

**CAMPAIGNING ONLINE: THE INTERNET, ELECTIONS AND
DEMOCRACY IN CANADA**

by

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ABSTRACT

As political engagement declines in Western democracies, the Internet has been held up as a promising site for citizen participation and engagement. This optimism has been fuelled by recent political events that seem to confirm the Internet's democratic potential. Barack Obama channelled the Internet's power for fundraising and voter mobilization in the 2009 U.S. election. Likewise, Iranian voters successfully used social media such as Twitter to organize protests of the country's 2009 presidential election. This paper presents a first look at how Canadian political parties are using and responding to online communication tools during elections campaigns. Specifically it examines the role of online communications tools in building and developing a campaign platform. Moreover, it discusses whether these activities represent a shift towards a strengthened democracy or are simply reflective of current political culture. The findings are based on data gathered through semi-structured interviews with political strategists involved in the 2008-09 federal, British Columbia provincial and Vancouver municipal elections. This study found that online communication during election campaigns has little influence on the shape of the policy platform. However, political parties have been quick to adopt new online communications platforms allowing them to market their candidates and policies. Moreover, the Internet has shaped traditional campaign functions allowing parties to recruit funds, voter information and volunteers online. Rather than fundamentally shifting the character of democracy in Canada, the current use of online communication tools seems to be defined by the existing political culture.

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DEDICATION

*To Richard Zantingh, who taught me to do my best
and Marc Lindell, who always believes I can achieve it.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet has opened a new and seemingly endless space for citizens to voice their opinions, express dissent or show support for politicians, government and public policy. The role of technology in political mobilization has enhanced democratic engagement in a number of recent elections globally. Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign encouraged widespread democratic involvement using the Internet. His website helped to organize 150,000 events and raise \$600 million in campaign donations (Stirland 1). The Internet appeared to move the campaign beyond political elites and traditional media allowing the average American voter a voice in the debate. As Simon Rosenberg, president of a political think tank suggested, "[Obama's] run a campaign where he's used very modern tools, spoke to a new coalition, talked about new issues, and along the way, he's reinvented the way campaigns are run" (Stirland 2008). The democratic power of the Internet was also on full display in the aftermath of the last Iranian presidential election. Twitter was used as a means to send messages about the political situation to the outside world and to organize protests and political action inside Iran (Lev Grossman 1).

These examples raise an important research question: what is the relationship between online communication and political action in Canada? This study seeks to examine a small part of this question, focusing on the role of online communication in election campaigns. My research examines the impact of new media forms on the political agenda focusing on the role of interactive online information in the 2008 Canadian federal and Vancouver municipal election and the 2009 British Columbia provincial election. I am particularly interested in the role of interactive online communication and journalism (i.e.

Twitter, Facebook, blogs and online forums) in developing and communicating campaign platforms.

This research is important because while the Internet has become a site of political mobilization and expression in recent elections, media studies literature on the role of online communication and journalism in Canadian elections is underdeveloped despite the high levels of Internet use in this country (Fletcher and Zamaria 17). The Canadian attitude towards Internet empowerment does not resonate with recent real world events and thus warrants further investigation. According to the Canadian Internet Project's 2007 survey, 54 per cent of Canadian homes have broadband access and 88 per cent of Canadians 12 years or older have been online (Fletcher and Zamaria 5,8). Canadians spend an average of 15 hours online each week and use the Internet for a variety of purposes including email, entertainment, information seeking, social networking and news reading (Fletcher and Zamaria 5). Over 40 per cent of Canadian Internet-users have visited a community or social-networking site (Fletcher and Zamaria 14), which have been catalysts for political action in other countries. Moreover, news sites are among the most popular online destinations with 79 per cent of Internet-users going online to look for news (Fletcher and Zamaria 12).

Media and political marketing strategists provide glimpses of the impact of Internet mobilization on Canadian democracy. For example, in a 2009 *Toronto Star* article, Alexandre Sevigny, a communication professor at McMaster University, attributes the eventual inclusion of Elizabeth May, the leader of the federal Green Party, in the 2008 leaders' debate to pressure from MySpace users. Sevigny asserts that Internet pressure forced Stéphane Dion to stand up for May and led to her inclusion in the debate (Diebel 1). A 2009 political communications industry study surveyed parliamentarians and asked them about how they use and respond to online communication and the grassroots campaigns that employ them. Their initial findings were that MPs are not well positioned to develop online relationships and use the web tools for politics (Meyers, Nanos and Thompson 1).

Other studies have shown Canadians are sceptical about empowerment and the Internet. The Canadian Internet Project found that online civic engagement is low with fewer than one in five people using the Internet to communicate with an elected official or civil servant (Fletcher and Zamaria 15). According to the project's findings, "Canadians are not convinced of the empowerment potential of the Internet; only one in four thinks the Internet can give them more political power or influence the government" (Fletcher and Zamaria 16). While overall Canadians are unconvinced of the Internet's role in facilitating political action, there are small subsections of the population who are increasing their online civic engagement, specifically francophones and females (Fletcher and Zamaria 16).

So just how is the Internet used in Canadian elections and what are the implications for democracy. My research seeks to take a first step towards answering this question by examining the use of online media in three of the most recent Canadian election campaigns. By studying how political strategists used interactive online communication and journalism in the 2008-09 federal, provincial and municipal election campaigns, my research seeks to uncover the impact of online communication tools on the development and communication of political campaign platforms. I will build on recent studies and theoretical expositions of the power of digital media to create political action. This work will just be a small snapshot of the role that online political mobilization has in the Canadian context at one particular point in history, but it seeks to establish a pilot for academic inquiry into future campaigns. This research also fits into an important academic debate about the role online communication plays in creating political action. It is to this debate this paper now turns.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

My research is situated within a larger body of literature that seeks to explore a related set of conceptual themes and relationships. Most broadly, this work seeks to examine whether the Internet changes politics, whether political culture is reflected online or whether the relationship is more complex. Thus, my study is situated in the debate between technological determinists and social determinists, which will be discussed subsequently. More specifically, my research raises questions about the existence of enhanced opportunities for citizens to influence policy and better make their will known to politicians during election campaigns as a result of online communication tools. The next section will examine empirical studies about how politicians have been influenced by and are employing these new tools. Specifically, it will examine recent empirical studies on the Internet's role during election campaigns and then move on to consider the theories, technological and social determinism, that inform the field. More nuanced approaches to the role of the Internet in political campaigns will also be considered including theories of networking and agenda setting. It will conclude with a consideration of the role of the campaign itself in developing in policymaking and communications.

2.1 The Role of Online Communications in Elections Literature

The rising power of the Internet in recent elections in the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom has prompted empirical studies that examine how online political tools have been used during elections and their impact on political engagement. Some studies from the political communication and political science literatures (Panagopoulos and Bergan 2009, Dale and Strauss 2009, Cornfield and Kaye 2009) have demonstrated that political parties are using the Internet as an extension of traditional campaign tools. For example, Panagopoulos

and Bergan conclude that the Internet has become essential for fundraising, with presidential hopeful John Kerry raising \$82 million in 2003 and presidential incumbent George W. Bush eliciting \$13 million (Panagopoulos and Bergan 128). The researchers also found that these fundraising acts are likely to be accompanied by other political action. "Online donors take on average one additional action on the activism scale (134)." The conclusions of the previously cited studies are broadly that the Internet helps parties connect with voters in ways that mirror traditional campaign functions such as fundraising, advertising, eliciting new memberships, volunteer recruitment, getting out the vote and disseminating messages.

Other studies (Gueorguieva 2009, Slotnick 2009, Williams and Gulati 2009) focus on the political adoption of social media such as Facebook, MySpace and YouTube. These studies show politicians use social media sites for political advertising and for extending the reach of political messaging through networks. The literature demonstrates that politicians recognize the potential to reach formerly unreachable voters through online networks, a new application of the old campaign practice of meeting and greeting. Williams and Gulati find a correlation between the number of friends a candidate has on Facebook and the final electoral outcome (279). They hypothesize the relationship reflects the success of the grassroots campaign (Williams and Gulati 286). Gueorguieva asserts that YouTube has fundamentally changed the communicative style of politicians forcing them to appear more natural and honest (241). As Gueorguieva states, "The advent of YouTube changed the way politicians communicate with voters. Political analysts predict that YouTube will force candidates to be more natural, direct and honest, since they might be filmed anywhere and anytime..." (241). Yet, despite a growing online presence, some scholars have concluded that message control still defines every way politicians use the Internet (Panagopolous 13, Kifer, Druckman and Parkin 41).

In the Canadian context, Peter Smith and Peter Chen assessed the online presence of political parties in the 2008 federal election. Smith and Chen argue that online tools are

adopted when there are few barriers (12). In contradiction to Williams and Gulati, the researchers find that the number of friends politicians have online does not translate into votes (13). Instead, they conclude that due to their minimal presence on social networks candidates do not see social networking as the best investment (Smith and Chen 13).

If candidates saw social networking services as a useful means to access different constituencies online...it would be reasonable to expect candidates would employ large numbers of social networking profiles.....[however] there is no relationship between candidates' use of social networking services and their market share, indicating that use of these services tended towards symbolic association with the channel, rather than seeing specific benefit in the communities represented in these services" (Smith and Chen 13).

