

**The Only Constant is Change:  
Technology, Political Communication, and Innovation Over Time**

Ben Epstein  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Political Science  
DePaul University  
[bepstein@depaul.edu](mailto:bepstein@depaul.edu)

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### **Introduction: The Elements of Political Communication Change**

“They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself.”  
– Andy Warhol

Dr. Benjamin Rush, a gifted and outspoken patriot, scholar, and doctor, led a truly remarkable life, yet he balked at his best chance for immortality. He was among the most accomplished and well regarded of America’s founding fathers. Rush was one of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence and was an active member of the Sons of Liberty. Among his many accomplishments Rush was elected to the Continental Congress, served as the surgeon general of the middle department of the Continental Army, went on to provide Lewis and Clark medical training prior to their exploratory trip and become a leading professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania before founding Dickenson College in Carlyle, PA.

When he died in 1813, Rush was celebrated as the father of American psychiatry and was the most famous doctor in America, yet his name is not remembered among the most famous of the founding fathers due to one decision he made in 1775. Rush was preparing an address to citizens of the colonies about the necessity of independence, urging them to support the controversial revolutionaries who called for war. Yet, the high society doctor from Philadelphia “shuddered at...the consequence of its not being well received.” Instead he brought the idea up to a friend of his, Thomas Paine, asking “what he thought of writing a pamphlet upon the subject.” Rush suggested that Paine, a recent immigrant from England, had “nothing to fear from the popular odium to which such a publication might expose him, for he could live anywhere, but that [Rush’s] profession and connections,” tied him to Philadelphia, where many opposed to separation from England, “forbade [Rush] to come forward as a pioneer in that important

controversy.”<sup>1</sup> Paine agreed and immediately set out writing a 48-page pamphlet originally titled *Plain Truth*, which was renamed *Common Sense*, a title suggested by Rush.

*Common Sense*, published first on January 10, 1776, became the most widely sold publication in the colonies to date, reportedly selling 120,000 copies in the first three months and over half a million in the first year.<sup>2</sup> Based on the population of the American colonies at the time, a mere 2.5 million people, it is believed that *Common Sense* was proportionally the most widely published book in American history.<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising that many have titled Paine the Father of the American Revolution. Had it not been for Rush’s concern about utilizing the power of the press to voice his strong opinion about separating from England, his name would be implanted in our memories as the author of arguably the most popular printed document in American political history. Instead, his friend Thomas Paine, who had less to lose, took the risk of spreading these ideas via the press and became legendary.

There is a lot more to this story beyond one hell of a missed opportunity by Dr. Rush. The political winds were shifting and the movement that Rush and Paine supported needed to spread the word. The choice to turn to the press to spread their views was a rather obvious one in 1775, but just two decades earlier *Common Sense* would have likely been much less widely printed and read. The political motivation to write the pamphlet was fueled by the Revolution. But the concern about its political fallout provoked a very human calculation that made Dr. Rush reluctant to write it and made Paine a more likely choice. There were technological, political, and behavioral forces at play, and these same forces have influenced decisions about political communication choices throughout American political history.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Paine, Michael Foot, and Isaac Kramnick, *Thomas Paine Reader* (Penguin Classics, 1987), 8-10.

<sup>3</sup> Moncure Daniel Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, vol. 2 (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1893).

Over 145 years after the publication of *Common Sense*, the first politicians started to dabble with using the radio to campaign in America. Contrary to expectation, the earliest adopter wasn't an upstart presidential candidate with a baritone voice made for radio; it was New York City Mayor John F. Hylan who simply reiterated his campaign platform and past achievements to listeners two days before the election in 1921.<sup>4</sup> His opponent, Henry Curran delivered a radio address the next night but the nature of public broadcasting and the campaign's limited knowledge of the medium led to the announcement that the campaign didn't know exactly when the speech would occur, just that it would "probably be very late in the evening."<sup>5</sup> In the end, no one suggested the innovative strategies employed by either campaign impacted the outcome much and Hylan won reelection with a resounding 35-point victory.

Much more important than the impact of this new communication strategy on the outcome of the election was the timing and location of this early experiment in political broadcasting. Why 1921 and why the New York City mayoral race? The answer has to do with the reach of the new communication tool and the potential political advantages present. In 1921, less than one percent of American households owned a radio, however far more owned radios in urban centers than rural areas. New York was by far the largest and most densely populated city in America with over twice as many people as Chicago. In fact, this was the first mayoral election in U.S. history in which there were over one million voters. The concentration of radio listeners and sheer number of voters in New York City combined to create a greater incentive to try using the radio for politics than anywhere else.

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas B. Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 140-41.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

As Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff describe in their incredible history of the press and the civil rights movement, the movement came of age just as television news did.<sup>6</sup> The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other nonviolent civil rights organizations including the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) which grew out of the student sit-in movement in 1960, understood how to create disruptive actions that were newsworthy. However, these strategies were not universally successful.

In Albany, GA, after months of fruitless organized activity by SNCC, Dr. King and SCLC were asked to join the local movement. For many months between 1961-1962 Dr. King and SCLC ran into Albany's strategic police chief Laurie Pritchett who read about King's methods and took steps to minimize conflict and render movement activity less than newsworthy. Pritchett planned ahead in order to reduce overcrowding in local jails and any conflict visible to the outside press. After Dr. King was arrested in Albany, Pritchett released Dr. King early, which diffused the urgency of the Albany movement. In the end, SCLC left Albany with little to show for months of work, leaving the local SNCC chapter to continue to battle Pritchett.<sup>7</sup>

Reeling from the loss, SCLC soon targeted Birmingham, AL, one of the most violently segregated cities in the South and home to a police chief widely renowned for his brutality. Eugene "Bull" Connor, the police chief in Birmingham was, in many ways, the anti-Pritchett. Not only was Connor determined to strike down protesters, but he did not care how innocent

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<sup>6</sup> Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Vintage, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Doug McAdam, "The Case of the American Civil Rights Movement," *Research on Democracy and Society* 3(1997); Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, Fifth ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 256-69; James A. DeVinney and Callie Crossley, "No Easy Walk (1961-1963)," in *Eyes on the Prize* (Boston 1987).

they appeared. It was during this campaign that Dr. King was imprisoned and penned his remarkable letter from a Birmingham jail. While he was in prison, others from SCLC, led by Rev. James Bevel organized “Operation C,” standing for confrontation. They recruited local college and high school students to protest. Faced with a crowd made up mostly of teenagers, Connor unleashed attack dogs and fire hoses before the march could make it one city block. Newspapers and TV news filled their reports with images and detailed accounts from Birmingham, achieving one of the greatest media victories of the nonviolent movement.<sup>8</sup> Attorney David Vann, who was working on a political compromise while the protests were going on later stated:

“It was a masterpiece of the use of media to explain a cause to the general public of the nation. Because in those days you had 15 minutes of national news and 15 minutes of local news and in marching only one block, they could get enough news film to fill all of the newscasts of all of the television stations of the United States.”<sup>9</sup>

On June 11, exactly one month after the end of the Birmingham movement, President Kennedy appeared on television announcing his intention to send to congress the most sweeping civil rights legislation in the nation’s history, stating:

“Now the time has come for this nation to fulfill its promise. The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased the cries for equality that no city or state legislative body can prudently ignore them. The fires of frustration and discord are burning in every city, North and South...It is time to act in the Congress, in your home state, and local legislative bodies, in all of our daily lives...A great change is at hand and our task, our obligation, is to make that revolution, that change, peaceful and constructive for all.”<sup>10</sup>

The strategic manipulation of the television went along way to turning the tide. In 1963 alone, television coverage was dominated by the movement in Birmingham,

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<sup>8</sup> McAdam, "The Case of the American Civil Rights Movement; Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 256-69; DeVinney and Crossley, "No Easy Walk (1961-1963)."

<sup>9</sup> "No Easy Walk (1961-1963)."

<sup>10</sup> Quote taken from John Lewis and Michael D.Orso, *Walking with the Wind* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1998), 199.

President Kennedy's first TV address about civil rights, the March on Washington, and Kennedy's tragic assassination. Together these helped to shift public opinion and political priorities, leading directly to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the largest legislative victories of the movement.<sup>11</sup>

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It's easy to forget that when Barack Obama, the junior U.S. Senator from Illinois announced his candidacy for president on February 10, 2007 he was not well known nationwide and faced a monumental challenge in order to win the Democratic nomination. David Axelrod, the chief campaign advisor to Obama later recalled the early days before that official announcement, when the candidate and his nascent campaign staff contemplated their chances. Axelrod described one of the earliest meetings, remembering "The eight people that made up the entirety of the Obama campaign sat around and thought about how we could get a black man named Barack Hussein Obama to beat Hillary Clinton, the biggest powerhouse in the party. The answer was technology."<sup>12</sup>

Obama, as a candidate, epitomized what it meant to be a political challenger, facing remarkable political and historic odds and his campaign knew it. The great leveler, they believed, was to be found in digital tools and the campaign went on to invest heavily in their dynamic web campaign from the outset, bringing in people like Chris Hughes, one of the founders of Facebook to serve officially as "online organizing guru," incorporating internal analytics testing what type of messages were most successful on the webpage and in emails.<sup>13</sup> The campaign embedded an

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<sup>11</sup> Francesca M Cancian and Bonnie L. Ross, "Mass Media and the Women's Movement: 1900-1977," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 17, no. 1 (1981): 19-21; Paul Burstein, "Public Opinion, Demonstrations, and the Passage of Antidiscrimination Legislation," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1979): 168-69.

<sup>12</sup> David Axelrod, Address to the Chicago CEO Roundtable Meeting.

<sup>13</sup> Jennifer Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*, ed. Andrew Chadwick and Angela Chnapko, Oxford Studies in Digital Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).



interactive platform called my.barackobama.com, or “MyBO” into their website which served to offer countless opportunities to become active in the campaign, interact with other supporters, and find out about upcoming events occurring in their communities and online, all while collecting an incredible amount of data on over 100 million Americans.<sup>14</sup> The strategy was successful right out of the gate with Obama’s website receiving more than twice the number of visitors as Clinton’s during the first two months of 2007. This was the start of the most sophisticated and successful online campaign in history up until that point.

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So why do any political actors or organizations innovate their political communications activities as they do and why are some successful and others are not? Innovation worked for Obama but had little effect for Hylan. Civil rights activists found tremendous success in Birmingham after utter failure months earlier. Rush and Paine had the same goals, but Rush was reluctant to author *Common Sense* while Paine had no such reservations. Individually these anecdotes offer interesting historical nuggets, but together they start to hint at a broader pattern explored in this book. These choices were influenced by the combination of technological opportunity and political motivation. The right combination creates a fertile political petri dish that made the decision to adopt new communication practices easier for some, and harder for others.

Each of these anecdotes provides a brief glimpse into choices made about political communication innovations at various stages in America’s political, societal, and technological history. But the route between these events, the process of change that links them, is much more important than any single stop along the path. This book attempts to connect the dots by

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<sup>14</sup> Sasha Issenberg, *The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns* (New York: Broadway Books, 2012).

constructing and testing a model detailing the recurring process of how, when, and why political communication has changed over time.

### **What This Book Is, And What it Isn't**

The purpose of this book is not to offer a new theory on how ICT innovations occurred, nor is it to speculate about the particular social changes that resulted from innovations in communication technology and media. Instead I aim to examine the process of political communication change over time, a specific form of communication aimed at specialized political goals. By doing so, I identify and test the multi-stage political communication cycle (PCC) which charts the distinct course of political communication change since colonial times.

The political communication cycle is a historically-tested model that offers a useful framework regarding how political actors and organizations make decisions about if, how and when to innovate political communication practices. This model incorporates the technological, political, and behavioral factors influencing how and when changes in political communication activity take place. The PCC model is used to explore these changes through historical analysis detailing the process of political communication change that has developed for different types of political organizations.

The cycle serves as a valuable lens through which we can analyze political communication change historically and today. It is a model that can help explain why Mayor Hylan and President Obama are connected in the history of campaign innovation. It can help explain why radio transformed so many aspects of political communication but the telegraph did not. And it can help us draw a map to chart a path through the constellation of recent research of

how web-based tools, social media, mobile technology, and technological development are, and are not transforming political communication today.

Specifically the PCC offers several benefits for those interested in political communication change or the history of political communication in the U.S. First, it helps us understand repeated patterns in what causes major and permanent political communication changes. Next the PCC offers a system used to compare changes occurring throughout history. Third, this model helps readers identify where we are in the current revolutionary cycle. For many, recent history has felt like a period of unending digital communication change. The PCC provides historical evidence suggesting that we are actually witnessing increasing stability in political communication and that the current position in the cycle has profound political and policy consequences, discussed at length in chapters 8 and 9. Finally, the political communication cycle specifically, and this book more generally, provides a stable model upon which ongoing research on the intersection of the internet and politics can be rooted.

Throughout this book political communication refers to the communication strategies, activities, and tools employed by various political actors and organizations. Much of this book will be filled with stories of the technological, behavioral, and political gears that have worked together to lead to remarkable innovations. But all of these changing strategies have targeted fundamental political communication goals that have remained remarkably stable over time. Political actors and organizations have always communicated in order to try to disseminate information, gain (or maintain) supporters, influence the public agenda, raise resources, and mobilize political action. Stated simply, *political communication goals have remained remarkably stable over time, while the communication activities used to achieve these goals have changed substantially.*

Since the colonial era, American political actors have used information and communication technologies (ICTs) to try to achieve consistent broad and targeted political communication goals. Broad political communication is the broadcasting of political messages to large numbers of people or groups. This would include activities aimed at creating and disseminating information, attempting to influence the political agenda, support a movement or campaign, or generally mobilize political action. Targeted political communication is the delivery of specialized messages directed at particular individuals or members of groups asking for some type of political action. This can include efforts to recruit supporters, raise money and resources, and/or specific efforts mobilize political action.

The stability in political communication goals is notable in and of itself. But especially in its apparent contradiction to the sudden and dramatic changes that have occurred in specific communication activities over the past two centuries. Broad political communication has made up the vast majority of political communication over time, and is the primary focus of this book. Political actors and organizations have always tried to influence large blocks of Americans. This book explores how and why the efforts to achieve those consistent goals have changed.

One of the central aspects of this book is agency. Who or what facilitates changes in political communication? That is a big question, probably larger than any one book can answer. And it is a question that might be answered differently for different political actors or organizations situated within varied social, political, and historical contexts. Organizations decide whether or not to change political communication activities for many reasons, which makes it a messy process in real life. But within this complex story of political communication change, there are constant technological, political, and behavioral elements at play. All three of these elements have agency, but it is important at the outset to emphasize perhaps the most

important argument of the entire book: *throughout history changes are made by political actors and organizations that choose innovative communication approaches over traditional ones.*

These behavioral actions play the pivotal role in the repeating story of political communication change and largely distinguish political communication change from communication or media change more broadly. The role of human choice is central in determining when and how political communication change happens, but long-lasting political communication change does not happen without technological and political elements as well.

Countless political historians have spent careers dissecting rapid and sweeping changes in political, social, and economic arrangements, debating the role of various elements and actors in these periods of fundamental political change. Yet surprisingly few have focused on the link between political change and the communication practices integral to these changes.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, media and communication historians have documented the dramatic changes in communication, producing a substantial body of literature on the subject. Though much of this literature is both useful and interesting, it documents the central causal role of communication, and specifically communication technologies, in creating social and political change. While there is no doubt as to the profound effect of new ICTs on politics, it appears equally obvious that all ICT innovations are not created equal in terms of their impact on political communication and that ICTs do not bring about change all on their own, often described as technological determinism. This literature therefore tells an incomplete story of the dramatic changes in political communication through American history.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> One notable exception is Bruce Bimber, who's work will be discussed much more later in this chapter Bruce Bimber, *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Just as Bimber offered an important exception noted above, Roger Fidler, noted journalist, writer, technologist, and professor, offered a valuable book on the development of new media that not only includes cultural, political, and economic forces but also argues that technology can not create these changes on its own. Fidler's work will be cited many times throughout this book and is still relevant though it was published

This book aims directly at these gaps in the existing literature by presenting and exploring the political communication cycle (PCC), a model that focuses on the process of political communication change through American history. As I will describe in more detail later in this chapter, the process of permanent, disruptive change in political communication behaviors over time follows a repeating pattern that makes up the political communication cycle (PCC). The PCC is the first model to incorporate the technological, behavioral, and political components that lead to revolutionary political communication changes over time. Why did political communication change dramatically during a few revolutionary periods and what role did new ICTs and the choices of political actors play in these changes? To be clear, this book is not about the individual changes in political communication strategy, but about the process of change over time.

The scope of this book is broad in terms of time, spanning over 300 years of political communication change. However geographically the scope is much narrower, focusing exclusively on political communication change in America. This is done for one main reason. The PCC incorporates technological, behavioral, and political elements into the process of change, but these variables interact differently in different nations and regions. For instance technologies enter nations at different times, and spread through societies at different speeds.<sup>17</sup> But even more important are the differences in political behaviors and structures across the globe. The political choices made by political actors and organizations are the central cog in determining when and how political communication actions change and those organizations, from political parties, to governing bodies, to interest groups, to social movements, vary from

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nearly two decades ago. Roger Fidler, *Mediamorphosis: Understanding New Media* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1997).

<sup>17</sup> There will be much more on the importance of variations and speed of diffusion of ICTs in chapter three.

place to place. When it comes to the story of political communication change, the United States is unique, as is Finland, Nigeria, Mexico, South Korea, and Egypt.<sup>18</sup>

Each nation, and often regions within each, is unique in the details of their story. Yet the pattern of change, the PCC, is universal. Therefore while this book introduces the PCC model and applies it to the U.S. context, it is a model that can, and I hope will be used in an international and comparative context in the future. I believe that while the PCC will likely have different contours and disruption points in each country or region, it is still very helpful in providing historical context for those interested in studying political communication change around the world and also could be used in a comparative context to link transitions in political communication change across nations.

This book aims to do a lot, and to do so in a way that is mainly driven by an engaging analysis of political communication through U.S. history. But this book does not answer all questions or attempt to. The target is presenting and testing a broad model. The political communication cycle (PCC) helps to map the meandering forest of American political communication change. It does not analyze each tree. This book will address the role of social media in modern campaigning and why it is used much less consistently by modern interest groups, but it will not evaluate every specific angle of Twitter use by Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential election.<sup>19</sup> This is also not a book principally focused on political media, though the development of communication technology including the press, radio, television, and internet will all be detailed. The PCC is not used to evaluate modern day practices of political journalism,

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<sup>18</sup> For a great comparative study demonstrating the asynchronous development of media systems across developed nations, and a distinct lack of “Americanization,” see Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, “The Absence of Structural Americanization: Media System Developments in Six Affluent Democracies, 2000-2009,” *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 18, no. 4 (2013).

<sup>19</sup> The book includes plenty of analysis about the 2016 election, and the unconventional and controversial campaign (and early presidency) of Donald Trump. This obviously must include his use of Twitter. However his campaign choices will be evaluated within the context of the PCC and campaign innovation broadly. Many others are detailing Trump’s use of Twitter in greater detail which will be referenced in Chapter five.

though I hope that others down the road might test its application in those journalistic waters. Importantly this book, and the model that guides it, does not realistically strive to incorporate all forms and changes of political communication that have ever existed. Trees are missing. But a map of the forest and how it has changed offers useful and meaningful ways to talk about political communication past, present, and future, and a strong argument about how they are all linked.

### **Political Communication Revolutions and Orders**

The exploration of revolutions in communication is far from a revolutionary act. Irving Fang, a journalism and communications scholar, provided the most definitive exploration of what he calls information revolutions, which described transition periods across the broad expanse of communication history. Fang defines these information revolutions as “profound changes involving new means of communication that permanently affect entire societies, changes that have shaken political structures and influenced economic development, communal activity, and personal behavior.”<sup>20</sup> Though these information revolutions are broader in both chronological scope and communication type than the political communication revolutions (PCR) I am exploring, Fang’s concept serves as a theoretical foundation for this study.

Just as in Fang’s definition of information revolutions, political communication revolutions (PCR) are both profound and permanent. However unlike information revolutions, PCRs specifically describe the major changes in how political communication is conducted. These changes include fundamental tools, tactics and strategies that political elites, political organizations, and increasingly politically engaged citizens use in their political communication

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<sup>20</sup> Irving E. Fang, *A History of Mass Communication: Six Information Revolutions* (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 1997), xvi.



activities. Simply stated, a *political communication revolution (PCR)* is defined as a lasting and fundamental change in political communication activities, which alters the relationship between the sources and audiences of political messages and, in turn, the relationship between political elites and the public.<sup>21</sup> In other words, they are the relatively brief periods of time when political communication practices change the most and change the most abruptly.

Bruce Bimber's book *Information and American Democracy* (2003) offers the most comprehensive look into the role of technology and information in the evolution of political power through American history. Bimber's book creates a framework to link information revolutions within American politics over time and focuses on how the dynamic information age we have been experiencing since the 1990s is affected American democracy. This work greatly influenced my approach to this book both in design and style. Bimber's work consciously avoids an overemphasis on ICTs because, in his view, technology is constantly changing and old and new technologies remain interdependent.<sup>22</sup> This speaks to the complexity of what Andrew Chadwick has termed the Hybrid Media System.<sup>23</sup> Bimber's focus remains fixed on information as opposed to technology. Information revolutions, Bimber argues, have punctuated what he calls information regimes and he developed a useful model to capture the relationship between the two that has substantially influenced the ideas in this book.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> As stated earlier, the concept political communication cycle (PCC) and revolution (PCR) could, and I hope will, be applicable to societies and nations around the world as well as a frame through which to compare political communication changes around the world. It is by no means limited to the American political context to which it is applied in this study.

<sup>22</sup> Bimber, *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*, 8-9.

<sup>23</sup> In many ways this book seeks to accomplish something akin to the Chadwick's wonderful Hybrid Media System, in that it tries to present a theory that encompasses a dynamic political communication environment while also remaining applicable to the wide variety of political organizations and actors. The concept of hybridity is a key building block that has helped to shape my concept of the PCC and is used in various ways throughout the book. For more see Andrew Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*, ed. Andrew Chadwick and Angela Chnapko, Oxford Studies in Digital Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>24</sup> Bimber, *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*, 20-25.

Especially important for this book is the link Bimber draws between information and communication.<sup>25</sup> Information, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is “knowledge communicated about some fact, subject, or event”; communication is “the imparting or exchanging of information or news.” It is clear that these two terms are inherently interwoven. Where Bimber tends to focus on the information itself, I will look at the methods and activities associated with the communication activities during PCRs.<sup>26</sup>

The evolution of political communication in America has not been a steady process. PCRs have disrupted *extended periods of relatively consistent political communication activity, which I identify as **political communication orders (PCOs)***.<sup>27</sup> Through the course of American political history four PCOs have existed: the Elite, Mass, Broadcast, and Information Political Communication Orders. Each was a lasting period of relatively stable political communication activities aimed at timeless broad and targeted political communication goals.<sup>28</sup> These four orders, though not static, maintained stability in the fundamental form and function of political communication, as well as in the relationships created through this structure. Both the PCOs and

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<sup>25</sup> It is also important to note the difference between the political communication cycle (PCC) described in this book, and Andrew Chadwick’s political information cycle. While these terms are similar and potentially confusing, the PCC is not a revision of, or comment on the political information cycle, which describes the modern process of gaining political news and information through an increasingly hybrid media system. The political information cycle is an important contribution to understanding how political news is created, disseminated, and accessed and is much more holistic than the traditionally used, and largely outdated, “news cycle.” All that said, the PCC is fundamentally different, looking at the changing process of strategic political communication activates over time. I hope others find it valuable as well. Andrew Chadwick, “The Political Information Cycle in a Hybrid News System: The British Prime Minister and the “Bullyinggate” Affair,” *International Journal of Press/Politics* 16, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>26</sup> Additional definitions of communication focus on the connections and relationship between people, and element that I believe is lacking in most technologically deterministic histories of media detailing the impact of new ICTs on American politics Bimber, *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*, 10-11.

<sup>27</sup> The concept of PCO can be seen as roughly analogous to Bimber’s information regimes in his information regime model. They both describe periods of equilibrium and both studies primarily focus on the transitions between these periods.

<sup>28</sup> The social and technological changes involved throughout these four PCOs and the PCRs that disrupted them will be detailed at length during the next historical chapter. They are summarized in brief here.

the political communication revolutions that disrupted them are extremely valuable lenses through which to view the changes in ICT use through American history.

Initially a localized order developed, where the majority of political activity was conducted in person. Political communication that was not conducted face-to-face was done exclusively through print and primarily through newspapers, with political and business insiders, organizations, and newspaper editors controlling nearly all of the information directed at an economically and politically elite audience. As such, I name this initial order the Elite PCO. This PCO was in place at the birth of the United States, which lasted until the 1820s when the first American PCR brought political information to a wide audience over the next two decades.

Following this transition, a second order emerged which I have labeled the Mass PCO. This was the longest PCO in American history, as political communication was conducted in relatively consistent ways nationwide for nearly a century. The Mass PCO emerged in part because of technological innovations in printing and changes in the American postal system, which dramatically restructured the cost of newspaper making and distribution. These changes occurred just as literacy rates were climbing quickly and suffrage rights expanded dramatically, bringing people from all classes into the American political process and greatly increasing the demand for political information and communication. Together these factors caused an increase in the speed, and a dramatic reduction in the cost, of political news dissemination leading to a massive increase in readership and a change in how politics was reported and how political organizations aimed to reach the public.

The advent of radio eventually led to the second American PCR, ushering in the Broadcast PCO. This included more personal and immediate interaction between political elites and the American citizenry and an increasing emphasis on media expertise and image based

politics. This PCO continued through the development of the television, which provided new tools for political activity but did not revolutionize the style and activities of political actors so much as provide them with a new stage and format. Some may find this statement controversial; so let me briefly clarify as to avoid political media scholars and fans from hyperventilating. This book does not claim that the television was unimportant in the evolution of political communication in America. Quite the contrary: there is strong evidence suggesting it has been, and continues to be, the most influential political medium since the 1950s.<sup>29</sup> Instead, I argue that strategic, media-minded, immediate, and personal political communication was refined during the early years of the radio era. Television, while adding video, did not radically disrupt the relationship between political elites and their audiences as much as building upon the revolutionary changes of the radio.<sup>30</sup>

The most recent political communication revolution started in the mid 1990s, with the exponential growth of the use of the internet and related digital media for political purposes. This PCR transitioned American political communication into what I term the Information PCO. This new PCO offers more interactive, flexible, and multidimensional tools than any prior order and has redefined the boundaries of political communication for actors at all levels of the American political landscape over the past 25 years. Some of the ways in which the internet and new media have permanently changed political communication practices are clear today. However the current PCR has yet to become fully stabilized, an important perspective on our current place within the PCC and a worthwhile topic that will be addressed in the final two chapters.

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<sup>29</sup> Stephen Ansolabehere, Roy L. Behr, and Shanto Iyengar, *The Media Game: American Politics in the Television Age*, New Topics in Politics (New York: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993); Shanto Iyengar, Mark D. Peters, and Donald R. Kinder, "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs," *The American Political Science Review* 76, no. 4 (1982).

<sup>30</sup> This argument will be developed much more completely in the next chapter.

Each of the political communication orders provide context regarding the slow gradual pace of change over longer periods of stability. Each is juxtaposed against the relatively rapid and irreversible changes to political communication practices and norms that develop during revolutionary periods (see Figure 1.1). These revolutionary interludes transition one PCO to another, often following the conscientious innovation and adoption of new communication tools. Yet they do not simultaneously discard traditional tools as irrelevant. As Andrew Chadwick accurately states, today's media system is hybrid.<sup>31</sup> I argue that this hybridity applies to older political communication orders as well.

Again following the notion of Chadwick's hybrid media system, the political communication cycle is designed to offer a more holistic approach to understanding how transitional periods take place and incorporate the multifaceted and dynamic forces present in this process.<sup>32</sup> The orders and revolutions within the cycle offer a frame through which to understand how the newer communication tools are incorporated into existing political communication structures, and how the resulting hybrid political communication system becomes increasingly stable.

Newer political communication tools often offer potential advantages over traditional ones, incentivizing some political actors to innovate their activities. However this is not meant to suggest that traditional political communication media cannot be used in pivotal ways. In fact, many political communication successes can be attributed to strategic uses of older communication tools and technologies. Harry Truman's remarkable victory in the 1948 election was not due to his pioneering use of the emerging television. Instead, much of the credit was given to his tireless, seemingly impromptu whistle-stop tour in which he "Gave-em hell" one

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<sup>31</sup> Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

speech at a time. In reality, Truman's speeches were strategically crafted by an eight-person team back in Washington and delivered by the incumbent along his 31,000-mile tour.<sup>33</sup>

It is also true that traditional communication tools have been used to create major changes in the political landscape of the nation. This was the case with the rise of conservatism starting in the 1960s. The origins of this growth, from Barry Goldwater to the increasing political power of American evangelicals,<sup>34</sup> to Ronald Reagan is often traced back to interpersonal meetings, pamphlets, magazines, and the emergence of direct mail by Richard Viguerie.<sup>35</sup> The articulation of the orders and revolutionary periods in U.S. political communication history is not meant to refute the political impact or strategic use of traditional communication media.

Instead I argue that during these four PCOs, the ICTs at hand were used in relatively consistent ways and were structured by various institutions, norms, and regulations. At particular points in history, elements of emerging ICTs have created the possibility for political actors to transform certain types of political communication activity, instigating a political communication revolution (PCR) as one PCO is displaced by another. From this historical pattern three research questions emerge: First, under what conditions do changes in communication technology generate new opportunities for political communication activities? Second, why do some political actors choose to utilize these opportunities more than others? And third, how do these periods of dramatic change transition into periods of greater stability?

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<sup>33</sup> Philip White, *Whistle-Stop* (Lebanon, NH: Fore Edge, University Press of New England, 2015); Steven R. Goldzwig, *Truman's Whistle-Stop Campaign* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> The development of direct mail is analyzed more completely in chapter five. Lisa McGurr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Richard Armstrong, *The Next Hurrah: The Communications Revolution in American Politics* (New York: Beech Tree Books, 1988); Larry Sabato, *The Rise of Political Consultants* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

## **The Political Communication Cycle: a Model of Change**

As a new ICT becomes more widely accepted, it offers new opportunities for political actors to innovate their political communication activity. The transition between PCOs varies in pace and scope based on elements of the new ICT, as well as on the interests and resources available to political actors and the choices they make about the adoption of new tools.<sup>36</sup>

Most historically minded mass communications scholars argue that these changes are the end result of a technology-centered process.<sup>37</sup> That is, the changes in the speed, interactivity, and forms of communication available because of a new communication technology serve as the causal forces driving political actors and policies to adapt their behavior. Although I agree that new ICTs have a substantial impact on political communication, the technology-centered argument minimizes the role of political actors, and therefore is incomplete.

