past, current, and future developments in digital campaigning in established democracies.

The second main contention of the book is that the position of countries in this evolutionary cycle differs, and that this variance can be explained by a combination of system-level traits, country-specific factors, and individual-party characteristics. A full understanding of the drivers of digital campaign developments thus requires large N study, as well as detailed country-specific analyses. Chapter 3 delivered on the first of these demands by testing the impact of various regime-level characteristics on levels of online campaigning in 18 nations. The results of that analysis revealed that a critical mass of internet users among the electorate and competitive presidential elections were among the most significant factors in predicting higher rates of digital mobilization. Subsequent chapters presented a more detailed picture of developments in digital campaigning at the national level. Taking four established democracies, we showed

how distinctive cultural and political norms had affected parties' abilities and incentives to incorporate the new technology into their campaign armory. These chapters were also able to reveal the pivotal role played by certain parties in triggering the shift into a new phase. While there was no "one size fits all" model of adoption, there did appear to be a notable tendency for mainstream leftist parties, and some of the more prominent minor parties, to emerge as the catalysts for change. Furthermore, in Australia there also appeared to be a prominent role for non-party actors.

The third, and possibly most contentious, claim of the book is that the "mainstreaming" of digital technology in elections is fostering the growth of a new type of campaign operative—the *apolitico*—and the emergence of a new condition of *hypernormality.* Full entry into phase IV–style digital campaigning is marked by the rise to power of a new organizational elite that are recruited from outside the regular party political channels. Drawn from academia and industry, these data scientists and software engineers increasingly challenge and ultimately "trump" the traditional role of field experience in the critical decision-making of the campaign. The emergence and domination of this new group of digital experts can be seen in one sense as a continuation and culmination of the normalization logic first articulated by the e-pluralists and developed further by Margolis and Resnick (2000) and later Howard (2006). Control over decision-making is increasingly centralized in the hands of an inner team of specialists. At the systemic level, competition decreases, as only the bigger parties have sufficient resources to engage in this new digitally intensive electoral warfare. There is, however, a subversion of this narrative in that this new "scientific" elite are not autonomous actors. They are heavily, if not exclusively, reliant upon computer algorithms and statistical modeling to formulate campaign strategy. Machine, rather than human learning now determines decision-making at the higher echelons of party organization. Voters are, in turn, viewed as little more than remote and manipulable data points. Their input is sought mainly to help improve the accuracy of the campaign's forecasts and its targeting activities. We characterize this condition as one of *hypernormality* in that power is concentrated and centralized in the hands of a few key players, to an exponential degree. Voter communication shifts from a state of managed or "controlled interactivity" to one of full automation, and internal decision-making is effectively depoliticized. We return to further develop and defend these arguments later in the chapter when we reflect on what comes next for digital campaigns.

All three of our central claims have been developed and tested using a variety of methods and data. In the following, we summarize each one in more detail and evaluate the credibility of the evidence gathered to support them.

Claim 1: The Four Phases of Digital Campaign Development

Beginning with claim 1, our argument for a four-phase model of digital campaign development is based on the insights of the e-pluralists, or *new Jeffersonians*, who theorized that politics was likely to become more fluid in the internet era, at least initially. Parties would compete on a more even footing during elections and become more porous structures that were open to greater grassroots input and interaction with voters. Following this period of "equalization," a counter-tendency would emerge to "normalize" the situation. This would see the larger, well-resourced, and hierarchically structured parties move in to dominate the new cyber-space arena, leaving little room for minor players, activists, or wider citizen input.

This initial pendulum swing was then extended to include a new cycle of equalization and normalization, as changes in the technological environment and growth of use among voters and supporters ushered in a new set of capabilities and goals for digital campaigns. This ultimately produced a four-phase model of development that was broken down into eight dimensions of party operation. Progress through the phases occurred in both linear and cyclical terms. The move from phase I to phase IV of digital campaigning is marked first by a monotonic growth in campaigns' capacity and incentives to engage in this new form of electioneering. This expansion is, however, underpinned by the rotation between two competing models of campaign operation. The first takes a radical bottom-up approach to the task and seeks to open the process up to grassroots voices and less powerful actors. The second follows a more conservative and top-down logic that essentially reinforces the existing imbalanced power relations. The full model of change was summarized in Table 1.1 in Chapter 1.

The applicability of the four-phase model to "real world" cases was then tested in a variety of ways. We began with a retrospective review of the literature. This exercise revealed how the key questions posed and conclusions drawn about digital campaigning could be "plotted" onto the four stages set out in Table 1.1. This impressionistic evidence was then supplemented with a series of in-depth case studies that traced historical developments in the supply and demand for digital campaigning in four major democratic nations. These studies confirmed that the four-phase model of change provided a meaningful framework for mapping developments within individual countries. They also revealed some important differences in the pace and nature of those changes.

Specifically, while all four countries appeared to have entered phase III at the time of writing (i.e., parties were engaging in significant online community-building activities), there was a distinct hierarchy in their progress. American

parties and candidates had moved most quickly through the sequence. Campaigns at the national level had spent relatively little time in the early phases, advancing to phase III within 10 years of the internet's arrival. As of 2012, they were showing clear signs of having entered phase IV. In contrast, Australia and France both appeared to have moved more slowly through the cycle, although their patterns of development and the reasons for this comparative inertia differed.

Australia, as the title of the chapter describing developments there indicates, was something of an "early bloomer" among nations. An initial surge of enthusiasm for the new technology by campaigners quickly subsided into an elongated period of standardization and professionalization. Parties and politicians appeared to be almost "frozen" in their approach to the new medium. Signs of engagement with the community-building properties of the web that emerged under Kevin Rudd and Labor in 2007 were initially lauded, but ultimately dismissed by critics as "window dressing." It was thus only after the start of the next decade that a genuine focus on activist mobilization really began to take hold among Australian campaigners.

Developments in France were also slower than in the United States, but took a rather different trajectory. From the outset, the pace of change was glacial, and continued to be so for much of the first decade of the internet's existence. Where innovations emerged, they occurred largely among fringe actors on the far right and left. Major parties did not appear to take the medium seriously as an electioneering tool. Even up until the 2007 presidential election, candidates were being accused of paying largely lip service to its mobilizing power. By 2012, however, the parties had begun to make up for lost time. In particular, the major left-wing presidential candidate Francois Hollande made a concerted effort to import and exploit the techniques introduced by his US counterpart, Barack Obama. This direct injection of American expertise catapulted his campaign into a hybrid mix of community building and direct voter mobilization that pushed it onto the center stage of digital campaign innovation globally.

Nestled in between these cases of "arrested development" and the fast-paced adoption of the United States is that of the United Kingdom. Progression by the British parties through the cycle appeared to be the most steady and incremental of the four cases examined. Early experimentation in the 1997 election cycle was followed by a period of sustained professionalization that lasted for the next two election cycles. Significant forays into community building and activist mobilization followed in the campaign of 2010. These innovations were developed further in 2015 and were supplemented by the introduction of phase IV–style data-intensive and micro-targeted techniques. These efforts, according to more recent reports, became even more widespread during the 2016 Brexit referendum campaign.[1]

Claim 2: The Common and Unique Drivers of Digital Campaign Change

Observing the similarities and differences in the patterns of digital campaign development in these four countries leads us to the second main conclusion of the book, namely that a country's progression through the cycle is driven by a range of both common and unique factors. On the former front, the analysis of Chapter 3 was important in highlighting the role of regime-level features in this process. Starting from the premise that higher levels of direct and indirect voter contact are indicative of entry into the later phases of digital campaigning, we compared the frequency of both modes during recent elections in 18 countries. The results produced a four-tier ranking of countries according to their digital campaign intensity. A systematic analysis of these rankings revealed that competitive presidential elections and a critical mass of internet users were key drivers in the push toward phase III– and IV–style digital campaigning.

Armed with this "baseline" information, the case studies probed how far individual countries' experience matched with the expectations drawn from results of the comparative analysis. Given that two of these cases were presidential systems (the United States and France), and two were parliamentary (Australia and the United Kingdom), we began with an expectation of how our four cases would line up in terms of the rapidity of their progression through the four-phase cycle: the former two being ahead of the latter two nations. The results of this more focused over-time analysis were useful in confirming the United States as a leading nation, both in terms of the pace of advances made in digital campaigning at the supply side (i.e., among parties and candidates, and in terms of the levels of engagement with those efforts by the wider public). According to Table 3.2, the United States sat at the top of tier one countries in terms of the proportion of voters contacted online. Just over one-third (34%) of the American public had reported receiving some type of digital prompt about their vote during the 2012 presidential election campaign. This higher intensity was matched by the rapid pace of innovation observed at both the elite and mass level in terms of take-up and use of the new tools during campaigns. Given that other countries not selected as case studies for this book displayed similar or higher levels of online contact to the United States in recent comparable elections, as noted in Chapter 3, we do not see our evidence as supporting the notion of US exceptionalism in terms of digital electioneering. However, our findings, we argue, do give credence to the view that US parties occupy the "bleeding" edge of campaign modernization.

The findings for the other countries aligned less closely to expectations. In particular, France was found to be at the bottom of tier two countries in terms

of digital mobilization rates, below both the United Kingdom and Australia, as well as Serbia and Mexico. This weaker than anticipated performance was underpinned, and in part explained, by its slower progress in moving through the four-phase cycle and the more modest level of enthusiasm shown by French voters for reading and redistributing digital campaign content, at least in the most recent comparable elections. Closer investigation of the possible causes of this inertia identified a complex set of "suspects." Chief among them was the technology itself. Despite levels of internet use achieving an equivalence in France to those seen in other advanced economies, this parity had only recently emerged. Tracing the history of internet diffusion in France revealed a distinctly different pattern from that observed in our three other case studies. In particular, take-up was much slower among the public. While this might reflect a lack of interest or degree of technophobia on the part of the French, review of the wider communication environment challenged such an explanation. For several years prior to the arrival of the internet, French citizens had had access to, and made extensive use of, a rival computerized communication network in the from of *Minitel*. The presence of this alternative platform clearly diverted any demand for internet services during the first decade of their existence.

Even after *Minitel* had been dismantled, there remained other regulatory aspects of the communication environment that helped slowed the progress of internet campaigning in France. Specifically, the rules ensuring plurality in news coverage by public broadcasters gives smaller parties a more prominent voice in the mainstream media coverage of election campaigns than in most other democracies. This more equalized exposure meant that one of the main benefits of the internet as a campaign medium was significant reduced. A further and arguably even stronger restraint on French parties' use of email and social media to communicate with voters was the long-standing prohibition on their ability to collect citizens' personal data for electoral-targeting purposes. This type of segmentation of the public opened the door to discrimination, and thus violated the principle of egalité under the law enshrined in the French constitution. These controls are in direct contrast to the situation in the United States, where constitutional protections on freedom of speech are frequently invoked to support campaigns' rights to build up and rigorously exploit extensive voter files.

The findings from the two "parliamentary" cases conformed more closely to expectations. Australia and the United Kingdom are both located in tier two of the league of digitally mobilized nations (see Table 3.2), reporting "healthy," rather than "stand-out" rates of online voter mobilization. The slightly lower ranking for Australia was seen as largely due to the timing of the data collection, which occurred two years prior to that for the United Kingdom. Certainly all things being equal, the Australian context appeared to provide one of the most fertile environments for the growth of internet campaigning. Australia had a

strong reputation internationally for promoting e-government and e-democracy initiatives. Australian parties had extensive experience in using electronic databases and micro-targeting methods such as direct mail. Finally, although its geography did present digital campaigners initially with a logistical challenge to reach the large swath of rural voters lacking internet connections, the response of successive federal governments to "roll out" broadband to the bush transformed this barrier into an incentive. Once they were online, these remote electorates became much more accessible through the new methods of communication compared with resource- and labor-intensive methods of doorstep canvassing and leafleting.

Against these strong incentives for parties to seriously engage in digital campaigning, however, the figure of Jeff Kennett loomed large. Just as no individual can be seen as solely responsible for the successful take-off of internet campaigning in a country, neither can any one person be held entirely accountable for its failure. That said, however, the former Victorian state governor comes perhaps closest to acquiring the latter status. Kennett's high profile and highly personalized web campaign became the symbol of his inability to relate to the concerns of ordinary voters. The medium, along with the governor, became a target for ridicule. The ensuing criticism of Kennett's campaign ensured that Australian politicians and parties avoided flexing their tech-savvy credentials for several elections afterward. While this episode served to underscore the power of "events," in addition to institutional frameworks and technology, in determining the speed of parties' take-up of the technology, it also provided an interesting insight into how advances occurred in the vacuum of major party innovation. Elsewhere it had been the mainstream left parties that acted as the main catalysts for change, particularly in the later phases. It was notable that in Australia this role fell to the smaller parties and also non-party campaign actors. Judged in particular by the activities of their supporter base, it was the Greens and GetUp! that led the push into online community building and activist mobilization.

While this mix of comparative and country-specific analyses provides a credible basis for identifying the key drivers of digital campaigning, it clearly does not "close the book" on the subject. With regard to the large N study, an obvious improvement would be to add more cases. The full CSES module 4 data set that includes 38 countries is now available for analysis, and study has already commenced on the question of online mobilization.[2] Extension and revision of our explanatory model should also be considered in future analysis. In particular, while we concluded that current data-protection rules had no effect on the amount of online contact voters received, as our later case studies have shown, this may be a result of measurement error. Closer scrutiny of the French and US experiences of digital campaigning, in particular, identified a deeper set of

constitutional and cultural norms that have affected parties' willingness and capacity to use citizens' personal data for campaign purposes. While it is difficult to develop accurate and comparable measures of these latent cultural norms and attitudes toward micro-targeting, it should be possible to design indicators that better capture their outcomes or results. In particular, more attention could be given to constructing indices that measure the extent of successful enforcement of these national and international frameworks, and levels of compliance among political organizations.

In terms of small *N* analysis, further strategically selected case studies could be included to road-test and confirm the relevance of the four-phase model beyond the countries examined here. How well does the pathway we describe "travel" to examine developments in other established democracies? Which pattern of development is most commonly observed? The late blooming of France, the early bloomer enthusiasm of Australia, the trend-setting pace seen in the United States, or, the slow burn shown by the United Kingdom? Are there alternative trajectories of growth that we can add to this list, and what other features of the campaign and communication environment are relevant to understanding those patterns of development? Looking even further afield, can the model be used to map changes over time in some of the newer democracies? Does their more limited experience in running election campaigns mean that progression stalls at the earlier stages? Or does this lack of a "path dependency" in campaign practice make such countries more adept and open to deploying the tools in innovative ways? Perhaps their newness means they will "leapfrog" over the experimentation and standardization phases seen in the established democracies, and move directly to embrace the strategic goals of phase III and IV?

Claim 3: The Rise of the Party *Apoliticos* and the Shift to Hypernormality

The evidence in support of our third and most provocative claim—that the mainstreaming of digital technology is producing a new *apolitical* elite and conditions of *hypernormality*—is the most speculative. To date, much of the literature on digital campaigning (including this book) has focused on charting the outward and more visible changes that the new technologies are promoting. Attention has thus centered on developments in the external "facing" aspects of the campaign (i.e., the establishment and content of websites, social media profiles, apps, and measurable voter responses). While this has produced a range of interesting and important findings, it is an approach that concentrates arguably on the "low-hanging fruit" of digital campaign change. The more challenging

and pressing task for researchers is now to detect and measure the changes that are occurring in the internal power dynamics of organizations.

Bearing these caveats in mind, we argue that our analyses point to the emergence of a new and potentially concerning trend—the depoliticization of campaign management. This is a process whereby algorithms, artificial intelligence, and machine learning, along with those who have the skills to understand them, assume a stronger role in deciding campaign strategy, and in so doing, demote the role of field experience and expertise generated through long-term exposure to voters. Put in a wider political context, such developments can be seen as further steps in the "hollowing out" of democracy, a process that Peter Mair (2013) so eloquently described, and argued against, in his final book, *Ruling the Void*. Although Mair's focus was on the rising tide of anti-political sentiment emerging at the heart of government, which he saw as driven by the influx of "neutral" experts and technocrats who eschewed the cut and thrust of ideological conflict, there is a natural extension of his argument to the "scientification" of campaign management and party decision-making documented in this book.