Canadian politicians also demonstrate a preference for traditional campaign tools such as face-to-face communication, but have a growing appreciation for online tools especially websites (Smith and Chen 17). While Smith and Chen provide an exceptional baseline assessment of which tools political parties used, they do not say whether the online presence of political parties impacted policy decisions, nor did they assess if politicians actually engaged with voters online.

Hun Myoung Park and James L. Perry find that an online presence could have an impact on campaign outcomes. Citizens who read websites are 20 per cent more likely to send an email urging other people to vote, 10 per cent more likely to attend a rally and 11.2 per cent more likely to give money to a candidate (Park and Perry 108-114). A similar relationship was found to be true for online donors in another study (Panagopoulos and Bergan 2009:134). The researchers do not however explain the mechanics of this relationship.

There is less evidence in the literature that the online presence of politicians has created a two-way dialogue that lead to changes in the policy agenda. Steven Schneider and Kirsten Foot's assessment of the 2000 and 2004 American presidential elections demonstrates that the online activities of political parties did a good job of informing, but were

not successful in truly connecting or mobilizing (27). Other scholars examined blogs with a similar conclusion. Roland Abold's study of citizen weblogs in the 2005 German election argues that in a post-modern campaign politicians need to target specific groups and blogs can help achieve that goal (211). Theoretically, Abold is optimistic about the democratic potential of blogs arguing that they dismantle barriers to political discussion and break open the public agenda (214). However, Abold's research, based on survey research, concludes differently. Respondents reported that weblogs have minimal effect; only 25 per cent believed blogs were credible and 18 per cent believed they influenced public opinion (Abold 229). Abold concludes that weblogs only attract people who are already politically involved and have little impact on opening up debate (230).

One thing that is empirically clear is that web campaigning is now central to elections in Western democracies. As Schneider and Foot state, "Web campaigning moved from the exotic and exploratory fringes of the electoral arena to its very core (190)." Based on their extensive study of American elections, Schneider and Foot believe the online sphere provides more opportunities for political action and fundamentally changes how politicians and citizens perceive themselves and their role in democracy—a suggestion that taps into larger questions about the impact of technology on culture and democracy which will now be discussed.

2.2 The Internet: Revolutionary Force or Reinforcing Power?

2.2.1 Revolutionary Force: Technological Determinism

While this study is focused on a narrow question related to the relationship between online communication and the development and communication of the campaign platform, the overarching aim of this research is rooted larger debates about the relationship between the media, information technology and democracy.

The Internet has many characteristics that elicit scholarly optimism. It is interactive, instant and interconnected. It has the power to allow direct communication enabling citizens

to set the public agenda and demand the attention of politicians. The Internet was also seen as a tool to provide voters with pertinent information and give them a space to act. In short, optimists suggest technological advances would lead to advanced democracy. The view that technology drives social and political change is called technological determinism and set its theoretical roots long before the development of the worldwide web.

Media theorist Marshall McLuhan is likely the best-known technological determinist. Claiming that the medium is the message, McLuhan argued information technology drove human development. He posited that electronic media created a global village, fundamentally changing the way we do things (Littlejohn 267). Quoting McLuhan, Stephen Littlejohn states: “[Media] is forcing us to reconsider and re-evaluate practically every thought, every action and every institution formerly taken for granted....They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered.” (Littlejohn 267-268). McLuhan died before the Internet took hold, but scholar Paul Levinson pushed the theory into the digital age. Levinson asserts moving content online has a profound democratizing consequences.

Unlike our experience with books, newspapers, and magazines, which for all but a tiny fraction of the population has been a one-way engagement of reading, not writing; the online experience is two-way, allowing readers to contribute via email, bulletin board discussion and all the manner of annotation as they navigate the web...Indeed, with the exception of the telegraph and the telephone, whose content was always written or spoke by its users, the Internet and its tributaries reverse the trajectory of a handful of messages to a legion of passive users that has typified all technological media since the printing press (38).

For technological determinists, the Internet presents a new form of media that has the capacity to fundamentally change the way citizens interact and how they form their social and political structures. It puts citizens back into control.

McLuhan’s mentor, Canadian media theorist Harold Innis, was one of the founding thinkers about the emancipatory power of the media—the same emancipatory power that has excited technological optimists. Innis’ Empire and Communications demonstrates that empires are propped up by monopolies of knowledge (Littlejohn 266). That is the powerful in

society control access to and the distribution of knowledge. As new media technologies like the printing press come onto the scene and change access to knowledge they challenge this power (Littlejohn 266). Building on Innis' theories, technology optimists assert the Internet causes a fundamental shift in the production and distribution of knowledge forcing change in the political loci of power. As an expression of this optimism, John Barlow wrote "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace" in 1996. The treatise asserts the freedom of online expression for all societal groups, regardless of race, class or values, without government interference, stating, "I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us" (Barlow 1). This treatise expresses the idea that the technology has power against social and political forces, an ironic assertion considering the Internet was designed as a tool for intra-government communications.

Some scholars have applied the frame of technological determinism to recent political developments. In their book Millennial Makeover, Moreley Winograd and Michael D. Hais argue the character of the Internet, coupled with a web-savvy, networked generation will create a political realignment in the United States. The authors assess the technological developments adopted into the everyday lives of the new generation including peer-to-peer and networked technologies and assert the ability of these technologies to connect people, share information and allow every citizen to be a producer of information would play an important role in political realignment (Winograd and Hais 152). The authors assert this new world will undercut former political institutions such as traditional media and the primacy of fund-raising and allow every citizen to disseminate his or her own ideas (Winograd and Hais 154). Contrary to technological determinists, other scholars suggest the relationship between technology and political change is too simplistic and flows in the wrong direction, a theoretical proposition to which I now turn.

2.2.2 Reinforcing Power: Social Determinism

Social determinists are more sceptical about the Internet's potential for greater citizen impact on the political action and public policy. Theorists such as Lelia Green (2001) invert the relationship set out by technological determinists. For Green, technology is the dependent variable. Society is responsible for the adoption and implementation of new technologies (Green 3). Class, race, gender create power imbalances that impact the ways in which new technologies are used (Green 5). Instead of levelling the playing field, social determinists would assert "technologies express the priorities of those who champion them" (Green 6). This perspective allows for positive changes if people are interested and involved in using technology to advance values like democracy for example (Green 9). Overcoming the influence of the powerful in society who may not see widespread democratization in their best interests will simply be challenging.

Another theorist, Michael Schudson, asserts that technology is simply not decisive when it comes to democracy, instead we have to look at the character of the political culture in which technology operates (7). Thus, any sort of emancipatory action or protests we see online can be explained by the decline of cultural authority that defines society (Schudson 7). Schudson maps the decline in authority of the news media and the changing face of an ideal democracy asserting the current political era is one where rights and activism are important (Schudson 13). He also asserts that the Internet will reflect activism, not necessarily create more of it—it amplifies existing forces (Schudson 13).

Jodi Dean (2005) is another media democracy sceptic. In her article "Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics," Dean asserts politicians are not engaging in online dialogue, but are simply using networking communications like the Internet to flood the airwaves with their own ideas. The power relations inherent in society are simply reflected online, undermining any new opportunities for diversity (Dean 56). Dean disputes the value of online messages because, while they may be abundant, they do not elicit

responses (Dean 58). This misunderstanding of messages leads to what Dean calls the fantasy of participation and technological fetishism. "...They believe that they are active, maybe even that they are making a difference simply by clicking on a button, adding their name to a petition or commenting on a blog" (Dean 60). Dean labels this as interpassivity and asserts that it is depoliticizing by displacing real world struggles (Dean 61).

2.2.3 A More Nuanced Role

The role of technology in enhancing democracy may be more nuanced than either camp proposes. For instance, theorists such as Wade Rowland assert that different types of technologies have different impacts on democracy. As Rowland states:

Today, among the democracies of the world, communications technologies tend to be accepted as tools of liberation, weapons against oppression, and guarantors of freedom. But not all communications technologies have the same impact on democratic institutions... (224).

Using the work of Emile Durkheim and Jurgen Habermas, Rowland distinguishes two societal outcomes of different media. The first is mechanical solidarity or a society held together by criminal law and paternal authorities (224). The second outcome is organic solidarity, which is defined by consensus, customs and continuing conversation among diverse individuals (250). Rowland separates media according to their role in creating these two different types of solidarities or integrations. Broadcast technologies like television and radio are grouped as mechanical because these technologies are largely controlled by powerful elites and offer little airtime to citizens (Rowland 251). Telephone, mail and the Internet are deemed organic technologies (Rowland 251). The Internet has a different nature than broadcasters.

The Net was defined by a set of open and non-proprietary protocols that allow free and open access without any need for licensing or identification or fees or permissions, because it was designed for research and communications, not commerce or control (Rowland 398).

Organic media is important to democracy because it facilitates conversations and self-organization. The character of organic media creates social change. It is not technologically deterministic. Instead, the character of the media tempers determinism. Rowland identifies several social changes. The first change is interactivity.

... the ability to interact in something close to real time with information courses (to query, comment, challenge, suggest) encourages conversation as opposed to monologue, and in doing so promotes the communication of understanding as opposed to purely instrumental communication (Rowland 418).