Each successful new communication technology requires a societal or commercial need to motivate its widespread acceptance and impact. For example, the railroad created the need for long-distance, immediate communication; a need that led to the incredible expansion of the telegraph across the nation. In the same way, new ICTs do not automatically disrupt political behavior unless there is a supervening political need that will motivate political actors to innovate. In other words, a new communication tool is only going to be used to innovate political communication strategies if it is perceived as potentially able to achieve political communication goals better than traditional ICTs. A candidate for office is perhaps the most obvious example. Candidates cannot expect to win elections without visibility. Once upon a time the only way to become known was to hold public events or go door to door, both time-consuming and

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<sup>36</sup> This is one overarching theme of chapters five through eight.

<sup>37</sup> See Fang, *A History of Mass Communication: Six Information Revolutions*; Paul Starr, *The Creation of the Media : Political Origins of Modern Communications* (New York: Basic Books, 2004); Brian Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet* (London: Routledge, 1998).

exhausting endeavors. In retrospect the local partisan newspaper, the radio, television, and the internet each offered new and potentially better ways of not only gaining visibility but also disseminating information and recruiting supporters, consistent communication goals of candidates and campaigns. Yet the fact that new communication technologies could potentially be used for political purposes does not mean that they were. This book is ultimately about *how* political actors and organizations determine if and when to make changes. Accordingly, I argue that disruptions in political communications activities result from a confluence of technological, behavioral, and political forces.

While there are dynamic forces at play, the entire process of change actually follows a regular and repeating pattern over time, namely the political communication cycle (PCC). The process starts with a stable order. Disruptions in PCOs, then, occur through a multistage process. First, a new ICT is developed and becomes widely accepted.<sup>38</sup> As access to this medium grows, political actors are motivated to start to experiment with the use of the new technology in political communication activities. Once some political actors successfully tap the new communication technology to achieve their communication goals, others often follow their lead. But this copying is not automatic. Instead the diffusion of successful political communication innovations requires the effective use of a political communication innovation by one political actor that appears to be easily transferable to the goals of another, and reasonable to try based on the costs, and technological expertise requirements. Under these circumstances then diffusion of certain practices will spread and eventually new norms are created.

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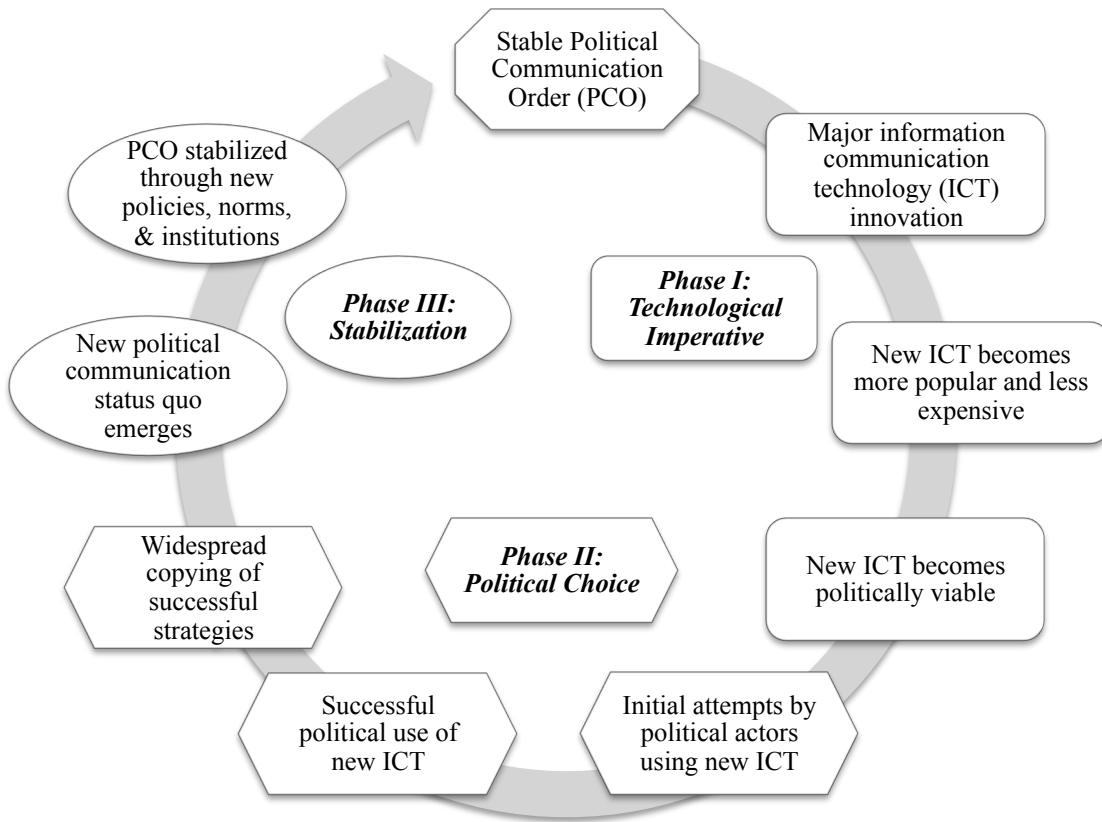
<sup>38</sup> Obviously all ICTs are not successfully disseminated throughout a population. Most in fact are not successful and therefore hold limited potential to impact political communication. For more on roll of ICT development and dissemination in the process of challenging existing political communication and contributing to PCRs see chapter three.



Although disruptions in PCOs cannot occur without the development of new ICTs, the new technologies alone cannot create new political activity. In other words, changes in communication technology are a necessary precondition for a PCR, but insufficient on their own to create a revolution. Major ICT innovations can create conditions where PCRs are possible once they become potentially useful for political communication goals. But only the choices and actions of political actors actually create political communication revolutions.

All told, the PCC includes the development of a new ICT, the growth of its popularity and political viability, early political experimentation, widespread copying of successful political communication innovations, and eventually the stabilization of a new political communication status quo through new policies, norms, and institutions creating a new PCO. This multi-stage process is made up of three broad phases: the technological imperative phase, the political choice phase, and the stabilization phase (see Figure 1.1)

**Figure 1.1: The Political Communication Cycle**



## Theoretical Framework

There is little doubt that quantitative methods have grown to dominate political communication scholarship over the past four decades. However there is a growing chorus of influential scholars criticizing the dominance of this methodological approach.<sup>39</sup> In particular some have argued that the lack of qualitative methods have limited the opportunity to develop theories and advance research at the pace of the changes that many political communications scholars are studying.<sup>40</sup> The response has been a push for more qualitative work that can “help us answer the *how* and *what* questions that must be addressed in order to answer the *why* and *so*

<sup>39</sup> Lance Bennett and Shanto Iyengar, "The New "Media Affect" and the Crisis of Representation for Political Communication," *International Journal of Communication* 58, no. 4 (2008); David Karpf et al., "The Role of Qualitative Methods in Politics Communication Research: Past, Present, and Future," *ibid.* 9(2015).

<sup>40</sup> Lance Bennett and Shanto Iyengar, "The New "Media Affect" and the Crisis of Representation for Political Communication," *ibid.* 58, no. 4 (2008); Bruce Bimber, "What's Next? Three Challenges for the Future of Political Communication Research," in *New Technologies and Civic Engagement*, ed. H. G. de Zuniga (London: Routledge, 2015).

*what* questions.”<sup>41</sup> And many recent influential qualitative works exploring the modern era of political communication of campaigns,<sup>42</sup> political organizations and interest groups,<sup>43</sup> and the public,<sup>44</sup> have answered the call. This book is also qualitative but takes a different methodological angle than many of these recent works. Instead of gathering data through ethnographic observation, or a series of in-depth interviews, this book is built on historical research used to theoretically construct and test the political communication cycle model.

While this book fits into a mode of recent qualitative methodological work, attempting to ask big, broad questions, it also follows a long history of interdisciplinary political communication scholarship.<sup>45</sup> In this project I will address several bodies of literature, including American Political Development (APD) scholarship on disruption and change, mass communication and historical scholarship on ICT development and implementation, and diffusion scholarship primarily growing out of sociological and economic research. APD scholars seek to identify and account for patterns of change and equilibrium in American political institutions, norms, ideas, and political behavior. The APD framework provides a useful

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<sup>41</sup> Karpf et al., "The Role of Qualitative Methods in Politics Communication Research: Past, Present, and Future."

<sup>42</sup> Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, *Ground Wars: Personalized Communication in Political Campaigns* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012); Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*; Daniel Kreiss, *Prototype Politics: Technology-Intensive Campaigning and the Data of Democracy* *ibid.* (2016); *Taking Our Country Back*, ed. Andrew Chadwick and Angela Chnapko, Oxford Studies in Digital Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Jessica Baldwin-Philippi, *Using Technology, Building Democracy: Digital Campaigning and the Construction of Citizenship*, ed. Andrew Chadwick *ibid.* (2015).

<sup>43</sup> David Karpf, *The Moveon Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy* *ibid.* (2012); "How Will the Internet Change American Interest Groups," in *New Directions in Interest Groups Politics*, ed. Matt Grossmann (New York: Routledge, 2014); Jen Schradie, "Political Ideology, Social Media, and Labor Unions: Using the Internet to Reach the Powerful, Not Mobilize the Powerless," *International Journal of Communication* 9(2015); Bruce Bimber, Andrew Flanagin, and Cynthia Stohl, *Collective Action in Organizations: Interaction and Engagement in an Era of Technological Change*, Communication, Society and Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>44</sup> Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, *The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>45</sup> This interdisciplinary tradition was recounted well by Karpf et al., "The Role of Qualitative Methods in Politics Communication Research: Past, Present, and Future." It was exemplified by many classic studies in political communication including Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes up His Mind in an Election Campaign* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, *Politics and Television* (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1968).

approach to the analysis of the impact of changing ICTs on political activity because it does not presume the traditional periodization of American history favored by historians.<sup>46</sup> This allows for a broader and often richer approach to historical changes across the American political landscape.

The most sophisticated and comprehensive analysis of APD as an approach was developed by Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek in *The Search for American Political Development* (2004).<sup>47</sup> One central tenant of APD scholarship is the identification of recurring patterns or historical breakpoints in time. These patterns help delineate political orders, which Orren and Skowronek define as a constellation of practices, ideas, and institutions that hangs together over time, a bundle of patterns exhibiting coherence and predictability even as other aspects of politics undergo change.<sup>48</sup> The identification of specific kinds of political orders allows for the examination of when and why one particular order ends and another begins and how the changes influence other parts of the political system, in the case of this book why one PCO is disrupted and another is established.

According to Orren and Skowronek all political change, including transitions between political orders, proceeds on a site, a prior political ground of practices, rules, leaders, and ideas,

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<sup>46</sup> Rogan Kersh, "Rethinking Periodization? Apd and the Macro-History of the United States," *Polity* 37, no. 4 (2005).

<sup>47</sup> For the most complete overview of the methods, rationale, and implementation of American Political Development see Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); for additional noteworthy examples of APD analysis of changes in American political institutions, norms, ideas, and political behavior see Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997); Jeffrey Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987); Peter F. Nardulli, *The Constitution and American Political Development: An Institutional Perspective* (University of Illinois Press, 1992); "The Concept of a Critical Realignment, Electoral Behavior, and Political Change," *The American Political Science Review* 89, no. 1 (1995); Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*, The Julian J. Rothbaum Distinguished Lecture Series V. 8 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

<sup>48</sup> Orren and Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development*, 9-16.

which provide boundaries and impediments to political development.<sup>49</sup> This is closely aligned to the related concepts of path dependence and increasing returns.<sup>50</sup> Path dependence suggests that change occurs over time largely through incremental adjustments guided by the series of changes that have taken place stretching back through time. Path dependence in turn generates increasing returns: the further along a particular historically evolved path, the more costly it would be to start over. Increasing returns is a concept particularly well suited to the analysis of ICT development as the creation of ICTs have moved society in one direction as communication has become faster, cheaper, and more convenient over time.<sup>51</sup> It would be almost unthinkable to develop a new useful technology and then stop using it unless it no longer serves its purpose or is replaced by a more advanced technology that performs the same function.<sup>52</sup>

Path dependence is often attributed largely to gradual change in political institutions and orders, yet at certain times, elements unite to disrupt the status quo and create transformational change. This is very much the case in the history of political communication in American politics, where ICT development has undoubtedly caused disruptions to political activity by modifying the cost, access, control, and flexibility of political communication.

Over the past fifteen years there has been an explosion of research regarding ICT development among political science, history, and mass communications scholars. Several have outlined various recurring processes involved in the history of communication technology

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 20-26.

<sup>50</sup> Both path dependence and increasing returns have grown mainly within the field of economics; yet have regularly been applied to political growth and development. For a clear articulation of these terms within a political context see Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (2000).

<sup>51</sup> For further explanation of the usefulness of applying increasing returns to the development of technologies see chapter two in W. Brian Arthur, *Increasing Returns and Path Dependence in the Economy* (Univ of Michigan Press, 1994).

<sup>52</sup> This is the case even when newer technological developments offer improved functionality, as in the case of the outdated keyboard that we all use. For more see Paul A. David, "Clio and the Economics of Qwerty," *The American Economic Review* 75, no. 2 (1985).

development.<sup>53</sup> Rare works have rooted this development in complex societal changes, like Roger Fidler who describes changes in media over time as “mediamorphosis”, which he defines as the transformation of communication media, usually brought about by the complex interplay of perceived needs, competitive and political pressures, and social and technological innovations.<sup>54</sup> Some argue that old and new media are converging today, debunking the common conception that one form of technology simply replaces its predecessor over time.<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, political scientists and media scholars have focused on how a particular communication technology has or has not changed the American political system. One of the most compelling analyses is Jeffrey Pasley’s *The Tyranny of Printers* (2003), which details the development of printing and early newspapers within American politics during the earliest years of the nation by highlighting the very personal and dramatic narratives embedded in this historical process.<sup>56</sup> Similarly rich accounts of the political history of the development of the radio detail the role of political, economic, and social forces on the wireless transformation and eventual regulation of American political communication.<sup>57</sup> Although the television is a more recent innovation, it is likely that more has been written about the political impact of this twentieth century innovation than any other medium.<sup>58</sup> A comprehensive look at the role of television in American politics is presented in *The Media Game* (1993), which provides both an

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<sup>53</sup> Fang, *A History of Mass Communication: Six Information Revolutions*; Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*; Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002); David Demers, *History and Future of Mass Media: An Integrated Perspective* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2007); Fidler, *Mediamorphosis: Understanding New Media*.

<sup>54</sup> *Mediamorphosis: Understanding New Media*, xv.

<sup>55</sup> For more see Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: NYU Press, 2006); Fidler, *Mediamorphosis: Understanding New Media*.

<sup>56</sup> Pasley, “*The Tyranny of Printers*”: *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*.

<sup>57</sup> For one of the best examples see Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*.

<sup>58</sup> One of the early eye-opening studies was the experimental study conducted by Shanto Iyengar, Mark Peters, and Donald Kinder in 1982, which used an innovative study of television news to show its large priming effect and the power that television had over the opinions of the public. For more see Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder, “Experimental Demonstrations of the” Not-So-Minimal” Consequences of Television News Programs.”

overview of changes that developed as television emerged and specific chapters detailing the numerous ways that television influenced the political behavior of politicians and citizens.<sup>59</sup> A growing body of research has examined the impact of the internet on various aspects of American politics.<sup>60</sup> Some of this work has detailed the effect of the internet on the American democratic system,<sup>61</sup> while other important scholarship has focused on party politics,<sup>62</sup> and participation and citizen empowerment.<sup>63</sup> Still others have explored the role that ICTs play in

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<sup>59</sup> Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar, *The Media Game: American Politics in the Television Age*.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Davis and Diana Marie Owen, *New Media and American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Gary W. Selnow, *Electronic Whistle-Stops: The Impact of the Internet on American Politics*, Praeger Series in Political Communication, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1998); Richard Davis, *The Web of Politics: The Internet's Impact on the American Political System* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Bruce Bimber, "The Internet and Citizen Communication with Government: Does the Medium Matter?," *Political Communication* 16, no. 4 (1999); AG Wilhelm, *Democracy in the Digital Age* (Routledge London, 2000); M Castells, *The Information Age* (Blackwell, 2000); Bruce Bimber, "The Study of Information Technology and Civic Engagement," *Political Communication* 17, no. 4 (2000); *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*; Andrew Chadwick, *Internet Politics: States, Citizens, and New Communication Technologies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Matt Bai, *The Argument: Billionaires, Bloggers, and the Battle to Remake Democratic Politics* (New York: Penguin Press, 2007); Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008); K Wallsten, "Political Blogs: Transmission Belts, Soapboxes, Mobilizers, or Conversation Starters?," *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 4, no. 3 (2008); Tim Wu, *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010); Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011); Karpf, *The Moveon Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*; Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, "Mundane Internet Tools, Mobilizing Practices, and Coproduction of Citizenship in Political Campaigns," *New Media and Society* 13, no. 5 (2011).

<sup>61</sup> Wilhelm, *Democracy in the Digital Age*; Bimber, *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*.

<sup>62</sup> Bai, *The Argument: Billionaires, Bloggers, and the Battle to Remake Democratic Politics*; Issenberg, *The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns*; Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back*; Nielsen, *Ground Wars: Personalized Communication in Political Campaigns*; Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*. Daniel Kreiss and Adam J. Saffer, "Networks and Innovation in the Production of Communication: Explaining Innovations in U.S. Electoral Campaigning from 2004 to 2012," *Journal of Communication* 67, no. 4 (2017); Kreiss, *Prototype Politics: Technology-Intensive Campaigning and the Data of Democracy*.

<sup>63</sup> See Bimber, "The Internet and Citizen Communication with Government: Does the Medium Matter?"; "The Study of Information Technology and Civic Engagement"; "Information and Political Engagement in America: The Search for Effects of Information Technology at the Individual Level," *Political Research Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2001); Wallsten, "Political Blogs: Transmission Belts, Soapboxes, Mobilizers, or Conversation Starters?." For a wonderful example of valuable contributions to the subject emanating from a mass communications and journalism perspective see Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*.

political discourse on a global scale,<sup>64</sup> including the relationship between the form of government and the diffusion of ICTs.<sup>65</sup>

Diffusion literature provides the vocabulary and theory necessary to start to bridge the gap between APD scholarship and research on ICT development and its impact on politics over time. A growing number of scholars have contributed to diffusion literature since Bryce Ryan and Neal Gross published their pioneering study of the diffusion of hybrid corn adoption by farmers Iowa farmers in the 1943.<sup>66</sup> The vast majority of this diffusion research comes from sociology and economics.<sup>67</sup> Everett Rogers, a very influential communication scholar, sociologist, and teacher, compiled, organized, and clarified the diverse world of diffusion research in his book *Diffusion of Innovations* (2003).<sup>68</sup> In his book, Rogers defines diffusion as the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.<sup>69</sup> In other words, diffusion takes place through a behavioral process. This process and the vocabulary of diffusion scholarship help to connect the technologically focused mass communications scholarship to the political choices made by actors during both periods of stability and disruption.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Castells, *The Information Age*; Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2nd ed., Information Age, Economy, Society, and Culture (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Pub., 2004); Rebecca MacKinnon, *Consent of the Networked* (New York: Basic Books, 2012); Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion* (Jackson, TN: PublicAffairs, 2012). Alexa Robertson, *Media and Politics in a Globalizing World* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2015).

<sup>65</sup> Helen V. Milner, "The Digital Divide: The Role of Political Institutions in Technology Diffusion," *Comparative Political Studies* 39, no. 2 (2006).

<sup>66</sup> For more information on this interesting study and the impact that it had on the future of diffusion research and the development of the S-curve model, describing adoption patterns see chapter three. Bryce Ryan and Neal C. Gross, "The Diffusion of Hybrid Seed Corn in Two Iowa Communities," *Rural Sociology* 8, no. 1 (1943).

<sup>67</sup> Barbara Trish, "The Diffusion of Campaign Technology," in *The 2010 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association* (Chicago, IL 2010).

<sup>68</sup> This is the fifth edition of this important book, which was first published in 1962. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 5,12.

<sup>70</sup> For more on the characteristics of political actors and organizations as potential adopters that might increase or decrease the likelihood that they adopt new ICT innovations, see chapter four. Case studies about how this



### The Three Claims Central to My Study

Through this book, I advance and test three claims about how technological and political forces disrupt political communications activity and how these disruptions may lead to new PCOs. The first claim focuses on the characteristics of new ICTs that may lead them to become politically viable and therefore capable of being used to disrupt an established PCO. The final two claims stress the role of political choices about new ICTs and political communication strategies, which can lead to PCRs. These three claims play a central roll in explaining how the political communication cycle may affect different types of political organizations differently, and are utilized throughout this book.

First is the **cost** claim: *As the cost of new ICTs declines, the potential for its incorporation in political communication activity increases.* While each new ICT increases the speed of communication, it also initially costs a great deal. Eventually these new technologies usually become more affordable as more people use them due to a combination of reduced production costs and an increase in the competition for services. As costs are reduced and technology improves, the ICT likely becomes more portable and/or accessible, and therefore more convenient to use. Each of these factors helps to integrate the new communication technology into American society, creating a technology-driven opportunity for political actors to use the new ICT in innovative ways, or, in other words, making the new ICT politically viable, the topic of chapter three.

Next is the **resource** claim: *political actors with greater financial and technological resources are more likely to innovate earlier than those without such resources.* The cost of new

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process has occurred for various types of political organizations can be found in chapters five through eight.

ICTs affects both the political viability of the technology and also the choices that political actors make about whether or not to use it. Because the cost of using new ICTs is generally very high, political actors will only be able to innovate if they have sufficient resources to do so. If these conditions are met and early experimental innovations eventually are used to achieve political success, then they will likely be imitated and lead to a fundamental and widespread shift in how political communication is transmitted and a new relationship between political actors and the American public. However the cost and resource claims evolve as the political communication cycle progresses. By the time the new ICT is widely diffused it is no longer extremely expensive. Thus the resources claim applies less over time as ICT costs decrease.

Finally, the **challenger** claim: *political challengers or outsiders are more likely to innovate earlier than those in power*. Political insiders and incumbents are likely to support the status quo in terms of political communication because the political risk of innovation could include a reduction in audience size, influence, or control of message. They have relatively few incentives to innovate. By contrast, because political challengers and outsiders lose under the current system, they are motivated to experiment with new approaches. Therefore, when new ICTs become politically viable, challengers and outsiders are more likely to be the first to incorporate these technologies into their political activities.

## **Organization of the Book**

This introduction serves several important goals. It lays out both the research objective and theoretical framework in order to place this study on an interdisciplinary foundation combining work from political science, political communication, mass communication, history, and diffusion studies. It also introduces, in an abbreviated form, the political communication

cycle (PCC), which serves as not only the main theoretical contribution of the book the main source of organization for the following chapters. In short, the PCC, and its two important components: political communication revolutions (PCR) and political communication orders (PCO) make up a recurring cycle of change with three phases. The first phase of the PCC, which I call the technological imperative phase, involves new, widely diffused ICTs that may or may not have wide scale political utility. Eventually, some of these new ICTs may be used to successfully achieve traditional political communication goals followed by widespread copying of these tactics. These behavioral actions regarding if, when, and how political actors should innovate their communication strategies make up the second, political choice phase of the PCC. Ultimately, regulation and stabilization of new political communication activities form a new PCO in the third stabilization phase of the PCC.

Chapter two is devoted to providing a historical overview of ICT development through the lens of PCOs and PCRs in American political history. This will provide both a more complete description of these original concepts as well as a historical framework laying out the four political communication orders that have existed through American history, to which the rest of the book will refer.

Chapter three focuses on the technological component of political communication revolutions and address how the cost, rate of diffusion, and perceived benefits of each new ICT affect its political utility. In other words chapter three will evaluate how new ICTs become politically viable. A politically viable ICT does not enter American politics without active choices made on the part of political actors who try to use these new tools in innovative ways.

Chapter four will be devoted to explaining the concept of political choice as it pertains to the larger PCC. The political choice phase is the process in which each political actor chooses if

and when to incorporate new ICTs into their communication strategies. These political choices are the primary determinants regarding if and how ICT innovations are used to change in political communication activity. Therefore it is the most important phase of the PCC, which differentiates political communication change from social and societal communication change more broadly.

The behavioral choices made by various types of political organizations follow the PCC, but differ from one another based on the communication goals and constraints placed upon various types of actors. The next several chapters offer case studies that explore these variations over time. In chapter five I look closely at the development of campaign communication strategies over time and I examine the pace and pattern of communication innovation, and imitation. Chapter six explores communication innovations made by American social movements by exploring two long-lasting movements: the woman's suffrage movement and the fight against racial discrimination leading to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. The chapter concludes with a brief comparison to shorter internet-based movements. Chapter seven is the final chapter exploring political choice. It evaluates interest groups by looking primarily at innovations made by four of the largest interest groups in America: AARP, the Sierra Club, the National Rifle Association (NRA), and MoveOn.org. Interest groups have a very different set of communication goals from campaigns and social movements and this has a great impact on if and how they innovate.

Chapter eight is the penultimate chapter of this book and it shifts focus to the stabilization phase of the PCC by detailing the pattern of communication regulation and institution construction over time. In particular this chapter explores the instructive similarities and key differences between the regulation of the radio and the internet. This leads to the final chapter,

which summarizes the key takeaways from the book, the utility of the PCC and applies these historical lessons to the current status of political communication within this recurring cycle. Ultimately I use these lessons to present ideas about the increasing role of interactivity and decentralization in web-based political communication and sketch possible paths forward, highlighting related areas that could become subjects of future studies.

## **Chapter 2 – The Social and Technological History of Political Communication Change**

“True stability results when presumed order and presumed disorder are balanced. A truly stable system expects the unexpected, is prepared to be disrupted, waits to be transformed.” – Tom Robbins

It is uncontroversial to state that the internet has revolutionized many aspects of our social world. However, when we take a step back, placing the internet into broader historical context, we begin to see it as the latest in a dramatic line of technological advances in communication media. During the past three centuries of American political history, mass media evolved from print, to wired transmission like the telegraph and wire service, to wireless radio and television broadcasts, and now digital technology. Meanwhile political actors from presidents to concerned citizens have experimented with using these new technological tools to aid their political communication strategies. Though many of these trials were unsuccessful, others have led to political communication revolutions (PCRs) that have permanently shifted the way that political communication is conducted in America.

The evolution of communication technologies from the beginning of colonial America up until today has been continuous, though far from gradual. Taken separately, the newspaper, telegraph, telephone, radio, television, internet, and all of their variations seem to create a story of sudden leaps forward in communication capabilities with nearly limitless social and political ramifications. The apparently jolting thrusts toward modernity were far from random. In fact, historical analysis suggests that clear patterns have developed that helps determine when and why many of these social changes actually took place.

This process starts with the changes in technology and the emergence of new mediums, which have clearly reshaped our social world. The beginning of any technological innovation is ideation, the process of conceiving of a new communication technology. This moves the

technology from basic scientific competence to the level of technological performance, meaning that the processes of science can be used to test possible solutions. Ideation may occur years before any real technological breakthrough is apparent. For example, three decades before the first working telegraph, the thought was conceived in Germany. In France the first ideation of the telephone occurred more than 20 years before Alexander Graham Bell started working on it. And the idea of the television was suggested in 1877, 75 years before it became a common household item.<sup>71</sup>

Following ideation are several steps of actually building and reforming machines themselves. The initial devices built toward fulfilling the purpose conceived during ideation are prototypes. Prototypes could blossom or wither depending on a combination of forces that combine to propel or obstruct the development of any such device. Communications professor and media scholar Brian Winston calls this amalgam of forces the supervening social necessities. Supervening social necessities can take three general forms. First, they can include the consequences of other technological innovations. This was the case when the telegraph suddenly gained great utility with the development of the railroad. Second, would be a series of social forces or changes in society which make an innovation much more important, such as the telephone which arose first as a result of the development of the modern office. Finally, there are supervening social necessities that grow directly out of commercial practices pushing the need of new technologies on the public.<sup>72</sup>

These social forces transform the circumstances in which the prototypes are developed and, at times, create fertile ground for innovation. At these times certain prototypes are fostered

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<sup>71</sup> Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*, 4-5.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-9.

and become inventions.<sup>73</sup> Because inventions are impacted by the same supervening social necessities, they often occur around the same time, as when Bell and his rival Gray filed patents for a speaking electric telephone on the exact same day in 1876.<sup>74</sup> Inventions move into the marketplace where they are further acted upon by conflicting forces. On one hand, the belief in progress and the supposed need for the new technology presses for the development and dissemination of the new product; on the other, the new invention must conform to current social and commercial patterns.<sup>75</sup> For instance, a cable company today would not create a new version of the internet that made cable television obsolete, but that same company would embrace an innovation that could enhance its existing services and products, or seek to merge with internet providers, telephone companies, or content creators as we have seen in increasing numbers during recent years.<sup>76</sup>

The result is a jerky process of advancement, which can be seen repeating itself over and over throughout communications history. This pattern is theorized by historians such as Fernand Braudel as a conflict between brakes and accelerators being applied to the technological progress. The accelerators are the supervening social necessities themselves and the brakes can take the form of social, political, or legal constraints that help to slow the diffusion process.

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<sup>73</sup> The concepts of innovation and invention are important and often closely related and confused. One example can be found in the important recent work by Padgett and Powell, in which they describe innovations as improving a way of doing something and inventions as changing the ways things are done. These definitions vary slightly and are sometimes interchanged by other definitions of the terms. Scott Berkun who has studied innovations and how the term has been used correctly and incorrectly for years offers clarification by suggesting that the best definition of innovation is significant positive change. Thus requiring both a real change and a positive one. This extends beyond something that is simply new. John F. Padgett and Walter W. Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets* (Princeton NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012); Scott Berkun, "The Best Definition of Innovation," <http://scottberkun.com/2013/the-best-definition-of-innovation/>; *The Myths of Innovation* (Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly, 2010).

<sup>74</sup> Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*, 9-10.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>76</sup> A recent example is the acquisition of DirecTV by AT&T first proposed in May 2014. This merger was approved in July 2015 creating the largest pay television company in the country and offers AT&T, a telecommunications giant, new venues, media formats, and media opportunities.