While it is not the claim of this book that any country has as yet, or indeed will, reach a state of *hypernormality*, it is argued that a shift toward this state is now detectable in some democracies, and that the march of the *apoliticos* into campaign headquarters, or the "nerds," as the book's title more colloquially terms them, has begun.[3] Richer qualitative study of parties, campaigns, and the external personnel they employ or structurally embed is now needed to explore and test the veracity of this contention. How are the recruitment criteria for campaign staffers and managers changing? What are the critical skills and resources required to deliver modern campaigns? What happens when data and gut instincts collide? While this work is underway in the United States in studies of the rise of prototype politics by Kreiss (2016) and the growth of data-driven campaigning in the United Kingdom (Anstead, 2017), we need a more systematic picture of the extent to which these new approaches are taking hold in democracies elsewhere, beyond these "usual suspects."

Future Directions: Toward a Phase V?

The evidence that is cumulated and analyzed in this book, we argue, presents a persuasive case for accepting our four-phase model as a framework for mapping, comparing and forecasting the progression of digital campaigning across countries. However, even if one accepts the four-phase model as set out, this inevitably begs the question of what comes next. Despite the extensive nature of the empirical analysis undertaken in this book, we had to conclude our investigation

at some point. Ending our analysis in 2015 has meant we have been precluded from integrating several major digital campaign developments that have since emerged. To what extent do these developments fit within our existing framework? Or, do they suggest a challenge to it and a possible extension into phase V?

The development of digital campaigns obviously did not end in 2015, which marks the final election studied here. According to accounts of the 2016 US presidential race, the role of digital and data analytics became even more central to the Democrats' efforts. Hillary Clinton allegedly refused to make a move without reference to her head of analytics, Elan Kriegal.[4] The view that 2016 simply saw the intensification and perfecting of the scientific method practiced by Obama in 2012 is, however, challenged to an extent by the rise of Donald Trump. The eventual Republican nominee went on record to reject the "measure everything" approach pioneered by his left-wing rival. In one widely publicized interview, he was reported as saying he had always considered such methods to be "overrated . . . Obama got the votes much more so than his data processing machine. And I think the same is true with me."[5] Trump in contrast, took to Twitter to engage in more direct and spontaneous digital communication with his supporters and to rebut the stories put out by what he later described as the "fake news media" industry.

The idea that the Trump campaign opted out of harnessing data analytics expertise has since been largely debunked, most notably by Trump's own digital director, Brad Parscale, who, in several interviews, made clear the vast scale of the campaign's investment in social media advertising, particularly Facebook. Employees from the company, he noted, were "embedded inside our offices" in order to explain how to use the platform to target voters.[6] Subsequently published academic research has confirmed this new type of personnel "sharing" was taking place between the campaigns and major tech companies on both sides of the political spectrum at this time (Kriess and McGregor, 2018). Spending reports issued by the Federal Election Commission (FEC) for the final weeks of campaign, however, supported Republican claims of a Facebook advertising blitz. Figures recorded for the critical "home stretch" period, leading into election day, revealed that Trump outspent Clinton almost two to one on digital advertising ($29 million, as compared with $16 million).[7]

While Parscale's testimony, and the FEC spending figures, underscored the importation of data-driven techniques for the Trump campaign, it was the hiring of Cambridge Analytica that perhaps most visibly, and controversially, signaled their adoption of phase IV–style practices (Gonzalez, 2017). The mission of the company, in the words of CEO Alexander Nix, was to use its unique psychological profiling tool to "determine the personality of every single adult in the United States of America," and based on these data, to identify the millions of voters who are most open to being persuaded to support Trump.[8] While the firm was

crystal clear about its ambitions to mine voters' personal data in order to deliver a Republican win, it proved much less transparent about the methods used to reach this goal. This lack of clarity and rising concerns about potential breaches of voter privacy led to a series of extensive post-election investigations of the company's tactics, and the platform that had been used to deliver those tailored messages—tech giant Facebook.[9]

This new and more negative twist in the evolution of phase IV campaigning gained further traction as reports emerged about how social media and particularly Facebook were being used by the Trump team to target a range of so-called dark ads to certain groups of voters. Although selective political marketing and negative advertising are standard practice in election campaigns, the untraceability of these digital ads earned them the label of "dark," and meant that campaigns could avoid scrutiny of their more controversial and contested messages. In the case of Trump, reports surfaced of racially targeted dark ads that were explicitly designed to deter and demobilize Clinton's support among the African American voters.[10]

The view that digital campaigns had now taken on a new impetus in terms of promoting the "dark arts" of voter manipulation and suppression gained perhaps its strongest support after the publication of the report by the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) on foreign interference in the 2016 election. The report revealed a pattern of coordinated and forceful "weaponization" of social media to spread misinformation and increase divisions in the US electorate during the presidential campaign (Howard et al., 2018).[11] While the campaign had been waged by foreign actors, most notably the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA), in partisan terms the content had been more favorable to the Republicans and its clear purpose had been to help secure a Trump victory.[12]

As in 2012, claims about the accuracy and success of digital tools in mobilizing, and now, demobilizing US voters have been subsequently scrutinized and challenged by academic analysts. According to Baldwin-Philippi (2017), while Facebook ads may have been the *sine qua non* of the election, there was no evidence of any "great leap forward" in their reach and effectiveness:

> while the [Trump] campaign's Facebook ad strategy was productive it was ultimately similar in quality and more extensive in quantity than that of the Clinton campaign, both of which were largely an extension of the Obama 2012 campaign. (630)

In addition, the extent to which people were actually affected by deliberate disinformation campaigns or the inadvertent circulation of "fake news" stories on Facebook (and other social media platforms) has also been called into question.

Based on survey data, election Twitter data, and the publicly released IRA posts from the SSCI inquiry, a number of studies showed that deliberately manufactured false content was consumed by only a small segment of already "decided" voters. Furthermore, the crudity and inauthenticity of the content of most of the automated messages meant that their power to persuade was likely to be very limited (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Boyd et al., 2018; Grinberg et al., 2019; Salamanos et al., 2019).

Despite the rising doubts over its effectiveness, it is clear that this switch of phase IV campaigning to embrace more opaque and manipulative tactics on social media has spread to elections beyond the United States. The UK Brexit Referendum in 2016 prompted several formal investigations of campaigns' use of online targeting tactics, and specifically whether the services of Cambridge Analytica had been used by those involved in the "leave" side of the debate.[13] Elsewhere, elections in Mexico, Brazil, and India have sparked concerns that voters are at risk of manipulation by automated and deliberate attempts at misinformation through targeted selective exposure to social media and, in particular, Facebook advertising (Arnaudo, 2018; Bashyakarla, 2018; Glowacki et al., 2018).[14] As in the case of the US 2016 election, while some of these activities have been linked with the parties and candidates, there is also evidence of involvement by non-party actors and foreign governments. The term "digital astroturfing" has now sprung up as a means of describing this new phenomenon, whereby domestic or foreign actors manufacture activity on the internet to mimic authentic grassroots activism, thereby building false momentum in support of a particular agenda or candidate (Keller et al., 2020; Kovic et al., 2018).

As well as creating new challenges for governments in terms of how to regulate these new practices and raising doubts about the legitimacy of election outcomes, this shift in the direction of data-driven campaigning, and particularly the rise of these new actors, poses a significant new threat for political parties' continuing relevance (Dommett and Temple, 2018). Given talk of parties ongoing "decline," the growth of these new digitally enabled networks and satellite movements, whether real or not, clearly has the capacity for siphoning away existing and new sources of support (Andeweg and Farrell, 2017; Scarrow, 2014). Rather than the end result being the further "hollowing out" and increased depoliticization of campaigns, however, the outcome, at least in the short term, may be a more intense period of repoliticization, as digital channels are used to spread disinformation and polarize electorates.

As such, data-driven campaigning looks set to continue, but we may see a split in the direction of travel. One version sees the continued mainstreaming and refinement of these scientific methods within the confines of conventional campaign practice. A second variant sees the deployment of these techniques toward

more subversive and anti-systemic ends, with disinformation, demobilization, and division of voters being the driving goals (Gibson and Römmele, 2020).

While we could stop our horizon-scanning exercise at this point, there would appear to be both theoretical and empirical grounds for considering a third trajectory for digital campaigning to take, based on post-2015 developments. Here, we draw on the recent work of Bennett et al. (2018), particularly his attempts to identify a new "connective'" style of political party, and earlier theorizing by Andrew Chadwick (2007) about the rise of "organizational hybridity" in the digital age. Both authors highlighted the growth of a new style of political organization that was particularly dependent on the internet, and which blends the electorally oriented goals of parties with the structural fluidity of social movements. According to Bennett, new European populist parties such as Píratar in Iceland, Alternativet in Denmark, and Podemos in Spain are among the most obvious incarnations of this new organizational model—their defining feature being that internet technology sits at the heart of their organization and provides their "central operating system."

This immersion of party structures within the digital environment is perhaps the ultimate expression of how the technology has moved from the margins to the mainstream. However, lacking the intensive analytics capabilities and database infrastructure of the bigger parties, these groups promote an alternative, more organic, and bottom-up approach to social media targeting. Messages are seeded in supporter networks, and people, rather than machine algorithms, power their dispersal. As a result, their campaigns can prove to be somewhat chaotic and uncoordinated in their actions. This weakness can also be regarded as a strength, however, in that it helps to cultivate an image of authenticity and spontaneity, which in turn increases their appeal among those voters who are turned off by the major parties' switch to a more robotic or machine-led style. Despite being born of necessity, therefore, this connective approach can be seen to offer something of a pushback against some of the more machine-like tendencies of phase IV.

Viewed together, these trends suggest that, rather than a wholesale shift into a singular new phase V era, the future of digital campaigning is more likely to involve the bifurcation and possibly trifurcation of current practice. On the one hand, we can envisage an intensification of the scientific mode of voter mobilization as campaign teams place more resources and effort into expanding their databases and improving their predictive models of voter behavior. Alternatively, we may also see the subversion of that scientific model, whereby campaigners begin to understand how it can be "better" used to demobilize voters and spread misinformation. Finally, a third and more reactionary trend may erupt among the smaller and newer parties that lack the resources necessary for either intensification or subversion of the scientific model. These actors weave the internet

into their infrastructure of organizational DNA to develop a more connective and organic model of micro-targeting voters that relies on digital tools, but is driven by human actors and real social networks.

Which one, if any, of these three trends will win out and redefine the current phase, or define any new phase, is not clear at this point. However, what is apparent is that it matters greatly which one does. The first two scenarios, in particular, present significant challenges to the future healthy functioning of democracy. Intensification of the scientific model threatens to further depoliticize and hollow out parties, and shrink the public sphere. Campaigning will increasingly focus on the easily persuadable "perceived" electorate (Hersh, 2015) leaving the disengaged and "unperceived" electorate out of scope and under-mobilized. Current participation and knowledge gaps will thus inevitably widen as byproducts of the drive to achieve ever more precise levels of micro-targeting. Intensification of the subversive mode of data-driven campaigning clearly carries a more overt and direct threat to the democratic process, as parties are increasingly sidelined, and "enemy" agents use digital technologies and social media platforms to destabilize, demobilize, and divide electorates.

Perhaps the best hope for the future of democracy lies with the growth of the connective model of digital campaigning and the shift toward increased organizational hybridity. Here there is a blend of technological and human communication that eschews the worst excesses of the scientific and subversive modes of digital campaigning. A more diverse range of non-usual suspects are reached with authentic campaign messages, and there is no deliberate attempt to manipulate or mislead voters with false and divisive messages. Arguably, such methods promote a return to the "grassroots in cyberspace" (Bonchek 1995) approach to campaigning, or what has since been termed the "netroots" model of political organization and communication (Armstrong, 2006; Feld and Wilcox, 2008). The fact that this is essentially the strategy of the weak rather than the strong, however, suggests that it is unlikely to become the dominant force in future campaigns. Whichever mode does emerge as the primary *modus operandi* from this point, what is clear is that this movement of digital technology from the margins to the mainstream of campaigning is of profound significance, not just for the future of political parties and elections, but for the longer term health and sustainability of the wider democratic project.

Tables 3.1 and 3.3, Measures of Campaign Contact

Data source: The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (www.cses.org). CSES Module 4 Second Advance Release [2.0]. March 20, 2015 Version. Final release available at https://cses.org/data-download/module-4-2011-2016/

Online Direct Contact (Binary)

1 = yes to the following question: *"During the campaign, did a party or candidate contact you in person or by any other means?"* AND to any of the subsequent response options: *"Did they contact you by text-message or SMS? By email? Through a social network site or other web-based methods?*

Else = 0 DK, and refused also coded to zero to ensure consistency across countries.

Online Indirect Contact (Binary)

1 = yes to the following question: *"During the campaign, did a friend, family member or other acquaintance try to persuade you to vote for a particular party or candidate?"* AND yes to any of the subsequent response options: *"Did they try to persuade you by text-message or SMS? By email? Through a social network site or other web-based methods?*

Total Online Contact (Binary)

1 = yes to Online Direct Contact by SMS, email, or social network OR yes to Online Indirect Contact by SMS, email, or social network.

Offline Direct Contact (Face to Face) (Binary)

1 = *"During the campaign, did a party or candidate contact you in person or by any other means?"* AND yes to *"Did they contact you in person, face-to-face?"*

Offline Direct Contact (Mail/Phone) (Binary)

1 = *"During the campaign, did a party or candidate contact you in person or by any other means?"* AND any of the subsequent response options: *"Did they contact you by mail? By phone?"*

Total Direct Contact (Binary)

1 = yes to Online Direct Contact by SMS, email, or social network OR yes to Offline Direct Contact in person, by mail, or phone.

Sign-up Online: (Binary)

1 = yes to the following question *"Prior to, or during the campaign, did you use the internet or your mobile phone to sign up for information or alerts (e.g., e-newsletters, text messages, RSS, or blog feed) from a party or candidate?"*

Tables 3.5 and 3.6, Dependent and Independent Variables

Primary data source: The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (www.cses. org). CSES Module 4 Second Advance Release [2.0]. March 20, 2015 Version. Final release available at http://www.cses.org/datacenter/module4/module4. htm

Dependent Variable

CSES Total Online Contact (Binary)
1 = yes to Online Direct Contact by SMS, email, or social network OR yes to Online Indirect Contact by SMS, email, or social network. Else = 0 (see Appendix 3.1 for full question wording).

Independent Variables (Individual Level)

CSES Gender
0 = Male; 1 = Female

CSES Union Membership
0 = Non-member; 1 = Member

CSES Education (ISCED Codes)
No qualifications (ref category) 1—primary; 2—lower secondary; 3—upper secondary; 4—post-secondary non-tertiary; 5—short-cycle tertiary; 6—bachelor or equivalent; 7—master or equivalent; 8—doctoral or equivalent

CSES Close to a Party
"Do you feel close to one party? Or closer to one party than all the others?"
0 = No; 1 = Yes.

CSES Age
Measurement varies by country but typically based on individuals' self-reported age in years at the time of the survey.

CSES Left–Right Party-Placement
"Where would you place Party A, B, C, etc., on this scale?" 0 = "Left"; 10 = "Right."

CSES Sign-up Online
"Prior to, or during the campaign, did you use the internet or your mobile phone to sign up for information or alerts (e.g., e-newsletters, text messages, RSS, or blog feed) from a party or candidate?".
0 = No; 1 = Yes

Independent Variables (System Level)

Human Development
United Nations Human Development Index. CSES macro file. Variable D5083

Economic Development
Gross domestic product per capita. CSES macro file. Variable D5080_1

Political Development
Age of current regime. CSES macro file. Variable D5052.