The second socio-political change identified by Rowland is the opening up of politics because the Internet is a low-barrier, low-cost communication technology which increases political involvement defined as the ability of people to give “political expression to their ideas and beliefs” (Rowland 419).

Organic media is also defined by its networked nature and its ability to reproduce offline communities online as well as its tendency to produce new networks. Networks have a long-standing relationship to politics. Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld (1957) proposed a two-step flow theory of communication in which mass media messages flow through social networks and are mediated by the network’s social class, values, age, gender and education (Newton 210). Judith Trent and Robert Friedenbergs analysis of campaign communication suggests that politicians use their networks or “social precincts” to test out the reaction to key speeches and decisions (Trent and Friedenbergs 302). Politicians will then determine which issues resonate and can be used in a campaign platform. In today’s media environment, the Internet couples the forces of technology and personal networks through its interactivity. Winograd and Hais foreshadow the potential for social networks to merge with media and influence the political agenda. The Internet has put social networks online in an accessible, digestible format. These social networks are now producing and disseminating political information. Winograd and Hais assert that reaching these voters requires that politicians engage online (Winograd and Hais 170).

Other scholars point to a marriage between politics and technology where both come out changed. In his examination of new media campaigns, Philip N. Howard (2006) suggests there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between technologies and society, stating:

Technologies and social organizations evolve together...the search for the net effects of new media must move beyond technology diffusion questions to an examination of how technology and democratic institutions are growing together through technical and political decisions that simultaneously shape organizational constraints and capacities (38).

Technology cannot be understood outside of political culture and our understanding of political culture will not be complete without an understanding of technology's role.

American political scientist Bruce Bimber also adheres to a more nuanced view of the role of technology. Bimber places a heavy emphasis on the power of technology, but distinguishes his theoretical position from that of technological and social determinism. He suggests technology is political and can create new behaviours and institutional rules, but it does not necessarily do so (Bimber 32). However, it is not just technology, but the information flows it can deliver that create change. Bimber asserts that information is vital to democracy:

In the processes by which citizen preferences are formed and aggregated, in the behaviours of citizens and elites, in formal procedures of representation, in acts of governmental decision making, in the administration of laws and regulations, and in the mechanisms of accountability that freshen democracy and sustain its legitimacy (Bimber 11).

Bimber's analysis concludes that the Internet has shaped American politics because it makes information cheap, decentralized and widely distributed (229). He suggests that these features are changing political intermediation, organization and mobilization (229). On the other side of the democratic equation however, political engagement has been largely unaffected by the Internet. The Internet simply reinforces existing patterns of engagement (Bimber 229). Bimber also acknowledges the role of power in information distribution stating that access is unequal, mirroring traditional social inequalities and the Internet is no different (243).

2.2.4 The Relationship between Media and Political Decision-Making

Finally, any role the Internet may play in shaping politics should also be considered with respect to studies that examine how media influence political discourse. One of the most developed theories on the relationship between media and politics is agenda-setting theory. The theory is founded on the work of Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw who studied how media coverage of political campaigns influenced the agenda of the campaign. "The mass media force attention to certain issues by constantly presenting objects and suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about and have feelings about" (McCombs and Shaw 177). The media places issues in the minds of citizens and in doing so forces the public action on these matters. McCombs and Shaw hypothesize that "the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues" (McCombs and Shaw 177). They found issues covered in the news correlated with those that resonated with voters, and interpret this as evidence for mass media influence. The research allows for hypothesis building around the power of new media to influence public opinion and political action.

Since McCombs and Shaw's study, other researchers have sought to test the original agenda-setting theory with mixed success. Most of the studies demonstrate that the agenda-setting theory is contingent on external factors (Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006, Davis 2007). Steven Walgrave and Peter Van Aelst sketch out a more flexible theory of agenda-setting that is contingent on the numbers of sources for information, politicians use of the media to test political ideas, the extent to which media is seen as reflecting public opinion and institutional rules of the game (100-101). In a study of British parliamentarians, Aeron Davis comes to similar conclusions about the contingency of agenda-setting. Davis concludes that media attention on issues can shift political agendas and policy development, but not by simple stimulus-response (Davis 102). The agenda is dependent on politicians' strategic use of the media (what can they get the journalists to communicate) and on the feedback given by

journalists on policy issues (Davis 184). Davis' work allows politicians to be conceptualized as strategic actors whose agendas are not only influenced by media, but who try to influence the public agenda through media. In new interactive media forms, politicians can attempt to influence the public agenda to align with their political agenda unmediated.

Agenda-setting theory is generally applied to traditional media, but extended to online communication, this premise means that issues debated on Twitter, Facebook, blogs, etc., become highlighted in the minds of politicians and the public as issues that require action. The promise of the Internet is that traditional media and journalists would not be the only actors producing content and thus setting the agenda, but that individuals, especially marginalized individuals, would have a chance to get issues on the agenda. In a 2009 study, Paul Wallenfelsz and Kelly Wallenfelsz compare the agenda-setting power of traditional and new media and find the agenda-setting effect weaker in people who used new media more frequently (Wallenfelsz and Wallenfelsz 11). The media is not able to play a gatekeeper role on the Internet as people pick their stories. They conclude that, while there is much work to do on new media and agenda-setting, its impacts can no longer be ignored (Wallenfelsz and Wallenfelsz 12).

2.3 The Role of the Campaign in Policy-Making and Communications

Another important body of literature that informs this study concerns the purpose of political campaigns. Former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell is famous for saying, "Elections are no time to debate the issues" and there is a substantial body of literature examining the purpose of elections. This section will first look at how policy-making fits into a campaign and then will turn to the role of campaign communications.

According to numerous scholars, elections are about winning, not about policy development. Political scientist William Cross argues political parties have long seen their role

as electoral machines (Cross 425). Cross uses the findings of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing to demonstrate this point quoting:

The dilemma is that the core of the party organization is concerned primarily with elections: it is much less interested in discussing and analyzing political issues that are not connected directly to winning the next election, or in attempting to communicate the broader values of the party (Cross 434).

In his book Political Parties, Cross makes it clear that the primary role of political parties is waging an election campaign (108) and that this war is not one for amateurs stating:

The central campaigns are not participatory exercises; rather, they are dominated by a small group of seasoned campaigners and close associates of the party leaders....Two groups tend to take over the parties' central operations during election campaigns: individuals with long-standing connections to the party leader, and experienced professionals with particular campaign-related skills (122).

Policy-making is left to elected politicians in between elections when parties can employ the resources of the state to help (Cross 426). Cross' assessment of the policy-making opportunities available flies in the face of Internet democracy optimists who argue the online world is going to strengthen democracy. While the Internet may open up opportunities for de-professionalization of politics, the current Canadian political culture of campaigning may not be amenable.

While politicians may not be spending much time policymaking during the campaign, they do exert a huge amount of energy devising campaign communications. One of the most prominent theories seeking to explain how campaign platforms and policies are developed and communicated during election campaigns is that of political marketing. As defined by Jennifer Lees-Marshment (2004), political marketing is "the study of how politicians interface with their electorate" (3). In a framework of political marketing, political parties and politicians use professionalized tools such as public opinion research and market research to decide which policies or products to pursue (Lilleker and Lees-Marshment 7). After determining the appropriate product, political parties use marketing communication tools to sell the product.

Effective communication will result in an election win (Lilleker and Lees-Marshment 11). In this theory, professionalized marketing tools and public opinion research are the key forces determining political action, not the citizen dialogue that Internet optimists see driving the future of politics.

In the book What are Campaigns For? James A. Gardner (2009) examines the disappointment with the quality of deliberative democracy and dialogue during a campaign. Gardner asserts that campaigns are not and should not be expected to be the formative grounds for public opinion (147). He believes it is acceptable for the campaign to be “tabulative” of the existing political thoughts of the electorate instead of persuading them to adopt new ones.

The way candidates and especially voters behave during campaigns tends to reflect social norms that also guide their behaviour at other times, and it is implausible to think that people who behave one way all the time will suddenly behave in another way simply because the calendar tells them so (191).

Thus, there is no need to put pressure on campaigns to be an extraordinary site of deliberative democracy and expression of the public will (Gardner 193). The main purpose of campaigns in the literature then is not deliberative engagement or collaborative policy-making, it is using the necessary communication tools to get into office and these communications tools have changed with the rise of the Internet, warranting greater study.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This literature has informed the theoretical standpoint which I use to help explain and understand the data. While technological determinists assert, technology has a powerful role to play in politics, and society in general, scholars such as Bimber, Dean and Schudson make strong arguments that technology is limited by the current norms and practices that define political culture itself. During an election campaign one of the most important forces influencing the power of the Internet to change politics is the current campaign models

outlined by the work of Cross and Lilleker and Lees-Marshment. Thus, in the context of an election it will be important to study how technology interacts with these established campaign models. Neither technology nor society is independent, but they shape each other either forcing change or reinforcing the status quo.