Constraints may be applied in order for society and major organizations and institutions to be able to absorb the new technology successfully or they may be present simply to maintain stability and the current status quo. These constraints are, in many ways, more powerful than the accelerators and often are in place primarily because the status quo works for many people and is a difficult and risky status to challenge.<sup>77</sup> This entire process, which includes ideation, prototypes, inventions, social necessities and social or political constraints, moves society forward, at times reaching apparent levels of equilibrium before wrenching itself forward again.

### **ICT Development through the Lens of The Political Communication Cycle**

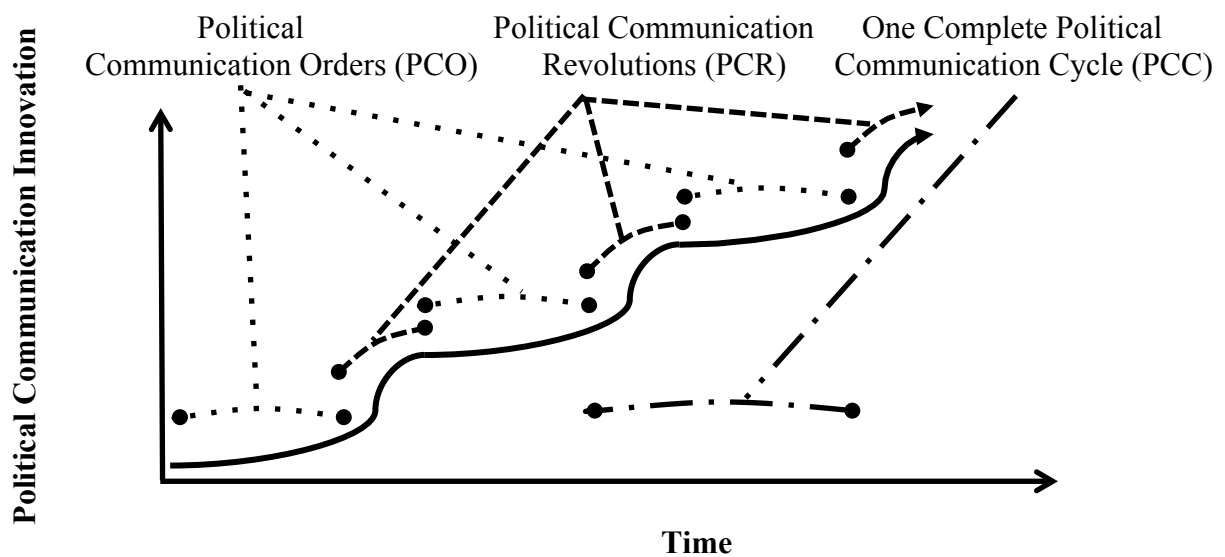
For the purposes of this book it is important to view the process of technological development by analyzing the ways that it has, or has not, affected various forms of political communication. The result is an undulating pattern of political communication advancement and stability growing out of ICT innovation. In fact, these periods of equilibrium and sudden forward jolts correspond to the concepts of political communication orders (PCO) and political communication revolutions (PCR), respectively, which together make up the political communication cycle (PCC). Just as the social impact of new ICTs requires a social or commercial need to develop, there must be a supervening political need that causes political actors to use the new ICT for political purposes in order for a PCR to occur. In this regard all ICTs are not made equal: some have fit political needs and thus have been utilized by political actors to innovate vast swaths of American political communication activities, while others, though pivotal in terms of their social utility, have remained marginal in terms of their political impact. For the purpose of this book, ICT innovations must be reframed and viewed through the lens of the political communication cycle.

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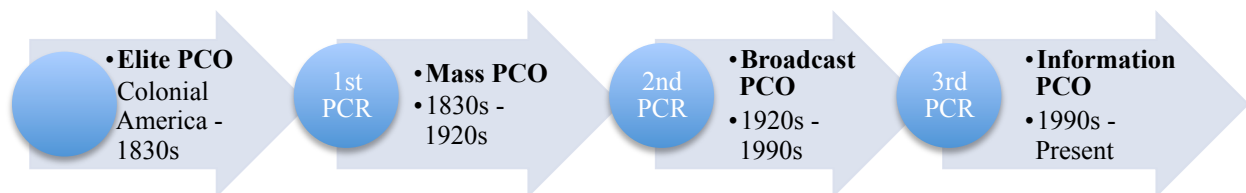
<sup>77</sup> Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*, 11-15.

A political communication revolution (PCR), introduced in the last chapter, is a period of permanent disruptive change in political communication activities, which serve as the transitions between relatively stable periods labeled PCOs (see Figure 2.1). Each PCR has followed a general pattern, together known as the political communication cycle (PCC). The PCC has three main phases: the technological imperative, political choice, and stabilization phases. This chapter will provide a historical narrative, which clearly links the changes in political communication through American history to the four PCOs labeled the Elite, Mass, Broadcast, and Information PCOs, and the three PCRs that disrupted them (see Figure 2.2).

**Figure 2.1: Political Communication Orders and Revolutions Over Time**



**Figure 2.2 Timeline of Political Communication Orders and Revolutions**



### The Elite Political Communication Order

The first political communication order in American history, the Elite PCO, emerged at the same time as the young country. It should not surprise anyone looking at the limitations in transportation and communication technology during the colonial era and early years of the new nation that most political communication was conducted in person. If a politician wanted to connect with the public, he made speeches or participated in local community events. The political news coverage and communication that did not occur face-to-face was printed. Many eager and hardworking printers sought to share news with local business and wealthy citizens. Although most printers in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century printed a wide variety of items, by far their most important business was newspaper production.<sup>78</sup>

While printers enjoyed more prominence than most artisans in colonial America, and occasionally earned local acclaim, their visibility rarely translated into influence.<sup>79</sup> Further, the actual printing process was a labor-intensive, difficult, filthy, and dangerous job, limiting any printer's ability to climb the social ladder. The first task a young printing apprentice would be given would be to prepare the sheepskin balls used to ink the type. The skins were soaked in urine, stamped continuously for softness and then wrung out by hand. Next, ink was created, often by boiling soot in varnish, creating hazardous and nauseating fumes, and enough filth to cover everyone in the print room.<sup>80</sup> This reality was far from the nostalgic image of early printers who simply disseminated ideas and changed the world. The actual newspaper production process was only slightly better. A typical four-page colonial newspaper, like the *Pennsylvania*

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<sup>78</sup> Starr, *The Creation of the Media : Political Origins of Modern Communications*, 85.

<sup>79</sup> One important exception was that of Ben Franklin who was a printing apprentice under his brother before running away to Philadelphia and eventually starting his own successful print shop. Over time Franklin papermaking took off and he was a leading paper producer in the colonies opening up several mills and was eventually licensed to print currency for Pennsylvania. Because paper was milled from rags, Franklin literally turned rags into riches, which is the true source of the "Rags to Riches" story embedded into American lore. Jill Lepore, *Book of Ages: The Life and Opinions of Jane Franklin* (Vintage Books, 2014); Brooke Gladstone and Bob Garfield, "Rags to Riches," WNYC: On the Media, <http://www.wnyc.org/story/rags-riches/>.

<sup>80</sup> Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, 25.

*Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, began with up to 16 hours of setting type, followed by the repeating process of wetting and pressing copy onto each side of each sheet. The most experienced print men of the era could complete around 240 sheets per hour. Altogether, even a small rural weekly newspaper would require a day and most of a night of non-stop labor to produce each week's paper, and much longer for papers with larger circulation.<sup>81</sup> Yet even with these difficult circumstances there were often many more printers willing to produce newspapers than there were literate subscribers with enough money to pay for the publication.

Newspapers have always been political. In fact, the first newspaper of the American colonies grew out of the first inter-colonial political event, the multiple rebellions against the Dominion of New England in response to the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89.<sup>82</sup> In an attempt to calm the public, the reestablished government of Massachusetts Bay issued *The Present State of New-English Affairs*, a broadside that looked exactly like the front page of a London newspaper, with the subheading "This is Published to Prevent False Reports."<sup>83</sup> *The Present State of New-English Affairs* served as a model for colonial newspapers in that only newspapers under the influence of local elites could survive.

This was the established norm when Benjamin Harris, a high-minded and rebellious Puritan journalist who had fled King James II's crackdown on the press, published the first independent newspaper in the colonies meant for regular publication. On September 25, 1690 Harris published a three-page paper entitled *Publick Occurances Both Forreign and Domestick*. The newspaper was published in Boston, a bustling political and trading center with a population of around 7,000 at the time. The paper included information from London, a bit of American

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 25-26.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

news, and some commentary.<sup>84</sup> *Publick Occurances* was intended to become a monthly publication, but four days after the first issue appeared, the governor and council met and declared their “high resentment and disallowance of said pamphlet and order[ed] that the same be suppressed and called in: strictly forbidding any person or persons for the future to set forth anything in print without the license first obtained.”<sup>85</sup> The paper had been shuttered because it dared to print interpretations of fact without the advice or official approval from the Massachusetts leaders.<sup>86</sup>

Printers in the American colonies heard the message loud and clear. It took another 14 years before another newspaper was attempted, this time taking a much more cautious approach. The *Boston News-Letter*, first published in 1704 was the first American newspaper to make it more than one publication, largely because it carried the declaration “Published by Authority.” Boston postmaster John Campbell gained the required government permission to print his publication by allowing British authorities to vet each issue before it was published.<sup>87</sup> The *News-Letter* was designed entirely for the local political elite of Boston, connecting them with the news from London, and occasionally government approved colonial news.<sup>88</sup> In 1719, Boston became the first city with two newspapers competing with one another and by 1721 official government censorship of the newspapers had ended.<sup>89</sup> Yet the elite audience remained constant throughout the colonial era and was obviously a major element of the Elite PCO throughout and after the American Revolution.

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<sup>84</sup> Sidney Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1960), 10; Pasley, “*The Tyranny of Printers*”: *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, 29.

<sup>85</sup> Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper*, 13; Pasley, “*The Tyranny of Printers*”: *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, 29.

<sup>86</sup> “*The Tyranny of Printers*”: *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, 29.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper*, 29-30.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> Century the growth of the population grew much faster than the expansion of the newspaper, at least until the revolutionary era (see Table 2.1). Newspapers came into their own as a political weapon during the build up to the American Revolution and the printing of newspapers and number of subscribers grew quickly during this time. From 1760 through the revolution the number of newspapers printed more than doubled, increasing at more than twice the rate of population growth.<sup>90</sup> The newspapers were a fundamental tool stoking anti-British aggression and were used extensively as a propaganda machine throughout the revolutionary era. Further, the extensive writing by a handful of white, male, political and business elites using the pseudonyms of classical heroes or invented characters, allowed a very small number of the rebellious elite to speak in the guise of the public, assuming the voice of the people at large.<sup>91</sup>

**Table 2.1: Growth of Population and Newspapers in American Colonies/States 1704-1780<sup>92</sup>**

Year	Population	Number of Papers
1704	300,000	1
1720	500,000	3
1725	1,000,000	5
1750	1,207,000	12
1760	1,610,000	21
1770	2,205,000	29
1774	*	37
1775	2,803,000	48
1776	*	37
1780	2,580,000	38

\* - Unknown

Among the growing volume of revolutionary ideas emanating from American print shops, Thomas Paine's anonymously printed monograph, *Common Sense*, sparked by the ideas

<sup>90</sup> Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, 33.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>92</sup> Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper*, 96-97; Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, 402-03.

of his friend Dr. Benjamin Rush, presented the most powerful argument against the British.<sup>93</sup> Published first on January 10, 1776, it became the most widely sold publication in the colonies to date, reportedly selling 120,000 copies in the first three months and over half a million in the first year.<sup>94</sup> David Ramsey, who witnessed the war firsthand and wrote a history of the American Revolution in 1789, aptly stated the importance of printed documents like *Common Sense* and the numerous newspapers that emerged during the era when he wrote, “In establishing American independence, the pen and the press had a merit equal to that of the sword.”<sup>95</sup>

Unlike later ICTs, the political utility of the newspaper was never in question. Political printing, especially during the American Revolution, became both powerful and popular and started to emerge as a primary means of political communication. Arguably the best examples of the strategic use of the newspaper in U.S. history were the series of 85 essays written anonymously under the name Publius by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay extolling the virtues of the newly written U.S. Constitution and arguing for its ratification. These essays, later collected and named the Federalist Papers, explained the rationale and merits of the Constitution and are often described as the most thorough and influential commentary ever written about the document. But at the time they were designed as persuasive arguments, intended for the public but specifically those political elite who would be voting on ratification in each state. From October 27, 1787 to May 28, 1788 these essays were published in four New York City newspapers: *The Independent Journal* (or *General Advertiser*); the *New-York Packet*; *The Daily Advertiser*; and the *New-York Journal and Daily Patriotic Register*. Four newspapers

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<sup>93</sup> Chapter one started with the anecdote describing why Dr. Rush suggested that Mr. Paine should be the one to write the document. A noteworthy story of the power of the press to shape opinion and the fear of what it might do if met with resistance.

<sup>94</sup> Paine, Foot, and Kramnick, *Thomas Paine Reader*, 8-10.

<sup>95</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence; the Newspaper War on Britain, 1764-1776*, [1st ed. (New York, Knopf, 1958), vii.

were used because most urban papers were only published twice a week at that time and they wanted to reach as many people as rapidly as possible.<sup>96</sup> The 85 essays were written quickly, published in the span of 215 days, averaging one essay every two and a half days. While the essays were addressed to the people of the State of New York and initially published in New York City papers, they were quickly reproduced by newspapers across the young nation and their direct influence is thought to have been just as significant outside of New York as within the state.<sup>97</sup>

The Federalist Papers perfectly epitomized the Elite PCO as the most powerful voices in American politics used the printed press to successfully influence political elites across the nation necessary to win the ratification debate. Significant concerns about the new Constitution were written by the Anti-Federalists of the era, but were minimized by the Federalist Papers. By the time the 85<sup>th</sup> and final essay was published, eight of the nine required states had already ratified the Constitution and less than a month later, on June 21, 1788, New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify the Constitution, making it official.<sup>98</sup>

Following the American Revolution, printing presses spread to most major towns in America. These early papers were mainly weeklies until the first daily, the *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser*, was published in 1784. As the title would suggest, commercial interests dominated much of the early newspaper industry. The word “advertiser” was included in the title of five of the eight dailies published in 1790 and 20 of the 24 published in 1800. After 1800 advertising generally filled more than half of the space in American newspapers, regardless of

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<sup>96</sup> *The Origins of the American Constitution: A Documentary History*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 125-26.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>98</sup> It took some work but eventually the Constitution was ratified by every state in the Union when Rhode Island officially approved of the new government on May 29, 1790.



the name of the newspaper.<sup>99</sup> The prevalence of advertising suggests the influence of commercial interests over newspaper content, which remained a constant influence through the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

While commercial interests played a major role in newspaper content, partisan politics were arguably the most influential force shaping early American newspapers. Until the very end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the printing trade and journalism were essentially one and the same. However, the two trades began to split and specialize as professions starting in the 1790s.<sup>100</sup> While printing remained an economically and mechanically rooted trade, the emerging journalism profession was very politically active. From the 1790s on, any politician who thought about campaigning, launching a new movement, or reaching people in a new geographic region understood that they needed a newspaper to do so. Partisan newspapers grew early in the battle between Alexander Hamilton's Federalist Party and the opposition party led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison that would soon become the Republican Party. By the election of 1800, the first featuring the two parties, 82 different opposition papers were either explicitly supporting the Republican Party or leaned heavily pro-Republican.<sup>101</sup> Even after the incumbent Federalists of John Adams were soundly defeated by Thomas Jefferson and his opposition Republicans, in what is often referred to as the "revolution of 1800," new partisan papers were published supporting each party over the next fifteen years though Federalist influence declined quickly after Adams' defeat.<sup>102</sup>

According to the exhaustive *History of Printing in America* published by Isaiah Thomas, there were over 350 newspapers printed in the United States in 1810, nearly 85 percent of which

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<sup>99</sup> Starr, *The Creation of the Media : Political Origins of Modern Communications*, 86.

<sup>100</sup> Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, 46.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 407-09.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 405.

were classified by party affiliation.<sup>103</sup> Parties began to control newspapers directly starting in 1828, and relied on them as their means to advocate for policies and gain supporters. Usually the formation of a new party or the breakdown of partisan alliances led directly to the launch of a new newspaper to give voice to the new party.<sup>104</sup> Political communication was embedded into the fabric of early American newspapers, but the newspaper needed to reach a much broader audience in order to gain political viability necessary to start the first political communication revolution in American political history.

### **The Mass Political Communication Order**

As the number of newspapers grew, so did the audience size. By the 1820s, the newspaper business had grown exponentially both in terms of newspapers published and readership. While there were approximately 37 newspapers publishing in the United States at the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, there were just over 100 in 1790, nearly 600 by 1820, and 1,258 in 1835.<sup>105</sup> The extraordinary growth of newspapers and the development of the first political communication revolution were due to a combination of political, social and technological factors. Political participation and literacy rates increased at the same time that a series of technological innovations dramatically altered the printing industry during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Up to that point, printing still closely resembled the wooden hand press, invented by Gutenberg in the 1440s. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century the wood presses were replaced by iron presses, though they were still operated by hand. The iron presses

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<sup>103</sup> Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, 2 vols. (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1810). As cited in Stephen Botein, "Printers and the American Revolution," in *The Press & the American Revolution*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1981).

<sup>104</sup> Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, 9.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 403; Starr, *The Creation of the Media : Political Origins of Modern Communications*, 68; Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper*.

were no faster than previous versions though they were more reliable and produced higher quality impressions.<sup>106</sup>

The mechanization of the printing process really led to the extraordinary expansion of newspaper printing and changes in how the press was used for political communication. This process started with the development of the steam-powered press and then by moving to a cylinder press. Frederick Koenig, who invented a steam-powered press in 1811 in London, pioneered both of these innovations.<sup>107</sup> Koenig's steam-powered cylinder press was set up in secrecy and used to print the *London Times* starting on November 29, 1814. It was announced with a remarkable editorial crediting this innovation as "the greatest improvement connected with printing, since the discovery of the art itself."<sup>108</sup> The construction of this new mechanized press was even kept secret from the skeptical pressmen who worked the machines. They were welcomed at 6:00 AM on the morning of November 29, 1814 by an announcement that the paper had already been printed, that any violent rebellion would be put down immediately, and those who reacted in a calm manner would continue getting paychecks until new employment could be found. This press produced roughly 1,000 sheets per hour per side, approximately 10 times faster than the best flatbed press at the time. This technology eventually started to make it across the Atlantic. The first book printed by a steam-powered press in America took place in 1823, and steam-powered printing became standard by 1840.<sup>109</sup>

The speed and volume of Koenig's cylinder press initially outpaced the need of most publishers and was adopted slowly by newspaper and magazine printers. As readership expanded

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<sup>106</sup> Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News : A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 31-32.

<sup>107</sup> A great deal of printing press innovation occurred during the first four decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century across the UK and specifically in London. Many of these innovations later made the leap to the United States. James Moran, *Printing Presses: History and Development from the Fifteenth Century to Modern Times* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973).

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 107-08.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 124; Schudson, *Discovering the News : A Social History of American Newspapers*, 32.

and costs decreased the higher volume cylinder presses became more practical. The first two-cylinder press, known as the “Hoe Type Revolving Machine,” created by David Napier was used to print the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* in 1847. This marked a dramatic improvement in the speed and quality of printing and became the industry standard within a few years.<sup>110</sup>

Equal in importance were the developments in papermaking, which occurred around the same time. Paper generally accounted for the highest cost for any newspaper, often making up more than fifty percent of the costs of printing.<sup>111</sup> One reason for its high cost for early printers was the scarcity of paper, which was made primarily from repurposed rags until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1799, N.L. Robert patented the Fourdrinier paper-making machine, which dramatically improved paper making. This new paper-making process was introduced in the United States in 1827, reducing printing costs and helping to fuel the first major PCR.<sup>112</sup> Following this refinement in papermaking, newspapers expanded quickly, especially dailies, however once wood pulp was used in papermaking starting in 1866, reducing the cost of paper by as much as 80 percent, the number of newspapers and circulation per capita soared.<sup>113</sup>

Before 1833 the only way to access newspapers was through subscriptions and by the mid 1820s there were over 50 newspaper subscriptions for every 100 households, up from 18-19 in the 1780s.<sup>114</sup> The late 1820s and 1830s marked a remarkable period where political, social, and technological changes helped to form a revolution in journalism, marked most clearly in the

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<sup>110</sup> Moran, *Printing Presses: History and Development from the Fifteenth Century to Modern Times*, 131-33; Schudson, *Discovering the News : A Social History of American Newspapers*, 32.

<sup>111</sup> Matthew Gentzkow, Edward L. Glaeser, and Claudia Goldin, "The Rise of the Fourth Estate: How Newspapers Became Informative and Why It Mattered," in *Corruption and Reform: Lessons from America's Economic History*, ed. Edward L. Glaeser and Claudia Goldin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

<sup>112</sup> Schudson, *Discovering the News : A Social History of American Newspapers*, 32.

<sup>113</sup> Gentzkow, Glaeser, and Goldin, "The Rise of the Fourth Estate: How Newspapers Became Informative and Why It Mattered," 196.

<sup>114</sup> Although this does not mean that half of America subscribed to newspapers (many families subscribed to more than one paper), it does suggest that readership might not have been limited to only the political and economic elite. Starr, *The Creation of the Media : Political Origins of Modern Communications*, 86.

penny press, which fundamentally changed the role of American newspapers as a tool to achieve political communication goals.<sup>115</sup>

The elite status of newspapers started to crumble on Sept 3, 1833, when Benjamin Day took the gigantic leap of selling his newspaper, *The New York Sun*, to an anonymous and heterogeneous population on street corners for the price of one penny.<sup>116</sup> The “penny press,” as the early mass marketed newspapers would come to be known, was a major shift both in the type of news being offered and the audience that read it. This business innovation helped to usher in the first PCR in American history. The penny press targeted the newly literate middle and working classes.<sup>117</sup> It was much cheaper than the majority of subscription dailies that existed previously, costing on average one-sixth the price. The lower production costs and more efficient printing presses allow this new business model to take hold. Other advances, such as home lighting allowed more people to read in their homes at night and contributed to the growth of the first mass medium.<sup>118</sup>

Though all of these innovations helped increase the number of people reading newspapers, one of the most important developments leading to the first PCR was not an advance in technology but in infrastructure. Both the dramatic increase in the capabilities and size of the U.S. Post Office and the preferential treatment given to newspapers played a central roll in the expansion of the newspaper industry.<sup>119</sup> The turning point occurred with the Post Office Act of 1792. The 1792 Act had two principle features that directly promoted newspaper distribution. First, it admitted every newspaper into the mail, provided that it paid a nominal

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<sup>115</sup> Schudson, *Discovering the News : A Social History of American Newspapers*, 14.

<sup>116</sup> Ronald Berkman and Laura W. Kitch, *Politics in the Media Age* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986), 20.

<sup>117</sup> Schudson, *Discovering the News : A Social History of American Newspapers*.

<sup>118</sup> For much more on this see chapter six in Steven Johnson, *How We Got to Now: Six Innovations That Made the Modern World* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2014).

<sup>119</sup> Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 2.

fee.<sup>120</sup> No other class of mailable items received such favorable rates. This government subsidy for newspaper dissemination had an enormous effect. Prior to the Act, the delivery of newspapers through the mail only occurred for members of Congress sending a newspaper to a constituent or between newspaper printers. This norm of free printers' exchange, a custom carrying over from the colonial era, allowed printers to see and copy what other newspapers had covered without paying a fee for the newspaper or news itself. The second important aspect of the Post Office Act was to put this printer's exchange policy on legal footing, codifying it and protecting it from future litigation.<sup>121</sup>

As a result of the Post Office Act, the total volume of newspapers that printers sent to subscribers through the mail grew exponentially. By 1800, 1.9 million newspapers were transported through the postal office, 6 million in 1820, 16 million by 1830 and 39 million by 1840. Perhaps even more striking is that by 1830 there were over 1.5 newspapers sent through the mail per capita, increasing to 2.7 in 1840, approximately the same as the number of letters transmitted per person. The extremely inexpensive postage for newspapers removed the financial and geographic limitations restricting the printers of the Elite PCO and was so influential that historian Richard R. John suggests that this amounted to a communication revolution in and of itself.<sup>122, 123</sup>

At the same time that newspaper circulation was growing, nationwide political participation was also skyrocketing. Western states admitted to the Union after 1815, including

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<sup>120</sup> The incredibly affordable fee amounted to one penny if the newspaper was being transported under 100 miles or one and half cents if it was being transported further.

<sup>121</sup> John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse*.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 30-39.

<sup>123</sup> Combining the increasing population, literacy rate, and technological advances with this low cost, subsidized distribution by the U.S. Post Office led directly to the growth of the audience for the mass newspaper industry. After only two months *The Daily Sun's* readership grew to 2000, up to 5000 after five months, and to 8000 after six months. This number ballooned to over 30,000 readers daily by 1837, and this says nothing of the quickly expanding penny press in most other major cities across America. Berkman and Kitch, *Politics in the Media Age*, 20-22.

Indiana (1816), Illinois (1818), and Missouri (1821), adopted state constitutions that allowed for universal male suffrage, replacing the property ownership requirement that had limited suffrage in most states. Nearly every other state followed suit during the 1820s and political participation grew dramatically as all classes were included in the political business of America for the first time.<sup>124</sup> The best indication of this expanding political participation was the incredible growth in the popular vote during the 20 years coinciding with the first PCR. In 1820 just over 108,000 votes were cast in the presidential election, a total that would increase more than tenfold by the election of 1828 and balloon to over 2.4 million in 1840.<sup>125</sup> While the population grew by 177 percent during that 20-year period, the popular vote grew by an astounding 1,250 percent, over seven times the rate of population growth!

The political participation rate during this era was simply remarkable. The earliest record of voter turnout as a percentage of voter age population (V.A.P.) was in 1824 when there was 26.9 percent turnout. This number nearly doubled to 57.6 percent in 1828, then after staying relatively stable through 1836, catapulted to 80.2 percent in 1840, a number unfathomable in modern politics.<sup>126</sup> Along with changing state suffrage laws, party politics evolved during this period opening the political process to the public in a way it had never been before.

Within the context of this massive growth in political participation, the expanding reach of newspapers offered a growing opportunity to reach new and different political audiences, beyond the political and business elite. A substantial portion of American households could participate in the political process, and thus this dramatic expansion in political audience created

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<sup>124</sup> Vermont had never included property ownership as part of their voting requirements.

<sup>125</sup> The 1820 popular vote represented 1.12 percent of the U.S. population for that year including slaves and 1.34 percent not including the slave population. The over 1.7 million votes cast in 1840 represented 14.1 percent of the population or 16.48 percent not including slaves. The numbers of votes grew over 22 times during that period. The voter turnout also skyrocketed during this period.

<sup>126</sup> This extremely high voter turnout remained the norm, staying over 70 percent in every presidential election until 1900. Lyn Ragsdale, *Vital Statistics on the Presidency: Washington to Clinton* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1996).

a supervening political need that motivated political organizations to use the newspaper to reach the masses. Even those who were excluded from the political process, like white women and blacks started publishing newspapers as far back as the 1820s.<sup>127</sup>

Together the greatly expanded readership, increase in national political coverage, vastly expanded post office (along with its subsidization of newspaper distribution), and increased political participation created the first PCR leading into the Mass PCO. For the first time in American history, the majority of the American public, regardless of class, gained access to both the newspapers and the political system, changing the strategies and methods of political communication forever. To be clear, the increasing access to newspapers did not cause changes in suffrage rights and voting patterns. Instead, the expansion political access and interest created a new type of political viability, making it much more attractive for publishers and political organizations to use the newspapers for a new political purpose, that of a mass political medium.

Different political communication orders represent long periods of relatively stable political communication activities, both in terms of the relationship between political actors and the public along with the tools that they use. During the first political communication revolution, newspaper access grew and its role within the political process changed. During the Elite PCO newspapers were often identified with political causes or politicians. During this early period, newspapers were essentially advertisements for parties, politicians, and their platforms. The Mass PCO witnessed the gradual transition from the partisan press to more neutral and independent news reporting.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> A full discussion of these early political communication innovations by social movements including the women's suffrage movement and the fight against racial discrimination leading to the modern civil rights movements can be found in chapter six.

<sup>128</sup> In 1850, the census classified only five percent of newspapers as neutral and independent. By 1940, 48 percent of newspapers were labeled as independent with another 24 percent identified as Independent, Democratic or Republican. Only 28 percent of papers continued to explicitly align themselves with one party or another. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 22.



In the early twentieth century, the emergence of public relations meant that information was given to the newspapers through publicity agents representing the interests of their employers. It did not take long for these agents to be used by government agencies and politicians as well. As a result, reporters now had ready access to information, but that information was highly filtered.<sup>129</sup> Along with press releases and wartime propaganda, these publicity agents undercut the objective nature of newspaper reporting that had been growing through the early twentieth century. It was at that time that the full-scale effort to control what facts reached the journalists, and in turn the public, began.<sup>130</sup> These strategic actions taken by politicians are precisely the type of choices that lead to transformations in political communication once ICTs, like printing and newspapers, saturate society and become politically viable.

### **The Broadcast Political Communication Order**

The broadcast political communication order started to emerge during the 1920s, and lasted through the 1990s, a period that included remarkable technological and political upheaval. This PCO emerged with the expansion of the radio and later included the television and eventually cable and satellite. The technological tools may have changed but the form and function of political communication and the mainly unidirectional orientation of messages to the public remained constant. The effect of immediate and personal connection between political elites and the public was consistent whether it was through the Franklin Roosevelt's fireside chats or the televised speeches of Ronald Reagan. Throughout this era the image of politicians were central to their electability and often their effectiveness.

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<sup>129</sup> Berkman and Kitch, *Politics in the Media Age*, 25.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 26.