Internet Use
International Telecommunication Union (ITU: number of internet users and natural log of internet users per 100 inhabitants. CSES macro file Variable, D5095.

Interest in Politics
% of population = "very interested" and "interested" in politics calculated from two comparative sources:

World Values Survey, Wave 6 (2010–2014) Australia, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Taiwan, Thailand, and the United States
How interested would you say you are in politics? Are you: 1 Very interested; 2 Somewhat interested; 3 Not very interested; 4 Not at all interested?

European Social Survey. Round 7 (2014) Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Poland, Servia, Switzerland
How interested would you say you are in politics? Are you: 1 very interested; 2 quite interested; 3 hardly interested; 4 not at all interested? DK

Average Voter Turnout (Post–World War II)
Based on recent national elections (ranging from minimum of 8 in Germany to maximum of 32 in Switzerland—national referenda included).
Source: IFES Electionguide; www.Electionguide.org

Compulsory Voting (Binary)
CSES macro file Variable D5044 Original variable coded 1–4. Recoded as binary: strong enforcement and weak enforcement = 1; no sanctions = 0

Electoral System
Single-Member District/Majority/Plurality/Mixed = 1; PR = 0
The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance http://www.idea.int/

Frequency of Elections
Months since last national election CSES Macro file. Variable D5055

Presidential Election (Binary)
1 = Presidential Election; 0 = Legislative/Parliamentary
Source: IFES Electionguide www.Electionguide.org

Average District Magnitude
Average number of candidates per district. Calculated for elections to lowest tier chamber. CSES macro file Variable D5064

Effective Number of Electoral Parties
Based on formula of Laakso and Taagepera (1979) formula: $ENEP = 1 \Sigma v2i$ where v_i is the percent of votes obtained by the ith party. CSES macro file. Variable D5103

Ideological Polarization (0–10)
This was calculated according to Dalton's Polarization index (Dalton, 2008). The index is computed using an average of respondents' individual placement of parties on the left–right scale of parties in the micro CSES file (see the preceding). The Polarization index is measured as the following: $PI = SQRT\{\Sigma(\text{party vote share i}) *([\text{party L/R score i—party system average L/R score}]/5)2\}$, where i represents individual parties. This index is comparable to a measure of the standard deviation of a distribution and is similar to the statistics used by other scholars. It has a value of 0 when all parties occupy the same position on the Left–Right scale and 10 when all the parties are split between the two extremes of the scale. For further information, see Dalton (2008) . Data were missing for Taiwan, L–R placement question was not asked.

Party-Centered System (Binary)
0 = Party centered; 1 = Candidate centered

Calculated from the rankings supplied in the Johnson and Wallack Electoral Systems Dataset, which covers 180 nations over the period 1975–2005. Specifically, we used the DOM_RANK variable, which orders electoral systems on a 1–13-point ordinal scale based on the incentives provide to cultivate a personal vote. The measure is based on the original a to m ranking by Carey and Shugart (1995). The DOM_RANK is calculated for elections to most populous electoral tier within the legislature. A country with a DOM_RANK of 1 would have a tier with the lowest possible rank of personal vote incentives, and that tier would account for the majority of the members in the assembly. Conversely, a country with a DOM_RANK of 13 would have a tier with the highest possible rank of personal vote incentives. The rankings were recoded into a binary variable with scores of 1–8 = 1 "party-centered" and 9–13 = 1 "candidate-centered." This resulted in Australia, France, Japan, New Zealand, Taiwan, Thailand, and the United States = candidate-centered, and Austria, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Mexico, Poland, Serbia, and Switzerland = party-centered. For further details, see Johnson and Wallack (2012). Data available at https://dataverse.harvard.edu/file.xhtml;jsessionid=6c796b432626437805a53e5fe02e?fileId=2409085&version=RELEASED&version=.0

Free or Subsidized Media Available (Binary)
1 = Free or subsidized media available to parties or candidates for campaigning; Source: The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) Political Finance Database
http://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/political-finance-database

Cap on Party Spending (Binary)
1 = there is a cap on campaign spending by candidates or parties.
Source: The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance IDEA) Political Finance Database:
http://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/political-finance-database

National Vote Margin
Difference in national % vote share between top two parties if election in question was parliamentary/legislative election and between top two candidates if a presidential election.
Source: IFES Electionguide: www.Electionguide.org.
Note: Data for Thailand 2011 not available; used Adam Carr's Psephos database: www.psephos.adam-carr.net/ Adam Carr

Data Privacy Index (0–5)
Additive index based on presence of any of the following 5 features:
1) Has a data/information commissioner or equivalent

2) Has a legal requirement to appoint a data protection officer to certain organizations

3) Can enforce breech in data protection by criminal sanctions

4) Has specific laws pertaining to online privacy

5) Requires data subjects' consent to pass data on to a third party.

Source: DLA Piper Data Protection Laws fact book, http://dlapiperdataprotection.com/#handbook/world-map-section

Table 4.1, Citizen-Initiated Campaign Index Construction

Community Building (0–8 Additive Index)

Set up profile—Users can establish a personal page or profile within the site following the logic of a social network site such as Facebook. The contents of this can include:

Photo—a personalized image or photo;

Biography—a short statement about themselves, their general interests, family life, hobbies, etc.;

Why joined—a more political statement about their interest in the party and why they want to help the campaign;

Set up/join groups—a facility to start or get involved with a sub-community of other members within the site to support the candidate or party, based on a shared interest or identity. Examples could include gay and lesbian groups, African American, trade unionists, environmentalists.

Set up blog—a facility to establish a personal blog within the site on which users can post their thoughts and responses to the campaign, comment on and follow other blogs, and be followed by other users;

Set up Wiki—a facility whereby a group of users can set up a collective work space to share, write, and archive documents relating to policy or other matters of interest;

Email/msg system—an internal messaging system through which users can send private messages to each other;

Externally promote profile—Users can publicize their membership in the site externally through a generic "share" button, or are given an explicit option to link their profiles to their Facebook or Twitter accounts.

Resource Generation (0–6 Additive Index)

Personal fundraising—Users can download software or can set up a publicly accessible site within their account that allows them to solicit and receive donations of money for the party or candidate.

Promote membership—Users can send out appeals via email or their Facebook / Twitter accounts inviting others to join the party.

Sign up as local organizer—Users can complete a form (online or download, print, and post) or are invited to send an email to the campaign HQ offering to act as a local organizer, neighborhood or team leader.

Sign up as candidate—Users can complete a form (online or download, print, and post) or are invited to send an email to the campaign HQ signaling their interest in becoming a candidate in the future.

Organize/add event—Users can complete a form (online or download, print, and post) or are invited to send an email to the campaign HQ offering to organize/ host an event that will help to raise funds, or recruit volunteers for the campaign.

Vote leaders to attend events—Users can sign a petition or are invited to send an email to the campaign HQ to "vote" on where the candidate or party leaders should visit during the course of the campaign.

Voter Mobilization (0–11 Additive Index)

Get Out The Vote (GOTV) offline—Users are given opportunities to mobilize and remind voters in person, on the phone, or by posters to turn out for the candidate or party on election day.

Access phonebank—Users can sign up to make GOTV phone calls to voters. In its "ideal type" this will entail their being given access to download phone records, a prepared script, and instructions on how to start calling voters from their homes.

Sign up for f2f canvassing—Users can sign up to start canvassing voters by visiting them in their homes. In its "ideal type" this will entail their being given access to download a list of likely voters' names and addresses, a prepared script, and street plans of where they need to go.

Sign up to discuss with friends and family—Users are invited to make an online pledge that they will contact a certain number of close associates before election day to remind them to vote for the candidate/party.

Leaflets download—Users are given options to download pdfs of flyers and promotional material to distribute to voters that will publicize and promote voting for the party/candidate.

Externally promote event—Users are encouraged to publicize events they are attending or organizing via the site externally to their networks through a generic "share" button, email, or directly posting to Facebook and Twitter.

GOTV online—Users are given opportunities to mobilize and remind voters through online communication tools to turn out for the candidate or party on election day.

Send email—Users are given a template email that they can edit and send out to their contacts reminding them to vote and promoting the candidate/party.

Post to Facebook—Users are invited to post a message to their Facebook profile reminding those in their network to vote and promoting the candidate/party.

Post to Twitter—Users are invited to post a message to their Twitter feed reminding those in their network to vote and promoting the candidate/party.

Smart phone app—Users can download a custom-made smart phone application that will allow them to send a SMS to their contacts, reminding them to vote and promoting the candidate/party.

Email forward to a newspaper editor—Users are given a template mail that they can edit and send on to an editor of a local or national newspaper for publication that is supportive of the candidate/party's message.

Start e-petition—Users are given the tools to set up an e-petition on a cause or issue of importance to the candidate/party during the campaign.

Message Production (0–11 Additive Index)

Message creation

Policy email fwd/customize—Users are offered a template email on party policy and are invited to edit it and develop the party's message by offering their personalized view and sending it to their contacts.

Poster/leaflet create/customize—Users are offered tools to create a campaign poster or leaflet or to edit a template that they can send to their contacts online or print and display offline.

Policy input—Users are given the opportunity to make comments on current policy and offer ideas and suggestions to develop policy proposals of the party via a special policy forum or "ideas" thinktank. There is an explicit commitment to consider the ideas with a national policy making body.

Message distribution

Web banners/ads download—Users can download promotional items from the site such as logos and banners that can be added to their own blogs, social network profiles, or other types of online presence

Posters/leaflets download—Users can download promotional items that can be printed and displayed in their window or car. In contrast to the GOTV leaflets, these are items that individuals use to publicly express their own support for the party, while the GOTV documents are more instrumental and are designed to be distributed to get others to turn out to vote.

Email/share policy docs—Users can click on share or forward buttons to send out policy documents such as the manifesto to those in their social network or email contact lists.

Newsfeed to website—Users can set up a newsfeed from the site to their own online presence so that RSS and news updates from the party are automatically displayed on their blog or webpage.

Share blog posts externally—Users can click on share or forward buttons to send out party blog posts such as the manifesto to those in their social network or email contact lists.

Link to SNS profile—Users can set up a link from the site to their own Facebook or SNS account so that updates from the party are automatically posted to their profile.

Link to Twitter account—Users can set up a link from the site to their own Twitter account so that updates from the party are automatically posted to their twitter feed.

Import email contacts—Users are given the option to import their email address book into their online profile so that they can easily send out messages to their contacts from the party.

Tables 4.2–4.4, Data Sources and Variable Definitions

The results reported in Tables 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 use data from four surveys covering the 2005, 2010, and 2015 general elections.

2005

For 2005 we used data from the ESRC-funded project "Campaigning in Cyberspace: The 2005/6 General Election Online," RES-000-22-1284. The questions were fielded as part of an NOP omnibus post-election survey of a stratified sample of 1,937 British adults aged 18 years or older. Quotas for age and working status within sex were applied following a one-stage ACORN and region stratification. The data were weighted to ensure that demographic profiles matched those for all adults in Great Britain age 18 or older. Interviews were conducted face to face between May 12 and 17, 2005.

READ, REDISTRIBUTE, AND RECEIVE VARIABLE CONSTRUCTION

All questions were measured as binary 1 = yes have done; else = 0. The questions used to measure the three main types of engagement were as follows:

Read

E-news: "How much of your news and information about the election did you get from the Internet?" A lot/some/a little recoded = 1; none = 0.

Campaign sites: "Which, if any, of the following websites did you visit to get election information or news: A political party site OR a candidate site?"

Redistribute

Sign up/Use Party Tools: "Which if any online election-related activities have you participated in?" Volunteered online to help a party or candidate OR Downloaded election material OR subscribed to receive email newsletter from parties or candidates = 1.

Share/Exchange: "Did you send any emails about the 2005 general election to any of the following: Family/friends or work colleagues (people you know)?"

Redistribute: Sign up/Use Party Tools =1; AND Share/Exchange = 1.

Receive

Receive Online Direct: "Did you receive any emails about the 2005 general election from any of the following? Parties OR Candidates?"

Receive Online Indirect: "Did you receive any emails about the 2005 general election from any of the following: Family/friends or work colleagues (people you know)?"

2010

For 2010 we used data from the ESRC-funded project "The Internet, Electoral Politics and Citizen Participation in Global Perspective," RES-051-27-0299. The questions were fielded as part of a BMRB omnibus post-election survey of 1,960 British adults aged 18 years or older. Quotas for age and working status within sex were applied following a one-stage ACORN and region stratification. The data were weighted to ensure that demographic profiles matched those for all adults in Great Britain age 18 or older. The data are available from the UK Data Service: Gibson, Rachel (2013), *The Internet, Electoral Politics and Citizen Participation in Global Perspective* [Data Collection]. Colchester, Essex: Economic and Social Research Council. 10.5255/UKDA-SN-850856 File name "Original_files_UK_2010_BMRB_F2F_post_election_survey_w_newspaper_readership.sav"; available at http://reshare.ukdataservice.ac.uk/850856/

READ, REDISTRIBUTE, AND RECEIVE
VARIABLE CONSTRUCTION

All questions were measured as binary 1 = yes have done; else = 0. The questions used to measure the three main types of engagement were as follows:

Read

E-news: "Please could you tell me, whether you have done any of the following activities in relation to official parties or candidates online: Read or accessed any mainstream news websites or news blogs to get information about the campaign (e.g., BBC news online, The Guardian online, etc.) OR Viewed or accessed videos with unofficial political or election related content?"

Campaign sites: "Please could you tell me, whether you have done any of the following activities in relation to official parties or candidates online: Read or accessed any party or candidate produced campaign sites (home pages, official Facebook profile, official Youtube channel, etc.)?"

Redistribute

Signup /Use Party Tools: "Please could you tell me, whether you have done any of the following activities in relation to official parties or candidates online: Used any online tools to help parties and candidates in their campaign (e.g., sent OR forwarded email or texts promoting a party, set up or got involved in a campaign meeting or event through party sites or Facebook or Twitter, reposted party logos or material on your own site or profile, helped them design a poster/ad, downloaded leaflets or posters to promote the party offline, etc.)?"

Share/Exchange: "Which, if any, of the following activities did you do online during the election campaign over the last month: Posted comments of a political nature on a blog or a wall of a social networking site (either yours or someone else's) OR Joined or started a political or election related group on a social networking site (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, etc.) OR Forwarded unofficial campaign content (links to video, news stories, jokes, etc.) to friends, family or colleagues via email, SMS, Twitter, or through your Facebook network OR Embedded or reposted unofficial campaign content (links to video, news stories, jokes, etc.) on your own online pages (i.e., a social networking profile, blog or home page)?"

Receive

Receive Online Direct: "In the course of the recent election, did anyone from a political party, campaign, or political organization contact you to ask about how you were planning to vote through any of the following methods: Online or internet-based contact (i.e., through email or any internet/web-related technology)?"

Receive Online Indirect: "In the course of the recent election, did you receive any campaign-related political messages or content through the internet from a friend, a member of your family, or someone at work?"

Receive Offline Direct: "In the course of the recent election, did anyone from a political party, campaign, or political organization contact you to ask about how you were planning to vote through any of the following methods: By telephone, mail, or in person and face to face?"

2015

For 2015 we used two British Election Study surveys. The first survey was the Wave 5 of the internet panel study conducted by YouGov, which was used for measuring the read, redistribution, and receive modes in Tables 4.2 and 4.3. The *N* was 30,725 adults aged 18 years and older and included internet users only. The data were weighted using the "core weight." The second survey was the mail-back component of the post-election face-to-face survey, which contained the CSES module on mobilization and was used to measure the receive mode in Table 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 by parties and from friends and family. The sample was 1,567 and included internet users and non-internet users. The data were weighted with the wt_combined_CSES—combined CSES weight. The decision to use two different data sources was prompted by the fact that no single source provided measures of all three modes. The YouGov panel allowed us to measure the read and redistribute modes of engagement reported in Tables 4.2 and 4.3. The CSES module provided the best measure of receive in that it allowed us to differentiate direct and indirect forms of this mode, which is an important distinction to retain. Finally, the CSES data were used to measure the receive mode in the United Kingdom for the comparative analysis of Chapter 3 and reported in Table 3.2. Thus, on consistency grounds it made sense to use this measure of receive throughout the book.