This framework will help provide insight on some of the areas that past research has not sufficiently addressed. The current body of literature does not address whether or not politicians, strategists and parties are actually listening to the voices they hear online. This is an important question because even if technological optimists can prove the Internet expands the number of voices in the public realm, it is hard to argue its democratic value if politicians are not incorporating those voices into the way they govern. Moreover, this paper will go into greater depth about if and how interactive online media has changed campaign messaging. The amount of change the Internet has produced in recent Canadian elections will be studied through qualitative interviews. I will now outline the methods employed during this study before assessing the findings.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

This research study is qualitative and examines the norms and practices of political strategists with respect to online communications during the process of an election campaign. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore complex events and phenomenon. It also allows for contextualized analysis. Elections are multi-dimensional events characterized by complex relationships. While quantitative analysis is appropriate for some aspects of election study such as voter turnout or demographic analysis, it is less useful for examining the relationships between policy development, political communication, voters and online communication tools. This study adopts qualitative researcher Yvonna S. Lincoln's approach to epistemology. Lincoln states, "Qualitative research is conducted not to confirm or disconfirm earlier findings, but rather to contribute to a process of continuous revision and enrichment of understanding of the experience or form of action under study" (Lincoln 278).

It seeks to explore the relationships between campaigning and online communications and build on the debate occurring in the academic research. Moreover, it presents an assessment of a particular event within a particular community at a given time. In order to explore the new media practices of political parties, this study employs a qualitative research method of open-ended, semi-structured interviews.

3.2 Research Question

An assessment of the literature has informed the research question this study seeks to answer: How are political strategists in Canada using interactive online communication /social media and new forms of online journalism to shape the development and communication of campaign platforms?

3.3 Interviews

Interviews with political strategists are an appropriate way to study this topic because it is a study of a complex political process. Qualitative researchers Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin (2005) describe the strengths of interviewing as “especially good at describing social and political process, that is, how and why things change” (Rubin and Rubin 3). My work seeks to examine political change and its relationship to online media technologies. In doing so, it requires more than just quantitative research, but needs to collect data on how the participants involved with the campaign process, particularly political strategists, understand, interpret and react to innovations in information technology. This research technique is referred to as semi-structured interviewing, a process of asking focused, but flexible questions to allow participants to expand on ideas and meanings (Rubin 5).

I decided to interview seven strategists from competing parties who played decision-making roles during the most recent federal election, provincial election and municipal election involving political parties in English Canada. Six of the nine parties that won seats in the 2008 and 2009 elections are included in the study. This includes two of three municipal parties, two of two provincial parties, and two of four federal parties. The majority of past research has relied on content analysis or surveying, but by interviewing political strategists my research taps into a new source of knowledge. I allowed decision-makers to address how different variables interacted during a campaign. Political communication strategists were the subjects of study because of their role in advising which online tools should be employed and monitoring online conversations. Thus, they are sources of critical information for other members of the campaign teams. Moreover, these strategists are a key part of the campaign team and participate in and/or observe the decision-making processes. The decision to interview political strategists relies on several assumptions that are supported in the literature. Interviews allow researchers to explore topics in depth and allow research participants to bring new ideas to the table (Rubin and Rubin 33). It also allows for the revelation of complex

and nuanced relationships and can answer why certain effects occur instead of simply examining patterns (Rubin and Rubin 21). Other forms of data collection were considered, but were deemed unsuitable for the type of information desired. Surveying would not have allowed for the open-ended questioning desired and would be less likely to reveal complicated cause-and-effect relationships. Similarly, a content analysis would largely address how citizens started talking about an issue online and when it appeared in a political platform. It does not have the power to make conclusive claims about the cause and effect relationship between political conversations online and the content of election platforms. This methodology has proven effective in Davis' study of the media's impact on issue agendas in the United Kingdom. The interview format revealed a complex and nuanced relationship between the government agenda and the media. It allowed Davis to uncover the fact that media attention shifts political agendas and policy development, but it does so through a complex, multi-faceted relationship instead of the simple model of assuming that citizen pressure puts an issue on the agenda (Davis 182).

3.3.1 Participant Recruitment

I sought out subjects in a variety of ways. Contacting party offices was often the first step in identifying individual research subjects. There was also a public media trail identifying possible research participants. Moreover, I used my personal networks to identify individuals who would be able to direct me to appropriate participants in my study.

Once a pool of potential interviewees was established, I sent formal emails introducing myself and explaining the purpose and procedure of my study. I followed up with telephone calls or email to confirm the possibility of their participation. In other instances, individuals provided me with the contact information for a person that worked more closely with the online campaign. Subsequently, an appropriate interview time was established with those

interested in participating.¹ The interviews were in person or by phone depending on the location of the interviewees.

3.3.2 Data Analysis and Collection

The data collection process consisted of semi-structured interviews ranging from one to one-and-a-half hours. I asked participants questions from an initial list developed previously. Questions were developed based on research objectives and were linked to the theoretical and conceptual issues identified in the literature review. Interview questions were adapted to each individual to allow interviewees to have influence in leading the conversation and emphasizing the aspects on the online campaign they believed were most important (See Appendix A for a list of questions). All interviews were tape-recorded with participants' permission and transcribed fully for data analysis. Copies of the transcripts were provided to each interviewee for review.

Data collected during the interview process was coded thematically as per methods laid out by Rubin and Rubin (209-223). The coding was done within two weeks of each interview. This process followed an open coding process in which any and all potential concepts that exist in the data are labelled against a key of codes that include a definition and a description of how to know when the concepts exists. Subsequently, I highlighted the most relevant concepts as part of a focused coding process. The important concepts that emerged are the major points of discussion in the final analysis.

¹ Interviewees were provided with an informed consent form to sign as per UBC research ethics standards (See Appendix B for ethics certificate). The consent form allowed them to request anonymity. Confidentiality was desired by most participants. To protect the confidentiality of participants and the information they provided, the interviews and transcripts were only accessed by the researchers and were kept in a secure location. The interviewees also had the freedom to choose the location of the interview if done in person. Phone interviews were conducted in a private room. Interviewees will only be identified by numbers in the remainder of this study to protect their identities.

3.3.3 Research Limitations

Before analyzing the data collected through the interviews, it is important to highlight the limitations of the study. Primarily, the sample size of political strategists, while representative of those involved in the elections studied, is small. Moreover, the study examines three specific events meaning the results are not generalizable. These elections are bounded in time, historical circumstances and are defined by the politicians, strategists and citizens participating in them. Instead, this study is meant to reveal patterns, which could serve to as a starting point for other studies and can contribute to theory-building in this field. This goal is consistent with those set out by qualitative researchers. For example, Earl Babbie and Lucia Benaquisto state, "A major goal in the analysis of qualitative data is to reveal themes that emerge from data. This process is largely a search for patterns of similarities and differences, followed by an interpretation of those patterns" (392). Other researchers point to the value of these uncovered patterns for theory elaboration. Rubin and Rubin suggest information from particular cases can help contribute to existing theories by pushing them further or challenging their applicability (7). This is consistent with the view that there are local forms of truth that may not be generalizable, but can be a valid contribution to our understanding of social phenomena. In arguing research should be considered valid based on its design and execution rather than on the positivist "trinity of reliability, validity and generalization" (Kvale 37), Steiner Kvale has written:

The present understanding of validity starts in the lived world and daily language, where issues of reliable witnesses, of valid documents and arguments, are part of the social interaction...It accepts the possibility of specific local, personal, and community forms of truth, with a focus on daily life and local narrative (21).

Thus, while this study may not be generalizable, it has been designed with the principles of accuracy, thoroughness and believability in mind (Rubin and Rubin 769-70). It seeks to make a small contribution to a growing field of study.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Cases in Context

Before presenting the findings of my research, a brief contextualization of the elections studied is warranted. In 2008-2009, Canadians living in British Columbia faced three separate elections. The first of these elections was the federal election held on October 14, 2008. The incumbent party was the Conservative Party of Canada led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. There were five primary parties in contention for seats including the Conservative Party, Liberal Party, New Democratic Party, Bloc Quebecois and Green Party. The result of the election had the Conservative Party win a minority government. Voter turnout was 58.8 per cent, the lowest recorded in Canadian history (Elections Canada 2008).

Shortly after, the City of Vancouver held a municipal election on November 15, 2008. Vancouver's municipal government is a party system with three primary parties vying for seats on city council. These parties are Vision Vancouver, Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE) and the Non-Partisan Alliance (NPA). The result of the election had Vision Vancouver win the majority of the council seats with COPE winning two seats and the NPA winning one.

The final election was held on May 12, 2009 at the provincial level with the BC Liberal Party, the BC New Democratic Party and the Green Party as the three parties in contention for seats. The BC Liberal Party came out with a majority government, winning 46 per cent of the popular vote. Voter turnout was a mere 50 per cent (CBC 2009). This paper will now examine the specific themes uncovered during the course of the interviews.

4.2 Political Parties Extend Old Habits Online

While campaigns were optimistic about the Internet's capacity to reach voters and the media in new ways, the interviews suggested online campaign strategies were largely reactionary and their execution presented a migration of the traditional campaign onto a new platform. The interview material suggests that the use of technology is contingent on social forces as well as existing norms and practices of political campaigning in line with theories elucidated by Lelia Green and Michael Schudson. This section presents reasons why parties decided to campaign online and discusses how the Internet influences traditional campaign practices. It will conclude with an assessment of how the literature helps explain the themes.

4.2.1 Following the Audience Online

A common theme throughout the interviews was that parties were driven online by the sheer size of the audience. With voters and journalists already online, Internet campaigning was seen as a necessary part of doing business. The growing number of voters using the Internet as part of their daily lives appeared to be the driving force behind the development of an online campaign. As one strategist summarized,

We can see the research coming out that voters are getting more and more of their news from online sources and less from traditional print and television media. We adjusted our engagement strategy to start to use these tools, if nothing else, as something to try to communicate with people in the way they are seeking out information (Strategist A).