The impetus behind the second PCR and the emergence of the Broadcast PCO was the birth of the radio. The earliest ideation of the radio can be traced back to Mahlon Loomis in 1872. Following some of Loomis' ideas, Guglielmo Marconi was credited with inventing the wireless telegraph in 1895.<sup>131</sup> Besides improving on earlier prototypes, Marconi also realized that shipping communication provided the social necessity for wireless radio. Naval communication in particular called for the radio for long distance communication due to the growth in ironclad ships at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. These ships were much more durable and powerful than traditional ships with wooden hulls, yet far less nimble, requiring greater distances between ships and communication capabilities beyond that of traditional flag signals. Thus, just as the railroad had created a need for the telegraph, improved shipping had made wireless communication a necessity.<sup>132</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century the public market for what would become the radio was still in development, as wireless started to become popular outside of naval and shipping interests for the first time. Wireless amateurs popped up everywhere, filling the airwaves and listening in to naval signals. On Christmas Eve 1906, Reginald Aubrey Fessenden a Canadian-born inventor became the first to successfully transmit the human voice.<sup>133</sup> The radio itself became a public communication fixture only after two dramatic events paved the way. During the Titanic disaster in 1912, American Marconi operator David Sarnoff, picked up distress signals in New York, bringing radio to the forefront of public interest and prompting Congress to

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<sup>131</sup> Marconi was the first to show that radio telegraphy, the wireless transmission of code, was both technically feasible and practically useful. Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*, 68, 70; Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 3.

<sup>132</sup> Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*, 70-71.

<sup>133</sup> Fessenden convinced the General Electric Company to create a continuous wave oscillator in 1905, that Fessenden used to transmit the signal, which was transmitted to a receiver that Fessenden had created himself. Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 4.

pass legislation requiring radio transmitters on all ships with over 50 passengers.<sup>134</sup> Second was World War I, which created the need for coordinated radio systems. The government forced all amateurs off the air during the war, taking control of the airwaves for coordination, intelligence, and wartime propaganda, a specific and powerful political communication goal.<sup>135</sup>

After the War, radio remained a hobby for many Americans, as some 100,000 amateurs again popped up, communicating with one another.<sup>136</sup> The fixation on point-to-point communication was the real brake suppressing the potential of wireless communication. Once the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) was formed in 1919, Sarnoff, its new president, set out to create a radio industry based on the open broadcast of news and entertainment and the sales of millions of home radio sets.<sup>137</sup> Thus radio was conceived by its creators not as a public service but as a consumer product.<sup>138</sup> Spurred on by the popularity of Frank Conrad, an amateur who transmitted phonographic music from the top of his garage, Westinghouse built a large transmitter in East Pittsburgh to stimulate the sale of its home receivers in 1920. On November 4, 1920 station KDKA became the first radio station to broadcast regularly scheduled programs, when it transmitted progress reports of the Harding-Cox presidential election results.<sup>139</sup>

The number of radio stations exploded across the nation starting in 1922 due to improving economic times, the appearance of complete radio sets that required little home assembly, and newspapers devoting space to radio scheduling and announcements. In January of that year there were 30 broadcasting stations on the air; the total jumped to 556 one year later. Also in 1922, AT&T linked stations by telephone wire, creating the basic condition for the

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<sup>134</sup> Sarnoff would become president of the RCA and later dominate National Broadcasting Company (NBC) radio and television.

<sup>135</sup> Berkman and Kitch, *Politics in the Media Age*, 28-29.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>137</sup> Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*, 76-77.

<sup>138</sup> Martin Spinelli, "Radio Lessons for the Internet," *Postmodern Culture* 6, no. 2 (1996).

<sup>139</sup> Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 8.

modern network, allowing many stations to play the same program at the same time. By 1924, this network had connected 25 stations from coast-to-coast.<sup>140</sup> Overwhelming growth in the industry contributed to a growing number of legal and licensing issues and the need for government regulation. This need was met by the creation of the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) in 1927, which later became the Federal Communication Commission (FCC). The Radio Act, which created the FRC, was intended to put some controls on the commercial use of radio and stated that the airwaves were public, and belonged to the people. Yet, this Act and the FRC quickly moved to support the major industry players at the expense of local and private radio stations. At this point the basic structure of the broadcast industry was complete. Government regulation was in place. Individual stations were operating on temporary licenses, many of which were linked by wire to form networks. And advertising supported the whole industry.<sup>141</sup>

Not surprisingly, along with the number of radio stations, radio use in America skyrocketed during the 1920s. In 1922, only .2% percent of American households owned radios. In 1925, the figure rose to 19.2 percent, and by 1930, 45.8 percent owned radios receivers. One decade later, in 1940, over 80 percent of households owned radios.<sup>142</sup> Sales of radios went from \$60 million in 1922 to \$843 million in 1929.<sup>143</sup> The nationwide radio network, which simultaneously broadcasted programs to a national audience, created a national culture in a way that had never existed before. At the same time, the number of political broadcasts grew so quickly that norms were already starting to develop. During the election cycle of 1924, political messages on the radio had become widespread enough to lead the major broadcasting companies

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<sup>140</sup> Berkman and Kitch, *Politics in the Media Age*, 29-30.

<sup>141</sup> The formation of regulatory agencies (like the FRC and FCC) and policies during the early radio era will be described in detail in chapter nine. Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>142</sup> Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 12.

<sup>143</sup> "Radio: A Consumer Product and a Producer of Consumption,"  
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov:8081/ammem/amrlhtml/inradio.html>.

to develop a common policy on political broadcasting, focusing on major national figures and the two major parties.<sup>144</sup>

Though the first scheduled radio program was political in nature, it was not until a year later that politicians began experimenting with the use of radio for campaigning. In that year New York City Mayor John F. Hylan and his challenger Henry F. Curran both reached out to potential voters during the final two days of the campaign. The experiment in political communication was so new that Curran's campaign manager could not even provide the exact time of his remarks.<sup>145</sup> Not until 1923 could the broadcasters and radio companies offer politicians increasingly reliable service. These technological improvements combined with the widely supported ideological belief of radio exceptionalism. As historian Douglas Craig suggests, "This [combination of factors] convinced broadcasters that their own self-interest and radio's destiny as a bringer of civic improvement required radio to be available to those engaged in, or aspiring to, political offices. This confidence of technical development, radio exceptionalism, and broadcasters' self-preservation meant that radio was now ready do to political service."<sup>146</sup>

Woodrow Wilson was the first president to experiment with sending his voice over the radio in 1919 to WWI troops, and Harding made more successful attempts in 1922 and 1923. But President Coolidge was the first president to use the radio as a means of political communication and advancement.<sup>147</sup> On Dec. 6, 1923 Coolidge made the first Presidential radio address to the

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<sup>144</sup> The major companies involved were AT&T, RCA, Westinghouse, and General Electric Company (GEC). They also limited their political coverage to an hour a day suggesting the large demand for political coverage by the political campaigns. *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 117.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Wilson and Harding used the radio but did not address the public. Coolidge did not make addresses specifically for radio, instead broadcasting speeches to live audiences, with radio acting as a technological extension bringing the event to millions around the country. *Ibid.*, 142.

general public. On the following day *The New York Times* explained the connection that the audience had to the president: "Groups of New Yorkers were drawn together to listen intently to the words of their President, not as embalmed text, but as living things while he was in the very act of speaking them. ... No competent estimate was obtainable ... of the number here who heard the message broadcast, but there was no discoverable instance of a person equipped with a receiving set who did not use it for the purpose."<sup>148</sup>

These early attempts paved the way for the 1924 election, the first that utilized widespread strategic use of the radio by politicians and interest groups. In a preview of what would happen again with the introduction of television and the internet into politics, political campaigns became much more technologically savvy in the course of one or two national campaign cycles. Most analysts agree that the Hoover-Smith presidential race in 1928 was the first true radio campaign, with both sides understanding its nuances and utilizing it extensively. This was followed by nearly 80 radio addresses during President Hoover's four years in office. Next was Franklin Roosevelt, the unquestioned champion of radio politics, who took his broadcasting technique very seriously and completed dozens of addresses yearly including his compelling and historic fireside chats.<sup>149</sup> FDR understood that the radio did not simply offer a new way to speak with the public, but had redefined the art of political communication and the relationship between politicians and the American mass audience. According to one Roosevelt radio address in 1932:

In the olden days, campaigns were conducted amid surroundings of brass bands and red lights. Oratory was an appeal primarily to the emotions and sometimes to the passions... With the spread of education, with the wider reading of newspapers and especially with the advent of radio, mere oratory and mere emotion are having less to do with the determination of public questions under our

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<sup>148</sup> "Special to the New York Times," *The New York Times*, Dec. 7, 1923.

<sup>149</sup> for more on how and when political actors innovated using the radio see chapter three. *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 143-66.

representative system of government. Today, common sense plays the greater part and final opinions are arrived at in the quiet of the home.<sup>150</sup>

While this was rooted in the belief in radio's exceptionalism, it was also accurate in describing the effect of the second political communication revolution spurred on by the radio.

Though the radio obviously offered substantial benefits to technologically proficient politicians, it was also championed as a democratizing force and potential centerpiece of a more equitable and accessible political process. This concept was used by Sarnoff, the president of RCA, who linked this unifying cultural force with democratic ideals and consumerism in his testimony before the FCC during the late 1930s. He described listening to radio not only as a sign of membership in a national culture, but also as a patriotic act that fed other American free market ideals. Sarnoff thus veiled himself in the rhetoric of social benefits of listening to the radio in order to build a defense against anti-trust legislation. He went on to suggest that radio "must be appraised by the effect it has upon the daily lives of the people of America – not only the masses who constitute a listening audience numbered in the tens of millions, but the sick, the isolated, and the underprivileged, to whom radio is a boon beyond price. The richest man cannot buy for himself what the poorest man gets for free by radio."<sup>151</sup>

Although the sources of information remained firmly in the hands of private companies, the broad political uses and access suggested by Sarnoff did hold some truth. For instance, messages and themes embedded into popular songs broadcast on radio helped to create organized insurgency and political mobilization among textile workers in the South during the Great

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<sup>150</sup> Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Genesis of the New Deal: 1928-1932* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1969), 659. as quoted in Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*.

<sup>151</sup> Radio Corporation of America, *Principles and Practices of Network Radio Broadcasting - Testimony of David Sarnoff before the Federal Communications Commission, November 14, 1938 and May 17, 1939* (New York: RCA Institute Technical Press, 1939), 102.

Depression, even though they had no formal organization or union.<sup>152</sup> Additionally, the direct and personal connection between national politicians and the public through radio broadcasts did make many feel much closer to the political process, as exemplified by Roosevelt's fireside chats, which often offered little substance but increased support for the president and the New Deal.

The invention of the television was technically a spin-off of the radio, adding powerful visual images, and often described separately in terms of its impact on society. However, the changes in political communication brought through the television merely introduced a new stage to the Broadcast PCO because the fundamental relationship between the political actors and public as well as the institutions, regulations, and overarching communication strategies remained relatively constant. Following World War II, the development and diffusion of the television occurred quickly due to the ability to transition to it from radio. Television technology had already become sophisticated before the mass production of sets, and by 1948 there were about 70 stations and several million sets across the nation.<sup>153</sup> The network idea was already in place, and by 1951 a coast-to-coast television network had been established. Television quickly took over the dramas, soap operas, westerns, variety shows, and amateur nights that had been on the radio. Meanwhile radio moved to the automobile and catered to audiences when television was unavailable. Even government regulations were already established as the FCC simply expanded its control over television.<sup>154</sup>

In terms of political reporting, early television offered limited news programming. The three main broadcasting companies through most of the early era were the National Broadcasting

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<sup>152</sup> Vincent J. Roscigno and William F. Danaher, "Media and Mobilization: The Case of Radio and Southern Textile Worker Insurgency, 1929 to 1934," *American Sociological Review* 66, no. 1 (2001): 21-48.

<sup>153</sup> Berkman and Kitch, *Politics in the Media Age*, 34.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.



Company (NBC) and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and the American Broadcasting Company (ABC).<sup>155</sup> From 1947 to 1956 NBC carved out only 15 minutes for news programming five nights a week, later expanding to 30 minutes per day. While television news was not the most popular programming on television, it did create a block of time each day when anyone tuning in was receiving political news, what Marcus Prior refers to as “politics by default.” Prior persuasively argues that this default political knowledge has faded as we have moved to a post-broadcast era where some stay up to date with political events by choosing to follow political events and many others opt out.<sup>156</sup>

Technological limitations reduced the potential political news coverage during the early television era. The inflexibility of early television cameras limited news footage to anything that was prearranged so that lights could be set up. As the smaller camera, detached recorder, wireless microphone, and VCR were developed, television news could dramatically increase the possibilities of television journalism.<sup>157</sup> However the political focus of the television largely grew out of politics itself. While President Truman and Eisenhower had both used the television to address the nation, President Kennedy was the first to use it strategically to campaign and govern.<sup>158</sup>

The presidential debates in 1960 between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon drew uninterrupted coverage from all three networks and attracted an estimated audience of 60 to 75

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<sup>155</sup> NBC and CBS were carryover broadcasters from the radio era while ABC emerged as a major broadcaster as the television era was dawning after the FCC forced NBC to sell one of its networks due to federal anti-trust regulation. They sold the Blue Network to ABC in 1941. Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 279.

<sup>156</sup> Markus Prior, *Post-Broadcast Democracy: How Media Choice Increasing Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>157</sup> Berkman and Kitch, *Politics in the Media Age*, 39-40.

<sup>158</sup> For more on the transformational role of Kennedy in campaigning see chapter four.

million viewers.<sup>159</sup> As is famously repeated, the television viewers overwhelmingly felt that Kennedy had won the debates, while listeners on the radio believed the winner was Nixon. Less well known is the reality that limited empirical evidence exists to support the supposed viewer-listener disagreement in the 1960 debates.<sup>160</sup> Most of the evidence that did exist was anecdotal other than one survey conducted by a Sindlinger & Co., a market research firm who published one magazine article entitled "Debate Score: Kennedy Up, Nixon Down," on Nov. 7, 1960, with no mention of their methods.<sup>161</sup> Further, those who were more likely to listen on the radio might have been predisposed to oppose Kennedy. Some have pointed out that "by 1960, those who could listen to debates only on radio were far from a random lot. Situated for the most part in remote rural areas, they were overwhelmingly Protestants, and skeptical of Kennedy as a Roman Catholic candidate."<sup>162</sup> While the concrete evidence of the extent of the 1960 viewer-listener disagreement is weaker than the common historical lore would suggest, there is no doubt that Kennedy prepared more for the visual component of the televised debates, or that the politics and television have combined to place image at the forefront of American politics ever since.<sup>163</sup>

Political news coverage expanded during the 1960s following not only national politics but local and international events as well. The civil rights movement marked the first widespread

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<sup>159</sup> Laurence Bergreen, *Look Now, Pay Later: The Rise of Network Broadcasting* (New York: Doubleday Books, 1980), 221.

<sup>160</sup> James N. Druckman, "The Power of Television Images: The First Kennedy-Nixon Debates Revisited," *The Journal of Politics* 65, no. 2 (2003).

<sup>161</sup> "Debate Score: Kennedy up, Nixon Down," *Broadcasting*, Nov. 7, 1960; David L. Vancil and Sue D. Pendell, "The Myth of Viewer-Listener Disagreement in the First Kennedy-Nixon Debate," *Central States Speech Journal* 38, no. 1 (1987).

<sup>162</sup> Steven Chaffee, "Book Review: Televised Presidential Debates and Public Policy," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 12, no. 3 (2000). Reviewing Sidney Kraus, *Televised Presidential Debates and Public Policy*, 2 ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000).

<sup>163</sup> A later study revisited the 1960 debate and divided participants into television viewers and radio listeners and found that television did, in fact, impact participants' view of the debate performance. Druckman, "The Power of Television Images: The First Kennedy-Nixon Debates Revisited." For more on the differences in appearance and performance during the 1960 debate see Kraus, *Televised Presidential Debates and Public Policy*. And for analysis of what the viewer-listener disagreement myth might mean historically see Vancil and Pendell, "The Myth of Viewer-Listener Disagreement in the First Kennedy-Nixon Debate; Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 116.

use of television to attract outside attention to issues of injustice. Nonviolent protesters used civil disobedience to highlight the brutality of Southern racism, knowing the cameras would capture images of police brutality for the entire world to see. This strategic use of television news coverage altered the public agenda, increased outside involvement, and forced the government to create and enforce civil rights legislation. The protests and activism of the civil rights movement blended into the antiwar movement, as coverage of the fighting in Vietnam and the unrest at home dominated news coverage through the end of the 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>164</sup>

The expansion of cable and satellite television has increased the number of choices, diversification and partisan nature of cable news.<sup>165</sup> Access to television is nearly universal. With the 24-hour news cycle generated by cable, the volume of political information available has increased dramatically.<sup>166</sup> Most Americans today who follow politics still get their political news from television, though political news consumers have been consistently shifting to online and mobile devices.<sup>167</sup>

Regardless of these changes in types of information and positions taken by television journalists on cable news, it is still used to broadcast political messages instantly to a mass American audience, much as the Broadcast PCO has since the 1930s. The years of the broadcast political communication cycle witnessed massive technological, media, and political upheaval,

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<sup>164</sup> Berkman and Kitch, *Politics in the Media Age*, 40-41.

<sup>165</sup> For a remarkable study of political polarization in media coverage in the modern media environment see Amy Mitchell et al., "Political Polarization & Media Habits," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2014).

<sup>166</sup> Prior, *Post-Broadcast Democracy: How Media Choice Increasing Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections*; "News Vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout," *American Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 3 (2005).

<sup>167</sup> In fact, Americans under 50 years old have been more likely to consume news online than any others sources since 2013. Amy Mitchell, Jeffrey Gottfried, and Katerina Eva Matsa, "Millenials and Political News," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2015); Mitchell et al., "Political Polarization & Media Habits; Andrea Caumont, "12 Trends Shaping Digital News," Pew Reserach Center, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/10/16/12-trends-shaping-digital-news/>. Pew Research Center, "State of the News Media," Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/state-of-the-news-media/>; Michael Barthel, "5 Key Takeaways About the State of the News Media in 2016," Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/15/state-of-the-news-media-2016-key-takeaways/>.

and the political communication practices of that era evolved a great deal. The radio, television and later cable and satellite each impacted the social fabric of American in substantial ways. Yet, referring back to the definition of political communication revolutions offered in the introduction they did not fundamentally change the relationship between the sources and audiences of political messages and, in turn, the relationship between political elites and the public. The Broadcast PCO is likely the best demonstration of the evolutionary process of political communication practices that can occur even within a political communication order, explored in depth in the case studies of political communication change of campaigns and social movements in chapters five and six respectively.

### **The Current Information Political Communication Order**

The internet itself is a large and complicated concept to define. Following the warning of Bruce Bimber, I will avoid getting tangled up in the intricate breakdown of all elements of the internet today, because it will undoubtedly continue to change.<sup>168</sup> David Karpf, among others, has warned against treating the internet as a stand alone medium. There is no doubt that the uses and applications of the internet have changed in remarkable ways. To distill all of these changes and the impact that they have had on political communication to a single conception of the ICT would be foolish and shortsighted.

The evolution of the internet, the web, and the many related applications, devices and changing uses are all part of the broader story of the political communication cycle and the emergence of the current order. Modern web-based political communication is clearly far from stabilized. However, norms of online political communication have already started to develop. We are currently in the midst of a stabilizing period, in which the major changes in online

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<sup>168</sup> Bimber, *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*.

political communication are becoming more entrenched, consistent, and regulated. But because the structure, development, and use of the internet is fundamentally more democratic than previous media, the stabilization is will likely develop in less concrete ways. This will be a major emphasis of the final two chapters. Thus within the context of the political communication cycle I conceptualize the internet broadly as inclusive of all elements in the evolution of the ICT, from the government-backed efforts in the early 1960s to the multifaceted commercial internet that now exists. It includes all technologies and uses relating to computing and methods of transferring data over the web.<sup>169</sup> The evolution of the internet from a four node academic system in the late 1960s to the mobile and seemingly limitless communication system that we have today has been nothing short of revolutionary.

The development of the internet obviously would not be possible without the computer, which stretches its scientific roots back well over a century. However the internet as a medium was born much more recently. A report given to the Rand Corporation in 1962 helped to foster a widely supported belief that the U.S. government created the internet primarily as a communications resource that could withstand a Soviet attack during the Cold War.<sup>170</sup> The reality is that the government scientists and university researchers who developed the early forms of the internet were aiming for a more scientific goal.<sup>171</sup> Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) professor J. C. R. Licklider began publicly investigating the benefits of computer networking early in the 1960s and became the first head of the U.S. Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in 1962. Fellow MIT researcher Lawrence

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<sup>169</sup> Kerry G. Coffman and Andrew M. Odlyzko, "Growth of the Internet," *Optical Fiber Telecommunications 4B: Systems and Impairments* (2002).

<sup>170</sup> Sandy Baldwin, *The Internet Unconscious: On the Subject of Electronic Literature*, ed. Francisco J. Richardo, International Texts in Critical Media Aesthetics (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 35-36; Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004).

<sup>171</sup> Andrew L. Shapiro, "The Internet," *Foreign Policy* Summer, no. 115 (1999): 16.

Roberts, who was studying the effects of packet-switching communication, later joined him at DARPA. Packet-switching allows messages to be broken up into separate bundles of information, which can travel independently to a destination before reassembling. In 1967, Roberts proposed a packet-based computer network that would come to be known as ARPANET, the precursor to today's internet. Although other researchers were working on a decentralized network, safe from Soviet attack, the first four nodes of ARPANET were set up in universities in 1969 with the primary goal of increasing research capabilities.<sup>172</sup>

Over the next 15 years many technological innovations, growing largely out of universities around the world, led to numerous new applications including email and a large increase in the number of web hosts and users around the world.<sup>173</sup> To handle this increased traffic, the ARPANET was phased out during the late 1980s and was replaced by the NSFNET (set up by the National Science Foundation), which launched in 1985 and provided a more robust backbone for the internet and served as the direct forerunner to today's internet. Starting in 1984, the number of internet hosts doubled approximately every nine months, first on ARPANET and then NSFNET, topping one million in 1992.

In 1989 Tim Berners-Lee created the first vision of the World Wide Web while working at CERN. One year later, he introducing HTML, URL, and HTTP, three fundamental technologies still use today, which allow computers to more easily share information over the internet. On August 6, 1991 the web was released to the public, though the world-changing event felt far less dramatic at the time, as Berners-Lee recalled:

I know that you'd love me to say that, well, I got it all wired up and then there was this big switch and we threw the switch and the lights dimmed for a moment, but then there was this incredible high pitched whine, and that was the web taking

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>173</sup> A web host stores the pages of a website. These hosts then make these pages available to computers connected to the internet.

off all across the world. People starting to log on and type in hypertext and we could feel the power, all these links spreading across the planet, and we just had to hold on tight. And then the calls came in from the BBC and the New York Times and the Economist about what it was that was happening to the world, and the stock market sort of took this incredible uptick. And then we turned it off. [Laughing]. No. It started off in a very small way.<sup>174</sup>

Two years later, in 1993 commercial browsers like Mosaic were introduced and the public commercial-driven started to grow quickly. This became the entirety of the internet when the NSFNET was phased out in 1996.<sup>175</sup> These browsers were the technological innovation that made the internet accessible and useful to the masses bringing political viability to the internet.

During the early 1990s a group including former Vice President Al Gore, proposed a national research and education network that would focus primarily on making networked computing a tool for education, scientific progress, and community empowerment. Instead the federal government chose to privatize the internet, creating the commercially driven net that we have today.<sup>176</sup> This privatization does not mean that the government has opted against regulating information online. Corporate and government regulation exists in many forms today and will, no doubt, become a greater issue as the development of the internet continues.<sup>177</sup>

Even casual observers of the evolution of the internet and related new media would agree that their use and role in society has exploded since the mid 1990s. Web browsers provided the catalyst for a true explosion in the scope of the internet. Web traffic on internet backbones in the United States grew 100-fold in only two years from 1994 to 1996.<sup>178</sup> In December 1995 there were 16 million internet users worldwide, growing to 361 million by the end of 2000, over 1.5

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<sup>174</sup> Philip Smith, "The Great Leveling?," in *The Virtual Revolution* (London: BBC, 2010).

<sup>175</sup> Coffman and Odlyzko, "Growth of the Internet."

<sup>176</sup> Shapiro, "The Internet," 17.

<sup>177</sup> Also for examples see Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*; Morozov, *The Net Delusion*.

<sup>178</sup> Coffman and Odlyzko, "Growth of the Internet," 19,42.

billion in 2008, and over 3.7 billion in 2017.<sup>179</sup> This unbelievable growth has already revolutionized entertainment, communication, business practices, research and information gathering, as well as the methods used for political communication. Thus the third PCR has occurred in a similar way to its predecessors: as the use of the internet grew exponentially, it gained political viability and was then explored and used by political actors.

It is not a coincidence that political actors started using the internet for campaigns and direct communication with the American public in the early 1990s, just as web browsers started opening up the internet to the masses. It was at this time when national institutions and campaigns started looking to use the emerging internet as an alternative way to reach the American public. On July 29, 1994 the Clinton Administration launched the first White House website.<sup>180</sup> A handful of midterm candidates created campaign websites in that same year, and by 1996 most major national candidates had followed suit. The year 1996 also saw the emergence of websites for political parties, interest groups, news media, and nonprofit voter education organizations.<sup>181</sup>

Just like earlier eras the initial innovators generally stumbled out of the gate. Bob Dole was the GOP nominee for president in 1996. He was also 73 years old and he was no technology buff. However he did have a shiny new campaign website that he was excited to tout during a televised presidential debate. Unfortunately he read the website incorrectly sending many would-be supporters to find only error messages.

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<sup>179</sup> Over two billion internet users in 2015 were living in developing nations. Jacob Davidson, "Here's How Many Internet Users There Are," *TIME*, May 26, 2015; Miniwatts Market Research, "Internet Growth and Stats," <http://www.allaboutmarketresearch.com/internet.htm>; "Internet World Stats," <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>.

<sup>180</sup> This basic website was the first of four versions just during the Clinton Administration. It was launched on July 29, 1994. National Archives and Records Administration, "Welcome to the White House," <http://clinton1.nara.gov/>.

<sup>181</sup> Bruce Bimber and Richard Davis, *Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. Elections* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23-25.



The sophistication of web tools and the numbers of political organizations online have continued to mushroom since the late 1990s. These tools continue to revolutionize political communication by making accessible information nearly limitless and increasing tools for interaction. Among the many innovative characteristics of the internet, the increased level of interactivity is arguably the most profound. The interactivity of online communication is simply unavailable from any previous communications medium and evolved quickly from the “brochureware” of the mid-1990s to web 2.0 and beyond. This interactivity offers an opportunity to break from the evolutionary line of top down organizing, providing more interactive and potentially democratic interchange of ideas and powerful tools for recruiting supporters, raising resources, and mobilizing political action.

Social media helped to bring the political utility of the interactivity web front and center in the early 2000s. Various social media sites and related interactive web-based tools emerged quickly (as shown in Table 2.2) and have become increasingly central to the web experience of so many people. Facebook alone topped 2 billion regular users worldwide by June 2017 and is used regularly by nearly 70 percent of all American adults.<sup>182</sup>

**Table 2.2: Launch Dates of Various Social Media Services 2002-2011**

Public Launch Date	Social Media Service
2002	Friendster
2003	Myspace
2003	Skype
2003	Facebook
2005	YouTube
2006	Twitter
2010	Pinterest
2010	Instagram
2011	Snapchat

<sup>182</sup> Josh Constine, "Facebook Now Has 2 Billion Monthly Users...And Responsibility," *TechCrunch*, June 27 2017; Shannon Greenwood, Andrew Perrin, and Maeve Duggan, "Social Media Update 2016," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2016).

Early social media pioneers like Friendster and Myspace were used to organize local political events and bring together people based on shared political ideologies or issues.<sup>183</sup> From those early political communication trials on social media, various platforms have worked their way into all aspects of political communication today. And just like earlier innovations, social media has helped cause the rise and fall of political figures. Cory Booker used the power of Twitter and Facebook to build a nationwide following while serving as Mayor of Newark, NJ and used that following to help propel him to become the junior Senator from his home state. Donald Trump has used Twitter to frame issues, attack opponents, rally supporters, rail against the media, and bolster unsubstantiated conspiracies. His confrontational style is now being used by some other politicians, including Democratic Connecticut Senator Chris Murphy, which is already leading some to whisper about his 2020 presidential prospects.<sup>184</sup>

Social media has also led to the downfall of political candidates from the left and right. In 2006 Virginia Senator George Allen, the Republican incumbent unexpectedly lost his bid for re-election to Democrat Jim Webb largely due to being caught on tape at a campaign event calling an Indian-American in the crowd, who was there filming the event for Allen's opponent, a "macaca." Macaca is a Portuguese word for monkey and has been used as a racial slur for generations. The video went viral on YouTube and although Allen stated that he didn't know that it was a derogatory term, the damage was done. The fallout from the event was a major factor in his loss.

Rising Democratic star Anthony Weiner's political demise was self-created through repeated "sexting" scandals that were spread on social media including some with girls under 18. His resignation from the U.S. House of Representatives in 2011, a failed run for New York City

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<sup>183</sup> Kara Jesella, "The Friendster Effect," *Alternet*, January 29 2006.

<sup>184</sup> Susan B. Glasser, "Do Democrats Need to Tweet More Like Trump," *Politico Magazine*, May 8 2017.

Mayor, and eventually his pleading guilty to transferring obscene images to an underage girl in May 2017 showed that social media had equal power to build and destroy political careers regardless of party.

For citizens, the internet and social media have impacted political communication in important ways by offering new ways to encounter information, interact about politics, and engage in the political process.<sup>185</sup> Perhaps most important are the ways in which social media has affected the political news we receive.<sup>186</sup> In 2017, for the first time, more than half of American adults received news through social media at least weekly, with Facebook being the dominant source for news among social media platforms.<sup>187</sup> There are potentially positive results of this including greater potential diversity of sources and a greater ability for a democratization of voices within the political media environment.<sup>188</sup> However at the same time, social media has clearly aided in the polarization of modern American politics, as viewers from the right and left self-select their sources of information and algorithms build on what users like or support creating filter bubbles.<sup>189</sup> Much of the information disseminated is also not well sourced, or flatly

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<sup>185</sup> Cristian Vaccari, Andrew Chadwick, and Ben O'Loughlin, "Dual Screening the Political: Media Events, Social Media, and Citizen Engagement," *Journal of Communication* 65, no. 6 (2015); Rasmus Kleis Nielsen and Kim Christian Schröder, "The Relative Importance of Social Media for Accessing, Finding, and Engaging with News: An Eight-Country Cross-Media Comparison," *Digital Journalism* 2, no. 4 (2014).