READ, REDISTRIBUTE, AND RECEIVE VARIABLE CONSTRUCTION

All questions were measured as binary 1 = yes have done; else = 0. The questions used to measure the three main types of engagement were as follows:

Read

E-news: "On an average weekday, how much time (if any) do you spend following news about politics or current affairs from the Internet (not including online newspapers)?" All responses from less than half an hour to over 2 hours = 1; None = 0.

Campaign sites: "In the last four weeks, have you read news or found information about the upcoming general election or politics more generally that was tweeted by any of the following people or organizations: Candidates or Parties on Twitter OR Candidates or Parties on Facebook?

Other than on Twitter and Facebook, have you visited the website of a candidate or party in the last 4 weeks?"

Redistribute

Sign up/Use Party Tools: "Have you signed up or officially registered online to help a party or candidate in their campaign?"

Share/Exchange: "In the last four weeks have you personally posted or shared any political content online, e.g., through Facebook OR Twitter OR email OR instant messaging or another website/platform?"

Receive

Receive Online Direct: "During the campaign did a party or candidate contact you in person or by any other means?" If Yes: "Did they contact you by: text message/SMS OR email OR a social network site or other Web-based method?" *Receive Online Indirect*: "During the campaign did a friend, family member, neighbor, work colleague, or other acquaintance try to persuade you to vote for a particular party or candidate?" If Yes: "Did they try to persuade you in any of the following ways: text message/SMS OR email OR a social network site or other Web-based method?"

Receive Offline Direct: "During the campaign did a party or candidate contact you in person or by any other means?" If Yes: "Did they try to persuade you in person, face-to-face; by mail; by phone?"

Socio-Demographic and Political Variables

PARTY ID

2005: "Regardless of whether you voted in the election or not, generally speaking, which political party, if any, do you tend to support?" Labour; Conservative/

Tory; Liberal Democrat; "Other" combines Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP), Plaid Cymru (PC), Green Party, United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP); No particular party; DK; Refused.

2010: "In general, do you think of yourself as a little closer to one of the parties than the others?" If Yes: "Please can you tell me which party?" Labour; Conservative; Liberal Democrat; "Other" combines Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP), Plaid Cymru (PC), Green Party, United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), BNP, and "other," DK/No party.

2015: (YouGov Wave 5 Online panel) "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, (Scottish National/Plaid Cymru) [in Scotland/Wales] or what?" None/No; Labour; Conservative; Liberal Democrat; "Other" combines Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP), Plaid Cymru (PC), Green Party, United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), BNP, and "other"; None/No and Don't know; Refused.

2015: (BES CSES module) "Which party do you feel closest to?" Conservatives; Labour; Liberal Democrats; "Other" combines UKIP; The Green Party; SNP; Plaid Cymru; and "other"; Don't know; Refused/No answer.

SEX

2005 and 2010: Survey Company supplied data, questions not listed in survey documentation. Response categories—1 Male; 2 Female.

2015: (BES CSES module) Are you: Male; Female?

2015: (YouGov Wave 5 Online panel) "Are you male or female?" 1 Male; 2 Female.

AGE

2005 and 2010: Survey Company supplied data as categories, questions not listed in survey documentation.
2015: (BES CSES module) "What was your age last birthday?" Enter years.
2015: (YouGov Wave 5 Online panel) "What is your age?"

EDUCATION

2005 and 2010: Terminal age of education

2015: (BES CSES module) "What is the highest qualification you have?" Recoded to correspond to 3 categories of 2005 and 2010:

No qualification; GCSE A*–C, CSE grade 1; O level grade A–C; Scottish Standard grades, Ordinary band; GCSE D–G, CSE grades 2–5, O level D–E; City & Guilds level 2, NVQ/SVQ 2 and equi; City & Guilds level 1; NVQ/SVQ 1 and equiv; Clerical and commercial qualifications; Recognized trade apprenticeship; Youth training certificate, skill seekers = *16 years or less*:

A level or equivalent; Scottish Higher or equivalent; ONC/OND, City & Guilds level 3,

NVQ/SVQ 3. = *17–18 years*:

Postgraduate degree, first degree, Univ/poly diploma, Teaching qualification, Nursing qualification, HNC/HND, City&Guilds level 4, NVQ/SVQ 4/5 = *19 years +*

(Note: Category of "Other technical, professional or higher qualification" was coded as missing given the uncertainty over which level it corresponded to, $N = 45$.

VOTE

2005: Vote in 2005 not asked.

2010: Two-stage filter question:

"Whenever there is an election, some people decide that they have good reasons not to vote, other people want to vote but are unable to, and some people vote. Thinking of the recent general election on May 6th, which of the following statements best describes you? Yes, I voted; No- Did not vote; No- Not eligible to vote; Don't know."

If Yes: "Please can you tell me, which party you voted for in the general election?" Labour; Conservative; Liberal Democrat; "Other" combines SNP, PC Green Party, United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), British National Party (BNP), Respect and "other"; Refused coded as missing.

2015: (BES CSES module) "Talking with people about the general election on May 7th, we have found that a lot of people didn't manage to vote. How about you, did you manage to vote in the general election?"

If Yes: "Which party did you vote for in the general election?" Labour; Conservative; Liberal Democrat; "Other" combines Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP), Plaid Cymru (PC), Green Party, United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), BNP, and "other"; Refused coded missing.

Tables 5.2–5.4, Data Sources and Variable Definitions

The results reported in Tables 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 use data from two surveys covering the 2010 and 2013 Australian Federal elections.

2010

For 2010 we used data from the ESRC-funded project "The Internet, Electoral Politics and Citizen Participation in Global Perspective." The questions were fielded as a module within the 2010 Australian Election Study (AES) which was conducted by the Australian National University and the Social Research Centre (SRC). Version 2.0 of the survey was used. The primary mode was a postal survey with a secondary online completion option. Respondents were recruited in two waves. The first wave were recruited by random sampling methods (stratified by state) and sent the survey/link to the online survey via mail; to correct an age bias (under-representation of young people) in the mail-back survey, a second "top up" wave of online respondents were recruited by telephone (using a combination of re-contact lists from previous Australian National University phone-based projects) and through the *MyOpinions* online panel database. Fieldwork for wave 1 took place from August 23, 2010, to November 24, 2010. Fieldwork for wave 2 took place from January 25, 2011, to February 7, 2011. The response rate for wave 1 was 42.5 percent (calculated after removing out of scope from the sample, i.e., deceased, incapable, return to sender); for wave 2 respondents recruited by phone, the online survey completion rate was 37.3 percent and for the MyOpinions panel 8.1 percent. Total of 2,214 surveys completed, 376 (16.9 percent) completed online.

Weight2 supplied by SRC. Based on gender (national 18+ gender distribution), age (actual enrolled population), State/Territory (actual enrolled population), 2010 voting behavior (based on voting data provided by the ANU). For full details of the survey including technical report and data download see https://australianelectionstudy.org/voter-studies/

READ, REDISTRIBUTE, AND RECEIVE VARIABLE CONSTRUCTION

All questions were measured as binary 1 = yes have done; else = 0. The questions used to measure the three main types of engagement were as follows:

Read

E-news: "Did you follow the election campaign news on the internet?" A good deal/some/not much recoded = 1.

Campaign sites: "During the 2010 election campaign, did you read or access party or candidate campaign sites (e.g,. home pages, official Facebook profiles, official YouTube channels)?"

Redistribute

Signup /Use Party Tools: During the 2010 election campaign, did you do any of the following activities online: Signed up to receive information from a party or candidate and/or registered as a follower/friend/supporter OR Used online tools to help parties and candidates (e.g., forwarded/shared/reposted campaign information)?"

Share/Exchange: "During the 2010 election campaign, did you do any of the following activities online: Posted comments on a blog, twitter feed, or wall of a social network site (either yours or someone else's) OR Shared unofficial campaign content (e.g., links to videos, news stories) with others via email, Facebook, twitter OR Reposted unofficial campaign content (e.g.. blog posts, links to videos) on your own pages (Facebook or twitter profile, blog)?"

Receive

Receive Online Direct: "During the election campaign, did a candidate or anyone from a political party contact you to persuade you to vote for them?" If Yes: "By email or through the web?"

Receive Offline Direct: During the election campaign, did a candidate or anyone from a political party contact you to persuade you to vote for them?" If Yes: "By telephone or mail or face-to-face?"

2013

For 2013 we used the 2013 Australian Election Study (AES) conducted by the Australian National University and the Social Research Centre (SRC). Respondents were recruited by random sampling methods (stratified by state). Mode was a postal survey with online completion option; fieldwork took place from 6th September 6, 2013, to January 6, 2014. Total of 3,955 surveys completed, 576 (14.6 percent) completed online. The response rate was 34.2 percent (calculated after removing out of scope from the sample, i.e,. deceased, incapable, return to sender). Weight supplied by SRC. Based on: Sex, Age, and State (based on AEC enrolment data for the 2013 election) and party vote (based on AEC final election vote tallies).

For full details of the survey, including technical report and data download, see https://australianelectionstudy.org/voter-studies/

READ, REDISTRIBUTE, AND RECEIVE VARIABLE CONSTRUCTION

All questions were measured as binary 1 = yes have done; else = 0. The questions used to measure the three main types of engagement were as follows:

Read

E-news: "Did you follow the election campaign news on the internet?" A good deal/some/not much recoded = 1.

Campaign sites: "During the 2013 election campaign, did you read or access any of the following: Party or candidate campaign sites (e.g., home pages, blogs, official Facebook profiles, official YouTube channels)?"

Redistribute

Signup /Use Party Tools: "During the 2010 election campaign, did you do any of the following activities online: Signed up to receive information from a party or candidate and/or registered as their follower/friend/supporter on Twitter or

Facebook OR Used online tools to promote parties and candidates (e.g., shared, posted or reposted official campaign information on a blog, Twitter feed or social network profile)?"

Share/Exchange: "During the 2010 election campaign, did you do any of the following activities online: Shared, posted, or reposted any non-official content (e.g., links to videos, news stories, jokes) on a blog, Twitter feed, or social network profile?"

Receive

Receive Online Direct: "During the election campaign, did a candidate or anyone from a political party contact you to persuade you to vote for them?" If Yes: "By text message OR SMS by email OR by social network site or other web-based method?"

Receive Online Indirect: "During the campaign, did a friend, family member, neighbor, work colleague, or other acquaintance try to persuade you to vote for a particular party or candidate?" If Yes: "By text message OR SMS by email OR by social network site or other web-based method?"

Receive Offline: "During the election campaign, did a candidate or anyone from a political party contact you to persuade you to vote for them?" If Yes: "By telephone OR by mail OR face-to-face?"

Socio-Demographic and Political Variables

PARTY ID

2010 and 2013: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as Liberal, Labor, National or what?"

Liberal; Labor National (Country) Party; Greens; Other party (*please specify*); No party.

SEX

2010 and 2013: "Are you male or female?" Male = 1; Female = 2.

AGE

2010 and 2013: "In what year were you born?"

EDUCATION

2010 and 2013: "Have you obtained a trade qualification, a degree or a diploma, or any other qualification since leaving school? What is your highest qualification?"

Up to Secondary: No qualification since leaving school;

Diploma: Associate Diploma; Trade qualification; Non-trade qualification;

Higher Education: Postgraduate Degree or Postgraduate Diploma; Bachelor Degree, Undergraduate Diploma.

SOCIAL CLASS

2010 and 2013: "Which social class would you say you belong to?"

Upper class OR Middle class; Working class; None.

VOTE

2010: "In the last federal election in August 2010, when Labor was led by Julia Gillard and the Liberals by Tony Abbott, which party got your first preference then in the House of Representatives election?" Liberal Party; Labor Party (ALP); National (Country) Party; Greens; Other *(please specify party below)*; Voted Informal/Did not vote.

Note that in Table 5.4 Liberal and National votes are combined as Coalition vote.

2013: "In the federal election for the House of Representatives on Saturday September 7, which party did you vote for ***first*** in the House of Representatives?"

Liberal Party; Labor Party (ALP); National (Country) Party; Greens; Other (*please specify party below*); Voted Informal/Did not vote.

Note: in table 5.4 Liberal and National vote are combined as Coalition vote

Tables 6.2–6.4, Data Sources and Variable Definitions

For results reported in Tables 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4, use two main data sources corresponding to the 2007 and 2012 presidential elections.

2007

For 2007 the data were made available by Professor Thierry Vedel and the Centre for Political Research CEVIPOF at Sciences Po, Paris, France. The survey was conducted by the French market research company L'Institut Français d'Opinion Publique (IFOP) using an Internet panel, and it was part of their "Observatoire de la Netcampagne." The survey was fielded in April 2007. The overall sample was 1,004 and consisted of French adult internet users aged 18 years or older. Quotas for sex, age, PCS, and région*agglo were applied to sample recruitment. PCS refers to the nine-category "Occupational and Socio-occupational Categories" developed by French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE). Region *agglo refers to selection using a combination of region and local community size, i.e., to ensure the sample is matched to the dispersion of the French population. The data were weighted by IFOP to ensure that demographic profiles matched those for all adults in France age 18 or older.

READ AND REDISTRIBUTE VARIABLE CONSTRUCTION

All questions were measured as binary 1 = yes have done; else = 0. The questions used to measure the three main types of engagement were as follows:

Read

E-news: "Au cours de la campagne présidentielle, vous est-il arrivé souvent, de temps en temps: Rechercher des informations sur actualité politique sur Internet?" (During the presidential campaign did you often, from time to time, rarely or never: Search for information on political news on the Internet)

    Often, time to time, and rarely = 1; never = 0.

    Campaign sites: "Au cours de la campagne présidentielle, vous est-il arrivé souvent, de temps en temps: Visiter le site d'un candidat à l'élection présidentielle?" (Visit the sites of presidential election candidates)

Redistribute

Sign up/Use Party Tools: Was measured in two stages.
Stage 1—a filter questions was used:

    "Quelles sont vos trois principales sources d'information politique sur Internet?" (What are your three main sources of political information on the Internet)

    Les sites d'information des chaînes de télévision (TV news channels)

    Les sites d'information des radios (Radio news channels)

    Les sites d'information de la presse écrite (Newspapers, print media)

    Les portails d'information généralistes (General information portals)

    Les sites ou les blogs de personnalités politiques (Sites or blogs of political figures)

    Les sites ou les blogs de journalistes politiques (Sites or blogs of political journalists)

    Les sites ou les blogs de citoyens (Sites or blogs of citizens)

    Les sites de formations ou de partis politiques (Political party sites)

    Les forums de discussion politique (Political discussion foruma)

    Autres (Other).

    Stage 2—All those reporting political party sites as one of their three main sources of information online group were selected and the frequencies reported for this group on whether they:

    "Télécharger des argumentaires politiques, des textes ou des tracts politiques?" (Downloaded political arguments, texts or political leaflets)

    Share/Exchange: "Transférer à des proches des informations sur la campagne présidentielle par email?" (Transferred information on the presidential campaign by email to relatives)

    Redistribute = all those selected in stage 1 who had downloaded content AND shared the content.

2012

For 2012 we used data from the ESRC-funded project "The Internet, Electoral Politics and Citizen Participation in Global Perspective." The questions were included as a module within the French National Election Study (FNES) conducted by the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques. The fieldwork was carried out by TNS Sofres using a stratified three-stage probability sample (region, household, individual) and was conducted after the second round of the election. The overall sample was of 2,014 French citizens aged 18 years or older. The data was weighted to ensure that demographic profiles matched to the population on socio-demographics (sex, age, and occupation). Overseas territories are not included. Interviews were conducted face-to-face between May 10 and June 9, 2012. For further details on the study design, see the CSES Macro report at https://cses.org/datacenter/module4/macro/FRA_2012_Macro.pdf

READ, REDISTRIBUTE, AND RECEIVE VARIABLE CONSTRUCTION

All variables were created in an identical manner as for the UK 2010 election, using the BMRB survey. Refer to Appendix 4.1, Election 2010, for the English translations. All questions were measured as binary 1 = yes have done; else = 0. The questions used to measure the three main types of engagement were as follows:

Read

E-news: "Lu ou accédé à des sites d'actualité généralistes ou à des blogs sur l'actualité pour avoir des informations sur la campagne?"