Strategists recognized the fact that digital media was an essential part of people's lifestyles and that politics had to follow.

As those platforms grow and people use digital tools to communicate together, the impact of digital on a campaign will become more profound because it is just where people spend their time (Strategist B).

Strategists explained there were consequences to staying offline. "It's a way of life and failing to engage people in the way they communicate means you aren't going to reach them"

(Strategist C). As evidence of the primacy of digital media in the lives of voters, many political strategists cited the high traffic to party websites during the election campaign.

Several strategists also talked about the mainstream media being a key online audience. “The biggest factor is the reporters sitting there in front of their computer. They are the ones that are the interpreter to the general public more than the Internet is” (Strategist A). With reporters doing more and more reporting from their offices, this strategist underscored the importance of providing the media with accessible information. However, it went beyond just providing information. For all of the interviewees, innovative online campaigning was a method of gaining media attention from print, television and radio outlets. “Partially, it’s about getting these process stories written because the mainstream press gets bored some days and wants to write about something else and they will write about your new media strategy” (Strategist D). Many strategists could think of examples of media coverage of the online campaign including stories about viral video, a digital van that toured British Columbia, and social media campaigns. The strategists recognized that the media coverage of new media was driven by the novelty of some of the online tools such as Twitter. Some political strategists mentioned fear of bad press if they were not online. For example, a political strategist explained, “You can’t not do it or there will be a story about how your party isn’t engaged with young people or isn’t using new media tools” (Strategist C). In effect, it appears that political parties reacted to the practices of voters and the media in their campaigning practices rather than leading the way. At the same time during the course of the interviews, it became quite evident that the online campaign was not only reactionary, but also it extended traditional campaign tools.

4.2.2 Traditional Campaign Activities in a Digital Age

The Internet is breathing new life into traditional campaign instead of creating a transformation of the campaign process. Political strategists explained that volunteering,

databank management, door-knocking, phone calls, and leaders tours are imperative to getting out the content of campaign platforms and information about candidates. These campaign activities have migrated and extended online.

One of those activities mentioned by campaigners was fundraising. Many strategists said they were inspired by the fundraising success of the Obama campaign. “That sort of fundraising has the potential to change a campaign, so if you hit it in some parallel way, you could just spend your opponent into the ground” (Strategist F). This strategist’s party formatted their entire online campaign to enhance potential financial windfalls. Others reported record fundraising thanks to the help of soliciting donations online (Strategist C).

Another campaign function bolstered by the Internet was volunteering. All political strategists solicited volunteers online. Moreover, databanks are now housed online allowing volunteers to call voters via automated systems. This allowed campaigners to break down geographic barriers between ridings. One strategist reported that the party could use volunteers from “unwinnable” ridings to make calls in another far-flung riding where the party is competitive (Strategist C).

Political strategists explained that online communications tools were also used to bolster campaign events such as the leader’s tour. Strategists talked about how messages sent out online promoted and reinforced the day-to-day announcements made by party leaders and candidates. One strategist explained, “The tour and the announcement of the day...What we put online is basically everything. There is the daily narrative of message of the day.” (Strategist C). At the same time, political strategists expressed that they have not abandoned the practice of message control and consistency during the campaign. Online messages are inline with those communicated at announcements, in news releases, and in media interviews. As one strategist summed up,

Like any campaign, we developed central messaging that has been tested among our supporters and we would stick in a pretty disciplined way to that message box. The

worst thing obviously is being caught off message and particularly there is a huge possibility in online campaigning of one bad tweet, one bad ad, or one bad Facebook message getting picked up by the daily newspaper writers (Strategist C).

Political strategists set up careful checks on messaging that goes out online just like those in place for other media platforms. “The number one key to mitigating risk was, let’s make sure this goes past enough eyes” (Strategist E).

Similarly, the age-old campaign focus on developing the leader has been given new life online according to political strategists. Political strategists report using the Internet to market candidates and leaders in new ways. “A real marketing advantage for [candidates] and [parties] is to find any method to provide open access to personality and sincerity” (Strategist F). The Internet, and especially social media, allowed candidates to display their personalities. For example, one party encouraged the leader to Twitter about hockey to give this individual more interest in the minds of voters (Strategist C). The online media allows politicians to interact with constituents, and thus share their personalities in subtle ways, which according to strategists is one of the big challenges on the campaign.

You have to define the leader and you can’t send out a release saying [the leader] is caring, but hard working. Defining a leader is much more subtle than that. The online universe could give us another dimension in terms of defining, particularly [the leader], but also to some extent candidate in terms of who they actually are (Strategist C).

Online communication appeared to be valued as an accessible and convenient way to demonstrate personality with little effort and a large potential audience.

Despite all the online developments, political strategists said in the end the best way to get out the message about the platform is still face-to-face interaction. As one strategist states, “In my mind there is still no real substitute for going out there and knocking on doors, phoning people and actually engaging people directly.” Another affirms, “It’s the proven number one way of getting someone to vote for you” (Strategist A). Online tools can help campaigners organize information and volunteers, but it is still humans that elicit response. One strategist described it this way. “It’s just a matter of connecting modern technology and

human beings where at the end of the day there wasn't anything magical about it. It is a volunteer talking to a voter. It's something very traditional, but very effective" (Strategist C).

4.2.3 Interpreting the Findings

Taken together, these findings leave us with a larger picture in which the online campaign described by political strategists is shaped by societal patterns as well as political norms and practices. In some ways, this picture is supportive of a social deterministic view of the technology set out by scholars like Green. For Green, society is responsible for how new technologies are adopted and implemented (Green 3). This seems consistent with how political strategists talked about why they campaigned online. The existence of the Internet did not push strategists to campaign online, instead the interview material suggests the strategists were reacting to shifting social practices. Strategists saw citizens changing their information consumption habits and thus altered their behaviour to meet that demand. Cultural forces thus seem to have played an important role in initiating online campaigning.

Similarly, the idea that political culture strongly influenced campaign practices online finds support in many accounts offered by political strategists. The interview material suggests that political strategists did not deviate from the practices that define current campaign culture. This campaign culture in Canada is described by William Cross and it seems to be reflected in the ways in which strategists have applied online tools. As stated previously, Cross asserts that the main functions of political parties are electoral machines (425). The goal is to win the election, so it is unsurprising that political strategists would try to enhance their existing arsenal of tried and true election tools with the Internet's power. In fact, that is exactly what social determinists would expect. Green states "technologies express the priorities of those who champion them" (Green 6). The goal of an election is to win and a part of that strategy is to get people involved in the political process primarily through voting, but also through volunteering, donating and attending events. Internet tools have proven

successful for fundraising and volunteering in the Obama campaign, which are and have been for decades, essential parts of a winning campaign. Thus, to be competitive, traditional tools must be adapted. The existing norms and practices of electioneering migrate online as another method to help achieve the ultimate goal, election. Cross' analysis also helps to provide insight about why a focus on the leader appears to have migrated online. Cross argues the importance of party leaders in the Canadian political landscape and asserts that they dominate campaigns (Cross 76). Political strategists mentioned the Internet as a key site to develop a leader's personality. In effect, it appears that the political culture defined by familiar campaign tools is a strong determining force for how the Internet is applied in a Canadian electoral context. However, the interview material did suggest innovation when it came to engaging and connecting with voters online, a theme that will now be discussed.

4.3 New Opportunities to Engage and Network

Another theme that became evident during the interviews was that political strategists saw value in using the Internet to engage people and tap into new audiences. They expressed optimism that by disseminating messages through an interactive and networked medium, politics could be made relevant for unengaged voters. Similarly, during the course of the interviews it became evident that most political strategists acknowledged that there was a growing for new online influencers such as bloggers. The interview material suggests political strategists initially regarded the promise of the Internet in a similar way as technological determinists such as McLuhan, Levinson and Winograd and Hais. However, the results of their efforts appears to more consistent with Jodi Dean's account of "technological fetishism"—a suggestion that is underscored by the low voter turnout in each election. This section will present the approach of political strategists to new engagement and networking opportunities including those presented by bloggers. It will conclude with an assessment of how the literature can help explain the interview material concerning these themes.

4.3.1 Communicating Messages in a Digital Age

Many of the political strategists explained that the Internet allowed them to contextualize their policies in an attempt to make them relevant to more voters. As one strategist explained,

If I don't ever see anything that I care about, I'm never going to vote. I think it has the potential to activate more people because you can spend your time engaging, debating and getting information from political parties or special interest groups that are relevant to me (Strategist B).

The characteristics of the Internet allow political strategists to target and personalize messages for specific voters, with the hope that it will change their actions. Parties can create layers of information that provides voters with an in-depth and contextualized look at the issues as well as the candidates. As one strategist explained,

If I can surround that with links and video and with other things that make it contextually-relevant, my ability to provide an idea of why the issue matters and what other areas of the economy it might impact...it starts to tell a better narrative about why the policy matters (Strategist B).