<sup>186</sup> The main thrust of this book is not political media or political news. For some excellent scholarship on politics and media in the modern era see, among others: Barthel, "5 Key Takeaways About the State of the News Media in 2016"; Natalie Jomini Stroud, *Niche News: The Politics of News Choice* (Oxford University Press on Demand, 2011); Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, "Digital News as Forms of Knowledge: A New Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge," (2017); Nic Newman et al., "Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017," in *Reuters Institute Digital News Report* (Reuters, 2017); Bennett and Segerberg, *The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics*; Shelley Boulianne, "Social Media Use and Participation: A Meta-Analysis of Current Research," *Information, Communication & Society* 18, no. 5 (2015); Robertson, *Media and Politics in a Globalizing World*.

<sup>187</sup> Important to note that within the hybrid media system this does not mean that social media is replacing traditional platforms and in fact, for many is not used or only make up a very small part of their political news. Newman et al., "Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017; Nielsen and Schröder, "The Relative Importance of Social Media for Accessing, Finding, and Engaging with News: An Eight-Country Cross-Media Comparison; Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*.

<sup>188</sup> Clay Shirky, "The Political Power of Social Media," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2011.

<sup>189</sup> Eytan Bakshy, Solomon Messing, and Lada A Adamic, "Exposure to Ideologically Diverse News and Opinion on Facebook," *Science* 348, no. 6239 (2015); Mitchell et al., "Political Polarization & Media Habits; Amy

inaccurate and the rise of fake news and its impact on American politics was in full display during and after the 2016 election.<sup>190</sup>

Yet before the specific elements of the internet or other historical ICTs can be evaluated it is first necessary to address the role of new ICTs in the emergence of PCRs. This will be done in two steps. In chapter three I evaluate when and how particular technologies become socially diffused to the point of becoming politically viable. Once new technologies become politically viable, then the politically innovative uses of these new tools are determined by the actions and choices of political actors. These political choices are the primary determinants of whether a new PCR emerges or whether the existing order is maintained, and will be examined in-depth in chapters four through seven.

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Mitchell et al., "How Americans Encounter, Recall and Act Upon Digital News," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017). Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*.

<sup>190</sup> Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow, "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election," (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2017). For an interesting study on how correcting misinformation via social media can help see Emily K Vraga and Leticia Bode, "I Do Not Believe You: How Providing a Source Corrects Health Misperceptions across Social Media Platforms," *Information, Communication & Society* (2017).

### **Chapter 3 - The Technological Imperative: How and When New ICTs Become Politically Viable**

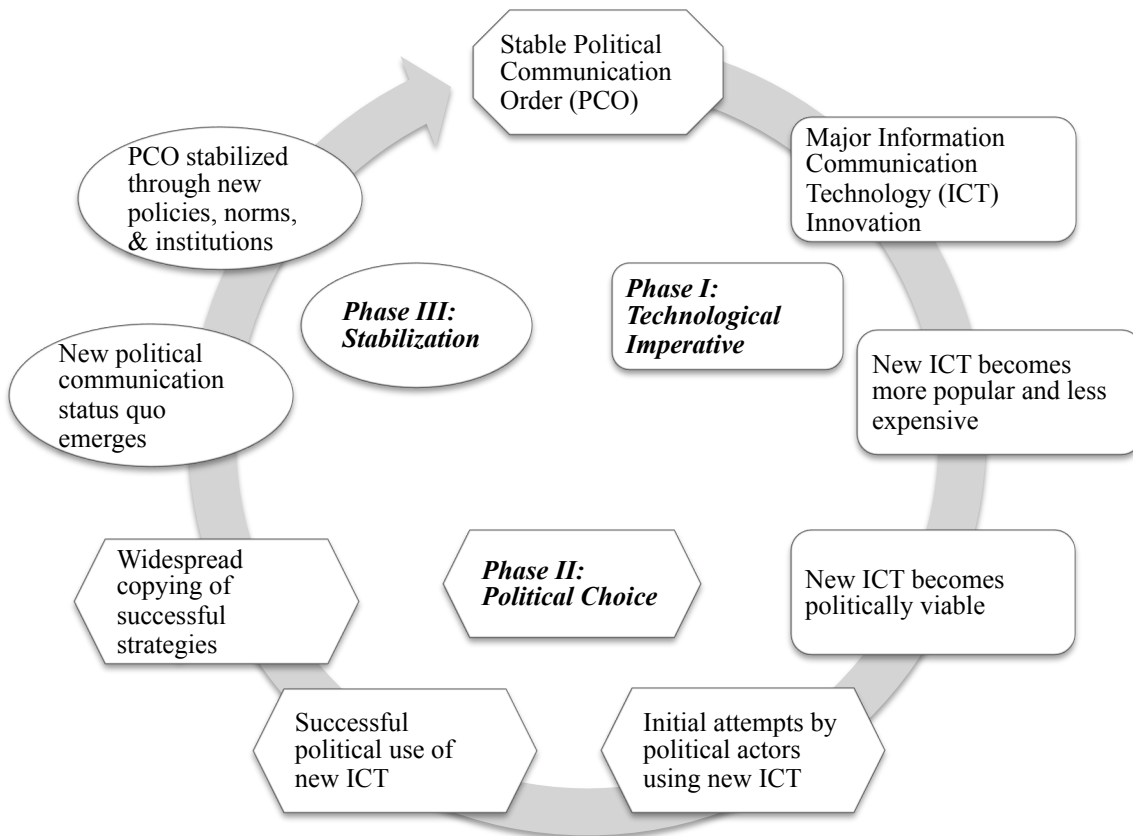
“Our wretched species is so made that those who walk on the well-trodden path always throw stones at those who are showing a new road.” — Voltaire

The first two chapters introduced the makeup and historical current of the political communication cycle (PCC). This chapter unpacks the first of the three phases of the PCC, the technological imperative, exploring what leads certain ICTs to become potentially useful to political actors, gaining what I call political viability. Political viability is essential in order for political actors and organizations to recognize the potential benefits of trying these new communication devices and innovating their communication tactics. In other words, it is necessary for the political choice phase of the PCC to begin. This chapter will analyze the characteristics of ICTs that make them more or less likely to become politically viable. Specifically the political viability of an ICT increases when, relative to other communication technologies, it: 1) diffuses through society at a fast rate, 2) is relatively inexpensive to use, 3) is convenient to access, 4) is easily used to reach broad audiences.

As Figure 3.1 shows, the technological imperative begins when new information and communication technologies (ICT) diffuse widely across America. As more people across a society adopt a new ICT, it becomes increasingly attractive to political actors who are looking for new and better ways to achieve their political communication goals. If a new ICT is viewed as a potentially powerful method to reach the public then over time more and more political actors and organizations adopt new political communication strategies utilizing this new technology in increasingly sophisticated ways. The first technological stage and the second behavioral phase are clearly related to one another. While many have written about how new technologies create change, I argue that the behavioral role in determining if, when, and how

political actors choose to innovate their political communication tactics is much more important. In other words, the dissemination of the emergent ICT across society is a necessary step toward a PCR, but insufficient to create one on its own.

**Figure 3.1: The Political Communication Cycle**



### **What Makes a Communication Technology Politically Viable?**

The political viability of an ICT is based in large part on the successful diffusion of a technology. All successful ICT developments have gone through a diffusion process and have achieved widespread social and economic success. In doing so, they have also achieved at least some level of political viability. Because political communication is centered on strategic information dissemination, political mobilization, and efforts to attract and maintain supporters,

the more users of a new ICT there are, the greater its political viability. Therefore, at a basic level, political viability is strongly related to the proportion of the members of a society who have access to a particular ICT. However, unlike the broad social impact of new communication technologies, the political viability of a communication technology requires more than simply a lot of users. Namely, political viability requires regular and easy access to the ICT by the public, speedy diffusion and perceived political utility in order to prompt a shift in political communication disruptive enough to create a PCR.

As access to a new ICT increases, it will eventually reach what has often been termed a critical mass. Once a critical mass is met the diffusion of a new device spreads quickly (see figure 3.2). For any new ICT to be considered a mass medium, a critical mass of adopters must be achieved.<sup>191</sup> Before a critical mass is achieved there is little incentive for new adopters because a new device's social utility remains severely limited, acting as a social and economic brake. For example, the telephone system was not particularly advantageous to its earliest users because there were few people for them to call. As more and more people were able to receive telephone calls, the incentive to get and use a telephone increased. Some have argued that the critical mass for communication technologies range from 10 to 20 percent of a society, while others suggest it may vary by the type and variety of communication available on each device.<sup>192</sup> No matter the actual size of the critical mass, wide access is necessary for any ICT to become political viable and entice political actors to innovate their political communications activities.

In terms of political viability, all widespread diffusion is not alike. Just as any technological innovation must be perceived as offering a benefit relative to prior technologies in order to be adopted by new users, a new ICT also needs to be perceived as politically

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<sup>191</sup> Merrill Morris and Christine Ogan, "The Internet as Mass Audience," *Journal of Communication* 46, no. 1 (1996); Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 11-23.

<sup>192</sup> Morris and Ogan, "The Internet as Mass Audience."

advantageous to political actors to prompt them to innovate. The faster an ICT diffuses the greater the chance that its incorporation into political communication activities will be both sudden and disruptive. At the same time, political communication, involves the interaction and relationship between political actors and the public. Therefore the public needs to have access to the ICT and personally use it in order to incentivize political actors to use it for their political communication activities.

### **The Diffusion of Communication Technology**

The path toward political viability for new ICTs is essentially measured by the diffusion of the new technology. As mentioned in the introduction, Everett Rogers defines diffusion as the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.<sup>193</sup> He defines the innovation itself, as “an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new.” Therefore the most important element of ICTs in terms of their diffusion is not when they actually originated but how new they are perceived to be.<sup>194</sup>

The most comprehensive diffusion research comes from sociology and economics.<sup>195</sup> Both disciplines have studied why some new ideas and inventions catch on while others do not, mainly by looking at the process of deciding if and when to use an innovation. Economist Robert Gordon recently produced a remarkable book about American growth and innovation. Through over 700 pages Gordon meticulously explores the enormous improvement in the American standard of living, starting in 1870. He explores these changes through the lens of numerous innovations improving living and working conditions, healthcare, financial services,

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<sup>193</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5, 12.

<sup>194</sup> Two major aspects to the diffusion of ICTs are the perception of potential adopters and the social processes that affect how they learn about innovations. These will be analyzed in detail in the next chapter.

<sup>195</sup> Trish, "The Diffusion of Campaign Technology." Robert J Gordon, *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U.S. Standard of Living since the Civil War* (Princeton University Press, 2016).



transportation, and yes, communication. He notably argues that the most important and sizable changes occurred from 1870-1940, and that these changes, like urbanization and electrification, are singular leaps and that the speed of massive innovation has slowed since.<sup>196</sup>

Scholarship on the spread of ideas and innovations over time has grown primarily out of sociological research, much of which has focused on social networks and the transmission of information, understanding, and trust about innovations. Some has focused on the importance of when individuals learn about an idea or innovation.<sup>197</sup> Others have paid particular attention to traits of individuals and organizations that are more likely to innovate early or wait for others to try the new idea or product first.<sup>198</sup>

The social analysis of diffusion of innovations dates back to a classic and widely cited study by Ryan and Gross in 1943. The authors, both rural sociologists, studied the rapid adoption of hybrid corn, which produced greater yields and resisted insects, among farmers in Iowa during the 1930s.<sup>199</sup> They interviewed 345 farmers regarding when and why they adopted the hybrid corn. In doing so they established the customary research methodology to be used by most future

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<sup>196</sup> *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U.S. Standard of Living since the Civil War.*

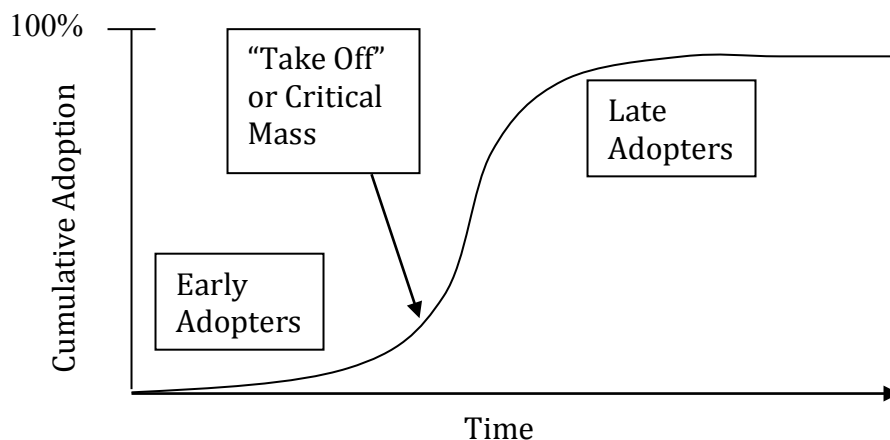
<sup>197</sup> Bradley S. Greenberg, "Diffusion of News of the Kennedy Assassination," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1964); Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

<sup>198</sup> This research will be particularly useful in the next chapter when the choices and actions of political actors are analyzed in detail. It is most important, for the time being, to point out that diffusion by individuals is not identical to diffusion within and between by organizations. This means, for instance, that the decision to start to use strategic radio advertisements, email, or twitter is made differently by individual Americans and organizations like the National Rifle Association (NRA) and Congressional campaigns, an important distinction that will be elaborated in the next chapter. Paul J. Deutschmann and Orlando Fals-Borda, *Communication and Adoption Patterns in an Andean Village* (San José, Costa Rica, 1962); Lawrence B. Mohr, "Determinants of Innovation in Organizations," *American Political Science Review* 63, no. 1 (1969).

<sup>199</sup> Hybrid corn became available to Iowa farmers in 1928 or 1929 and accounted for 75 percent of corn acreage in the state by 1939. This rapid diffusion provided a great opportunity to study diffusion based on interviews asking farmers to recollect their shift to hybrid corn during the relatively recent past. They suggested, in general, that their decision to use hybrid corn was credited primarily to seed salesmen and neighbors, though some media-based influences such as print and radio did played a factor as well. Ryan and Gross, "The Diffusion of Hybrid Seed Corn in Two Iowa Communities; Trish, "The Diffusion of Campaign Technology."

diffusion researchers.<sup>200</sup> The study's most notable contribution was to the understanding of the rate of adoption of innovations over time. Ryan and Gross described the general trend about the relative speed with which an innovation is adopted as an "S-curve." Although diffusion of any particular innovation varies based on many factors, the S-curve is extremely useful as a model for the general adoption rate over time. As shown in Figure 3.2., the S-Curve shows how, early on, only a few individuals adopt an innovation. Soon the adoption rate increases as it hits the critical mass point where enough individuals have adopted the new innovation that its further diffusion is self-sustaining. Therefore, after the critical mass is reached, adopting the innovative ICT becomes more and more likely as the innovation becomes a more and more standard, and therefore expected, form of communication. After this point, adoption escalates until eventually the growth rate slows as adoption nears 100% and fewer and fewer non-adopters remain.<sup>201</sup>

**Figure 3.2: Diffusion of Innovations: S-Curve<sup>202</sup>**



Perhaps the most important factor that determines whether the political viability of a new ICT might lead to a new PCR is the speed of its diffusion. The rate of adoption of new ICTs,

<sup>200</sup> Ryan and Gross, "The Diffusion of Hybrid Seed Corn in Two Iowa Communities; Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 31-35.

<sup>201</sup> *Diffusion of Innovations*, 11-23.

<sup>202</sup> Image adopted from Trish, "The Diffusion of Campaign Technology; Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 11.

modeled by the S-curve, charts the path that each successful new technology takes toward widespread diffusion and, in some cases, political viability. Political actors are more likely to innovate their political communication strategies when fast diffusion rates are paired with the ability for the public to conveniently access an ICT. One illustrative example is the difference between the telephone and the radio. In 1890 one percent of households across the nation had a telephone, yet it took another 67 years until telephones were in 75 percent of American homes. For radios, that same amount of growth occurred in only 8 years!<sup>203</sup> The slow adoption of telephones was one important reason that they did not create a disruptive change in political communication.

### **Technically Speaking: The Elements of a New Communication Technology**

The diffusion rate of each technology is affected by many factors including the characteristics of the innovation itself. It is important to elaborate on what exactly makes up a “technology.” Nearly all technology is made up of two parts: hardware and software, both of which play different roles in determining the political utility and diffusion of technologies. The hardware component of a technology consists of the tool that embodies the technology as a physical object.<sup>204</sup> The software component of technology is the data or operating information used to run the hardware, usually associated with computer systems large and small. For example, the keyboard, screen, case, and circuitry of a computer or smartphone including the cables, wires, or transceivers that connect it to the internet, make up a computer’s hardware. On

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<sup>203</sup> 1920 ratio of telephones to households extrapolated backward to 1890. United States Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1990*, 110 ed. (Washington D.C.: United States Census Bureau, 1990). Sue Bowden and Avner Offer, "Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain since the 1920s," *The Economic History Review* 47, no. 4 (1994): 729.

<sup>204</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 12-14.

the other hand, computer software includes computer code and programs, like web browsers that are used to access the internet and websites themselves.

While almost all technologies represent a combination of hardware and software, the hardware such as a telephone, television or printing press is usually the more tangible of the two and therefore is generally the focus of most studies of technological diffusion.<sup>205</sup> Sometimes the distinction between software and hardware can be particularly confusing, such as the case with newspapers of various types printed dating back to the colonial era. The printing presses, which have changed a great deal, clearly make up a technological hardware and the newspapers, or other printed material, are the products created. Yet, neither *Gutenberg's Bible*, Paine's *Common Sense* or the book you are holding are technically software.<sup>206</sup> Analog media like these, are containers for disseminating information. They are the output of the printing process and are clearly the most important aspect of this ICT process to measure in terms of access and diffusion. It's obviously rare for someone to own or run a printing press, but access to the information created through in a newspaper is what really matters. If, however, you are reading this online then there may be thousands of lines of code, the software, allowing your device to show these pixels on the screen.

Besides having multiple components, many technological innovations, especially ICTs, are related to one another. Closely related innovations form what diffusion scholars call technology clusters.<sup>207</sup> The hardware involved in the early newspaper business, namely the printing press, has evolved dramatically over the past 250 years of American newspaper making,

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Including my book in the same category as *Common Sense* and Gutenberg's Bible is the equivalent of saying Michael Jordan, Karl Anthony-Towns, and I are all basketball players because we have each hit a couple of three pointers in our lifetimes. I'm doing it anyway.

<sup>207</sup> Most diffusion research has generally investigated each innovation is if it were completely independent from other innovations. However that can be a bit misleading as some innovations build closely upon one another, while others are more distinct. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 14-15; Fidler, *Mediamorphosis: Understanding New Media*.

yet this ICT cluster is combined into one area for the purpose of this study using the consistent medium, the newspaper, as the overarching label. The next successfully integrated ICTs in terms of American political activities were radio and television. Television was built upon the radio by adding sophisticated hardware to allow video and also usurping some of radio's existing networks (hardware).

Although social elements and the characteristics of potential adopters do have an effect on the timing, rate, and comprehensiveness of diffusion, the diffusion rate also reflects the innovation itself.<sup>208</sup> For any new technology to spread through a society, the innovation must appear to offer a relative advantage over existing technologies in some way.<sup>209</sup> In the case of ICTs, successful new innovations must ultimately offer a potential increase in utility, usually measured by some combination of speed and sophistication of message delivery. In addition, a new technology must be able to fit the perceived needs of potential adopters.<sup>210</sup> A useful new ICT may be used extensively by a citizen in their daily lives, but unless it can be used to respond directly to a perceived political need it is unlikely to be incorporated into political communication activities and therefore offers minimal political utility.

Potential adopters of new technologies move through what Everett Rogers calls the innovation-decision process by gathering information about the innovation.<sup>211</sup> The more observable the benefits of the ICT are, then, the more likely potential adopters are to choose to adopt it. In general, communication technologies are very observable: anyone who came in contact a radio, television, telephone, or laptop computer would be able to see what it had to

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<sup>208</sup> The detailed examination of what type of political actors will likely innovate early and how their actions can, under certain circumstances, snowball into dramatic and widespread changes in political communication will be the main topic in the next chapter.

<sup>209</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 229-36.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 240-49.

<sup>211</sup> Rogers was an accomplished sociologist, communications scholar, writer, and educator and remains arguably the leading scholar on the diffusion of innovations including authoring the most widely cited text on the subject. The innovation diffusion process will get much more attention in chapter four.

offer. This is not to say that observability translates directly into adoption. If the observable technology does not serve some need or is not affordable or attainable, then it will likely remain unadopted and offer limited potential for diffusion. Further, if those uncertain about an innovation can use it on a trial basis first, they are much more likely to adopt. In the Ryan and Gross study, every one of the Iowa farmers who adopted hybrid corn had first tested it on a small portion of their farms before completely making the switch.<sup>212</sup> Though it is rarely possible to try a portion of a new ICT in the same way that farmers tested hybrid corn, social connections like friends, family and colleagues can allow some opportunities to try new communication technologies. Furthermore ICT trials have been facilitated by short-term and cheaper arrangements like an opportunity to lease instead of buy, which was the primary method of obtaining a telephone for decades, or the 30-day free trial of early internet browsers like America Online. Recently most major mobile carriers, along with Apple, have started offering the option of leasing a smartphone, though this is surprisingly not yet cheaper than purchasing a phone in most circumstances.<sup>213</sup>

One additional barrier to the adoption of new ICTs is their perceived complexity.<sup>214</sup> Potential users can be intimidated by using new technology that appears to be complicated to operate. Others may not believe that the potential benefits are worth the discomfort and time involved in learning how to use the new device. Ultimately the diffusion of a new ICT, or any innovation, is based less on the technological characteristics of the hardware or software and more on the perceived characteristics of the technology in terms of its effect on the user's life. Innovations that are perceived by individuals as having greater relative advantage, compatibility with their needs, observability, and trialability, with less complexity, will be adopted more

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<sup>212</sup> Ryan and Gross, "The Diffusion of Hybrid Seed Corn in Two Iowa Communities."

<sup>213</sup> Brian X. Chen, "Lease a Smartphone or Buy It? The Pros and Cons," *The New York Times*, October 21, 2015.

<sup>214</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 257.

rapidly and often more completely than other innovations, leading in-turn to greater political viability.<sup>215</sup>

The innovation-decision process is helpful in clarifying how people or organizations use information to make decisions about adopting new innovations. It will be used extensively in describing the behavioral processes involved in the PCC. While incredibly helpful, this process is a stylized method of describing the personal and messy process of deciding if and when to innovate. The truth is that information about new technology is not clear-cut. It leads to complex and inconsistent decision making processes and there are many examples of political organizations acting far more or less innovative than they would be expected to, a topic explored in detail in the next chapter.<sup>216</sup>

### **The All-Important Dollar: Cost as a Factor in Diffusion**

Although many characteristics of new technologies may offer clues as to how they will diffuse through society, the most tangible element contributing to ICT diffusion and political viability is cost. The costs associated for using ICTs may include separate costs for the device itself (hardware) and the software that provides the ability to send or receive information. Table 3.1 displays the types of costs required to use the six most successful ICTs used through U.S. history. Some ICTs require a user to purchase hardware in order to utilize the technology for communication, which can require substantial upfront cost. Meanwhile others require the user to pay for the ability to access the information being communicated, which is generally a lower but more regular cost. Furthermore some of these cost structures change over time such as the

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>216</sup> Schradie, "Political Ideology, Social Media, and Labor Unions: Using the Internet to Reach the Powerful, Not Mobilize the Powerless; Baldwin-Philippi, *Using Technology, Building Democracy: Digital Campaigning and the Construction of Citizenship*.

television, which offered free content for the first few decades of existence, during which nearly universal adoption was achieved. As of 2015, well over 80 percent of Americans access TV through paid cable or satellite providers, though that number is shrinking due to cord-cutting and cheaper online streaming services like Netflix and Hulu.<sup>217</sup> Table 3.1 generally describes the costs required to access the hardware and software content using various ICTs during the period in which the majority of Americans adopted them.

**Table 3.1: Costs Required for Use of Various ICTs<sup>218</sup>**

ICT	Cost for Hardware required	Cost to Access Information required
Newspaper		X
Telegraph		X
Telephone	X	X
Radio	X	
Television	X	
Internet	X	X

Although it is generally assumed that the costs of new ICTs start high and decrease over time, data show that rate of change can vary dramatically. The rate of decreasing costs affects whether potential adopters will perceive new ICTs as accessible, regardless of whether they see the ICT as offering relative advantages over older but more affordable ICTs. The cost for hardware begins extremely high, then drops rather quickly as the technology advances and becomes more commonplace. Consider a familiar example: the changing costs for black and white televisions (see Figure 3.3). When they burst on the scene in 1948, basic tabletop black

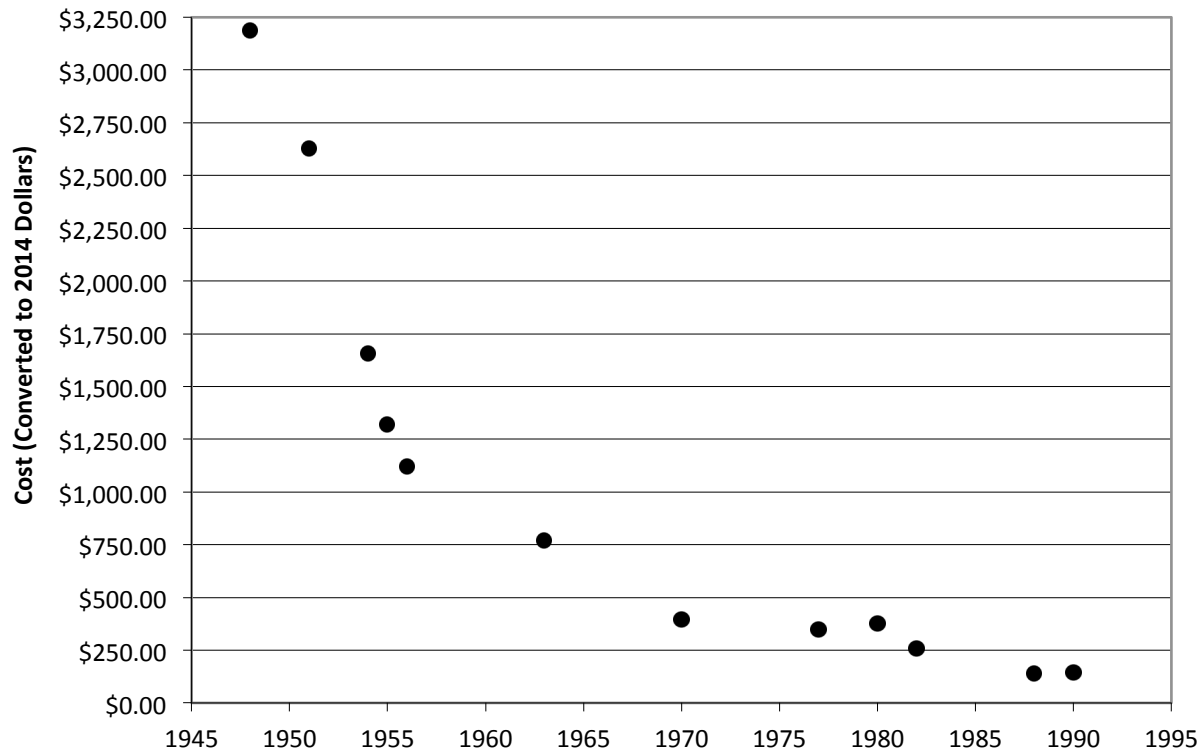
<sup>217</sup> Brendan James, "Forget Cable Cord-Cutting: 83 Percent of American Households Still Pay for Tv," *International Business Times*, October 23, 2015.

<sup>218</sup> Additional costs may be required in the case of radio, television, and the internet in order to access additional channels or better service. Examples would include radio and television stations accessed through cable or satellite subscriptions, and premium services such as premium television channels. However this study is focused on what is required in order to simply access information via ICTs for political purposes and therefore neither television nor radio requires this. Much more importantly, during the period of substantial diffusion for both the radio and television the only free content was available.



and white sets started at \$325, or the equivalent of nearly \$3,200 today when adjusted for inflation.<sup>219</sup> This price dropped by 50% in less than seven years and continued to decrease in smaller and smaller increments following a clear logarithmic curve.

**Figure 3.3: Changing Cost of New Black and White Television Adjusted for Inflation: 1948-1990<sup>220</sup>**



Similar trends characterize cost curves for purchasing hardware associated with radios, color televisions, and personal computers required for connecting to the internet. For example, when radios started to reach a mass audience in 1922, RCA radios ranged from 18 to 350 dollars. When adjusted for inflation, the radio started at \$253 could be as high as \$4,900, nearly the same

<sup>219</sup> tvhistory.tv, "Tv Selling Prices," <http://www.tvhistory.tv/index.html>.