Campaign sites: "Est-ce que vous avez lu ou accédé à un site Internet d'un parti ou d'un candidat?"

Redistribute

Sign up/Use Party Tools: "Est-ce que vous vous êtes inscrits comme soutien, ami ou 'follower' d'un parti ou d'un candidat sur leur site Internet ou sur les réseaux sociaux OR utilisé des moyens permis par Internet pour aider un parti ou un candidat dans leur campagne?"

Share/Exchange: "Rejoint ou créé un groupe sur la politique ou les élections sur les réseaux sociaux? OR Posté des commentaires avec un contenu politique sur

un blog ou le mur d'un réseau social OR Fait suivre du matériel de campagne non officielle (liens avec des vidéos, actualités, blagues, etc.) à certaines de vos connaissances OR Inclus ou reposté du contenu de campagne non officielle (liens avec des vidéos, actualités, blagues, etc.) sur vos propres pages Internet?"

Receive

Receive Online Direct: "Au cours de la campagne pour l'élection présidentielle, candidat a-t-il pris contact avec vous, que ce soit en personne ou par d'autres moyens? Vous ont-ils contacté par SMS? par courrier électronique; par l'intermédiaire de réseaux sociaux ou toute autre méthode sur Internet?"

Receive Online Indirect: "Pendant la campagne, est-ce que l'un de vos amis, un member de votre famille, un voisin, un collègue ou une autre de vos connaissances a essayé de vous convaincre de voter pour un candidat particulier? Vous ont-ils contacté par SMS? par courrier électronique; par l'intermédiaire de réseaux sociaux ou toute autre méthode sur Internet?"

Receive Offline Direct: "Au cours de la campagne pour l'élection présidentielle, un parti ou un candidat a-t-il pris contact avec vous, que ce soit en personne ou par d'autres moyens? Vous ont-ils contacté en personne, en face-à-face?; par courier?; par téléphone?"

Socio-Demographic and Political Variables

PARTY ID

2007: "De quelle formation politique vous sentez-vous le plus proche ou le moins éloigné?" (Which political party do you feel closest to or the least distant from?); Parti socialiste (PS); Union for Popular Movement (UMP); Union for French Democracy (UDF); "Other" combines Front National, Lutte ouvrière, Ligue communiste révolutionnaire, Parti communiste, Mouvement pour la France, Une autre formation politique (other); "Aucune" (none/no party).

2012: A filter question was used. The first part asked "Existence d'un parti ou mouvement poiltique proche?" (In general, is there a party or a political movement that seems more close to you than others?) If No: "Existence d'un parti moins eloigne que d'autres?" (Is there nevertheless a political party that you feel less distant to than others).

Options were—Parti Socialist; L'UMP; MoDem; Parti de gauche; Front National; "Other" combines Lutte ouvrière ou NPA (Nouveau parti anticapitaliste), Parti communiste, Europe Ecologie—Les Verts, Nouveau centre, Other; DK/Refused

SEX

Interviewer instructed to code the gender of the respondent. 1 = Male; 2 = Female.

AGE

"Can you tell me your date of birth?" Month and Year.

EDUCATION

2012: "Quel est le plus haut niveau d'études ou de formation que vous avez terminé?" (What is the highest level of education or training you have completed?)
Up to Secondary =
1. Non scolarisé ou école primaire non achevée
2. Ecole primaire uniquement
3. Certificat d'études primaires
4. Scolarité suivie de la 6ème à la 3ème
5. Brevet élémentaire, Brevet d'études du premier cycle, Brevet des collèges
6. Scolarité suivie de la seconde à la terminale
7. CAP, BEP, examen de fin d'apprentissage artisanal
8. Diplôme d'aide-soignante, auxiliaire de puériculture, aide médico-pédagogique, aide à domicile.
(No schooling or primary school not completed; only primary school, primary school certificate; schooling from 6th to 9th grade; elementary certificate; Certificate of Primary Studies, GCSE; schooling from 10th to 12th grade; CAP, BEP, examination for craft apprenticeship; diploma nursing auxiliary, auxiliary childcare, medical and educational assistance, home help)
Baccalaureate =
9. Baccalauréat professionnel, Brevet de technicien
10. Baccalauréat technologique, Baccalauréat de technicien, BEA, BEC, BEI, BES
11. Baccalauréat général, Brevet supérieur
12. Diplôme de la capacité en droit, Diplôme d'accès aux études universitaires (DAEU)

13. Diplôme de moniteur éducateur, Educateur technique spécialisé, Brevet professionnel

(Professional baccalaureate; technical certificate; technical baccalaureate; Bachelor of Technician; BEA, BEC, BEI, BES; General baccalaureate; higher certificate; degree in law; degree of access to university (DAEU); diploma monitor educator; educator specialized technical; professional certificate)

Higher Education =

14. Diplôme universitaire du premier cycle (DEUG), Classes
préparatoires aux grandes écoles

15. Diplôme universitaire de technologie (DUT), Brevet de technicien supérieur (BTS)

16. Certificat d'aptitude pédagogique (instituteur), Diplôme d'éducateur spécialisé, Diplôme
d'assistante sociale, Diplôme paramédical (laboratin, infirmier,

17. Licence professionnelle

18. Licence

19. Diplôme d'école d'ingénieur

20. DESS, Master deuxième année professionnel

21. Diplômes professionnels supérieurs divers (notaire, architecte, journaliste,...)

22. Diplôme des grandes écoles

23. Maîtrise, CAPES, CRPE (professeur des écoles)

24. DEA, DES, Master deuxième année recherche, Agrégation

25. Doctorat en médecine ou équivalents (dentaire, pharmacie, etc.)

26. Doctorat

27. Autres

(Undergraduate degree (DEUG); classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles; University Diploma in Technology (DUT); higher technician certificate (BTS); teaching certificate (teacher); special education diploma; degree in social work; paramedical Diploma (lab, nurses, etc.), Professional Bachelor, Bachelor, Engineering school diploma; DESS; Second year professional master; Various professional degrees (notary, architect, journalist, etc.), Grandes Ecoles diploma; Maîtrise; CAPES, CRPE(school professor); DEA, DES; Second year of reseearch master, aggregation; Doctorate in medicine (dentistry, pharmacy, etc.); Doctorate; Others)

Refused, DK/NA = missing.

INCOME

2012: "Si vous additionnez toutes les sources de revenus de votre
foyer, quelle lettre correspond le mieux au revenu net mensuel de votre foyer?

Pour répondre, veuillez m'indiquer la lettre qui correspond à votre réponse?"

(If you add up all sources of income of your household, which of the following best corresponds to the net monthly income of your household?

1. H—Moins de 7,500 euros
2. U—De 7,500 à 15,000 euros
3. A—De 15,001 à 30,000 euros
4. N—De 30,001 à 50,000 euros
5. E—De 50,001 à 75 000 euros
6. Z—De 75,001 à 150,000 euros
7. P—De 150,001 à 300,000 euros
8. B—De 300,001 à 450,000 euros
9. S—De 450,001 à 750,000 euros 10. R—Plus de 750,001 euros

(Original 10 categories recoded to five to ensure sufficient *N* for subsequent crosstabs)

Recoded: 1 = Less than 1,000 euros per month; 2 = From 1,001 to 2,000 euros per month; 2,001 to 3,000 euros per month; 3 = From 3,001 to 4,000 euros per month; 4 = More than 4,001 euros per month; Refused/Don't know = missing; Null = no income (not reported in table, *N* = 11).

VOTE

2012: Measured as a two-stage filter question: "Beaucoup d'électeurs n'ont pas voté au premier tour de l'élection présidentielle. Vous-même, pouvez-vous me dire si vous avez voté au premier tour de l'élection présidentielle le 22 avril dernier?" (Many voters did not vote in the first round of the presidential elections. Can you tell me if you voted in the first round of presidential elections on April 22?) If Yes: "Pour qui avez-vous voté?" (For whom did you vote?) François Hollande; François Bayrou; Nicolas Sarkozy Jean-Luc Mélenchon; Marine Le Pen; "Other" combines Nathalie Arthaud, Philippe Poutou, Eva Joly, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, Jacques Cheminade. Ref, DK = missing.

Tables 7.2–7.4, Data Sources and Variable Definitions

The results reported in Tables 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4 are from three main data sources corresponding to the 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential elections.

2004

For 2004 we used data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project—November 2004 Daily Tracking Survey. The survey was conducted using standard list-assisted random digit dialing (RDD) methodology with a nationally representative sample of 2,200 adults living in continental United States telephone households. Up to 10 attempts were made to contact every sampled telephone number. The final response rate for this survey was 30.6 percent. The interviews were conducted in English by Princeton Data Source, LLC, from November 4 to November 22, 2004. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. Further details can be found at https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2005/03/06/the-internet-and-campaign-2004/ Data available at http://www.pewinternet.org/dataset/postelection-2004-tracking-survey/

READ, REDISTRIBUTE, AND RECEIVE VARIABLE CONSTRUCTION

Responses were coded as binary (done/not done) unless otherwise stated. Don't know/Refused coded as missing.

Read

E-news: "Please tell me if you ever do any of the following when you go online. Do you ever: Look for news or information about politics and the campaign?"

Campaign sites: "Now thinking about some campaign websites, do you ever go onto to (a) the Kerry/Edwards OR (b) the Bush/Cheney campaign website to get news or information about the 2004 elections?"

Redistribute

Sign up/Use Party Tools: "Have you ever signed up to receive email newsletters or other online alerts containing the latest news about politics or the election?" OR

   "During this year's election, did you happen to sign up ONLINE for any VOLUNTEER activities related to the campaign—like helping to organize a rally, register voters, or get people to the polls on election day—or did you not sign up online for any volunteer activities?"

Share/Exchange: "Have you sent emails about the 2004 campaign to groups of family or friends who are part of an email list or online discussion group?"

Receive

Receive Online: In the past two months, have you received EMAIL urging you to vote for a particular presidential candidate?" If Yes: "Was that urging you to vote for Bush, for Kerry, some other candidate, or multiple candidates?" Response categories were mutually exclusive and thus cumulated to calculate overall frequencies.

Receive Offline: "In the past two months, have you received mail, or telephone calls, or been visited at home by someone urging you to vote for a particular presidential candidate?" Responses summed to = total offline contact.

2008

For 2008 we used data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project 'The Internet's Role in Campaign 2008' November 2008 Post Election Tracking Survey. The survey was conducted using standard list-assisted random digit dialing (RDD) methodology with a nationally representative sample of 2,254 adults living in continental United States telephone households. Up to 10 attempts were made to contact every sampled telephone number. The final response rate for this

survey was 23 percent. The interviews were conducted in English by Princeton Survey Research Associates International from November 20 to December 4, 2008. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. Further details can be found at https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2009/04/15/the-internets-role-in-campaign-2008/. Data available at http://www.pewinternet.org/dataset/november-2008-post-election/

READ, REDISTRIBUTE, AND RECEIVE VARIABLE CONSTRUCTION

Responses were coded as binary (done/not done) unless otherwise stated. Don't know/Refused coded as missing.

Read

E-news: "Please tell me if you ever use the internet to do any of the following things? Do you ever: Look for news or information about the 2008 campaign?" *Campaign sites*: "Now thinking about some campaign websites, did you ever go to the (a) Obama/Biden OR (b) McCain/Palin campaign website to get news or information about the 2008 elections?"

Redistribute

Sign up/Use Party Tools: "There are many different activities related to the campaign and the elections that a person might do on the internet. I'm going to read a list of things you may or may not have done online in the past year related to the campaign and the elections. Did you: Sign up online to receive updates about the campaign or the elections OR Sign up ONLINE for any VOLUNTEER activities related to the campaign—like helping to organize a rally, register voters, or get people to the polls? OR Signed up as a 'friend' of any of candidates on a social networking site?"

Share/Exchange: As above, "Did you: Share photos, videos or audio files online that relate to the campaign or the elections OR Forward someone else's political commentary or writing to others OR Forward someone else's political audio or video recordings to others?"

Receive

Receive Online Direct: "Thinking about this year's presidential election, people have been communicating with each other and with the political campaigns

in many ways, to talk about issues or where the campaign sends. What about? Over the past several months, how often did you: Receive EMAIL / TEXT MESSAGES from a candidate or political party?"

Receive Online Indirect: As above, "Send or Receive EMAIL/TEXT MESSAGES with friends, family members, or others about the campaign?"

Receive Offline Direct: As above, "Receive MAIL from a candidate or party?"

2012

For 2012 we used data from the 2012 ANES Time Series Study (ANES, 2014). The study was a two-wave pre- and post-election survey and consisted of two probability-based samples: (1) Face to face (F2F), *N* = 2,054; (2) Internet panel, *N* = 3,860. Respondents were recruited separately, and in both cases the sample universe were US eligible voters. The F2F sample was recruited using an address-based, stratified, multistage cluster sample in 125 census tracts. The internet sample was drawn from panel members of GfK Knowledge Networks. Fieldwork began in September 2012 and concluded in January 2013. Pre-election interviews were conducted with study respondents during the two months prior to the 2012 elections and were followed by post-election re-interviewing beginning November 7, 2012.

READ, REDISTRIBUTE, AND RECEIVE VARIABLE CONSTRUCTION

Responses were coded as binary (done/not done) unless otherwise stated. Don't know/Refused coded as missing.

Read

Enews (Post-election): "Did you read, watch, or listen to any information about the campaign for president on the internet?"

Campaign sites (Post-election): "Did you visit any presidential candidates' websites, or did you never do that?"

Redistribute

Sign up: "Prior to or during the campaign, did you use the internet or your mobile phone to sign up for information or alerts from a party or candidate?"

Share/Exchange (Post-election): "During the past four years, have you ever sent a message on Facebook or Twitter about a political issue, or have you not done this in the past four years?"

Receive

Receive Online Direct: "During the election campaign, did a candidate or anyone from a political party contact you to persuade you to vote for them?" If Yes: "By text message OR SMS by email OR by social network site or other web-based method?"

Receive Online Indirect: "During the campaign, did a friend, family member, neighbor, work colleague, or other acquaintance try to persuade you to vote for a particular party or candidate?" If Yes: "Did they try to persuade you by text or SMS; by email; through a social network site or other web-based method?"

Receive Offline Direct: "During the campaign, did a party or candidate contact you in person or by any other means?" If Yes: "Did they try to persuade you in person, face-to-face; by mail; by phone?"

Socio-Semographic and Political Variables

PARTY ID

2004 and 2008: "In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?" No party/Not interested in politics; Other party; Don't know/Refused.

2012: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what?"

SEX

2004 and 2008: Interviewer Recorded: 1 = Male; 2 = Female.

2012: Interviewer Recorded (F2F): 1 = Male; 2 = Female.

Internet sample: "Are you male or female?"

AGE

2004 and 2008: "What is your age?" Recorded in years (97 = 97 or older); Don't know/Refused (treated as missing data).

2012: "What is the month, day, and year of your birth?" Author recoding of ANES summary variable dem_agegrp_iwdate_x

EDUCATION

2004 and 2008: "What is the last grade or class you completed in school?"

Less than High school—None, or grades 1–8/High school incomplete (grades 9–11);

High school graduate—(grade 12 or GED certificate);

Some college—Technical, trade, or vocational school AFTER high school;

Some college, no four-year degree (includes associate degree);

College—graduate (BS, BA, or other four-year degree); post-graduate training/professional school after college (toward a Masters/PhD, law or medical

school);

Don't know/Refused = Missing.