Political strategists suggest that, online, policies can be more than just long documents left up to the interpretation of journalists. Politicians are making an attempt to better explain what they are offering voters. Many political strategists discussed microsites as a key contextual tools used in the last election. Microsites are single-page websites focused on a single issue or candidate. Parties used these sites to dump video and text to help give voters more information (Strategists E, F, and G). In other cases, these sites were used to attack the issues and parties of other politicians. One party talked about cutting videos of the leader from another party with clips from their own candidates discrediting their policies (Strategist B). Another party used a microsite to publicize another leader's political gaffes (Strategist F).

At the same time as trying to present issues in a way that make voters care, some political strategists talked about their attempts to build interactive online infrastructure that could facilitate democratic dialogue. The interviews demonstrated that most political

strategists had the goal of creating an interactive campaign and designing web tools that allowed feedback. As one stated, “Give them the opportunity to say something about [the platform] and actually be heard” (Strategist G). Political strategists reported voters would react to political messages and then start dialogues with their friends, more often than directing that communication back at the political party. Few strategists could provide examples of when this infrastructure actually resulted in meaningful episodes of interaction between parties and strategists. One party gave the example of the indirect feedback it received on its environmental policy (Strategist C). Instead of directing dissatisfaction to the party website or email account, voters used online websites like bcvotes.ca and nodice.com as well as Facebook and Twitter to express their views. The strategist said that these sorts of conversations, while not directed at the party, were fed back up the communication chain and affected conversations about policy and how to communicate it (Strategist C).

It also became evident that many political strategists acknowledged the power of online networks in facilitating message penetration. All of the strategists report using social networking sites to reach greater audiences. Half of the parties had formal ‘digital activism’ campaigns where supporters were identified and sent party messages to push through their social networks on Facebook, Twitter or email lists (Strategists B,C,E). These campaigns allowed political parties to direct messages at hundreds of people initially, who then could choose to forward the messages on through their social networks creating a giant multiplier effect. One party even reported implementing a Facebook application that allowed them to control supporters’ statuses (Strategist B). The strategist explained,

What you are activating is all the virility of the social networking technology and using it to put messages we want people to talk about into their status...And if you and I are best friends, your opinion matters to me a lot more than somebody I read in the paper (Strategist B).

The trust relationships underpinning these connections were identified as an important component in communicating political platforms. “If I share something with my network of friends, people are more likely to perceive that story as credible. Essentially, you are creating

a network of validators” (Strategist C). Social networks were seen as a powerful information tool because they enabled independent validation of the political message by an individual trusted by their peers. Along with tapping into voters’ social networks, political parties also built their own. Parties found Facebook and Twitter to be a valuable tool allowing them to broadcast messages to thousand of people.

4.3.2 New Messengers in a Digital Age

The networked nature of the Internet has also enabled the rise of new opinion leaders. Political strategists identified bloggers as an important site of opinion leadership. Most parties reported special outreach to bloggers including press conferences, exclusive interviews with leaders, story pitches, and even scoops (Strategists A, B, C, D,E,F). Political strategists explained that bloggers had an audience that could receive political messages.

You respond because these folks are opinion leaders at some level. We know that mainstream press read his site. We know that [other parties] read his site and if he picks up on something, they can pick up on something and make it into something and it works in both directions...but at the end of the day people read them and form opinions” (Strategists C).

The blogosphere was like a virtual coffee shop for another strategist—a place where citizens can go to hear dozens of different opinions. “These are informed Canadians, and in some cases not, that are really aware of what’s going on and they are talking about the issues” (Strategist E). Networked opinion leaders appeared to present an alternative to the top-down opinion leaders in traditional media. Strategists acknowledged the fact that organic technology like the Internet facilitates dialogue and has the potential to impact political opinions.

A further benefit of targeting new opinion leaders mentioned by several political strategists was bypassing media gatekeepers and using bloggers to set the public agenda. As one strategist stated, “We use the Internet to communicate our message and we hope that our message is what voters think is important” (Strategist G). The online activism described

by political strategists is another example. Party faithful sent out policy and campaign messages through Facebook pages, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter and e-mail prompting people to think about the issues the party was campaigning on. It is important to note here that the strategists maintained that journalists exercise more influence over voters and thus command more attention. "We have a pretty good idea of what happens when there is an article in the Vancouver Sun or a story on Global, but when a blogger with a readership of 5,000 publishes something, we don't know how it affects the electorate" (Strategist C). Political strategists identify mainstream media as the main source of political information for voters. In the words of one strategist, "Bloggers aren't taken seriously because they don't have the reach" (Strategist A). Another compared the reach to traditional media.

At the end of the day, most of what is published on the Vancouver Sun still is published in the paper and they send out thousands of copies a day. I am not going to pretend there is a blogger with a readership remotely approaching a Sun columnist (Strategist C).

Because of the limited reach of bloggers and the established audience for mainstream media, journalists appeared to remain the focus for strategists. Political strategists reported that only 10-20 per cent of effort was spent doing online campaigning, compared to the 80-90 per cent effort expended on traditional campaigning including mainstream media outreach.

4.3.3 Bringing the Online World Offline

Key to understanding these actions is an examination of how political strategists talked about the goals of online messaging. Many political strategists seemed confident that these messages and attempts at engagement would have an offline effect. In the words of one strategist:

Use the online to penetrate. Use the online to create discussion. And then transition into real collaboration...What we did was try to engage all along through stuff like Facebook advertising...And then we would say, we are having a meeting, would you like to come (Strategist E)?

Another political strategist expressed this optimism in a similar fashion. “[The] goal was that when you contacted them online...their goal was to convert you to a donor and more importantly to a volunteer in the real world, not the online world (Strategist C).” While some political strategists appeared confident about their ability to translate online action into real life action. Another was more critical about the success of the party’s attempts. “For us, most of what’s online stays online. It doesn’t turn into real life connections which is something [Obama] has been able to do quite well in the States” [Strategist D]. This scepticism is born out in the actual results of the election campaign. Voter turnout in the federal and provincial levels hit record lows, while voter turnout in the municipal election was the lowest since 1942.

4.3.4 Interpreting the Findings

This section has laid out the new ways that political strategists indicated they were communicating with voters thanks to the Internet. It has also revealed how they talked about the goals of the messaging. It found that political strategists saw value in using the Internet to engage people and tap into new audiences, but that those efforts were not reflected in the electoral outcome. In many ways, these findings suggest political strategists initially regarded the promise of the Internet in a similar way as technological determinists. The characteristics of the Internet as a technology—interactivity, networked and personal—were seen to have the potential to change the political behaviour of voters in the real world. Thus, the technology would touch and transform every part of citizens’ lives, including the political, as posited by Marshall McLuhan (Littlejohn 267). There seems to be some belief, on behalf of some strategists, that the Internet would exponentially multiply the numbers of messages and activate users as outlined by Paul Levinson (38). However, clearly the rates of voter turnout were not consistent with a view of an all-powerful technological force.

This leads us to look to the mitigating role of political culture. Jodi Dean’s account of “technological fetishism” appears more consistent with the electoral results and can help

explain the divergence. Dean's theory sets out the idea that technology creates a "fantasy of participation" (60). Essentially, Dean asserts that real life political action is being replaced by Internet activity (60). As Dean describes,

People believe that their contribution to circulating content is a kind of communication action. They believe that they are active, maybe even that they are making a difference simply by clicking on a button, adding their name to a petition or commenting on a blog (60).

Instead of actually having a real impact, online action is used as a "fetish" while other forces replace citizens offline (Dean 60). Dean argues this action is depoliticizing because people struggle for their political goals online replacing the real life achievement of these goals and securing the sphere of official politics for the powerful (61).

The working of such a fantasy is clear in discussions of the political impact of a new device, system, code or platform. A particular technological innovation becomes a screen upon which all sorts of fantasies of political action are projected (Dean 62).

Thus, the Internet has become a realm in which citizens project their fantasies of political action replacing real world action including voting. This could help explain why even if there is increasing activity online, it did not translate into action in the real world.

Dean's work also helps elucidate the relationship, or lack thereof, between messaging and democratic action. Dean makes it clear that penetrating messaging will not necessarily inspire political action from citizens, but in fact do the opposite. It is clear that political strategists increased the number of messages they were sending during the campaign including information about political parties, their policies and their candidates. The amount of information available is often theorized as a democratic good in and of itself. Even Michael Schudson who is critical about the power of information technology to change democracy states, "A more informed citizenry will create a better and fuller democracy" (Schudson 205). The Internet has exponentially increased the amount of information available to citizens and has presented it in new formats that are easier to understand. However, while this type of

communication may be necessary, it is not sufficient for democracy. Dean would argue that the ability of politicians to send messages online just reinforces their views at the expense of soliciting true, two-way communication (Dean 63). The interview material indicates that there has been a multiplication of messages flowing from politicians to citizens without a reciprocal flow back from citizens. This multiplication of one-way messages is not simply a function of technology, although technology enables it. It is reflective of the power relationships between political parties and citizens.