<sup>220</sup> All original costs adjusted for inflation using Consumer Price Index conversion factors determined by the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics and made publicly available by Robert Sahr, "Inflation Conversion Factors for Dollars 1774 to Estimated 2025," Oregon State University, <http://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/polisci/faculty-research/sahr/inflation-conversion/pdf/cv2014.pdf>. Original prices were lowest price black and white tabletop television advertised for those years and were taken from tvhistory.tv, "Tv Selling Prices".

price as an entry level 1922 Ford Model T.<sup>221</sup> More recently, the inflation adjusted cost for personal computers dropped from over \$7,200 in 1981 to around \$1,700 20 years later.<sup>222</sup> Today netbook computers designed specifically for internet computing are available for under \$100 and many are using cheaper tablets or smartphones as their primary computers.<sup>223</sup>

While the only cost required to use radio and television (at least before dawn of the cable and satellite era) was the hardware, the other ICTs required usage or monthly fees in order to access information. The variation in these costs was extremely important in determining the speed of diffusion for these ICTs and their political viability as well. In the case of newspapers, the dawn of the mass audience, and simultaneously the emergence of the first PCR, occurred with the emergence of the penny press in 1833. Prior to that year most dailies sold for six cents per issue, a price much too steep for the average citizen. When adjusted for inflation, that six-cent newspaper in 1825 would have cost \$1.43, a surprisingly low cost considering how large a barrier it proved to be at the time for the working class. The price reduction to one penny, 24 cents when adjusted for inflation, was substantial enough to bring the newspaper and its political coverage and messages to a mass audience. But equally important was the changing business model that freed readers from monthly subscription rates. This increased flexibility allowed newspapers readers of all classes much more flexibility to access the penny press papers because they could buy them when they could afford them, and share them freely once they were purchased. In order to compete, most dailies reduced their cover price to match, and nearly 20 years later, when *The New York Times* launched in 1851 it was also priced at one penny. Figure 3.4 displays the changing cover prices, adjusted for inflation, of the *New York Times* throughout

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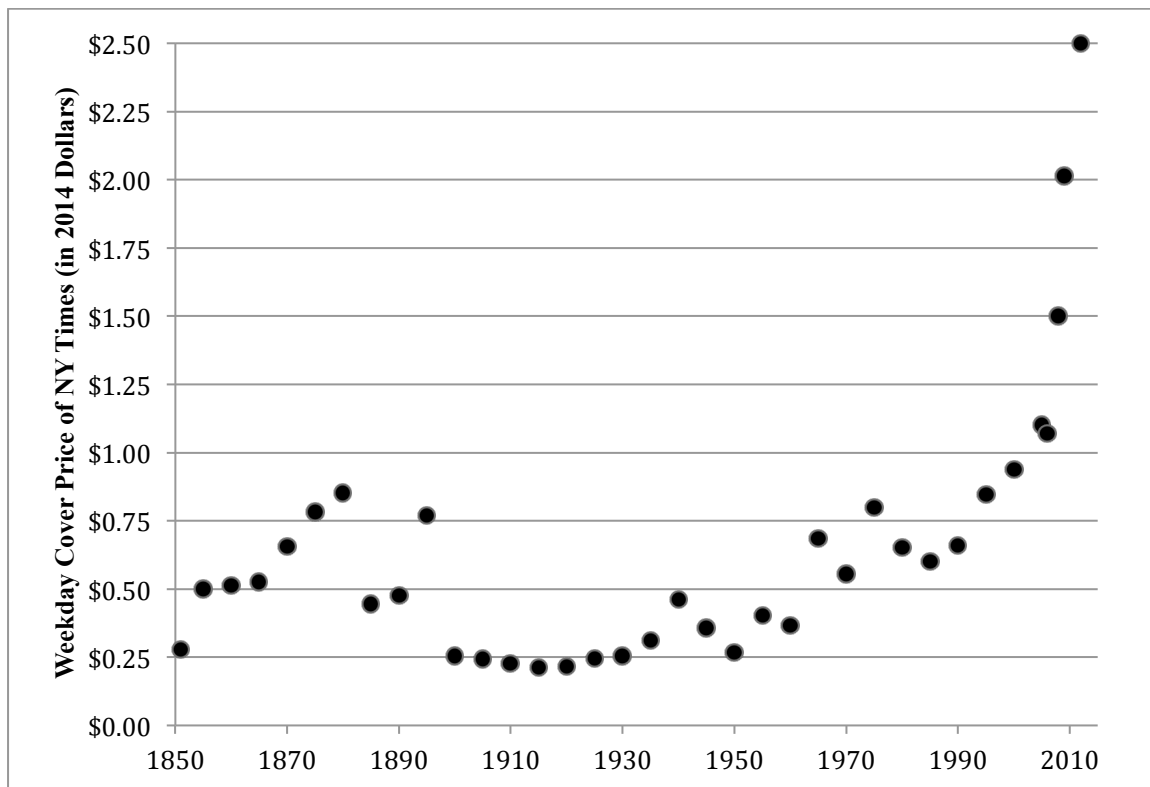
<sup>221</sup> Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 10; Sahr, "Inflation Conversion Factors for Dollars 1774 to Estimated 2025".

<sup>222</sup> Lincoln Spector, "Pc History: The Pc at 20," *PC World* 2001.

<sup>223</sup> For some, the smartphones is the only regular internet access they have. These Americans are often described as being "smartphone dependent," and will be discussed in more detail in chapter eight.

its history. Although the price of the *Times* has increased many times, the inflation adjusted price has remained low, staying below one dollar until 2000.<sup>224</sup>

**Figure 3.4: The New York Times Weekday Cover Price Adjusted for Inflation: 1851-2014<sup>225</sup>**



Communication via the telephone and telegraph also has largely been a pay per use endeavor.<sup>226</sup> However, unlike the newspaper, their costs have fluctuated significantly. The costs of sending a telegram and making a long distance call from New York City to various cities are displayed in Tables 3.2 and 3.3 respectively. These costs have ranged dramatically based largely

<sup>224</sup> The inflation-adjusted price of *The New York Times* in 2000 was \$1.04, which then jumped quickly, more than doubling to \$2.23 by 2009. The weekday cover price has been \$2.50 since it was last raised in early 2012.

<sup>225</sup> Cover prices taken from historical weekday editions of the New York Times from January 1-5 of each year then adjusted for inflation using Sahr, "Inflation Conversion Factors for Dollars 1774 to Estimated 2025".

<sup>226</sup> Trends do suggest that most communication technologies do eventually trend toward simpler flat rate costs as is evidenced by the convergence of telegraph costs shown in Table 2. Andrew Odlyzko, "Internet Pricing and the History of Communications," *Computer Networks* 36, no. 5-6 (2001).

on the distance of the messages being communicated. After adjusting for inflation, a telegram sent from New York to Philadelphia in 1850 cost \$7.54. Shockingly, 16 years later a telegram sent to San Francisco cost over \$110 dollars! This discrepancy was large but nothing when compared to telephone rates. In 1902 calls to Philadelphia cost the equivalent of \$15.28 dollars today, while a call to Chicago cost 10 times that rate. Over a decade later, one of the first available calls to San Francisco cost over \$480! Even though these prices declined steadily, they remained high enough to make regular use for mass communication implausible. Thus the cost alone made the use of the phone and telegraph for political communication on a massive scale impractical for political actors looking to reach a broad nationwide audience like those reached by the newspapers.

**Table 3.2: Cost of Sending a Telegram from NYC to Various Cities  
In 2014 Dollars: 1850-1970<sup>227</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>NYC to Philadelphia</b>	<b>NYC to Chicago</b>	<b>NYC to San Francisco</b>
1850	\$7.58	\$46.97	*
1866	\$3.73	\$27.61	\$111.19
1870	\$4.55	\$18.18	\$90.91
1883	\$3.49	\$11.63	\$34.88
1890	\$5.26	\$10.53	\$26.32
1908	\$6.41	\$12.82	\$25.64
1919	\$4.11	\$8.22	\$16.44
1946	\$4.02	\$8.05	\$16.10
1950	\$3.92	\$7.35	\$14.22
1954	\$7.46	\$10.96	\$14.91
1960	\$8.80	\$11.60	\$15.20
1966	\$9.27	\$12.41	\$16.28
1970	\$13.72	\$13.72	\$13.72

\* Telegraph lines were not established between NYC and San Francisco until transcontinental telegraph lines were completed in 1861.

**Table 3.3: Cost of Making a Long Distance Telephone Call from NYC to Various Cities Adjusted for Inflation: 1902-1970<sup>228</sup>**

<sup>227</sup> All data represent Western Union Prices and were taken from Ben J. Wattenberg, *The Statistical History of the United States, from Colonial Times to 1970* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 790. Prices adjusted for inflation to 2014 dollars using Sahr, "Inflation Conversion Factors for Dollars 1774 to Estimated 2025".

Year	NYC to Philadelphia	NYC to Chicago	NYC to San Francisco
1902	\$15.28	\$151.39	*
1915	#	#	\$481.40
1917	\$13.89	\$92.59	\$342.59
1919	\$7.53	\$63.70	\$226.03
1927	\$8.22	\$44.52	\$123.29
1937	\$7.38	\$36.07	\$106.56
1946	\$5.49	\$18.90	\$30.49
1952	\$4.46	\$13.39	\$22.32
1960	\$4.00	\$11.60	\$18.00
1965	\$3.76	\$10.53	\$15.04
1970	\$3.05	\$6.40	\$8.23

\* Calls from NYC to San Francisco were not available in 1902

# no data available for the cost of calls from NYC to Philadelphia and Chicago in 1915.

There is a notable similarity between telegraph and newspaper prices over time.

Telegram prices consistently dropped for a century until competition from the telephone forced remaining telegraph companies to increase rates. These increasing prices lead to a reduction in competitiveness, which factored into the ultimate demise of the telegraph for public communication. Similarly, over the past decade, newspapers have struggled to keep pace as more and more people have received their news and information from the internet, disrupting the ad-based business model that has supported newspapers throughout American history. As a result newspapers across the nation have cut staff, increased prices, and in many cases closed their doors.<sup>229</sup> Although the final chapter of the newspapers is far from guaranteed, the 250% increase in *The New York Times* cover prices from 2000-2015 indicates a worrying trend for advocates of the need for quality newspaper reporting in the future.<sup>230</sup> However *The New York Times* may

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<sup>228</sup> Wattenberg, *The Statistical History of the United States, from Colonial Times to 1970*.

<sup>229</sup> Amy Mitchell and Katerina Eva Matsa, "The Declining Value of U.S. Newspapers," Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/22/the-declining-value-of-u-s-newspapers/>; Michael Barthel, "Newspapers: Fact Sheet," *ibid.* (Washington D.C.); *ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> "Newspapers: Fact Sheet; "Key Indicators in Media & News," in *State of the Media* (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2014); Amy Mitchell, "State of the News Media 2014: Overview," *ibid.*

actually be pioneering a new stabilizing newspaper business model as their digital subscription options have become very popular and have cut into, but have not yet reversed the losses in print advertising revenue.<sup>231</sup> In fact, during the 2016 Presidential Election several major newspapers saw major increases in their digital subscriptions. *The New York Times* added more than 500,000 digital subscriptions in 2016 – a 47% year-over-year rise. *The Wall Street Journal* added more than 150,000 digital subscriptions, a 23% increase. And the *Chicago Tribune* added about 100,000 in weekday digital circulation, a 76% year-over-year gain. However overall newspaper circulation both print and online continued to decline, and 2016 witnessed the 28<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of circulation decreases.<sup>232</sup>

Research suggests that at the same time that costs of communication technologies have decreased, pricing has also become simpler, moving from multi-tiered price schemes to flat-rate costs.<sup>233</sup> Today most long distance calling is done on cell phones, which lump all minutes together under the monthly subscription plans as opposed to itemizing long distance calls as traditional home phone companies did. This trend matches changing costs for internet access. Early internet access through internet service providers (ISPs) like America Online and CompuServe offered multiple types of subscription costs ranging from monthly-unlimited access to hourly rates. Most ISPs today offer flat rate plans with unlimited access to the internet. The

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<sup>231</sup> As of September 2016 there were two tiers of digital only New York Times subscriptions starting at \$3.75 per week and jumping to \$6.25 per week including additional “all-access” features. Alternative digital subscriptions are available along with home delivery and with various discounts including education discounts for students and teachers.

<sup>232</sup> Michael Barthel, "Despite Subscription Surges for Largest U.S. Newspapers, Circulation and Revenue Fall for Industry Overall," in *Fact Tank* (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017).

<sup>233</sup> Odlyzko, "Internet Pricing and the History of Communications."

shift toward simpler flat-rate access fees increases the probability that potential users will be more likely to adopt the innovation because the process of adoption becomes much simpler.<sup>234</sup>

What has become largely extinct in the current era of cable television, broadband internet, and cell phones, is the possibility of buying a piece of hardware that offers unlimited free content without access fees.<sup>235</sup> This free content was available for the radio and television, the two ICTs with the fastest diffusion rates in American history. This trend clearly has implications for who adopts ICTs and the inequality in adoption rates. While the stabilization of the current PCR that is transforming our modern hybrid media environment is not yet complete, the cost structure(s) that become most common will play a large role in determining the access, diversity, and quality of information many can receive in the future.<sup>236</sup>

### **Why Some ICTs Reshape Political Communication and Others Don't**

There are many examples of ICTs that have fundamentally shifted how society communicates that have not had a revolutionary effect on political communication. Innovations are generally regarded as successful if they diffuse widely through society. However, a successful political communication innovation is one that achieves traditional political communication goals in markedly more efficient and/or effective ways than those that were used previously. The difference between successful ICT innovations and those that precipitate political communication revolutions deserves some attention.

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<sup>234</sup> Costs structures vary around the world with ISPs in many nations offering tiered plans based on data used. For an interesting study looking at changing cost structures, including the trends toward flat-rate pricing for various ICTs through American history, see *ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> One counterexample is the digital antennae which allows many TV viewers the ability to access some basic channels for free.

<sup>236</sup> For more on the hybrid media system see Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*; "The Political Information Cycle in a Hybrid News System: The British Prime Minister and the "Bullyinggate" Affair."

In order for successfully diffused ICTs to offer enough incentive for political organizations to incorporate them into their political communication strategies they must easily reach a broad audience in a cost effective manner. Two examples of politically viable ICTs that failed to meet their criteria are the telephone and telegraph. Though clearly distinct, these two ICTs share similar infrastructure and design. Although the ideation of sending sound over great distances by wire began in the mid 1600s, the first recognizable prototypes of the electric static telegraph began in 1816, when Francis Ronalds successfully sent a message over eight miles of wire. Ronalds' prototype was promptly rejected as useless due to a lack of a social need for this product. The need came in 1825 when another technological innovation, the railroad, required instant communication over great distances as a matter of safety.<sup>237</sup> The next great leap in the usefulness of the telegraph took place in 1837, when after five years of experiments and trials, Samuel Morse (assisted by Alfred Vail) developed his system, including a code that could be easily learned. The code itself, derived from research with local printers, was much simpler, clearer, and more efficient than earlier ones. Thus one important reason Morse's system prevailed was due to his insight of modeling his communication system after the known and developed printing system.<sup>238</sup> Quickly the telegraph was incorporated into the newspaper business. In 1844 the first "wire" story was sent over the telegraph. Four years later the Associated Press (AP) was formed as a joint venture of six New York newspapers as a means of cutting the cost of newsgathering. Each paper had equal access to the news gathered and could sell the stories to clients in other cities.<sup>239</sup> The telegraph thus increased the nationalization of news coverage available in newspapers and helped to expand the forms of political communication already occurring. However, it was not actively used to alter how politicians or

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<sup>237</sup> Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*, 8-9, 19-23.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

<sup>239</sup> Berkman and Kitch, *Politics in the Media Age*, 21.



parties communicated with the public because the point-to-point communication was not an efficient or cost effective way to reach a large political audience.

On the other hand, the ownership of the telegraph system was an important issue that ultimately had enormous ramifications in terms of the regulation and control of future communication systems. In 1845 the Morse line had been operated by the U.S. Post Office. The Postmaster general asked the crucial question: “How far the government will allow individuals to divide with it the business of transmitting intelligence...or will it purchase the telegraph, and conduct its operations for the benefit of the public?”<sup>240</sup> Despite the Postmaster General’s talk of “an instrument so powerful for good or evil,” which could not “with safety be left in the hands of private individuals uncontrolled by law,” a crucial privatizing precedent was set when Congress failed to take greater control of the telegraph industry. In the U.S. the transmission of intelligence and information was to forever be shared by the government, press, and business forces.<sup>241</sup>

Transmitting speech over the wire was the next great step after the telegraph. Prototypes of the telephone began in the 1860s, often attempting to modify the telegraph for this new purpose. Looking back, it is surprising to note a distinct lack of interest in the development of the telephone on the part of Western Union, the leading telegraph provider, and various electric companies around the nation. Some of the speed in the development of the telephone can therefore be attributed to a patent race between Alexander Bell (assisted by Thomas Watson) and Elisha Gray during the mid 1870s. This resulted in Bell’s patent of a machine that only partially worked in February 1876.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Gerald W. Brock, *The Telecommunications Industry : The Dynamics of Market Structure*, Harvard Economic Studies V. 151 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 63.

<sup>241</sup> For more on the role of regulation in the PCR cycle and during PCOs see chapter six. Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*, 27.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 37, 43-50.

The supervening social necessity, catapulting the telephone forward, was the development of the modern office. Though the social uses of instantaneous verbal communication over the wire were considered immediately, the cost and profitability of the telephone placed it in American offices much more often than in homes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Although America was in a severe economic downturn until the 1890s, technological and legal advances allowed for new, more expansive business systems that could use this new communication medium in a variety of ways.<sup>243</sup> The first use of the telephone for news reporting took place in April 1877, thus working along with the telegraph to update the newspaper business.

That same year marked the first time that the telephone was used by a president when sitting president Rutherford B. Hayes spoke to Alexander Bell over 13 miles of line while in Providence, RI. Some might consider the trial only a moderate success as President Hayes was unable to understand much of what Bell told him. But the event clearly left a strong impression on the President who had the first telephone installed in the White House just four months later.<sup>244</sup> However its utility for political communication was severely limited due to its cost, point to point limitations, and limited number of telephone users. For instance, in 1879, two years after the telephone came to Washington, a list of subscribers and telephone numbers was published listing everyone in Washington with a telephone. While it comes as no surprise that the White House was given the telephone number 1, it is more shocking that the entire list included only 190 telephones in the entire city!<sup>245</sup> At the time, approximately 177,000 people

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<sup>243</sup> This relative utility was reflected in the lease terms advertised by Bell Telephones in 1877: \$20 per year for social purposes connecting a dwelling with any other building, and \$40 per year for business purposes. *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>244</sup> Glenn Kessler, "Obama's Whopper About Rutherford B. Hayes and the Telephone," *Washington Post*, March 16, 2012.

<sup>245</sup> Richard T. Loomis, "The Telephone Comes to Washington: George C. Maynard, 1839-1919," *Washington History* 12, no. 2 (2000/2001).

lived in Washington, meaning that there was one phone for every 931 people living in the nation's capital.

Clearly impractical for politics, the telephone remained primarily a tool for business for its first 50 years. In 1894, when the Bell patent expired, there were 285,000 telephones leased in the U.S. or one for every 190 Americans. After the patent ended, increasing competition led to dramatic price reduction and a spike in telephones across the country, growing to 3.36 million in 1904, 6.1 million in 1907, and 7.6 million in 1911 or approximately one phone for every 12 Americans.<sup>246</sup> However it wasn't until after World War II, over three decades later, that most households leased a telephone.<sup>247</sup> Once telephone access reached this critical mass, the personal and political potential of this medium greatly expanded. However, in terms of political communication, the telephone, like the telegraph before it, increased the speed and communication capability of political offices and newsgathering but did not affect broader political communication activities around the country.<sup>248</sup> Thus neither the telegraph nor telephone precipitated a political communication revolution because neither is suited to reach a broad audience necessary to achieve broad political communication goals.

The telegraph and telephone, along with the newspaper, radio, television, and internet represent the six most successful ICT innovations over the past 250 years. All of them diffused widely through society, yet they did not all diffuse in the same manner and therefore must be compared carefully. The telephone, radio, television, and the internet were each ICTs that

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<sup>246</sup> Starr, *The Creation of the Media : Political Origins of Modern Communications*, 200-02.

<sup>247</sup> This slow diffusion is a key reason why the political viability of the telephone grew so slowly that it had very little potential disruptive effect on political communication. For a visualization of this rate of diffusion see figures 3.6 and 3.7 toward the end of this chapter. J Carey and M. L. Moss, "The Diffusion of New Telecommunications Technologies: Telecommunication Policy," (New York: New York University, 1985), 4.

<sup>248</sup> This would obviously change with the robo-calls, which started in the late twentieth century. After that point improved capabilities and convenience of telephones, the advent of cell phones, and the reduction in calling costs led to much greater impact on political communication, however this took place after the second PCR and the end of the National PCO.

required the user to own a piece of hardware. This leaves the newspaper and telegraph as the two successful ICTs that did not require home ownership of particular technologies. Thus the newspaper and telegraph are distinct from the rest, providing a great opportunity to examine why the newspaper became politically integrated while the telegraph did not.

The growth of the early telegraph was directly connected to the expansion of railways across the country.<sup>249</sup> The growth in the number of telegraph messages grew steadily from the 1840s through the end of the century, when it started to decline as a result of the introduction of the telephone. Although the use of this ICT grew dramatically, its private ownership did not because telegraph companies transmitted telegrams for customers.<sup>250</sup> Even at the peak of its popularity, the telegraph was not owned in homes and messages were conducted by telegraph operators and then hand delivered through companies like Western Union. It was not until 1958 that privately owned “Telex” machines became available, and these were almost exclusively owned by businesses.<sup>251</sup>

Neither the printing press required to produce newspapers nor the telegraph needed to send and receive telegrams were ICTs owned by Americans, yet both products were purchased and used extensively. The primary differences in the political viability between the two can be easily attributed to the huge cost difference and the difference in the audience size of each medium. Each daily newspaper constituted a one to many medium, as each paper printed reached

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<sup>249</sup> The network of telegraph wires mirrored the railways and soon interpersonal and business related telegrams were regularly sent around the nation. The 1920s marked the peak of interpersonal telegram use when sending a telegram was substantially cheaper than making a long distance call. However the use and expense of sending messages via the telegraph kept it out of homes and more and more in businesses. For more see Annteresa Lubrano, *The Telegraph : How Technology Innovation Caused Social Change*, Garland Studies on Industrial Productivity (New York: Garland Pub., 1997); Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*; Starr, *The Creation of the Media : Political Origins of Modern Communications*.

<sup>250</sup> Although the use of the telegraph has all but ended today, telegram messages are still sent on occasion mainly by businesses to send official notices because telegrams, unlike emails, faxes, or phone calls, are legal documents.

<sup>251</sup> Phillip R. Easterlin, "Telex in New York," *Western Union Technical Review* 13, no. 2 (1959).

anywhere from a few hundred to perhaps hundreds of thousands of readers per day and was relatively affordable to purchase for the reader.<sup>252</sup> Alternatively telegrams were a one to one form of communication, with limited capability for broad dissemination along with a high price tag.

### **Comparison of Diffusion Rates of Historical ICTs**

Each of the ICTs purchased for use in the home, namely the telephone, radio, television, and internet-ready home computer, were very expensive pieces of technology to purchase impacting if and when people adopted these new innovations. And while the diffusion rates of these four ICTs impact their political viability, they each played a substantially greater role in political communication than the telegraph. The political viability, brought on in large part by massive diffusion, does not guarantee a disruption of political communication practices. Therefore the diffusion rates, and related political viability, of these four ICTs must be compared.

The speed of diffusion directly impacts how politically disruptive a new ICT is. The mass diffusion of a product rarely begins when it is invented, it usually takes years until the first innovative group of any notable size adopts it. Therefore, I will focus on diffusion rates starting from the year when one percent of the American population adopted the new ICT. A simple measure of the speed of adoption of particular technologies is the time they take to achieve a given level of use in households across the country, generally called the penetration rate.<sup>253</sup> Table

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<sup>252</sup> Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*; Schudson, *Discovering the News : A Social History of American Newspapers*; Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper*.

<sup>253</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

3.4 outlines the time required for various ICTs to reach penetration rates of 20, 50, and 75 percent diffusion, beginning with the year they reached one percent of the population.<sup>254</sup>

**Table 3.4: Diffusion Rates of Selected ICTs in U.S. History<sup>255</sup>**

ICT	Household penetration begins (1%)	Years to 20%	Years to 50%	Years to 75%	Rank in Speed of Diffusion
<b>TV (black and white)</b>	1948	2	5	7	1
<b>Radio</b>	1923	3	6	8	2
<b>TV (color)</b>	1961	6	9	14	3
<b>Internet (all types of access)<sup>256</sup></b>	1991	5	8	18	4
<b>Broadband (high speed)<sup>257</sup></b>	1999	5	8	*	5
<b>Telephone<sup>258</sup></b>	1890		56	67	6

\* has not yet reached this penetration rate. As of 2017, 73 percent of Americans had broadband internet in their homes.

<sup>254</sup> Excluded from this list are newspapers and the telegraph, the two ICTs that do not require the purchase of hardware in order to send or receive messages.

<sup>255</sup> All information for the radio and television is from Bowden and Offer, "Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain since the 1920s," 729.

<sup>256</sup> American internet access from 2000-2015 taken from the Pew Research Center's yearly statistics on web access and use. All surveys prior to March 2000 were conducted by the Pew Research Center for People & the Press. For 1995, internet users include those who ever use a home, work, or school computer and modem to connect to computer bulletin boards, information services such as CompuServe or Prodigy, or computers at other locations. For 1996-1998, internet users include those who ever use a home, work or school computer and modem to connect with computers over the internet with services such as America Online or Prodigy. For 2000-2004, internet users include people who ever go online to access the internet or to send and receive email. For 2005, internet users include those who at least occasionally use the internet to send or receive email. As a result some data, especially that taken from 1995-1999, may overestimate the actual percentage of Americans who accessed the internet at home during those years. If anything this would only suggest that the rate of adoption remained slower a bit longer and then increased at an even more dramatic rate, which would affect the shape of the S-Curve during those years. All data prior to 1995 was taken from International Telecommunications Union estimates. Maeve Duggan and Andrew Perrin, "Americans' Internet Access 2000-2015," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2015); "Online News Survey," (Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, 2010). International Telecommunications Union, "Ict Statistics," <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/>. Most of this has been aggregated into the very useful Pew Research Center, "Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet," ed. Pew Research Center (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017).

<sup>257</sup> Aaron Smith, "Record Shares of Americans Now Own Smartphones, Have Home Broadband," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017); Pew Research Center, "Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet."

<sup>258</sup> 1920 ratio of telephones to households extrapolated backward to 1890. United States Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1990*. Bowden and Offer, "Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain since the 1920s," 729.

These data become more meaningful when visualized. Figure 3.5 below charts these diffusion rates on a timeline to compare not only the rate that each ICT reached 20, 50, and 75 percent adoption, but also when each took place relative to the others. The diffusion rates of the radio, television, and internet are impressive on their own, but when compared to the telephone and other popular household innovations of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, these diffusion rates are simply stunning.<sup>259</sup> Each of these innovations reached 20 percent diffusion in less than six years and 50 percent diffusion is less than nine.<sup>260</sup> Just as obvious is the deliberate diffusion rate of the telephone, which did not reach 75 percent penetration rate until 16 years after the radio and two years after the black and white television! To put it another way, the telephone took 67 years, or nearly three generations, to reach 75 percent penetration rate.<sup>261</sup>

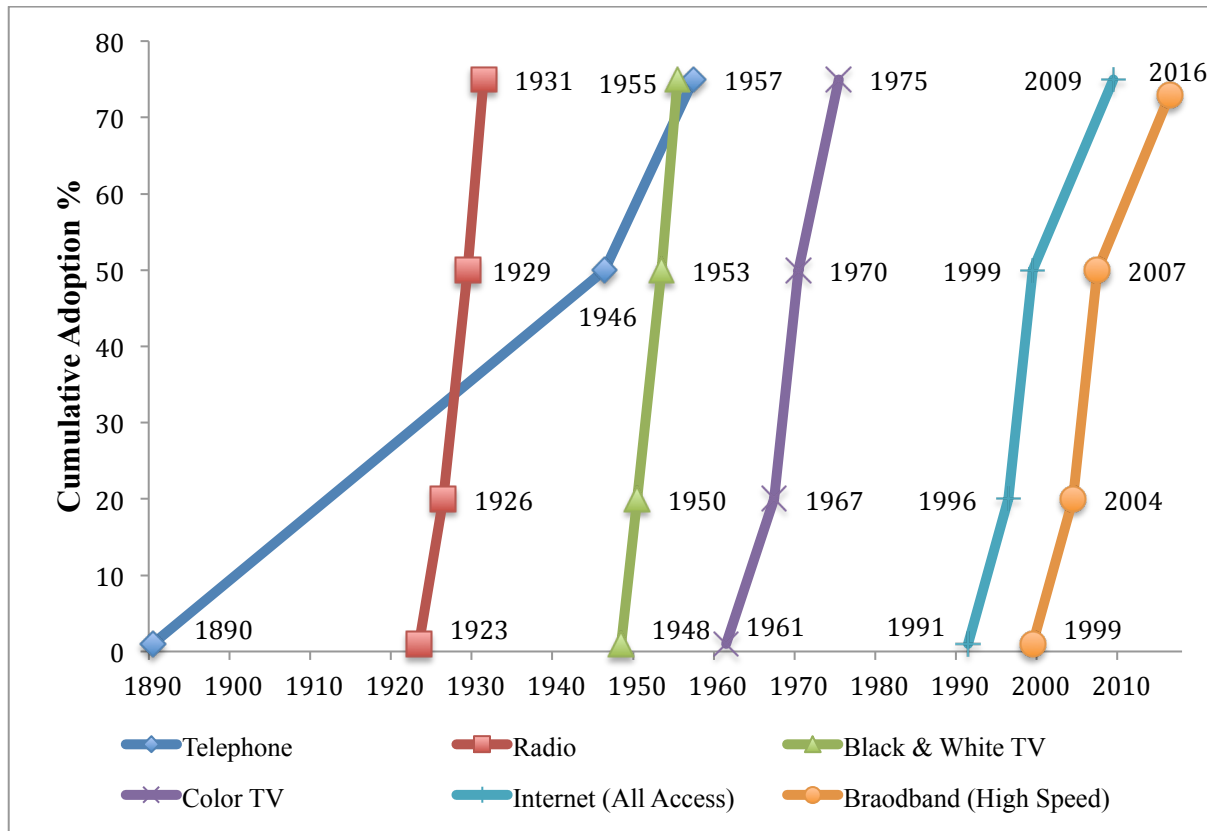
### **Figure 3.5: Timeline and Diffusion Rates of Selected ICTs in U.S. History**

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<sup>259</sup> It took 13 years for the refrigerator to reach a 50% household penetration rate, 16 years for the automobile, and 28 years for the vacuum cleaner respectively. To reach the 75% mark it took 23 years for the refrigerator, 48 years for the vacuum cleaner, and an amazing 52 years for the automobile. "Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain since the 1920s."

<sup>260</sup> It is also helpful to demonstrate the diffusion rates of related technologies. Those ICTs most obviously forming technology clusters include the black and white and color televisions and the internet, which started with dial-up service in households, and newer high-speed broadband connectivity. Both color television and high speed internet access provide added functions and greater features than their precursors and were introduced mainly as innovations and replacement for their more traditional and primitive cousins. In both cases the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation technology diffused at very similar rates to the original and all diffused incredibly fast. In fact it the diffusion of broadband internet has matched the rate of diffusion of the internet exactly. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

<sup>261</sup> This slow household diffusion was due to telephones remaining very expensive and mainly being used in the modern office until nearly halfway through the twentieth century. Bowden and Offer, "Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain since the 1920s."