2012: "What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?"

Less than high school;

High school credential;

Some college—some post high school no bachelor's degree;

College—Bachelor's degree/Graduate degree.

Author recoding of ANES summary variable dem_edugroup_x

INCOME

2004 and 2008: "Last year, that is in 2003, what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes? Just stop me when I get to the right category . . ."

1 Less than $10,000

2 $10,000 to under $20,000

3 $20,000 to under $30,000

4 $30,000 to under $40,000

5 $40,000 to under $50,000

6 $50,000 to under $75,000

7 $75,000 to under $100,000

8 $100,000 or more

9 Don't know/Refused

Recoded: 1 to 2 = <20,000; 3 to 5 = 20,000–49,999; 6 = 50,000–74,999; 7 = 75,000–100,000; 8 = >100,000; 9 = missing.

2012: "Information about income is very important to understand how people are doing financially these days. Your answers are confidential. Would you

please give your best guess? Please mark the answer that includes the income of all members of your family living here in 2011 before taxes."

Author recoding of ANES summary variable inc_incgroup_pre

RACE

2004 and 2008: Variable "racethn" used. This is a combination of two variables:

1. "Are you, yourself, of Hispanic or Latino origin or descent, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or some other Latin American background?"

2. "What is your race? Are you White, Black, Asian, or some other race?" "Other" includes Asian or Pacific Islander, Mixed race, Native American/American Indian, and "Other"; Don't know/Refused coded as missing.

2012: Author recoding of summary variable dem_raceeth_x.—White, non-Hispanic; Black, non-Hispanic; Hispanic; Other (Asian, native Hawaiian or other Pacif Islr, non-Hispanic, Native American or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic, other non-Hispanic incl multiple races).

VOTE

2004 and 2008: Two-stage filter question:

"A lot of people have been telling us they didn't get a chance to vote in the elections this year on November 2. How about you—did things come up that kept you from voting, or did you happen to vote?" Yes, voted; No, did not vote; Don't know/Can't remember/Refused = missing.

2004: If Yes: "Did you vote for: the Republican ticket of George Bush and Dick Cheney; the Democratic ticket of John Kerry and John Edwards?" "Other" and Don't know/Refused coded as missing.

2008: If Yes: "Did you vote for: the Democratic ticket of Barack Obama and Joe Biden, or the Republican ticket of John McCain and Sarah Palin?" "Other," Don't know/Refused coded as missing.

2012: "For whom did R vote for President? Barack Obama; Mitt Romney?" "Other" & did not vote = missing. Author recoding of ANES summary variable Presvote2012_x

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Notes

Chapter 1

1. See Barber's (1997) pessimistic prediction for example that "Left to markets, (and that is where it is presently being left), it islikely to augment McWorld's least worthy imperatives, including surveillance over and manipulation of opinion, and the cultivation of artificial needs rooted in life-style "choices" unconnected to real economic, civic or spiritual needs." (225); and Barber's (1998) outline of the "Pandora Scenario" whereby new technologies. . . give government instruments of indirect surveillance and control unlike any known to traditional dictators." (580).

2. These data sets were generated as part of a broader cross-national research project led by the author in the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded project "The internet, electoral politics and citizen participation in global perspective," RES-051-27-0299.

Chapter 2

1. The quote appears in Hoff and Lofgren (1997: 6). This was a pilot study on the use and strategy of Danish political parties and featured interviews with the "ICT-political spokespersons" from four parties, including the Liberals.

2. James Crabtree quotes Francis Maude, Conservative Party chairman during the early noughties, as part of his study of the 2010 election; "David Cameron's Battle to Connect," *Wired Magazine,* March 24, 2010, available at http://www.wired.co.uk/magazine/archive/2010/04/features/david-camerons-battle-to-connect (accessed May 10, 2015).

3. According to World Bank Development Indicators, the average internet use among member countries of the European Monetary Union (EMU) in 1996 was 2.9% and for OECD nations 6.1%; http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators. The national statistics on growth of internet use in each of case studies confirm this low starting point. See Figures 4.1, 5.1, 6.1, and 7.1 for the United Kingdom, Australia, France, and the United States, respectively.

4. "Ready on e-Day: A Web Analysis of the Major Campaigns in 2002," *Rightclick strategies*, available at http://www.rightclicks.com/e-day/e-day.pdf (accessed July 28, 2003).

5. Changes in the Federal Election Commission (FEC) rules about credit card donations meant that online donations became eligible for match funding. See Bob von Sternberg, "Cyber Campaign Is Getting Crowded," *Star Tribune*, June 3, 1999: A6. Also Klotz (2004).

6. For a fuller definition and understanding of the relationship between web 1.0 and 2.0, see Anderson (2007), especially pp. 5–6.

7. There are some studies that counter this general trend. Klinger (2013), for example, concluded that the smaller players in Switzerland did not exploit social media particularly strongly in the federal elections of 2011.

8. One of the most notable and successful of these efforts had come in the 1998 state-level campaign by former wrestler Jesse Ventura. Ventura scored a surprise victory in the Minnesota governorship that was credited to his skillful use of the internet and particularly discussion forums that he used to generate a large network of young supporters, known as "Jessenet." Candidates in the 2000 presidential election, notably Steve Forbes and Pat Buchanan, had also taken steps to build up e-precincts or "Buchanans' brigade" (Stromer-Galley, 2014: 37).

9. Peggy Noonan, "They've Lost That Lovin' Feeling," *Wall Street Journal*, July 30, 2011.

10. According to these authors, election campaigning had entered a new "professionalized" or "postmodern" era by the late twentieth century. While this shift preceded the arrival of the web, a key characteristic of the new era was its emphasis on careful message targeting through direct mail methods and multi-channel TV, and a rejection of the "one size fits all" mode that had dominated in the earlier "modern" era. The arrival of the internet and particularly tools like email was thus seen as aligning very well with this wider tendency toward "narrowcasting" and micro-messaging of voters.

11. The US Green Party under Ralph Nader pioneered this strategy during the 2000 presidential election. The party set up a platform that allowed Green and Democrat voters in different districts to trade votes in a bid to unseat Republican incumbents. In the UK general election of 2001, the Liberal Democrats copied the strategy, using their website to encourage tactical voting among their own and Labour supporters in order to defeat Tory candidates.

12. Sasha Issenberg, "A Vast Left-Wing Competency," *Slate Magazine*, November 7, 2012, available at http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/victory_lab/2012/11/obama_s_victory_how_the_democrats_burned_by_karl_rove_became_the_party_of.html (accessed April 8, 2013).

13. The reports are numerous, and Chapter 7 contains a more extensive review. In-depth coverage can be found in articles by Sean Gallagher, "Built to Win: Deep Inside Obama's Campaign Tech," *Ars Technica*, November 14, 2012, available at http://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2012/11/built-to-win-deep-inside-obamas-campaign-tech/ (accessed November 26, 2014); Christie Parsons and Kathleen Hennessey, "Obama Campaign's Investment in Data Crunching Paid Off," *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 2012. http://articles.latimes.com/2012/nov/13/nation/la-na-obama-analytics-20121113 (accessed June 27, 2017).

14. "Inside the Cave: Obama's Digital Campaign," a report by Engage Research, available at http://enga.ge/dl/Inside_the_Cave.pdf (accessed December 1, 2014).

15. According to one report, the campaign predicted the 50:50 split in the vote for Romney and Obama in Dixville Notch in New Hampshire, a town with less than 100 residents who have traditionally voted at midnight and provided the first official results. See Christi Parsons and Kathleen Hennessey, "Obama Campaign's Investment in Data Crunching Paid Off," *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 2012.

16. Sasha Issenberg, "Obama's White Whale," *Slate Magazine*, February 15, 2012, available at http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/victory_lab/2012/02/project_narwhal_how_a_top_secret_obama_campaign_program_could_change_the_2012_race_.html (accessed July 12, 2013).

17. Frank Mace, "Just How Good Was the Obama Campaign," *Harvard Political Review*, November 29, 2013, available at http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/just-good-obama-campaign/ (accessed March 24, 2014). See also John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, "Obama's Not So Big Data Campaign," *Pacific Standard Magazine*, January 21, 2014, available at https://psmag.com/social-justice/obamas-big-data-inconclusive-results-political-campaigns-72687 (accessed February 7, 2015).

Chapter 3

1. We use the term "online" rather than "digital contact" in this chapter since a key focus of the analysis is to compare their frequency and distribution with nondigital forms of contact—mail, leaflets, phone, and in-person. When analyzed in conjunction with digital forms, these other modes are typically referred to as "offline" and digital as "online." To maintain that ease of distinction and consistency with other studies, we adopt this prior terminology.

2. For further details see www.cses.org

3. Note that as of the time of writing, the figures for mail and phone differ from those later reported in the final version of the CSES data set, Module 4 Full Release, May 29, 2018 version. The discrepancy appears to be due to the fact that the mail and phone figures in the full CSES are reported as the proportion of those having reported direct contact, i.e., a filter has been applied. This does not seem to be the case, however, for the other forms of contact.

4. International Telecommunication Union (ITU) statistics for 2010 report that 44% of the Greek population were online. This made it the only major Southern European democracy to report less than 50 percent of its population online, with Spain at 66 percent and Portugal and Italy at 54 percent. See Excel file, "Percentage of Individuals using the Internet," available at https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx.

5. For details on countries' electoral finance rules and media use during elections, see the IDEA Political Finance Database, available at http://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/political-finance-database.

6. Although the work cited was published in 2009, Anstead and Chadwick had produced an earlier version of the chapter as a working paper in 2004.

7. This included a number of the key variables already tested in the web campaign models, such as the level of democratic development, use of a single member/preferential or proportional voting system, the party system size, and the competitiveness of the race. It also included some new structural features, such as the extent of ideological polarization within the party system, the prominence of the election as a presidential or legislative race, the district-level competitiveness of the race, and if compulsory voting was in place.

8. The multilevel model is tested on 16 and not all 18 countries listed in Table 3.1. The United Kingdom is not included in the final cross-national analysis since at the point of this analysis it was not part of the release 2.0 of the integrated Wave 4 CSES file. The results reported here are taken from the 2015 British Election Study (BES) which fielded the CSES module as part of its mail-back component. Further details of the 2015 UK CSES survey and sample are provided in Appendix 4.2. Switzerland is not included here, as they did not include the question about sign-up in their survey and thus we were not able to use it as a control variable in our model. Finally, the Party System model excluded Taiwan due to the fact the Left-Right variable used to calculate its score on the Dalton polarization index was not asked of respondents.

9. The general rule of thumb on the minimum N of level 2 units required for multilevel modeling varies, with some scholars arguing as few as 8, while other argue for up 100 (Stegmueller, 2013). Gelman (2006) has even claimed that Bayesian methods can produce unbiased estimates of variance components with as few as 3 units at the highest level using a carefully considered, weakly informative prior. However, Stegmueller (2013) concluded that multilevel models using ML estimates that did not include cross-level interactions needed 15–20 countries to produce estimates of macro effects with acceptable levels of bias.

10. The analysis was run with the xtmelogit command, which is a maximum likelihood estimate (7 iterations).

11. Internet use as a simple percentage was not significant in an earlier iteration of the model and was removed from the final specification.

12. Due to the multilevel structure of the model, summary statistics such as pseudo R-square are not appropriate to calculate since they do not account for the variance in both levels of analysis. Instead, intra-class correlation coefficients (ICC) were calculated and compared across models. The ICC is an inferential statistic designed for analysis of group data and

describes how much additional variance is explained by the addition of the level 2 variables. None of the ICC coefficients were higher than .23 for any of models tested (including the final version), which indicates the macro factors provided at best a modest contribution to the explanatory model beyond the individual level variables.

13. See Conclusion, note 2, for details of subsequent studies that have used the full data set to investigate online mobilization.

Chapter 4

1. James Temperton, "Elections, Politicians and the Internet: A History of Failure," *Wired*, April 22, 2015, available at http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2015-04/14/digital-general-election (accessed April 24, 2015).

2. The Conservatives' address was www.conservative-party.org.uk and Labour occupied the even less intuitive, albeit more aspirational address, www.labourwin97.org.uk (Bowers-Brown and Gunter, 2002: 167).

3. David Walker, "Electronic Election," *Guardian Online*, May 10, 2001, available at http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2001/may/10/internet.ukgeneralelection2001 (accessed April 4, 2015).

4. See McCarthy (2001) and Coleman and Hall, (2001)

5. "Campbell Says He Never Used Net," *BBC Newsonline*, February 21, 2006, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4731764.stm (accessed May 5, 2015); "Blair Discovers Joys of e-mailing," *BBC Newsonline*, July 14, 2006, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/5180888.stm (accessed May 5, 2015)

6. Temperton, "Elections, Politicians and the Internet."

7. Matt Carter, "Get Connected," *Progress Magazine*, September 5, 2005, available at http://www.progressonline.org.uk/2005/08/25/get-connected (accessed May 10, 2015).

8. See Cruddas and Harris (2006) who's post-election Compass report criticized the "top-down modus operandi" of the website.

9. Matt Warman, "General Election 2010: Never Underestimate the Power of the Internet," *The Telegraph*, April 7, 2010, available at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/election-2010/7561876/General-Election-2010-never-underestimate-the-power-of-the-internet.html (accessed May 9, 2015); Jon Swaine, "General Election 2010: Facebook and Twitter to Have Unprecedented Impact," *The Telegraph*, April 7, 2010, available at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/election-2010/7558703/General-election-2010-Facebook-and-Twitter-to-have-unprecedented-impact.html (accessed August 9, 2015).

10. James Temperton, "Elections, Politicians and the Internet."

11. The label "nasty party" entered the UK political lexicon in 2002 after Teresa May used it to refer to perceptions of the party at the Conservative Party conference that year. See Michael White and Ann Perkins, "'Nasty Party' Warning to Tories," *The Guardian*, September 8, 2002, available at https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2002/oct/08/uk.conservatives2002 (accessed June 1, 2016).

12. Labour was reported to have spent over £2 million on developing Contact and Campaign Creator and Phone Bank. These were digital tools to help local-level activists coordinate and increase their voter mobilization efforts. See Gibson et al. (2010: 10) for details.

13. A Blog post on Lib Dem Voice by Central party staffer, David Loxton. Posted November 9, 2009. Extracted by Mark Pack for author, November 14, 2015.

14. The largest group formed on LibDemACT was Lib Dem Youth with 312 members. Figures compiled from site by author, May 1, 2010.

15. Lilleker and Jackson (2011: 135) reported that the biggest groups ranged between 492 and 1,405 members, compared with 312 recorded by the author on May 1, 2010, for LibDemACT

16. According to "Refounding Labour," Labour Party (2011), 59,000 members had logged in during 2011, 3,300 events were created by over 400 CLPs, and over £100,000 donated to local candidates through fundraising tools.

17. The estimate based on the author's post-election interviews with party digital campaign managers from all three main parties. Confirmed by email correspondence with Mark Pack, May 9, 2015.

18. According to their LinkedIn profiles, Rishi Saha, a Conservative candidate in 2005, became head of new media for the Conservatives in January 2006, https://www.linkedin.com/in/rishisaha. Sue MacMillan became Labour's director of new media in September 2007, https://www.linkedin.com/in/suemacmillan

19. George Windsor and Shane Murphy, "Big Data and the 2015 UK General Election: Digital Democracy or Digitally Divisive?," *Nesta blog*, June 20, 2014, available at https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/big-data-and-the-2015-uk-general-election-digital-democracy-or-digitally-divisive/ (accessed July 6, 2018).

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24. James Temperton, "Elections, Politicians and the Internet."

25. Anthony Ridge-Newman, "#GE2015—UK General Election and New Political Communication," *Ridgenewman Blog*, April 23, 2015, available at http://ridgenewman.blogspot.co.uk/2015/-4/ge2015-uk-general-election-2015-and-new.html (accessed April 27, 2015).