Similarly, it is important to consider how political psychology interacts with and mitigates the power of the Internet. While the interview material suggests that the Internet has enhanced the information available, there is little evidence that it increases the size of the audience seeking it out. Microsites may exist, but citizens have to find them. Videos might be posted on YouTube, but potential voters have to search for them. Politicians might be on Twitter, but citizens have to be following them. Some citizens will take action to find these new information sources, however, political psychology informs us that that segment is small (Bimber 149). Bruce Bimber argues that voters will choose to read online only what they are interested in, political or not (Bimber 149). As Bimber quotes Curtis Gans in his book Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. Elections: “While candidates...may design the most complete sources of information and the most compelling presentations of that information, what they cannot do is provide the motivation to access those sites” (Bimber 153). The political strategists interviewed expressed similar concerns about the true reach of the Internet. “We are still talking, in terms of the people we are reaching, about our base and the people who are still paying attention anyways. There’s still the problem of disengaged, disenfranchised voters (Strategist D).” Another strategist labelled the problem as one of hyper-engagement. “[The Internet] has become a disengagement rather than engagement tool. It’s become a fragmented engagement tool where there can be hyper-engagement among fragmented groups. They become quite an echo-chamber (Strategist A).”

The idea that political culture plays a leading role in determining the shape of an online campaign also sheds light onto the findings concerning the power of bloggers. The focus on mainstream media reflects its place in current political culture. According to work done by Fred Fletcher and Mary Lynn Young, 54.1 per cent of voters report getting their information from television, 19.1 per cent receive political information from newspapers and 8.1 per cent get information about politics from radio (Fletcher and Young 11). In contrast, only 7.1 per cent of voters get the majority of their political information online (Fletcher and Young 11). The Internet cannot provide a mass, captive audience; instead, citizens have to seek out information online (Bimber and Davis 147). Moreover, Bimber argues that even if citizens do look for information online, it still may not be as effective as mass media encounters because of “voter selectivity” that is the tendency for people to seek out sources of information that confirm their existing beliefs (Bimber and Davis 148-149). Thus, reader habits online seem to be inline with political culture and the Internet simply enables readers with more fragmented information. Now that this paper has presented the findings concerning how the Internet has affected the communication of the campaign platform, I will turn to its impacts, or lack thereof, on the platform-building process.

4.4 Few Opportunities to Impact Policy

While many strategists listed tapping new audiences and engaging more people as important goals of the campaign, eliciting feedback on policy issues was not discussed as an appropriate online activity. The interview material indicated that strategists did not use the online campaign and the feedback it elicited to shape party policy, specifically the campaign platform. Rather, strategists explained that professionalized tools such as polling were the most trusted pictures of public opinion. This material presents a picture of a campaign that is still driven by professionals rather than citizens when it comes to determining the issues—an observation that seems consistent with the literature about political norms and practices

around platform-building as laid out by theorists such as Cross and Lees-Marshment. Again, the interviews appear consistent with the view that political culture plays a mitigating role in the power of technology to force political change. This section will present how political strategists assessed the Internet's value in platform-building and reflecting public opinion on issues. It concludes with an examination of how the literature can help explain the interview material concerning these themes.

4.4.1 A Professionalized Platform-Building Process

It is assumed that a democratic government will create public policy that reflects the will of the people. During an election, policy is contained in the campaign platform, which sets out a party's planned actions if they form a government. While traditionally, platform-building has been an activity relegated to the realm of party members or the backrooms of political strategists, the Internet provides the opportunity to open up the process to more participants. However, the majority of the strategists interviewed described a highly professionalized and/or party-focused platform-building procedure. Political strategists identified public opinion research, party conventions or the goals of party leaders as the main sources of campaign policy. As one strategist stated, "You are not going to just create a platform on a bunch of stuff people send you. It has got to be strategic to get votes. People that send stuff in aren't going to be strategic thinkers" (Strategist C). Another expressed, "It's not some big collaborative effort that everybody things it is" (Strategist A). Half of the parties explicitly mentioned that they valued the Internet's ability to allow direct feedback from citizens. During the campaign however, none of the party strategists could name a specific instance where feedback changed the course of a party's platform. The most-commonly cited feedback was positive affirmation, which was indicated by an approving email or a "thumb's up" on Facebook.

The nature of the Internet has also lead some writers (Morris 1999, Winograd and Hais 2008) to believe that online communications would be a key site for the expression of public opinion. The value political strategists placed on public opinion for platform-building came out through many of the interviews; however, strategists explained that the Internet was not an accurate gauge of public opinion. The Internet provides raw, unfiltered comments and concerns from citizens, but according to most of the strategists, it does not allow for the scientific accuracy or representativeness desired by political parties when drafting the campaign platform. As one strategist explained,

I always tell [elected members] that many anecdotes do not comprise data. At the end of the day, 20 people calling your office, while it may seem significant, it is still just 20 people, when you represent 60,000. You want repeatable, verifiable results.... If parties wrote policy based on even just the correspondence they got, it could really mean neglecting a vast majority of the voters (Strategist C).

The Internet is not seen as an accurate source for policy-informing public opinion, however, half of those interviewed said they believed informal online “heat maps” of public opinion could play a complementary role to scientific public opinion polling in future campaigns.

There were two exceptions to the findings presented above, representing some new innovations in platform-building in the lead-up to the election. One of these parties did have a small, informal online forum to discuss policy, but ultimately the political strategist reported that party membership created the platform (Strategist D). Moreover, one party did use the Internet to open up its platform-building process in advance of the election.² This party hosted a website where voters could submit their ideas for future government action. The official rhetoric surrounding the efforts clearly espoused the idea that the campaign platform was an essential opportunity to hear from citizens. As the website reads,

“Elections are a time for parties to lay out their plan for the future of the province. But plans are created by people sharing their ideas and being clear about their priorities for their province...we launched [this initiative] to give all [citizens] a new forum to

² This finding has been brought in separately from the interview process. Its inclusion does not necessarily indicate the inclusion of the quoted party in the pool of interviewees.

share their views on the issues facing our province, their input on the progress we are making together and the path they would choose to the future” (BC Liberals 2009).

The website was open to all members of the public and it solicited 1,500 submissions that helped inform the platform. The website was complemented by a digital van that travelled across the province and solicited input from voters about issues they believed were important and complementary policy ideas. While the process was open in the lead-up to the campaign, party strategists decided on the final content of the platform.

4.4.2 Interpreting the Findings

The research findings shed light on the research question concerning the impact of the Internet on the development of the campaign platform. The Internet’s potential as a channel for citizen input into election campaigns has not lived up to the optimism of technological determinists such as Winograd and Hais or scholars like Rowland who believe networked technologies have the characteristics needed to strengthen democracy by giving people a voice in policy decisions. The findings suggest that, in most cases, online communication had little impact on the development of the campaign platform in the three elections studied. Instead, there was a measure of distrust in the scientific value of online communications as a gauge of public opinion and electoral direction. Anecdotes do not comprise data, tweets do not make public opinion and Facebook groups are not focus groups. While there are more opportunities for a greater number of voices to be heard online, there is not a trusted, scientific way to gauge what the opinions mean.

The literature on political campaigns and the primacy of political marketing can help us understand why political strategists have been hesitant to use online communication to inform campaign platforms. The activities surrounding platform-building described by political strategists seems to be in line with established academic accounts of political norms and practices. The framework of political marketing set out by Jennifer Lees-Marshment highlights

the use of public opinion research to decide the appropriate policies to include in a political platform.

Political marketing is about political organizations adapting techniques (such as market research) and concepts (such as market orientation to satisfy user demands) originally used in the business world to help the organizations achieve their goals (Lees-Marshment 9).

Everything is professionalized and starts with the practice of market research, which occurs well before the campaign (Lees-Marshment 18). This market research includes polling, public opinion research and focus groups and is meant to design a product (read policies) that appeals to voters during the campaign. This is not surprising as extensive literature examines the professionalization of politics and the rise in the role of political consultants. Other studies have focused on the primacy of political consultants in determining policy areas of focus based on research with focus groups (Johnson 107). Understanding is further bolstered by the way this professionalization fits with Cross' assessment of our political culture. Cross explains that our electoral system does not incorporate room for policy-making, which instead happens between elections by parliamentary members (426).

This process of political marketing is similar to the one laid out by political strategists. They undertake market research in the months leading up to the campaign and create a platform based on that information. As a result, the Internet seems more like a place to promote the finished product than a place to develop it during an election campaign. In effect, these findings demonstrate how the practices and tools of current political culture still seem to be preeminent despite new technology that provides new sources of information. Of course, there was one exception borne out in the open platform process of one party, but for the most part, we are still witnessing political parties maintaining closed policy-making process despite changes new technologies offer.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of this study shed interesting light onto the question about how online communication tools affect the development and communication of the campaign platform in Canadian elections. The findings suggest that the Internet, while a promising new tool, online campaign strategies were largely reactionary and represented migrations of traditional campaign tools onto a new platform. There were indications that political strategists are both making and taking new opportunities to extend the reach of their messaging and engage more people with those messages by tapping into networks, building interactive infrastructure and interacting with online influencers. The Internet allows political parties to get their messages out to more people through networks, as well as allowing them more space to contextualize their policies. This change has the potential to allow for a strengthened dialogue between voters and political parties. However, the research suggests that these efforts had more of an effect in terms of broadcasting than engagement. Similarly, online communications have yet to make inroads in terms of shaping the campaign platform. Political strategists still report relying on traditional means of testing political will including polling and public opinion research in an attempt to build the winning platform.