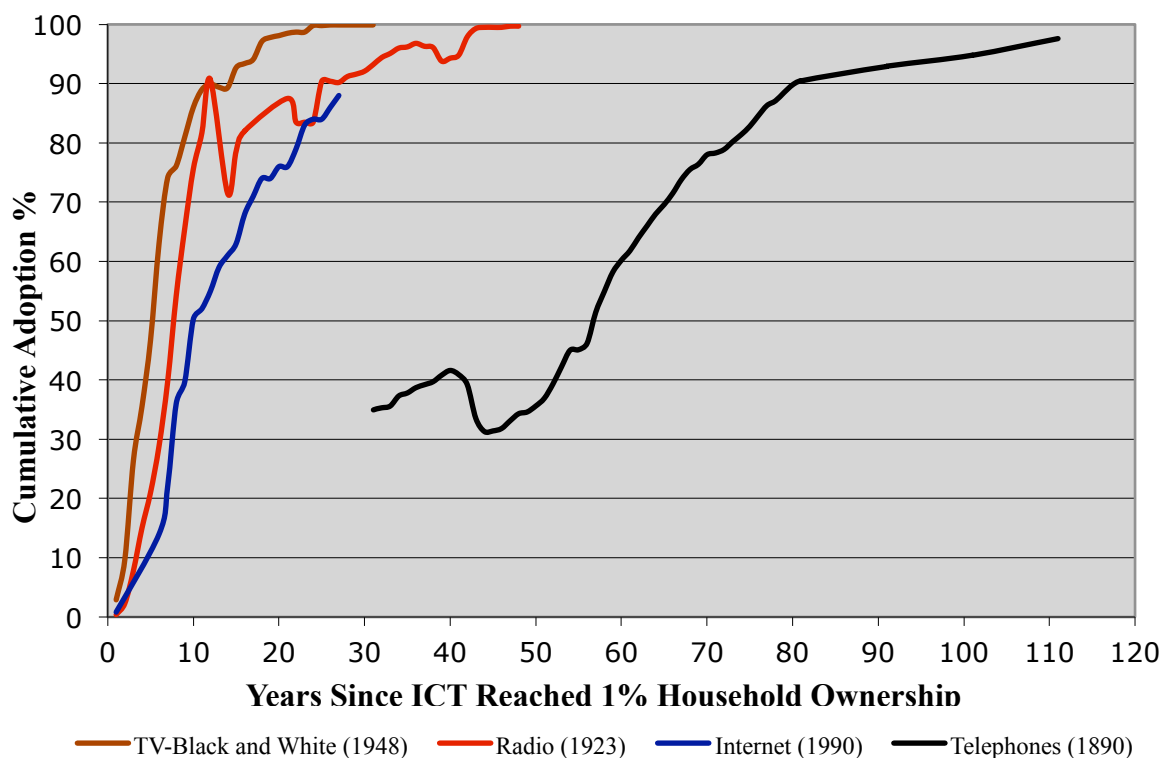
While comparing these particular thresholds is instructive, the S-curves for the diffusion of each ICT provide a more detailed comparison. In particular, when the S-curve for the diffusion of household ownership of the telephone is compared to the equivalent S-curves of the radio, television and internet, the difference in political viability becomes clear. The grade of the incline of an S-Curve indicates the rate of diffusion. The shorter a period of time between initial public use and widespread diffusion, the more jarring this innovation may be in terms of its impact on political communication. Figure 3.6 clearly shows how slow the diffusion rate of the telephone was in comparison to the radio, television, and internet.<sup>262</sup> This difference in rate of

<sup>262</sup> All data about the radio and television taken from *ibid.*. All data about the internet derived from "Online News Survey; International Telecommunications Union, "Ict Statistics".. See footnotes 23 and 24 for more details on analysis of internet data. All data pertaining to the telephone taken from United States Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1990*. and Wattenberg, *The Statistical History of the United States, from Colonial Times to 1970*. 1890, the date when Bowden cited as the first year when the telephone reached 1% household penetration rate was derived through backward extrapolation by the U. S. Census.



diffusion is a fundamental reason why the radio, television, and internet each played disruptive roles in the ways that political communication was conducted across the country and around the world, while the telephone did not. As mentioned earlier, one vital element to the potential adoption of a new technology is its accessibility, and a major barrier to access is cost. It is not surprising, then, that the television and radio, which offered free content, diffused fastest. Next was the internet, with monthly subscription rates, and then the telephone with very high per use costs. Thus the costs required to access the information using each ICT seems to have a greater impact on diffusion rates than the costs for the technological hardware, and this rate of diffusion is what leads to greater political viability and potential political disruptive capability.

**Figure 3.6: Comparison of S-curves of Household Ownership Rates of Successful ICTs<sup>263</sup>**



<sup>263</sup> Yearly data for telephone adoption was not available before 1920.

## Conclusion

The PCC has three phases: 1) the emergence of an ICT which gains political viability, 2) the political choices about whether or not to use new communication tools on a massive scale, and 3) the stabilization of a new PCO. This chapter analyzes phase one, the technological imperative, in order to determine what factors make a new ICT more or less politically viable. Several factors play a role in determining the political viability of an ICT that could lead to a PCR. Namely, the political viability of an ICT increases when it: 1) diffuses through society at a fast rate, 2) is relatively inexpensive to use, 3) is convenient to access, and 4) is easily used to reach broad audiences, relative to other ICTs already being used.

Arguably the most important characteristic affecting the diffusion rate of an ICT is its cost. Although hardware costs can be high for ICTs, they can still diffuse quickly if they do not have follow-up costs for software or the information produced. This was the case for the radio and television, which diffused incredibly fast and once owned could be used for free indefinitely. The only other ICT that comes close to the rate of diffusion of the radio and television is that of the internet. In addition, internet access fees in the U.S. have largely been flat-rate unlimited monthly charges, which, like the television and radio, avoid high per usage charges that served as barriers to the diffusion of the telegraph and telephone.<sup>264</sup>

Besides diffusing quickly, ICTs must be easily accessible and offer the ability to easily reach a broad audience in order to potentially impact the relationship between political elites and the American public. These conditions further limited the political viability of the telephone and telegraph. The telephone eventually diffused to nearly every household in America but did so at

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<sup>264</sup> This flat-rate internet standard is not the norm in many places around the world and is becoming less and less common in the U.S. This is especially the case for cell data that is offered in tiers by most American cell companies. Additionally, expanded internet speeds are now regularly offered by home broadband companies for additional fees. All of these changes are very important in how the current PCO will become stabilized and will be explored more in chapters eight and nine.

such a slow rate that its impact on political communication activities during any particular period of the twentieth century remained extremely low. Even more limited was the telegraph, which never made it into American homes. Further, both the telegraph and telephone were expensive to own and to use and were designed as point to point communication devices with limited opportunity to be used as broadcast media.

Beyond diffusion rates, the political viability of ICTs is based largely on their perception by potential adopters. Technological innovations that are perceived by political actors as having greater relative advantage, compatibility with their needs, observability, and testability, than prior ICTs, while being perceived as less complex, will be adopted more rapidly and often more completely than other innovations. The emphasis on perception is important and is very subjective. Jen Schradie's work (2015) is a great example of how two different labor unions in North Carolina decided whether or not to innovate their strategies based largely on those perceptions.<sup>265</sup> This is exactly why the PCC focuses on the choices of political actors, and tries to weave together a general pattern of those choices. The reality is that individual choices and motivations for political organizations are unique and are much messier than the model might suggest.

Ultimately, evaluating the political viability of ICTs past and present can help to clarify the important distinction between a socially successful communication medium and a politically powerful one. Those few ICTs that do achieve high levels of political viability in a short period of time have reached the end of phase one of the political communication cycle. Even then, however, it is up to the political actors as to whether the ICT will continue along a revolutionary course.

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<sup>265</sup> This work is very helpful in the discussion of interest group innovation in chapter seven. Schradie, "Political Ideology, Social Media, and Labor Unions: Using the Internet to Reach the Powerful, Not Mobilize the Powerless."

## Chapter 4: Political Choice: the Behavioral Role in Political Communication Change

“The vast majority of human beings dislike and even actually dread all notions with which they are not familiar... Hence it comes about that at their first appearance innovators have generally been persecuted, and always derided as fools and madmen.” — Aldous Huxley

“The paradox of innovation is that it is accepted as an innovation when it has become imitation.”  
— Piero Scaruffi

Contrary to popular belief, innovations do not occur in a sudden strike of genius.

Innovations are built through hard work by people talented enough to recognize a set of opportunities and dedicated enough to set out to capitalize on them.<sup>266</sup> In many respects political innovators are no different than innovators who transform any aspect of technology, science, or business. However, those who set out to innovate political communication activity have a great advantage over the majority of innovators in other fields, namely, that the problem has been largely defined and remains fairly constant over time. Einstein once said, “If I had 20 days to solve a problem, I would take 19 days to define it.”<sup>267</sup> This is not the case for political communication innovators because the goals of political communication have changed very little over the course of American political history. Political actors have generally tried to use political communication tools to disseminate information, attract supporters, raise resources, frame issues, and mobilize political action throughout American political history. What has changed dramatically are the strategies and tools used to achieve these goals.

New information communication technologies (ICTs) occasionally become fixtures in political communication strategies. These new technologies offer novel methods to try to reach audiences and mobilize political action. While many of these innovations seem promising, the decision to adopt them is far from automatic. Diffusion scholars agree that the likelihood that technological innovations spread through society is based on the characteristics of not only the

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<sup>266</sup> Berkun, *The Myths of Innovation*; Atul Gawande, “Slow Ideas,” *The New Yorker*, July 29, 2013.

<sup>267</sup> Berkun, *The Myths of Innovation*, 129.

innovation but also the potential adopters.<sup>268</sup> Political actors go through a decision making process in which they must carefully weigh many different considerations before incorporating new technologies into their political communication activities, because each innovation has advantages and drawbacks associated with it.<sup>269</sup>

The story of ICT innovation, adoption, and change, both inside and outside of politics, often magnifies the role of the new technology and minimizes the role of people in this process. Scholarship that addresses changes in political communication over time has primarily focused on the impact that individual information communication technologies (ICTs) have had in bringing about substantive change in political communication and the relationship between political elites and the public. Historically-minded media, communications, and journalism scholars have analyzed the long term changes in society resulting from new ICTs.<sup>270</sup> Others have studied how new communications mediums, such as newspapers,<sup>271</sup> radio,<sup>272</sup> television,<sup>273</sup> and the internet,<sup>274</sup> have disrupted traditional forms of political communication. All of this

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<sup>268</sup> See Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*; Barbara Wejnert, "Integrating Models of Diffusion of Innovations: A Conceptual Framework," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28(2002).

<sup>269</sup> Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin conducted one of the best studies of the political decision making process focusing on how and why to innovate political campaign websites. They analyzed 444 campaign websites from House and Senate campaigns in the 2002 and 2004 elections and looked at a number of candidate-level variables that they hypothesized might affect decisions about whether or not to innovate. James N. Druckman, Martin J. Kifer, and Michael Parkin, "The Technological Development of Candidate Web Sites: How and Why Candidates Use Web Innovations," in *Politicking Online: The Transformation of Election Campaign Communications*, ed. Costas Panagopoulos (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009).

<sup>270</sup> Fang, *A History of Mass Communication: Six Information Revolutions*; Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*; Briggs and Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet*; Starr, *The Creation of the Media : Political Origins of Modern Communications*; *Image Empire: A History of Broadcasting in the United States: Volume Iii - from 1953*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (New York: Oxford University Press).

<sup>271</sup> Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*.

<sup>272</sup> Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*.

<sup>273</sup> Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder, "Experimental Demonstrations of the" Not-So-Minimal" Consequences of Television News Programs; Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar, *The Media Game: American Politics in the Television Age*.

<sup>274</sup> Selnow, *Electronic Whistle-Stops : The Impact of the Internet on American Politics*; Davis and Owen, *New Media and American Politics*; Davis, *The Web of Politics: The Internet's Impact on the American Political*

scholarship shares the perspective that technology drives the process of communication change. Yet changes in political communication do not simply result from new technologies. Political actors must choose if, when, and how to adopt new ICT tools toward political communication goals. There are a few excellent books that focus on practical decisions made mostly during recent campaigns.<sup>275</sup> However scholarship exploring this political communication decision-making process as a systemic long-term phenomenon has remained largely absent from research in this area.

Within the political communication cycle, the role of an ICT does matters a great deal. That is why the previous two chapters have focused on the first phase of the PCC, the technological imperative. However, the second political choice phase which focuses on how political actors and organizations choose whether or not to innovate their political communication activities is the most important in terms of if, how, and when new ICTs are used and the extent to which new communication tools affect political communication activities. In short, the decisions we make, as individuals or as political organizations, regarding adopting innovations is a behavioral one more than anything else.

To illustrate let me offer a brief personal example. In late July 2001, one month after graduating from college, I moved to Brooklyn, NY to join my girlfriend (soon to be fiancé), and start my first career as a high school history teacher at Edward R. Murrow High School. In that

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*System*; Bimber and Davis, *Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. Elections*. Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*; Daniel Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back* *ibid.* (2012).  
<sup>275</sup> Joe Trippi, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Democracy, the Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything*, Updated ed. (New York: William Morrow Paperbacks, 2008); Nielsen, *Ground Wars: Personalized Communication in Political Campaigns*; Issenberg, *The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns*; Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*; Daniel Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back* *ibid.* (2012); Jessica Baldwin-Philippi, *Using Technology, Building Democracy: Digital Campaigning and the Construction of Citizenship*, ed. Andrew Chadwick *ibid.* (2015). Kreiss and Saffer, "Networks and Innovation in the Production of Communication: Explaining Innovations in U.S. Electoral Campaigning from 2004 to 2012; Kreiss, *Prototype Politics: Technology-Intensive Campaigning and the Data of Democracy*.

year, nearly 60 percent of Americans had cell phones, and I was definitely not one of them.<sup>276</sup> I did not have a lot of extra cash lying around and honestly didn't see the point. Several of my friends and my girlfriend had bought cell phones over the previous couple of years but I didn't really get what the big deal was. I thought that if someone wanted to get a hold of me they should just email me or leave me a message like any reasonable person. There were public phones all over the place. I had an answering machine. Why pay for an extra phone to carry around with me? I was not what most would call an early adopter.

Then 9/11 happened. It was the morning of the fifth day of my teaching career when I remember looking over the shoulder of a colleague of mine who was using the one shared computer in our social studies office. The America Online (AOL) headline said a plane had crashed into one of the towers of the World Trade Center. We all thought that was strange and went to class. When I returned to the office after my next class, the AOL update was much more grim. While the rest of the country was watching that tragic day unfold live, I was getting spotty updates through a dial-up modem just a few miles south of Ground Zero. In my next class I asked my students who had a Walkman with them to turn on the radio put on their headphones and give us some updates. Around that time regular announcements started to come over the PA system as parents came rushing to the school to pick up their children.

With little information I started to get nervous too. The last I had heard my girlfriend was planning on taking the A train from Brooklyn up to Manhattan, a path leading directly under the World Trade Center. In the late morning I tried calling my girlfriend's cell phone from the shared phone in the social studies office and there was no response initially, and then no reliable phone service at all. I finished the teaching day and called again before leaving, with no luck. I went home and called from home. I called her phone every 15 minutes. As everyone living in New

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<sup>276</sup> Derek Thompson, "The 100-Year Match of Technology in 1 Graph," *The Atlantic*, April 7, 2012.

York City at the time will recall, the phone service was quickly overloaded that day and communication was extremely difficult. I called my parents and I called my girlfriend's parents and I found out that they had spoken with her and she was OK. But there was no way to check in and those hours felt like days. In the early evening my home phone finally rang and we spoke for the first time since the world had changed. For me that was a tipping point for so many things but one was the need for connection. That was a Tuesday. On Wednesday I spent time checking in with everyone I knew in New York and assessing what was going on in my neighborhood and new city. On Thursday I walked into a Verizon store and bought my first cell phone.

The decision about whether or not I should add this new communication technology quickly became a very easy one to answer for me. Each person can think back to his or her first cell phone, smartphone, laptop computer, or first internet connection, VCR, or radio. Every household and every person decides if and when to adopt new communication technologies based on a number of factors and political actors and organizations function the same way. There needs to be a good reason to try something new. Broadly speaking this was described earlier as an underlying social necessity.<sup>277</sup> My decision about when to buy my first cell phone was motivated by my need to reach my girlfriend and other friends during a horrendous day in New York. We connected that day, were engaged later that year and have been married for 15 years and counting. Most of the choices about ICT adoption are less dramatic, but all are behavioral choices based on changing levels of information, resources, and context.

I offer this example for one additional reason, to recognize the role of contingency in innovation decisions. In the same way that unforeseen changes in steamship development led to new and powerful uses of the wireless radio, unplanned political, technological, or social events can change the decision-making environment motivating the adoption of new innovations.

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<sup>277</sup> Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*.



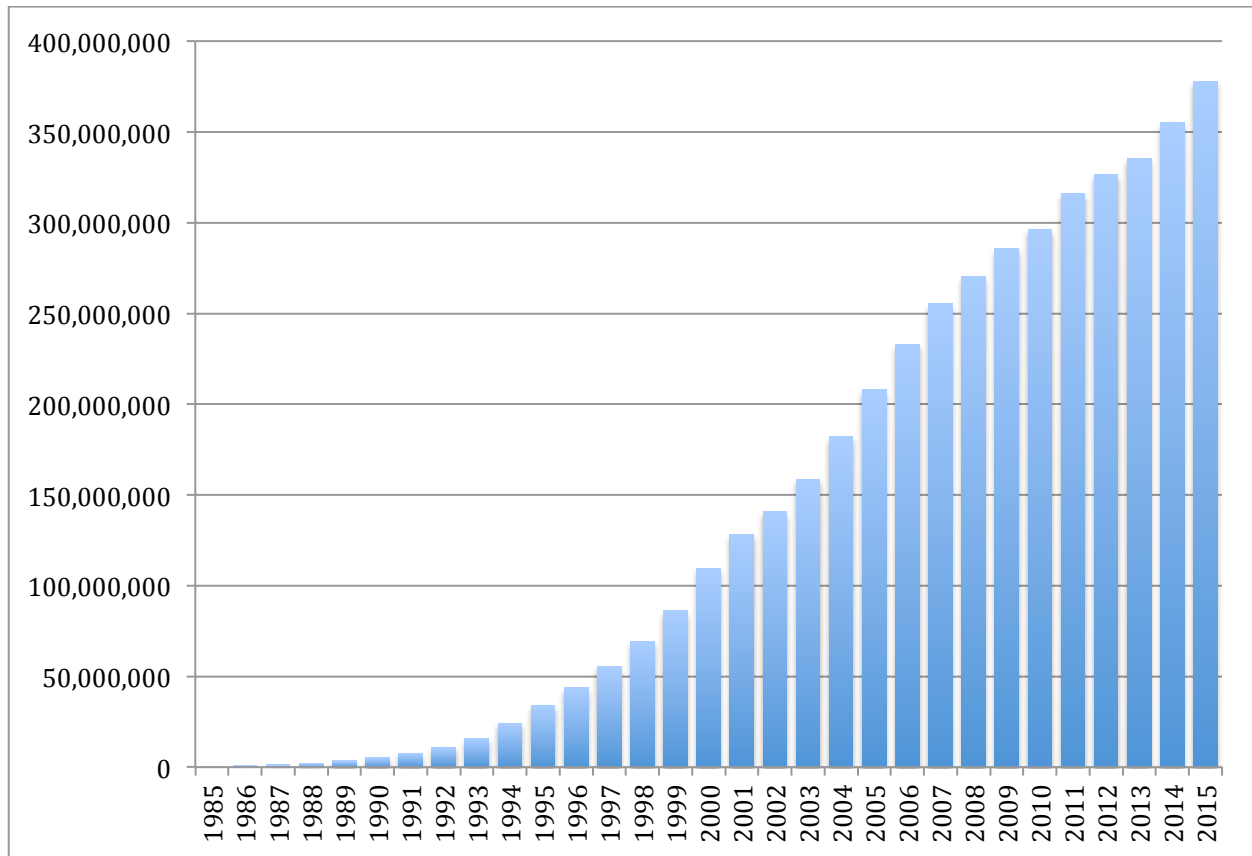
Altered incentives and barriers can dramatically change the likelihood of political communication innovation. These changes impact different types of organizations and individuals with different political communication goals in different ways. What is tectonic to some may have minimal effects to others. And, more importantly within the broader narrative of innovation adoption, these triggering events can become lost in the adoption story.

My experience on 9/11 motivated me to get my first cell phone. But that tragic event did not disrupt the long-term growth of cell phone adoption in any noticeable way as the data in Figure 4.1 clearly shows. My first cell phone came with a story. But in the narrative of cellphone growth over time, my story disappears. Thus there is a difference between contingencies that change the innovation adoption decisions of a small number of people, like some of us cell phone hold outs in NYC in 2001, and those that affect a large number of people or organizations. The same holds for political communication innovation. Individuals and organizations may be motivated to adopt new communications practices because of terrorist attacks, economic downturns, inspirational events, charismatic leaders, the emergence of movements, or any other unanticipated reason. All of these reasons matter. However the broader narrative that emerges by bringing together the individual stories about why political actors did, or did not, choose to innovate their strategies is the one that is modeled by the political communication cycle.

**Figure 4.1: U.S. Cell Phone Subscriptions 1985 – 2015<sup>278</sup>**

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<sup>278</sup> Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association, "Annual Wireless Industry Survey," (2015).



### Linking the Resource and Challenger Claims to the Political Choice Phase

The political choices about whether or not political actors innovate their political communication activities are affected by several determinants, three of which were outlined in chapter one as claims central to this book. Two of these claims pertained specifically to the political choices embedded in phase two of the PCC. Political actors must consider both practical and political issues in making these decisions.<sup>279</sup> Practical issues include the technical ease of using new technologies as well as their cost. These issues are a function of organizational and financial capacity, which leads back to my **resource** claim: *those political actors and*

<sup>279</sup> Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin, "The Technological Development of Candidate Web Sites: How and Why Candidates Use Web Innovations," 25.

*organizations with greater financial and technological resources are more likely to innovate earlier than those with fewer of these resources.*

The political issues that must be considered are more situational in nature, and center around a political cost-benefit analysis of innovation. While the political price of innovation could include a reduction in audience size, influence, or control of message, the potential political gains could be tremendous if individuals and organizations can use the new tools to influence public discourse and political agenda setting in a way that they could not have without innovating. This political risk evaluation generally provides much more incentive for a political challenger or outsider who has less to lose and substantially more to gain by changing tactics and reaching for a new ICT. Thus my **challenger** claim: *political challengers or outsiders are more likely to innovate earlier than political actors currently in power.*

While it may be obvious that those with more resources have greater ability to bear the cost of innovations as well as the risks involved, the challenger claim may be less intuitive. This expectation stems, in part, from Clayton Christensen's *The Innovator's Dilemma*, which focused on disruptive innovations in the business world that revolutionized particular markets. Christiansen points out the important difference between *sustaining* innovations, the relatively small, incremental shifts that dominant players masterfully adopt in order to maintain power, and *disruptive* innovations that incumbents usually do not react to until relatively late in the adoption process.<sup>280</sup> Disruptive innovations are substantial enough to create entirely new business markets or, if we carry the idea over to the political realm, offer an entirely new pool of potential political supporters and new ways to connect with these supporters. However these innovations offer limited potential benefits for those already dominating the current system. Thus while

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<sup>280</sup> Clayton M. Christensen, *The Innovator's Dilemma : When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail*, 1st HarperBusiness ed., The Management of Innovation and Change Series (New York: HarperBusiness, 2000).

challengers may jump at the opportunity to compete using the new innovation, the political actors in positions of power hold off, continuing to tweak the activities that have helped them maintain power. If challengers effectively master a quickly evolving disruptive innovation, then they can leverage that advantage to take control, disrupting the dominant positions of the incumbents and forcing them to scramble to keep up in the newly emerging political communication order (PCO).

However this increased challenger incentive does not last forever. The challenger claim is most applicable early on in the diffusion process. The earliest to try something new are often those with the least to lose. However as new innovations become more widely used, which happened quickly for ICTs like the radio and the internet, the risk is reduced for incumbents and those holding powerful positions.

It is important to note that the resource and challenger claims are not mutually exclusive and it is possible that a political challenger could have tremendous resources, as is the case with many candidates for office with large personal fortunes or substantial financial backing. These political actors would be most likely to innovate early relative to all others. In the terminology of diffusion scholars, they would have the highest level of innovativeness, which can be defined as the degree to which an individual adopts new ideas earlier relative to other members of a system.<sup>281</sup> It is also possible that certain political actors may be in power but have very limited resources, like a mayor of a town facing severe budget constraints. These actors would be the least likely to innovate based purely on the resource and challenger claims. Taken together, these two claims result in a four-cell matrix describing the innovativeness of political actors and organizations with varying levels of resources and political status as shown in table 4.1 below.

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<sup>281</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 267-68.

**Table 4.1: Political Actor Innovativeness Matrix**

<b>Practical Factors</b>	<b>Political Factors</b>	
	Political Actor in Power	Political Challenger
High Resources	Low motivation to innovate political communication activities in substantial ways because they already have power and control of message, likely to innovate in incremental ways in order to maintain power.	Highest innovativeness because they have little to lose politically, much to gain, and they have the resources to direct toward innovation which may be costly. Among high resource political competitors these actors are more likely to innovate early because their political risk level is much lower than current power holders.
Low Resources	Lowest level of innovativeness because of lack of political motivation and lack of resources.	Most likely to innovate when those they are competing against are in power and have similar low levels of resources because they have the most to gain and least to lose politically. However among political challengers those with the greatest resources have a much greater likelihood of innovating their political communication activities earlier.

As a political challenger with high resources, Donald Trump fit the mold of the most potentially innovative political actor during the 2016 election. He was not only a political challenger and outsider, but one with enormous resources. Additionally gaining publicity and support would have likely helped Trump's business prospects even if he lost the election. While he told many, including African American voters around the country "What the hell do you have to lose," the reality was it was Trump who had little to lose, and he acted like it, and won.

That said, by 2016 the use of the internet for campaigning was 20 years old and Trump's challenger status did not mean as much as it did in earlier elections. There is little evidence that Trump used new or different web-based resources, and in fact had one of the least sophisticated

web campaigns.<sup>282</sup> He also did not invest notably large amounts of resources toward innovative uses of technological tools. His innovation was not *what* ICTs were used, but *how* existing web and broadcast tools were applied. Trump upended the traditional strategies of television ads and strategic web-based communication and replaced them with reality-show-style antics that polarized the public but brought everyone to the television, laptop, or phone to see the latest brash, controversial, or offensive statement.<sup>283</sup>

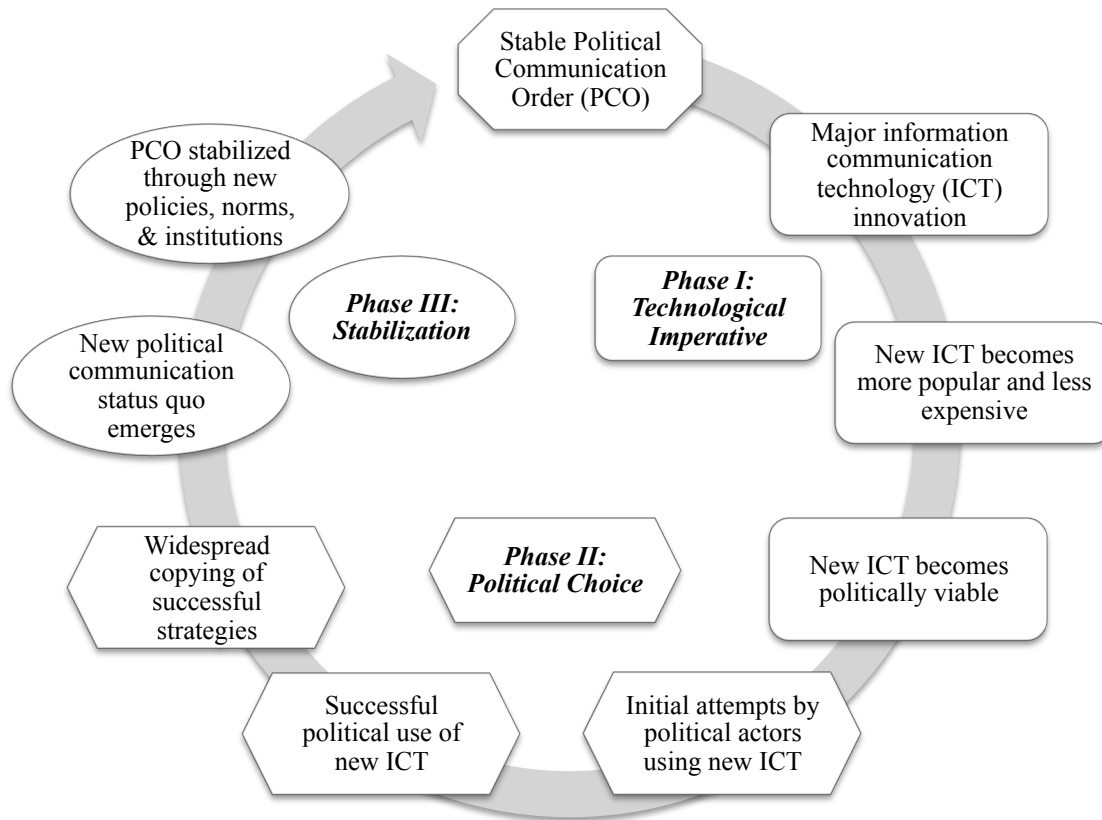
Both the resource and challenger claims affect the decision-making process of political actors and are part of the political choice phase of the political communication cycle. Following the technological imperative, described in detail in chapters two and three, the political choice phase begins with a period of early experimentation of a newly politically viable ICT to test whether it could actually provide a political advantage over traditional ICTs and communication activities. If these early adopters are able to show that new technological tools can be used to successfully achieve long-lasting political communication goals, the reluctance to innovate is greatly reduced. If other organizations share those same political communication goals they will be more likely to copy successful innovations. The political choice phase is the most important stage of the PCC because it is where political communication revolutions shift from a broader social change in behavior to one that is specifically directed by political goals and strategies.

#### **Figure 4.2: The Political Communication Revolution Cycle**

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<sup>282</sup> More on this in the next chapter. Also see: Joshua Darr, "Trump's Scorning of Data May Not Hurt Him, but It'll Hurt the GOP," *FiveThirtyEight.com*, <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/trumps-scorning-of-data-may-not-hurt-him-but-itll-hurt-the-gop/>; Jeffrey D Broxmeyer and Ben Epstein, "The (Surprisingly Interesting) Story of Email in the 2016 Presidential Election," in *Midwestern Political Science Association Annual Conference* (Chicago 2017).