26. Adriana Coppola, "Forget the Manifesto: Big Data Will Win Future Elections," *The Guardian*, May 6, 2015, available at http://www.theguardian.com/media-network/2015/may/06/general-election-big-data-marketing-electioneering (accessed May 20, 2015)

27. These were conducted for Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) grant projects (Award Nos: RES-000-22-1284; RES-051-27-0299). The author was a principal or co-investigator. They include a 2005 post-election survey by NOP and a 2010 survey by BMRB. All were conducted through face-to-face methods and included internet and non-internet users in the sample. Full details of the survey and variable definitions are provided in Appendix 4.2.

28. The estimates for the general population for 2015 read and redistribute were estimated using the ONS figure of 86% internet access for that quarter i.e. the figure of 59.4% calculated for read online news from the YouGov internet user only sample was multiplied by 0.86 to derive the figure of 51.1, and similarly for redistribute figures. The reverse was done for the receive figures given that we had the general population estimates but not the internet user population. In this case the estimates were obtained by dividing the original full sample estimates by 0.86.

29. There were some questions about whether respondents used Facebook and Twitter to get information on candidates and parties on the YouGov panel survey; however, they were not used to compute the sign-up variable since the question wording referred explicitly to reading content, not actively signing up to receive updates. Given this, these variables

were used contribute to measuring the "read" mode, specifically in terms of measuring attention to campaign sites. The decision to exclude these items from sign-up inevitably means that we are likely to have missed some of those who actively sign up to follow and receive updates from the parties and thereby underestimate the numbers engaging in the redistribute mode. When the Facebook and Twitter items are included as part of the sign-up variable, it increases to 15 percent and redistribute (i.e., sign up and share) to 8.5 percent of internet users. In the mail-back component of the BES, where the CSES questions were included, there was a measure of signing up to receive party information and news which reported 7 percent of the population as undertaking this activity, suggesting that the Facebook/Twitter estimates are inflated. Since there was no variable to measure sharing of election news and information, however, it was not possible to compute the "redistribute" from the F2F BES survey 2005 and 2010.

30. The percentages for party supporters engaged in receive mode in 2015 are likely to be underestimates. Since there was no baseline measure of internet use for the BES respondents who completed the CSES module, and this was used to calculate the receive figures we used the ONS estimate of 86 percent internet use among the UK adult population reported in Table 4.2 as the baseline for extrapolating the internet user % figures for each party. Following the process detailed in note 28. As can be seen from 2005 and 2010, the overall estimates of internet use for the population (53 percent and 75 percent, respectively) are slightly lower than is typically the case for most party supporters, but not markedly so. The figures for 2010 show a greater correspondence than 2005. Thus, we consider use of the ONS estimate for the United Kingdom to be acceptable here to calculate the internet user-only percentage within all parties.

Chapter 5

1. See Australian 1988 Commonwealth Privacy Act and the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000. For further information see https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy-law/privacy-act/ (accessed June 10, 2016).

2. See Australian Privacy Law and Practice (ALRC Report 108), available at http://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/report-108 (accessed June 10, 2016).

3. Their exemption from the privacy legislation allows the parties to exploit these data without prior consent and also means they are not obliged to disclose the personal data that are held (Howard and Kreiss, 2010).

4. For a discussion of the wealth of information held on voter preferences by the Australian parties' databases, see also Section 41, "Political Exemptions," of the Australian Privacy Law and Practice (ALRC Report 108), Section 41, available at http://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/41.%20Political%20Exemption/introduction (accessed June 10, 2016).

5. *World E-Government Rankings*, UN E-Government Survey, 2014, available at https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/Portals/egovkb/Documents/un/2014-Survey/Chapter1.pdf (accessed June 25, 2016).

6. The success of these policies can be seen from official figures which show a continual narrowing of the gap between city and countryside dwellers' use of the internet over time, particularly since 2010. Reports issued by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) show that by 2013 the divide had almost disappeared, with 79 percent of households located outside of capital cities reporting access, compared with 85 percent of households located within capital cities.

7. The AEC definition of a marginal seat is where the leading party has received less than 56 percent of the final two-party preferred vote (i.e., after preferences have been allocated) in the election to the House of Representatives. Using the list of the 62 marginal seats in 2016 reported by the Huffington Post at http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2016/05/09/the-62-marginal-seats-that-will-decide-the-election/ and the corresponding ABS classification of the demographic status of the 150 electoral divisions (see http://www.aec.

gov.au/profiles), 27 or 44 percent of these 62 marginals were identified as either rural or provincial.

8. "The ALP and the Internet," 2000, available at http:alp.com.au/about/alpwww.html (accessed July 10, 2000).

9. For full listing of party website URLs, see Ross Storey, "Internet's Too Popular for Politics to Ignore," *The Australian*, February 13, 1996, p. 57.

10. Post-election interviews by author with party web campaign officers. Interview period: October 26, 2000–November 3, 2000.

11. Storey, "Internet's Too Popular for Politics to Ignore," p. 57.

12. Quote is from Mr. Geoff Brooks, the Managing Director of Multimedia Creations, a company that ran a website (www.medianet.com.au) devoted to daily coverage of the 1996 election. Reported by Ross Storey, "Internet's too popular for politics to ignore" *The Australian*, February 13, 1996, p. 57.

13. Ibid.

14. Post-election interviews by author with party web campaign officers from Greens, Democrats, and National Party. Interviews conducted October 26 and 27, 2000.

15. "The ALP and the Internet."

16. Quote is from Bruce Hawker, former chief of staff to NSW Premier Bob Carr, 1999. Cited in Gibson and Ward (2002): 105.

17. Richard McGregor, "Politicians Cast the Net for Votes," *The Australian*, November 3, 1999, p. 12.

18. Lara Sinclair, "Campaign Websites Go the Way of Jeff after Costly 99 Debacle," *Weekend Australian*, October 2, 2004, p. 10.

19. Lara Sinclair and Sheen MacLean, "It's a Party as Voters Blitzed," *The Australian*, October 7, 2004, p. 20.

20. Ben Oquist, "We Are All Americans Now," *Green*, no. 15 (Summer 2004–2005); cited in Australian Parliamentary Library Research Note, February 8, 2005, no. 30, 2004–2005, available at http://apo.org.au/system/files/699/apo-nid699-3866.pdf (accessed July 21, 2018). Sinclair, "Campaign Websites Go the Way of Jeff after Costly 99 Debacle," p. 10.

21. "The YouTube Election," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 14, 2007, p. 23.

22. Sally Jackson, "Labor to Increase Internet Dominion," *The Australian Media Section*, August 27, 2007, p. 33; "Rush for Cyberspace Has Traps for New Players," *Sun Herald*, August 12, 2007, p. 31. Ben Doherty, "www.Kevin07.com.au: Rudd Ups the Ante in the Cyberspace War," *The Age*, August 8, 2007, p. 8.

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27. "Labour Launches Social Media Platform," July 15, 2010, *Community Engine*, available at https://mumbrella.com.au/labor-launches-social-media-platform-29865 (accessed May 15, 2016).

28. Josh Gordon, "Libs Hope Answer to Woes Is Online," *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 6, 2008, available at http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/libs-hope-answer-to-woes-is-online/2008/04/05/1207249537261.html (accessed May 14, 2008).

29. Interview with Author, October 12, 2010.

30. Farrah Tomazin, "Bare-Bones Greens Growing from Grassroots," *The Age*, June 12, 2010, available at https://www.smh.com.au/national/barebones-greens-growing-from-grassroots-20100611-y3os.html (accessed July 21, 2018).

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34. Michele Levine, director of Roy Morgan Polling, quoted in Fitzsimmons, "Lessons from the White House."

35. McGregor, "Politicians Cast the Net for Votes," p. 12.

36. Rayner, "Will Big Data Change the 2013 Election?"; Fitzsimmons, "Lessons from the White House."

37. "Annual GetUp! Report 1 July 2013–30 June 2014," 2013 Federal Election Section, available at http://annualreport2013-14.getup.org.au/#election (accessed May 27, 2015).

Chapter 6

1. Angelique Chrisafis, "France Says Farewell to the Minitel—The Little Box That Connected a Country," *The Guardian*, June 28, 2012, available at http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2012/jun/28/minitel-france-says-farewell (accessed July 7, 2015)

2. For a good guide to the rules governing French campaigns, see the US Library of Congress Law Library pages at https://www.loc.gov/law/help/campaign-finance/france.php#campaigns

3. Length of official campaign period was not included in the CSES macro data file and has not been used as an independent variable in previous cross-national models of voter mobilization. Future iterations of the comparative analysis conducted in Chapter 3 should give consideration to testing the impact of this variable on rates of both offline and online contact.

4. See report on 2012 election by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights—The *OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report* February 20–22, 2012, available at https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/89000?download=true (accessed September 2, 2018). See also the OSCE report on "Political Advertising and Media Campaign during the Pre-election Period: A Comparative Study," available at https://www.osce.org/mission-to-montenegro/346631?download=true (accessed September 2, 2018).

5. It is worth noting that to date, neither print nor online media have been included under the equal time rules. This omission clearly could increase the incentives for parties to exploit these new channels during the election as an alternative means of reaching voters. However, restrictions do apply to the purchase of online advertising (similarly to television and radio), which means that candidates do not enjoy unfettered use of digital channels to promote themselves during elections. Furthermore, although the lack of regulation of parties' free or "unpaid" speech online may increase its appeal, the wider legal and cultural environment in France (which we also discuss later in the chapter) clearly discourages this type of unsolicited, individualized contacting by political actors. These norms, we argue, would thus counter impulses by candidates to use their sites as platforms for direct self-promotion. See the reports listed in note 3 for further information about control over parties' use of media in French presidential elections.

6. The EU General Data Protection Regulation Act (GDPR) was required to be enacted in all member states as of May 2018. The new rules increase the rights of individuals to

control their personal data and the obligations of organizations to ensure privacy and consent in the collection of those data. The sanctions for noncompliance have also been strengthened, particularly with regard to fines. A summary of the key points and further information is available from the UK Information Commissioners Office (ICO) and can be found here: https://ico.org.uk/for-organizations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr (accessed July 12, 2018).

7. Notably, the French government had already taken steps to increase the powers of CNIL in 2016 with the Digital Republic Bill; see http://www.gouvernement.fr/en/the-digital-bill. See also https://www.huntonprivacyblog.com/2016/10/31/entry-force-french-digital-republic-bill/. The new legislation prefigured the arrival of GDPR by strengthening existing controls over use of French citizens' data and reinforcing requirements for their explicit consent to its collection and use. CNIL also released a secondary document in 2016 that imposed more specific restrictions on political parties' use of social media to contact voters. More general information on data privacy regulation in France can be found in the DLA Piper Global Data Protection Handbook at http://dlapiperdataprotection.com/#handbook/law-section/c1_FR (accessed June 2, 2016).

8. Steven Erlanger, "In France, Using Lessons from Obama Campaign," *New York Times*, April 21, 2012, available http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/22/world/europe/in-france-hollande-camp-tries-us-style-canvassing.html?_r=0 (accessed July 21, 2015).

9. The company was the architect of Hollande's 2012 online campaign. According to the website at http://www.liegeymullerpons.fr (accessed June 12, 2015), they advertise themselves as "La première startup de stratégie électorale en Europe" with an explicit mission of bringing the new "big data"–driven campaign tools to European campaigns. For a more detailed account of their activities during the 2012 campaign see Liégey et al. (2013), See also http://www.liegeymullerpons.fr/references/tous-hollande-2012 (accessed June 28, 2018).

10. "La Coopol, le 'réseau social' du Parti socialiste," *nonfiction.fr*, available at http://www.nonfiction.fr/article-3417-la_coopol_le_reseau_social_du_parti_socialiste.htm (accessed July 21, 2015)

11. Oriane Raffin, "Le PS lance la Coopol, son réseau social en ligne," *20 Minutes*, January 12, 2010, available at http://www.20minutes.fr/politique/375770-20100112-ps-lance-coopol-reseau-social-ligne (accessed on July 22, 2015).

12. Rémi Duchemin, "La Coopol bouge encore," *Europe 1*, August 26, 2011, available at http://www.europe1.fr/politique/la-coopol-bouge-encore-687777 (accessed on July 22, 2015).

13. Antonella Napolitano, "Can an Obama-like Campaign Work in France?" *Tech President*, March 21, 2012, available at http://techpresident.com/news/21948/can-obama-campaign-work-france (accessed July 4, 2013).

14. Samuel Laurent, "La mort annoncée du réseau social de l'UMP," *Le Monde*, December 28, 2010, available at https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2010/12/28/la-mort-annoncee-du-reseau-social-de-l-ump_1458360_823448.html (accessed July 28, 2018).

15. On a standardized 0–100 scale, Labour's *Membersnet* scored 71, *Tous Hollandee* scored 58, and *Labor Connect* scored 47.

16. Napolitano, "Can an Obama-like Campaign Work in France?"; "Le PS peut désormais compter sur une armée de sympathisants," *L'Obs*, October 21, 2011, available at https://www.nouvelobs.com/politique/primaire-socialiste/20111019.OBS2859/le-ps-peut-desormais-compter-sur-une-armee-de-sympathisants.html (accessed July 4, 2013).

17. Based on IDEA figures for Voting Age Population in France in 2012, 51,979,508. See https://www.idea.int/data-tools/question-countries-view/441/86/ctr (accessed September 3, 2018).

18. This email list obviously includes an unmeasured number of overseas and non-eligible US residents. According to US Census reports, the total eligible voting population in 2008 was 206,072. This included those citizens over the age of 18; https://www.census.gov/prod/2014pubs/p20-573.pdf.

19. According to media accounts, Sarkozy's government spent millions setting up an agency to implement the so-called HADOPI law or "Haute Autorité pour la Diffusion des oeuvres et la Protection des droits d'auteur sur Internet," which was designed to prevent illegal file-sharing. The law ran afoul of the French Constitutional Council, however, in its stipulation that those found guilty would have their internet access removed for one year. Internet access, the Council argued, was a "human right." For more coverage of the issues, see Richard Wray, "French Anti-filesharing Law Overturned," *The Guardian*, June 10, 2009, available at https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2009/jun/10/france-hadopi-law-filesharing (accessed September 3, 2018).

20. "Sarkozy and Hollande: Two Great Examples of How Not to "Do" Twitter," *Myndset* by Minter Dial, June 12, 2015, available at http://myndset.com/2012/07/12/sarkozy-and-hollande-two-great-examples-of-how-not-to-do-twitter/ (accessed on October 5, 2015). "Hollande and Sarkozy: How Not to Use Social Media in Politics or Business," *Econsultancy*, November 8, 2012, available at https://econsultancy.com/hollande-and-sarkozy-how-not-to-use-social-media-in-politics-or-business/ (accessed October 4, 2015).

21. Estimates provided by Koc-Michalska et al. (2014) are that the Greens e-campaign budget for 2012 was 25,000 euros, a fifth of the amount that it had spent in 2007.

22. Author interview with member of Greens' digital team, June 12, 2012

23. The estimates for the general population for 2007 read and redistribute were derived using the 66% internet access figure reported in figure 6.1 using World Bank estimates for that year. As in the UK for 2015 where an online sample was used to calculate read and redistribute we multiplied the % engaging in an activity for online users by 0.66 to approximate the general population figures. Thus 68% for internet users who read online news about the campaign equates to 44.9% of the overall sample/population. We apply the same method to calculate the population estimates for candidate sites and the redistribute variables.

24. The response categories differ, with four options in 2007 and five in 2012. In addition, the 2007 question asks about interest in the presidential campaign, while the 2012 asks about interest in politics generally. The results indicate that while the proportions with the highest interest were comparable across the two surveys (29 percent and 28 percent across the respective years), those with only "a bit of interest" were significantly smaller in number in the 2012 survey (19 percent vs. 46 percent), as were those with no interest (5 percent vs. 10 percent).