The theoretical framework outlined at the beginning of this report helps make sense of the themes uncovered in this research. The findings suggest the Internet is not a benign force, but it is not the defining variable of online campaigns. However, it can be argued that the Internet's impact on the development and communication of the campaign platform is mitigated by existing society, especially the established norms and practices of political culture. Political culture, and the norms and practices it entails, appears to be the key force in determining how online campaigning takes shape in Canada. The interview materials suggest politicians followed broader social trends when deciding to launch an online campaign and

refurbished established campaigning practices. Even attempts at innovation including interactive messaging, the use of social networks and the rise of bloggers seem to be limited in their impact due to the effects of “technological fetishism” (Dean 60) and “voter selectivity” (Bimber 148). Finally, the professionalized culture of the platform-building process staved off the participatory potential of the Internet. To a substantial extent, these results point to the influence of political culture in determining how the Internet is applied in Canada. Thus, the theoretical framework informed by social constructivist academics Bimber, Dean and Schudson as well as political theorists Cross and Lees-Marshment help make sense of these research findings by setting out the possibility that technology must interact with and thus is shaped by existing cultural forces.

This paper presents a first look at how Canadian political parties are using and responding to online communication tools during elections campaigns, but it also provides direction for several other areas for future study. The Internet has moved to the core of contemporary political communications and should command greater academic attention. A promising area for future research will be opportunities for influencing the policy, especially the development of the campaign platform, between elections. This research made it clear that the time to influence policy is between elections. Future study should be watchful for openings the Internet could facilitate in this process. Currently, one political party in Canada seems to be experimenting with a more open process of setting priorities. Canada @ 150 was the Liberal Party of Canada’s 2010 policy conference. The conference was an exclusive event, with a \$700 per person price tag. However, the party tried to open up the process by streaming the conference proceedings online, and many constituency offices were transformed into theatres for interested citizens. Citizens could also use Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to contribute ideas or questions to the conference. This conference is only a first step towards creating policy, but it seems to represent a more open process, facilitated in part by the Internet.

Another important area for study will remain whether or not the current model of broadcasting and political marketing shifts over time and political strategists experiment and learn how to facilitate a greater flow of two-way dialogue. Moreover, will this two-way dialogue engage a greater diversity of people; that is those citizens who are not already previously engaged. Canada @ 150 might be a good place to start examining these questions because it is a small sample of people. It will also be interesting to see whether online communication will lead to greater fragmentation. As part of studying the potential for growth in two-way online dialogue between political parties and the citizens they seek to represent, more study should be directed towards studying barriers to Internet campaigning in the Canadian context. According to the political strategists interviewed, these barriers include spending limits, privacy laws, small audiences and a small pool of influential online personalities.

A final question that should be explored in future research is how much pressure we should put on the media and technology to renew political engagement. Focusing too strongly on what can be done to make information technologies a force for democracy may blind researchers, policy makers and citizens to other aspects of the electoral system and political culture that need to change. Information and information technology certainly have a role to play in connecting people with politicians and policy issues, however it is unreasonable to consider new applications of media and discourse as a panacea for declining interest in the political system. There are other reforms that could work in tandem with more responsive and dialogue-oriented political communication. For example, it might not be enough for people to see their pet issue discussed on Twitter. Perhaps, a better way to make people feel relevant and listened to is electoral reform, open policy processes, candidates that are more relevant or a decline in negative campaigning.

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INTERVIEWS

- Strategist A. Personal Interview. 20 January 2010.
- Strategist B. Telephone Interview. 15 January 2010.
- Strategist C. Personal Interview. 13 January 2010.
- Strategist D. Personal Interview. 11 January 2010.

Strategist E. Telephone Interview. 26 January 2010.

Strategist F. Telephone Interview. 27 January 2010.

Strategist G. Telephone Interview. 1 February 2010.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Objective: Gauge the new media uses of the political parties

1. Name:
2. Tell me a little bit about yourself?
3. What was your role in the last election campaign? What about past campaigns?
4. What was your role vis-à-vis new media?
5. How would you describe your party's approach to new media in the campaign?
6. What were your goals for the online portion of the campaign?
7. During the last election campaign, did you have a designated team to take care of the online components of the campaign?
 - a. How did it fit into the rest of the campaign team structure?
8. In the past decade political parties and candidates have steadily embraced online media tools and have developed an online presence. Which of the following online communication tools did you use in campaigning during the 2008/2009 election campaign? (Please check all that apply)
 - a. A website
 - b. A Twitter account
 - c. A blog
 - d. A Facebook account
 - e. Online forums
 - f. YouTube account
 - g. Other (please specify)
9. Why did you choose to invest in an online presence?
10. How is your adoption of these tools different than in previous campaigns?
11. Which tools did you find most effective in reaching voters? Why, do you think they were effective?
12. During the campaign, which types of interactive online media did you read? (For example: websites, Twitter feeds, blogs)
13. How did you see voters using online media?
14. Which group of people do you focus most of your online communication efforts at?

- Journalists
- Lobbyists
- Voting individuals
- Other political parties
- Other

15. Could you tell me the percentage of time you spent campaigning online versus more traditional forms of campaigning (television, radio, newspapers, door-knocking)?

a. Follow-up: How does this compare to previous campaigns? Why?

16. When did interactive media have the strongest presence? During campaigns? During policy decisions? During parliamentary session?

Objective: To determine the use of online conversations in communicating the election platform.

1. What is the role of the Internet in helping a party get into power?
2. What sort of content does your online communication include?
3. What do you think the Internet's role is in communicating policy?
4. What do you think the Internet's role is in communicating politics?
5. How much time do you allocate to each?
6. In your opinion, what part of the campaign did the Internet have the biggest impact on? (e.g. Getting out the vote, communicating platforms, creating candidate recognition)
7. How did the Internet help you communicate your platform, if at all?

Objective: To determine whether online conversations drive or change the content of the election platform.

1. We've seen Facebook groups rise up to lobby for political change and Twitter go crazy retweeting political announcements, how did the public respond to your online communication attempts?
 - How did you use that information?
 - How did you incorporate that reaction into your campaign?
2. What kind of online communication caught your attention during the last campaign?
 - e.g. policy conversations, talk about candidates, reactions to the campaign
3. Do you use online communications tools (e.g. Twitter, YouTube and blogs) to gauge public opinion?
 - Does this assessment of public opinion change the campaign platform? Campaign communications?

4. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton both used the Internet to announce their intentions to vye for the Democratic leadership. Did/Have you ever used the Internet to announce anything during a campaign?
5. How does the internet campaign influence the content of the party's policy platform? Why?
6. In the 2008/2009, did you use the Internet to help set the public agenda?
 - Did you use the Internet to foster discussions about the issues your party believed were important?
 - How did this compare to how you use traditional media to do this task?
7. Has blog content ever put an issue on the agenda in campaigns you have worked on?
 - What was it about it that made it pertinent?
 - What did you do to respond?
8. How did you respond to online media conversations? For example, do you feel obligated to respond to online media conversations?
 - e.g. If you found a negative letter to the editor, you may respond, but what about a negative blog post?
9. Did you experience any significant online advocacy campaigns during the 2008/2009 elections?
 - How did you respond to them? Why?
10. In general, do you think new media is impacting how political parties campaign and connect with voters during the election campaign? How?
11. Is online and or social media changing the electoral conversation? If yes, how?
12. Which authors of online media do you believe are most influential?
 - Journalists
 - Lobbyists
 - Interest groups
 - Other political parties
 - Individuals
 - Other
13. What would it take for online political mobilization to be translated into real-life change in terms of platform or policy statement content?

Objective: To assess the impact of interactive media on future campaigns

1. How do you see the impact of interactive media changing in the future?
2. How do you see the use of interactive media by politicians changing?
3. How do you see voters using the Internet?
 - What does this mean for the future role of the Internet in the campaign?

APPENDIX B: ETHICS CERTIFICATE

<https://rise.ubc.ca/rise/Doc/0/714G-406U861KF93KCRKUUTPE88/fromString.html>



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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - FULL BOARD

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Mary Lynn Y. Young		INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT: UBC/Arts/Journalism		UBC BREB NUMBER: H09-02448	
INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:					
Institution		N/A		Site	
N/A					
Other locations where the research will be conducted: I will be conducting interviews in the subjects' workplace or home, depending on personal preference and availability.					
CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Rebecca teBrake					
SPONSORING AGENCIES: N/A					
PROJECT TITLE: Political Campaigns and the Internet: New media in campaigns platform development and communication					
REB MEETING DATE: November 12, 2009			CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE: November 12, 2010		
DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:				DATE APPROVED: December 1, 2009	
Document Name	Version	Date			
Protocol:					
Rebecca teBrake-Research Proposal	N/A	October 9, 1930			
Consent Forms:					
Study Consent Form	v.2	November 19, 2009			
Study Consent Form	Version 1	October 9, 1930			
Questionnaire, Questionnaire Cover Letter, Tests:					
Rebecca teBrake-Interview Questions	N/A	October 9, 1930			
Letter of Initial Contact:					
Letter of Consent	Version 2	November 9, 2019			
Rebecca teBrake-Letter of Contact	N/A	October 9, 1930			

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<https://rise.ubc.ca/rise/Doc/0/714G-406U861KF93KCRKUUTPE88/fromString.html>

<p>The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair Dr. Ken Craig, Chair Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair Dr. Anita Ho, Associate Chair </p>