25. There may also be a methodological reason for its robustness. The measures used to calculate the read mode of engagement in the two election studies were very similar. Thus, the higher rate reported in 2007 is in line with the general pattern of higher estimates of political attitudes and behavior that were reported in that survey more generally. The measure used for "redistribute" in 2007, however, was notably more conservative than that used in 2012 and thus likely underestimated numbers. Specifically, the "redistribute" variable in 2012 was based on respondents saying yes to two items—whether they had "signed up to help support a candidate/party" AND had shared political content. In 2007 we used a two-part filter question to measure redistribute. Specifically, we first selected those individuals who said they had downloaded any political content AND also shared political material. Then, in order to make this a more precise measure of redistributing official party content, we applied a filter that selected only those respondents who reported party sites as one of their top three sources of information. This filtering process arguably introduced a more stringent selection criteria than the measure used in 2012, and thus may have resulted in suppressing the figures for redistribution.

26. Income was used rather than social class. Unlike the United Kingdom, France does not have a commonly agreed hierarchy of class categories that are used by survey researchers. The categories that do exist are very specific and extensive in nature. See Desrosières (2008) Rose and Pevalin (2001) for further discussion of the complexity in constructing measures of socioeconomic class in France.

Chapter 7

1. The notion of Americanization has been challenged by Negrine and Papathanassopoulos (1996) and Plasser (2000), who have argued against the idea of a wholesale importation of US techniques and the importance of local context in shaping a process of "modernization." For a good overview of the debates, see Farrell (2002).

2. The quote is attributed to Jim Messina, Obama's campaign manager for his 2012 re-election bid. See Dan Balz, "How the Obama Campaign Won the Race for Voter Data," *Washington Post*, July 23, 2013, available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-the-obama-campaign-won-the-race-for-voter-data/2013/07/28/ad32c7b4-ee4e-11e2-a1f9-ea873b7e0424_story.html?utm_term=.796841dd4a0b (accessed March 3, 2018).

3. Phil Noble, "Internet and Campaign 2002 Analysis," *Special Report Politics Online*, November 4, 2002, available at http://netpulse.politicsonline.com/soundoff.asp?issue_id=6.18 (accessed November 6, 2002).

4. J. Benson, "Dean Goes Bust: The $40 Million War Chest Is Gone—and so Is Campaign Manager Joe Trippi. What Happened?" *Salon*, January 29, 2004, available at http://archive.salon.com/news/feature/2004/01/29/dean/index.html (accessed March 12, 2007).

5. "Howard Dean: Politics in Cyberspace," *NewsMax.com*, July 5, 2003, available at http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2003/7/4/161644.shtml (accessed July 20, 2003).

6. Quoted in E. J. Dionne Jr., "Dean's Grass-Roots Cash Cow," *Washington Post*, July 8, 2003, available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2003/07/08/deans-grass-roots-cash-cow/e4d4eaac-53a0-4c55-a0d8-35e48db2c629/?utm_term=.a25271b5d9a9 (accessed July 20, 2003).

7. See Chris Suellentrop, "Peer to Peer Politics: Should Howard Dean be a Little Bit Afraid of the Internet?" *Slate.com.* July 14, 2003, available at https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2003/07/should-howard-dean-be-afraid-of-the-internet.html (accessed June 28, 2007). Edward Cone "Election 2008: The Internet Campaign." *CIOInsight 6* August 6, 2007. Available at https://www.cioinsight.com/print/c/a/Trends/Election-2008-The-Internet-Campaign, (accessed August 15, 2010). Marshall Ganz, who helped design Obama's field organization, is reported as having said that Dean "understood how to use the internet for the fundraising but not for the organizing" in Sarah Lai Stirland, "Obama's Secret Weapons: Internet Databases and Psychology," *blogwired*, October 29, 2008, available at http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2008/10/obamas-secret-weapon (accessed November 12, 2008).

8. S. DiJulio and A. Wood, "Online Tactics & Success: An Examination of the Obama for America New Media Campaign," a report by the Wilburforce and Brainerd Foundation, 2008, available at http://www.wilburforce.org/resources/wilburforce-funded-reports/online-tactics-and-success/at_download/file (accessed July 31, 2016).

9. Jose Antonio Vargas, "Obama Raised Half a Billion Online," *Washington Post*, November 20, 2008, available at http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/11/obama-raised-half-a-billion-on.html (accessed February 26, 2018)

10. Mark Sweeney, "Barack Obama Buys 30-Minute TV Ad," *The Guardian*, October 10, 2008, available at https://www.theguardian.com/media/2008/oct/10/barack-obama-tv-ad (accessed February 26, 2018)

11. Vargas, "Obama Raised Half a Billion Online."

12. Paul chose December 16, 2007, as the 234th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party, a date of considerable importance to his libertarian-minded supporters. See Kenneth P. Vogel, "'Money Bomb': Ron Paul Raises $6 Million in 24-Hour Period," *USA Today*, December 17, 2007, available at http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2007-12-17-ronpaul-fundraising_N.htm Accessed on August 1, 2016.

13. Kenneth P. Vogel, 'Ron Paul Becomes $6 Million Man," *Politico Magazine*, December 16, 2007, available at https://www.politico.com/story/2007/12/ron-paul-becomes-6-million-man-007421 (accessed August 5, 2018); Andrew Malcom, *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 2008, "News Shocker: Ron Paul Was Biggest GOP Fundraiser Last Quarter,"

available at http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/washington/2008/02/news-shocker-ro.html (accessed August 1, 2016).

14. Kate Phillips, "A Ban on Ron Paul Supporters," *The Caucus: The Politics and Government blog of the New York Times*, October 24, 2007, available at http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/24/a-ban-on-ron-paul-supporters/?_r=0 (accessed August 1, 2016).

15. Jose Antonio Vargas, "Meet the OPOs," *Washington Post*, May 4, 2007, available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/03/AR2007050302546.html (accessed February 28, 2018).

16. Vargas, "Meet the OPOs," note 14.

17. Sasha Issenberg, "A Vast Left-Wing Competency," *Slate Magazine*, November 7, 2012, available at http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/victory_lab/2012/11/obama_s_victory_how_the_democrats_burned_by_karl_rove_became_the_party_of.html (accessed April 8, 2013).

18. The work of Alan Gerber and Don Green in New Haven in 1998 using field experiments to test and measure the precise impact of different methods of party contact on voter turnout was particularly influential here. See Chapter 3 of Issenberg (2012) for a good historical overview of the emergence of the new methods.

19. Benedict Carey, "Academic 'Dream Team' Helped Obama's Effort," *New York Times*, November 12, 2012, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/13/health/dream-team-of-behavioral-scientists-advised-obama-campaign.html (accessed March 3, 2018).

20. NOI was absorbed by Wellstone Action, a liberal-progressive organization that was founded after the death of Senator Paul Wellstone of Minnesota. Information on its mission and core activities is available at http://neworganizing.wellstone.org/about/ http://neworganizing.wellstone.org/about/what-we-do/ (accessed March 4, 2016).

21. Balz, 'How the Obama Campaign Won the Race for Voter Data."

22. See Teddy Goff, LinkedIn profile for 2007–2008, https://www.linkedin.com/in/teddy-goff/.

23. "Inside the Cave: Obama's Digital Campaign," a report by Engage Research, slide 10, available at https://enga.ge/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Inside_the_Cave-1.pdf (accessed December 1, 2014).

24. Alexis C. Madrigal, "When the Nerds Go Marching In," *The Atlantic*, November 16, 2012, available at https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/11/when-the-nerds-go-marching-in/265325/ (accessed March 4, 2018).

25. Peggy Noonan, "They've Lost That Lovin' Feeling," *Wall Street Journal*, July 30, 2011.

26. Sean Gallagher, "Built to Win: Deep Inside Obama's Campaign Tech," *Ars Technica*, November 14, 2012, available at http://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2012/11/built-to-win-deep-inside-obamas-campaign-tech/ (accessed November 26, 2014).

27. Michael Scherer, "Inside the Secret World of the Data Crunchers Who Helped Obama Win," *Time Magazine*, November 7, 2012, available at http://swampland.time.com/2012/11/07/inside-the-secret-world-of-quants-and-data-crunchers-who-helped-obama-win (accessed March 12, 2014).

28. Gallagher, "Built to Win."

29. Derrick Harris, "How Obama's Tech Team Helped Deliver the 2012 Election," *Gigaom*, November 12, 2012, available at https://gigaom.com/2012/11/12/how-obamas-tech-team-helped-deliver-the-2012-election/ (accessed August 8, 2016).

30. Scherer, "Inside the Secret World of the Data Crunchers."

31. Gallagher, "Built to Win."

32. Issenberg, "A Vast Left-Wing Competency." . Proof of their newfound accuracy was claimed by the campaign after the first results came in on election night from the small hamlet of Dixville Notch in New Hampshire. The vote showed an even split in support for Obama and Romney, which, according to the analytics team, was exactly what their model had predicted. Christi Parsons and Kathleen Hennessey, 'Obama Campaign's Investment in Data Crunching Paid Off," *LA Times*, November 13, 2012, available at http://

articles.latimes.com/2012/nov/13/nation/la-na-obama-analytics-20121113 (accessed December 3, 2012).

33. "Inside the Cave: Obama's Digital Campaign," a report by Engage Research, slide 87. Available at http://enga.ge/dl/Inside_the_Cave.pdf (accessed December 1, 2014); Nick Judd, "How Obama for America Made Its Facebook Friends into Effective Advocates," *TechPresident*, November 19, 2012, available at http://techpresident.com/news/23159/how-obama-america-made-its-facebook-friends-effective-advocates (accessed March 12, 2014).

34. Madrigal, "When the Nerds Go Marching In."

35. Michael Scherer, 'Exclusive: Obama's 2012 Digital Fundraising Outperformed 2008," *Time Magazine*, November 15, 2012, available at http://swampland.time.com/2012/11/15/exclusive-obamas-2012-digital-fundraising-outperformed-2008/ (accessed December 1, 2014); Tim Murphy, "Under the Hood of Team Obama's Tech Operation," *Mother Jones*, November 15, 2012, available at http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/11/inside-obama-campaign-tech-operation (accessed January 1, 2014).

36. Stromer-Galley (2014): 147; "Inside the Cave: Obama's Digital Campaign," a report by Engage Research, slide 42, available at https://enga.ge/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Inside_the_Cave-1.pdf (accessed December 1, 2014).

37. Murphy, "Under the Hood of Team Obama's Tech Operation."

38. Sean Gallagher, "Inside Team Romney's Whale of an IT Meltdown," *Ars Tehnica*, November 9, 2012, available at https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2012/11/inside-team-romneys-whale-of-an-it-meltdown/ (accessed March 5, 2018); Dashiell Bennett, "Romney's Get Out the Vote Plan Was a Complete Disaster," *The Atlantic*, November 9, 2012, available at https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/11/romneys-get-out-vote-plan-was-complete-disaster/321610/ (accessed March 5, 2018).

39. Directly after their defeat in 2008 a coalition of prominent Republican online strategists released a 10-point action program entitled "Rebuild the Party: A Plan for the Future." The program explicitly focused on how the party should exploit and harness new communication technologies to empower their grassroots supporters. See http://www.rebuildtheparty.com/plan (accessed January 9, 2009). In February 2009 the RNC organized a "Tech Summit" for activists and strategists. See Emily Cadei, "Republicans Prep the Portals of Online Organizing," *CQ Politics*, February 17, 2009, available at http://www.cqpolitics.com/frame-templates/print_template.html (accessed April 4, 2009).

40. Blaise Hazelwood, former RNC political director and member of Romney's targeting team, quoted in Issenberg, "A Vast Left-Wing Competency." .

41. Thomas B. Edsall, "The G.O.P's Digital Makeover," *New York Times Opinionator Blog*, April 3, 2013, available at http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/04/03/the-g-o-ps-digital-makeover/?_r=0 (accessed April 4, 2013).

42. As in the French case, we adjusted the CIC index to take into account that it was a presidential election by dropping the item in the resource mobilization sub-index measuring whether the site encouraged people to stand as local candidates. Given that the US parties do not offer formal membership, we also removed the item measuring if facilities were available to help promote joining the party. This reduced the sub-index to a 0–4 measure, compared with 0–5 in France and 0–6 in Australia and the United Kingdom.

43. "Inside the Cave: Obama's Digital Campaign," a report by Engage Research, slide 68, available at https://enga.ge/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Inside_the_Cave-1.pdf (accessed December 1, 2014).

44. See "Inside the Cave: Obama's Digital Campaign," a report by Engage Research, available at https://enga.ge/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Inside_the_Cave-1.pdf (accessed December 1, 2014).

45. Pew did release several data sets that examined voters' use of internet technologies during the 2012 election; however, none contained the range and direct comparability of items available in the 2004 and 2008 studies. The data sets that were made available focused

more on particular uses, such as online video (http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/11/02/online-political-videos-and-campaign-2012/) and social networking (http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/11/06/social-media-and-voting/).

46. See "Inside the Cave: Obama's Digital Campaign," a report by engage Research, slide 55, available at: https://enga.ge/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Inside_the_Cave-1.pdf (accessed December 1, 2014).

47. Madrigal, "When the Nerds Go Marching In."

48. Frank Mace, "Just How Good Was the Obama Campaign?" *Harvard Political Review*, November 29, 2013, available at http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/just-good-obama-campaign/ (accessed March 24, 2014).

49. See also John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, "Obama's Not So Big Data Campaign," *Pacific Standard Magazine*, January 21, 2014, available at https://psmag.com/social-justice/obamas-big-data-inconclusive-results-political-campaigns-72687 (accessed February 7, 2015).

50. Murphy, "Under the Hood of Team Obama's Tech Operation."

Conclusion

1. For investigations into and evidence of, the use of data-driven micro-targeting techniques in the 2016 Brexit referendum, see Philip N. Howard and Bencde Kollanyi, "Bots, #Strongerin, and #Brexit: Computational Propaganda during the UK-EU Referendum," 2016, available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2798311; see also extensive reports by *The Guardian* on "The Cambridge Analytica Files," available at https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/26/the-cambridge-analytica-files-the-story-so-far (accessed December 2, 2018); and the 2018 report published by the UK Information Commissioners Office, "Investigation into the Use of Data Analytics in Political Campaigns," available at https://ico.org.uk/media/action-weve-taken/2259371/investigation-into-data-analytics-for-political-purposes-update.pdf (accessed December 2, 2018).

2. Further work by the author with colleagues on the drivers of digital campaign contact using the full release of 38 countries provides a helpful update to our analysis. The study by Magalhães et al. (2018) employs a simpler explanatory model that features fewer macro-level variables. The analysis confirms the importance of internet use as a driver of higher rates of online mobilization. Notably, the role of institutional context in the form of single-member electoral districts is not found to be significant in this larger *N* study. While this discrepancy may be due to a sensitivity bias in our model based on the smaller number of cases, it is also potentially due to the simpler explanatory model the authors tested. Specifically, the Magalhães et al. (2018) model did not test the effect of presidential elections or their competitiveness. Furthermore, the dependent variable was measured in a more nuanced manner, in that it was broken down into three separate modes—email, SMS, and web-based/social media. Also the focus was entirely on party-based contacting or direct online mobilization, while in our analysis the dependent variable was based on whether a respondent reported direct or indirect online contact.

3. Alexis C. Madrigal, "When the Nerds Go Marching In," *The Atlantic*, November 16, 2012, available at https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/11/when-the-nerds-go-marching-in/265325/ (accessed March 4, 2018)

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6. Holly Ellyat, "How I Helped Get Trump Elected: The President's Digital Guru," Tech Trenders: A CNBC Special Report, November 8, 2017, available at https://www.cnbc.com/2017/11/08/how-i-helped-get-trump-elected-the-presidents-digital-guru-brad-parscale.html (accessed November 12, 2017). Lois Beckett, "Trump Digital Director Says Facebook Helped Win the White House," *The Guardian*, October 9, 2017, available at https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/oct/08/trump-digital-director-brad-parscale-facebook-advertising (accessed November 11, 2019).

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