<sup>283</sup> Much more analysis about the 2016 election and the Trump campaign can be found in chapter five. Ruth Munoz, "Trump Underspends Clinton on Tv Ads, Relying on Social Media: Nbc," *Reuters*, August 9 2016; Maggie Haberman and Jonathan Martin, "Donald Trump Scraps the Usual Campaign Playbook, Including Tv Ads," *The New York Times*, Dec. 24 2015; Nicholas Confessore and Karen Yourish, "\$2 Billion Worth of Free Media for Donald Trump," *ibid.*, March 15 2016.



### Exploring and Understanding Political Choice

Diffusion literature provides the vocabulary and theory necessary to understand the decision-making process of adopting innovations. Everett Rogers, the most widely cited diffusion scholar of the past half century, compiled, organized, and clarified the diverse world of diffusion research in his book *Diffusion of Innovations*.<sup>284</sup> In his book, Rogers defines diffusion as the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.<sup>285</sup> In other words, diffusion takes place through a social

<sup>284</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 5,12.

process, an understanding of which is needed to help connect the technologically-focused mass communications scholarship to choices made by political actors.<sup>286</sup>

Existing research suggests that the characteristics of a particular ICT matter based primarily on how it is perceived by potential adopters and its accessibility.<sup>287</sup> In terms of the characteristics of potential adopters, several scholars have focused on the importance of when individuals learn about an idea or innovation.<sup>288</sup> Others have paid particular attention to traits of individuals and organizations that are more likely to innovate early or wait for others to try the new idea or product first.<sup>289</sup>

As described in chapter three, the political viability of ICTs comes about through the rapid and widespread diffusion of an ICT through society. Four factors increase the political viability of an ICT: 1) fast diffusion rate, 2) relatively low cost, 3) convenient access and, 4) ease of reaching broad audiences, relative to other ICTs already being used. The political choice phase of the PCC is effectively a second, distinct diffusion process in which a communication medium that is used widely in society may or may not be adopted by political actors. Each potential adopter goes through a process, dubbed the innovation-decision process, through which they initially learn of the innovation, evaluate it, decide whether or not to adopt it, and then confirm or reject that decision. The information gathering involved in this process is needed to

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<sup>286</sup> For more on the characteristics of potential adapters that might help increase the likelihood that they adopt new ICT innovations see Ben Epstein, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised Anymore: New Technology, Political Choice, and Changes in Political Communication from the Newspaper to the Internet" (The City University of New York Graduate Center, 2011).

<sup>287</sup> Trish, "The Diffusion of Campaign Technology; Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 219-66.

<sup>288</sup> Greenberg, "Diffusion of News of the Kennedy Assassination; Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

<sup>289</sup> Deutschmann and Fals-Borda, *Communication and Adoption Patterns in an Andean Village*; Mohr, "Mohr; Alwin Mahler and Everett M. Rogers, "The Diffusion of Interactive Communication Innovations and the Critical Mass: The Adoption of Telecommunications Services by German Banks," *Telecommunications Policy* 23(1999); Sigi Goode and Kenneth Stevens, "An Analysis of the Business Characteristics of Adopters and Non-Adopters of World Wide Web Technology," *Information Technology and Management* 1, no. 1-2 (2000); Se-Joon Hong and Kar Yan Tam, "Understanding the Adoption of Multipurpose Information Appliances: The Case of Mobile Data Services," *Information Systems Research* 17, no. 2 (2006); Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 267-302, 407-76.



reduce uncertainty about the innovation and decide whether its potential benefits outweigh its costs.<sup>290</sup>

Potential adopters move through the innovation-decision process in different ways and at very different speeds creating a pattern of adoption. As detailed in the last chapter, the S-Curve represents the cumulative adoption of a successful innovation over time. Early on, few innovators adopt a new technology, but increasingly more and more people adopt until most have done so, after which the cumulative rate of adoption slows. If, instead of cumulative number of adopters, a line graph displays just the number of new adopters over time, the result would closely approach a normal curve, which proves beneficial when detailing the innovation-decision making process across a society.

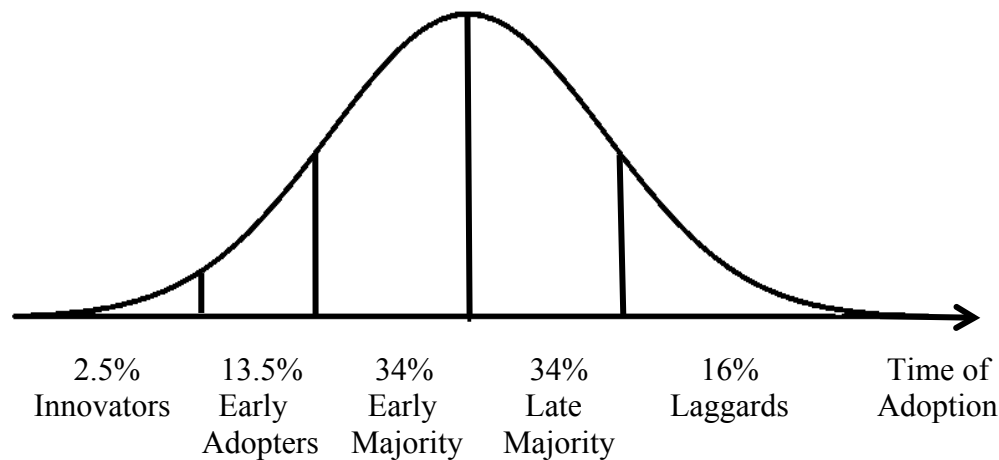
The likelihood that each individual or organization actually adopts a new idea, product, or, in this case, ICT early on is based on the person's or group's level of innovativeness. No aspect of the diffusion process has received as much attention as innovativeness. Researchers have focused particularly on categorizing adopters based on this attribute. After looking at dozens of diffusion studies, Rogers created the most common adopter categorization by dividing adopters of innovations into five innovativeness categories based on the mean time to adopt and the standard deviation.<sup>291</sup>

### **Figure 4.3: Number of New Adopters: Normal Curve<sup>292</sup>**

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<sup>291</sup> Rogers' adopter categorization grew out of the goal of creating categories that were 1) exhaustive, including all the units of a study, 2) mutually exclusive, with no unit of study appearing in more than one category, and 3) derived from a single classificatory principle. In this case he created adopter characterizations based on the statistical properties of the normal curve once it was shown that the S-curve is in fact a normal curve represented in a different way. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 272-75, 80.

<sup>292</sup> The area to the left of the mean time of adoption minus two standard deviations represent the earliest 2.5 percent of adopters known as "innovators." The next group, including the 13.5 percent of people whose innovativeness falls in the area between the mean minus two and minus one standard deviations, is



Once the categories are established, an obvious question follows: what characterizes those who are likely to innovate earlier as opposed to those who are likely to wait until adoption is unavoidable? The five adopter categories, innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards, are ideal types that create divisions in the innovativeness continuum. Innovators are those few people who are most excited about innovating. They are willing to take the risks associated with a possibly flawed innovation in exchange for being on the cutting edge. In order to do so, innovators must have access to substantial financial resources and must have the ability to understand and apply technical knowledge. They serve as the gatekeepers for the entrance of an innovation into a social system.<sup>293</sup> Early adopters are less extreme than the innovators and are the primary group that influences others to adopt. These are the main opinion leaders in terms of adopting new innovations. Those in the early majority make up over one-third of all adopters and, though they are deliberate and do not jump to be the first to innovate, they still innovate before the majority of people have done so and provide important links between

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appropriately labeled “early adopters.” The next 34 percent lying between the mean and the mean minus one standard deviation are the “early majority,” with those classified as “late majority” falling between the mean and the mean plus one standard deviations. The final 16 percent of those to adopt an innovation are those more than one standard deviation above the mean in terms of time taken to adopt and are labeled “laggards.” Image adapted from *ibid.*, 273.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 282-83.

early innovators and later adopters within a society's interpersonal networks. The late majority is as large as the early majority but this group is much more skeptical about innovating, which may be due to relatively fewer resources. These adopters must be confident that the innovation will succeed before signing on and the influence of their peers and opinion leaders is very important in overcoming this uncertainty. My adoption of the cell phone in 2001 would place me in this category, for instance. Laggards are extremely traditional and reluctant to innovate. They are often those with the least resources and the fewest social connections. As a result they often base their decisions on what has worked in the past and hold off innovating, largely because of economic necessity, until it is absolutely crucial.<sup>294</sup>

In politics, the decision to innovate may be made by either individuals or organizations, and it is necessary to distinguish between the two in terms of their innovativeness and innovation-decision process. Individual innovativeness is particularly important for individual politicians acting alone and individual citizens incorporating new ICTs into their political communication activities.<sup>295</sup> Hong and Tam (2006) evaluated factors contributing to individual decisions to adopt mobile data service technologies. Their study found that besides the usefulness, ease of use, service availability and cost of new ICTs, the amount that individuals gained satisfaction from the innovation, social influence and approval, and demographics all

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<sup>294</sup> Beyond these adopter categories, Rogers offers generalizations about the differences between earlier and later adopters relative to one another, gleaned from dozens of diffusion studies. Several generalized socioeconomic, personality, and communication characteristics provide rough guidelines about who is likely to innovate earlier than others. *Ibid.*, 282-85.

<sup>295</sup> For decades campaign managers, media consultants, and organized staff have used poll data and countless metrics to strategically shape the public image of politicians. However today there are increasing opportunities for actors to choose how to communicate as individuals through online media such as twitter or social networking sites like Facebook. Their individual innovativeness factors heavily into the timing of these decisions. For more on how the internet is affecting political communication activities of individual members of American society see chapter five.

played a roll.<sup>296</sup> There are also studies that show the strong cultural elements embedded in ICT adoption, and the influence of organizational structures, social contexts and established mechanisms of control on individuals determining whether or not to adopt ICTs for their professional goals.<sup>297</sup>

Most influential political actors are not individuals acting independently; instead they are organizations like interest groups, think tanks, social movements, political parties, bureaucratic agencies, nonprofits, legislative offices, and political campaigns.<sup>298</sup> The decisions about whether organizations should innovate are different than the decision making process for individuals. The networks of people within an organization matter a great deal, both because they obviously affect the decision making process regarding new innovations, but also because they can act as a spark for innovation itself. Padgett and Powell, in their voluminous book *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets*, outline how different types of networks can actually serve as vehicles for these transformations, as they call it, and go on to provide literally hundreds of pages of case studies exploring these how innovation gets started by various social and organizations networks.<sup>299</sup> Similarly, Kreiss and Saffer used network analysis to show how backgrounds and types of people recruited into Democratic and Republican campaigns from 2004-2012 were very

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<sup>296</sup> Hong and Tam, "Understanding the Adoption of Multipurpose Information Appliances: The Case of Mobile Data Services."

<sup>297</sup> Abdul Azees Erumban and Simon B. de Jong, "Cross-Country Differences in Ict Adoption: A Consequence of Culture?," *Journal of World Business* 41, no. 4 (2006); Bridget Somekh, "Factors Affecting Teachers' Pedagogical Adoption of Ict," in *International Handbook of Information Technology in Primary and Secondary Education*, ed. Joke Voogt and Gerald Knezek (New York: Springer US, 2008).

<sup>298</sup> One notable exception is former Governor and Vice Presidential candidates Sarah Palin. She is an individual political actor directing her own political communication largely through social media. She has built a huge influence primarily through Twitter and Facebook posts since the 2008 election and has specifically avoided the majority of traditional media other than the conservative Fox News on which she makes semi-regular appearances. She may in fact be an early innovator who uses self-directed political communication in a new and influential way and others may follow her lead in the future. In some ways Palin could be seen as an early innovator to a political communication style that propelled Donald Trump to the 2016 GOP nomination and bid for the White House, though her political influence has waned over time. See Mark Leibovich, "Sarah Palin and the Politics of Winging It," *The New York Times*, June 5, 2011 2011.

<sup>299</sup> Padgett and Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets*.

different. Democratic staffers came from more diverse background and were organized in ways to build off of shared experiences and missions, major factors leading the Democratic party to be more technologically innovative over that period.<sup>300</sup>

One study by Goode and Stevens considered various factors that determine whether various types of business organizations chose to adopt internet technology. The study showed that the younger an organization and the greater its level of IT support, budget, technological experience, and the more innovative the organization would be.<sup>301</sup> Research has also consistently demonstrated that larger organizations are more innovative. One relevant study by Mahler and Rogers rated how innovative 324 German banks were in innovating their communication technology. They found that innovativeness was highly correlated with bank size, whether measured by total bank assets, number of employees, branches, or customers.<sup>302</sup> Although smaller businesses are often assumed to be the most nimble, large organizations generally have more resources, IT knowledge, and connections to other similar organizations, and therefore translate these characteristics into higher innovativeness.<sup>303</sup> One study of the diffusion of hate crime laws in the U.S. found that states that were larger, wealthier, neighbored others which had adopted hate crimes legislation, and had a political culture supportive of these policies (in this case a liberal or progressive tradition) were more likely to innovate earlier than others.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Kreiss and Saffer, "Networks and Innovation in the Production of Communication: Explaining Innovations in U.S. Electoral Campaigning from 2004 to 2012."

<sup>301</sup> Goode and Stevens, "An Analysis of the Business Characteristics of Adopters and Non-Adopters of World Wide Web Technology."

<sup>302</sup> The correlation coefficient between innovativeness and total bank assets was .75 and number of employees was .70. Mahler and Rogers, "The Diffusion of Interactive Communication Innovations and the Critical Mass: The Adoption of Telecommunications Services by German Banks."

<sup>303</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 409-11.

<sup>304</sup> Admittedly this case is not about ICTs or technology adoption at all but does offer a useful measure of adoption rates in an apples to apples comparison of states, within the U.S. context. Ryken Grattet, Valerie Jenness, and Theodore R. Curry, "The Homogenization and Differentiation of Hate Crime Law in the United States,

Decisions about whether or not organizations should innovate can be made either by consensus or by a small group with authority.<sup>305</sup> Regardless of decision-making process, charismatic leaders who support risk taking or influential champions of change within the organization can greatly increase the likelihood of innovation. However, even with forward-thinking leaders, new innovations often take a long time to reach critical mass and diffuse through an organization. Additionally, increased complexity, social interconnectedness, and excess resources and skills within an organization lead to greater innovativeness.<sup>306</sup> Finally it is important to note that unlike the fairly simple individual choice about whether to innovate or not, organizations go through a multistage process to determine not only whether to innovate but how to implement innovations.<sup>307</sup>

More than anything else this book is about the process of political communication change by political organizations over time. The network of people that make up these organizations can vary, and affect the innovation choices of the organizations based on various characteristics and goals. Diffusion of innovation scholarship along with related research have helped to crystalize the political choice phase of the cyclical PCC model shaped by politics, technology, economics, and societal motivations and barriers. However, the model is not perfectly suited to all political organizations all of the time. As Padgett and Powell detail, a 'one size fits all' approach that appropriately measures the breadth of social networks, and organizations does not exist.<sup>308</sup> Many

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1978 to 1995: Innovation and Diffusion in the Criminalization of Bigotry," *American Sociological Review* 63(1998).

<sup>305</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 402-03.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 411-20.

<sup>307</sup> Within an organization there is a five-stage innovation process. The first two stages in which a problem is identified (agenda-setting) and matched to an innovation (matching) form the initiation phase before a decision is made. Next the innovation is modified to fit the needs of the organization (redefining/restructuring), the relationship between the organizations is defined (clarifying) and the innovation becomes more and more common within an organization's activity (routinizing). These last three stages make up the implementation phase of the innovation process in an organization. Ibid

<sup>308</sup> Padgett and Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets*, 70-114.

scholars have shown this by utilizing thoughtful qualitative methods to dive into the structural and decision-making processes of political organizations.<sup>309</sup> It is true that the process of political communication innovation is a messy one. Nevertheless the political communication cycle broadly, and particularly the political choice phase, offers a heuristic model for connecting past and present transitional periods and comparing innovation adoption across political organization types, the primary goal of the next three chapters.

## Conclusion

The most important phase of the PCC is the second political choice phase, which incorporates the various motivations and steps involved in deciding if, when and how to adopt new political communication strategies once new ICTs gain political viability. While this innovation diffusion process affects both individuals and organizations, the majority of this book is focused on political organizations. The decision makers, complexity, and size of a political organization affect its innovativeness just as it does for non-political organizations. However when it comes to ICT adoption for political purposes, the claims mentioned in this chapter are particularly important. Political organizations are most likely to innovate earlier than others when they have more resources and are political challengers or outsiders.

Different organizations fit these different characteristics in various ways. The next chapters will examine how political communication tactics have changed for different types of political organizations over time. These case studies will help to demonstrate the pivotal political choice phase of the political communication cycle. In the next chapter I examine ICT adoption

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<sup>309</sup> Nielsen, *Ground Wars: Personalized Communication in Political Campaigns*; Baldwin-Philippi, *Using Technology, Building Democracy: Digital Campaigning and the Construction of Citizenship*. Schradie, "Political Ideology, Social Media, and Labor Unions: Using the Internet to Reach the Powerful, Not Mobilize the Powerless"; Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back*; *Prototype Politics: Technology-Intensive Campaigning and the Data of Democracy*.

and political communication innovations over time by campaigns. Campaigns serve as a particularly rich case study of how, when, and why certain political organizations innovate their political communication activities for three reasons. First, the political communication goals of campaigns have remained constant. Second, campaigns function within election cycles, offering a regular timeline to plot changes over time. Finally, it is very clear what a politically successful ICT innovation would be, namely one that clearly helps achieve electoral success.

Next, I will analyze the innovation process of social movements in chapter six and interest groups in chapter seven. Social movements are useful because of their presence throughout American political history and their universal outsider status. The ability to isolate challenger status of social movements offers great opportunity to determine its role in how and when social movements innovate their political communication strategies. Alternatively interest groups were selected because, like campaigns and social movements, they have existed in some form or another throughout American political history. However they are unique in that the main political communication goals of interest groups have changed more than other organization types. Taken separately, each of these case studies demonstrates how different organization types move through the political choice phase, motivated by different political communication goals and limited by very different constraints. Together, the case studies allow us to illustrate the recurring pattern of political communication change that makes up the political communication cycle, highlighting the technological, political, and behavioral forces that have motivated political communication innovations over the past 250 years.



## **Chapter 5: Political Choice and Campaign Communication Innovation: Why Campaigns Have the Most Consistent Innovation Adoption**

“For the most part, the best opportunities now lie where your competitors have yet to establish themselves, not where they're already entrenched.” — Paul Allen

“You have to take your own bold approach, and if you do you will be rewarded with success. Or calamitous failure. That can happen too.” — Steven Moffat

At the very heart of the American democratic ideal is the vote, the opportunity for the American electorate to cast their ballots and select those who they believe are best able to represent them. Elections have been a constant, and offer perhaps the clearest lens through which to view ongoing communication dynamics between political actors and the public. This is due to the fact that the political communication goals of campaigns have remained the most consistent of all political organizations. Campaigns have a constant desire to reach the public, to inform them, and to motivate them to vote. Campaigns have always worked toward these goals. Yet, at the end of the day the power is in the hands of those who go to the polls, whether campaigns like it or not. As Abraham Lincoln said “Elections belong to the people. It's their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters.”

This chapter analyzes the major innovations in campaign communication tactics throughout American political history. Particular focus is placed on innovations during the past century, from the emergence of broadcast communication to the introduction of the internet and explosion of social media. The historical approach applied to each of the case studies in this book offers the best method to explore how the political communication cycle has developed, both in cyclical and sequential ways over time. The cycle clearly repeats itself as the technological imperative, political choice, and stabilization phases mark the transitions between

more stable orders. Meanwhile all of this occurs during the long narrative of increasing sophistication and complexity of campaign communication tactics.

I will start by summarizing the major innovations in campaign communication tactics from 1796 through the 1990s, spanning the Elite, Mass, and Broadcast political communication orders (PCOs), offering examples of how variations in resources and challenger status affected political communication innovations. Next, I will provide a more detailed examination of the history of online campaign innovations. Within the context of the political communication cycle (PCC), The Obama campaign was the most sophisticated, strategic, and successful online campaign in history, which provided a model for other national campaigns to copy. This chapter will conclude by evaluating the extent to which the Obama model was replicated and how campaign communication is stabilizing in the years since 2008. This stabilization includes the unconventional 2016 election. By viewing the historical comparisons of campaign innovation through the lens of diffusion research, I elucidate a pattern of political communication innovations and test my earlier claims about the characteristics that are more likely to lead political campaigns to choose to innovate their political communication strategies earlier than others.

Though the term innovation is often overused and misapplied,<sup>310</sup> an innovative campaign tactic is, by definition one that is still in the testing phase, and may fail or slowly gain popularity.<sup>311</sup> While many ICT innovations may be attempted, only a select few successful tactics become widely used political communication activities. A look back at the history of campaign communication innovations begins to show how differences in resources and incumbency status matter. But another important element in this story is the level of

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<sup>310</sup> Berkun, "The Best Definition of Innovation"; *The Myths of Innovation*.

<sup>311</sup> Paul Hunt, "Thinking Outside the Tube: Why Insurgent Campaigns Drive Internet Innovation," in *Southern Political Science Association Annual Meeting* (New Orleans, LA2011), 9.

competitiveness of an election, with more competitive elections often driving campaigns to innovate earlier than they might have otherwise. Finally the size of the election and corresponding target audience matters. All campaigns aim to publicize and increase support for candidate, frame issues and opponents, and ultimately drive political action through campaign donations, support, and eventually votes. However, local or statewide campaigns would differ in their desired audience from national elections and the likelihood of political communication innovations are impacted by these variations in audience. The consistent political communication goals, regular and timely elections, and available resources have often motivated campaigns to be among the earliest of all organization types to innovate.

### **Political Choice and Campaign Innovation from the Early Printers through Mass Political Communication Order**

With its roots stretching back into colonial America, the Elite PCO was well established when America gained its independence. Newspapers targeted the influential, wealthy, and literate, and partisan politics were arguably the most influential force shaping early American newspapers. The emerging journalism profession of the 1790s was very politically active and was often linked to political parties both as a source of content and a reliable revenue stream. From the 1790s on, any politician who thought about campaigning understood that they needed a newspaper to do so.<sup>312</sup> Put simply, newspapers have always mattered in American elections. Noted political commentator, historian, and writer Gore Vidal once quipped, “Half of the American people have never read a newspaper. Half never voted for President. One hopes it is the same half.”<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*.

<sup>313</sup> Gore Vidal, *Screening History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

George Washington remains the only president to be elected with unanimous approval from the Electoral College, and he achieved this feat twice. It was because of this unprecedented support that George Washington's decision not to seek reelection in 1796 was so stunning.<sup>314</sup> His decision plunged America into the first contested, and first partisan presidential election in history, pitting Federalist John Adams, the sitting Vice President, against his Republican opponent Thomas Jefferson. The important role of competitiveness and challenger status in innovating began to become apparent immediately. This election included brutal printed attacks on the leading candidates through partisan newspapers and political broadsides disseminated directly to people on the street. Republican documents and newspapers painted Adams as a monarchist while their Federalist counterparts labeled Jefferson an atheist and an enemy of the Constitution.<sup>315</sup> Although political printing was anything but new in 1796, the first contested national election offered new opportunities to use the printing press for campaigning. Both parties used the printing press to drive their campaigns during this very competitive race.<sup>316</sup>

After losing in 1796, the Republicans continued to exploit the partisan press by dramatically increasing their messages during the four years of John Adams's tenure, eroding his influence by consistently deriding Adams as a weak leader. Two years into Adams' term, only 51 of the 185 existing papers at the time were Republican-leaning. Most of the papers at that time supported the Federalists, either explicitly or tacitly.<sup>317</sup> Nevertheless, on July 14, 1798, the Federalists, led by President John Adams, passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, the latter of which

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<sup>314</sup> During the creation of our Constitution, the framers clearly envisioned our electoral process as a dignified, orderly, and decidedly elitist affair. It was not to be as only George Washington was elected to the presidency in this manner. This dignified ideal was perhaps most clearly articulated by Alexander Hamilton in Federalist Letter 68, which describes the need for knowledgeable and qualified electors. Quote from Bernard A. Weisberger, "How to Get Elected," *American Heritage*, August 1964, 63-64. as quoted in Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*.

<sup>315</sup> *Packaging the Presidency*, 5.

<sup>316</sup> John Adams won the election by a mere three electoral votes.

<sup>317</sup> Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, 117.

brought penalties of up to two years in prison and a fine of up to two thousand dollars for anyone who should “write, print, utter, publish, or shall cause or procure to be written, printed, uttered or published... any false, scandalous and malicious writing or writings against the government of the United States... with intent to defame the said government... of the said President, or to bring them... into contempt or disrepute; or to excited against them... the hatred of the good people of the United States.”<sup>318</sup>

Much of the motivation of the Sedition Act was directed at one paper in particular, the *Aurora*, printed in Philadelphia by Benjamin Bache. The *Aurora* had openly criticized George Washington, famously calling for a “jubilee in the United States,” on the last day of George Washington’s presidency.<sup>319</sup> The paper only ramped up its criticism of Washington’s successor, referring to him as the “the blind, bald, crippled, toothless, querulous Adams.”<sup>320</sup>

The Sedition Act was arguably the most severe restriction of political speech in American history, and only unified and motivated the Republican press.<sup>321</sup> From June 1798 until the end of 1799, 88 new Republican papers were founded, half of which started after the Sedition Act was passed. The restrictive law became a major campaign issue during the next national campaign. By the election of 1800, the first officially featuring the two parties, 82 different opposition papers were either explicitly supporting the Republican Party or leaned heavily pro-Republican.<sup>322</sup> The growing opposition to the Federalists, fanned by the emboldened Republican

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<sup>318</sup> Sedition Act of 1798 as quoted in *ibid.*, 120.

<sup>319</sup> Benjamin Bache, *Aurora*, March 5, 1797.

<sup>320</sup> Frederick Scouller Allis, *Government through Opposition: Party Politics in the 1790's*, vol. 3 (New York: MacMillan, 1963), 61.

<sup>321</sup> An argument can be made for the Sedition Act of 1918 as the most restrictive as well, as the potential punishments were more severe. However the 1918 law was limited only to speech during wartime, as opposed to the general suppression of speech included in the 1798 Act, and was repealed by Congress in 1920.

<sup>322</sup> Pasley, “*The Tyranny of Printers*”: *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, 9, 407-09.

press led the Republicans to sweep the Federalists out of power in both the executive and legislative branches.

The partisan press exploded in size and influence over the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. There were over 350 newspapers printed in the United States in 1810 and over 85 percent were classified by party affiliation.<sup>323</sup> Parties began to control newspapers directly starting in 1828, and relied on them as their means to advocate for policies and gain supporters.<sup>324</sup>

The 1828 election saw the number of participating voters more than triple and it also marked the first time most votes cast were for electors committed to particular candidates. The electors favorable to either Andrew Jackson or the incumbent John Quincy Adams, were clearly and publically identified throughout the states, primarily through newspapers. That meant that by 1828, a mass audience of voters existed who were able to directly determine who would win the presidential election and this mass political audience motivated innovative communications practices.<sup>325</sup> The campaign of challenger Andrew Jackson, who ran as a man of the people, a soldier-farmer, constantly took to newspapers and handbills to extoll his virtues by building a campaign image like never before. The campaign was the first to openly create positive nicknames endearing him to a newly emerging polity. He was described most commonly as “Old Hickory,” but also as “The Modern Cincinnatus,” “The Farmer of Tennessee,” “The Second Washington,” and the “Hero of Two Wars.” Further, his virtues were supported in his 1824 campaign biography, the first published in the history of the United States presidency.<sup>326</sup> Jackson’s opponents also tried innovative ways to use the press to criticize him as unschooled

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<sup>323</sup> Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*. as cited in Botein, "Printers and the American Revolution."

<sup>324</sup> Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, 9.

<sup>325</sup> Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, 5.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

and anything but presidential, but the expanded political class overwhelmingly supported Jackson and he won with 56 percent of the popular vote and more than double the number of electoral votes as the incumbent Adams.<sup>327</sup>

The period from 1828 to 1840, roughly the years of the first PCR and the transition into the Mass PCO also witnessed the rise of the two party system in a new and profound way. The Federalists had faded quickly as a national party after 1800, and the Republicans of Jefferson grew largely unopposed until fractions within the party fought openly against one another. The growth of national parties greatly impacted campaigning and campaign communications as the parties were built largely “to control and direct the struggle for power.”<sup>328</sup> By the 1832 election, in which Jackson was reelected, a two party system existed in half of the states. Two elections later, in 1840, the system was firmly in place nationwide.<sup>329</sup> These political changes helped to motivate innovation at the same time that technological and business innovations moved the print industry forward. In particular the explosion of the penny press took place at this time, meaning that the expansion of the role of national parties in campaigning and the emergence of a national political press emerged at the same time during the first PCR in American history.

One attempt to change campaign norms took place during the election of 1840, just as the newspaper began to gain nationwide circulation for the first time and politics continued to shift from a topic for the political and business elites to one that interested and included the masses.<sup>330</sup> It was during the buildup to that election that the campaign of William Henry Harrison, the Whig

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<sup>327</sup> It's worth noting that Jackson's shrewd use of the media of the day was often at odds with the reality of his war history and policy outlook. He was not the first, nor close to the last candidate to use communication tools to enhance their image and create a positive caricature of the real and flawed individual.

<sup>328</sup> Clinton Rossiter, *Parties and Politics in America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 47.

<sup>329</sup> Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, 8.

<sup>330</sup> The first PCR developed through a convergence of political, technological, and infrastructure changes. Universal male suffrage emerged during the Jacksonian era expanding the numbers of people directly invested in national politics, while newspapers were quickly becoming accessible to most of society following the development of the penny press in 1833. Along with the subsidization of newspapers by the U.S. Post Office the Mass PCO began to emerge. For more see chapter two.

challenger to Martin Van Buren, produced the first systematic and widespread use of image advertising as well as the first songster. In addition, Harrison was the first presidential candidate to actively campaign on his own behalf.<sup>331</sup> While image advertising became a fixture in campaigns during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the innovation of self-campaigning for the office of the President was rejected for over 70 years until Wilson used it successfully in 1912.<sup>332</sup> This is a clear example of a political challenger pioneering new political communication tactics with some innovative tactics being imitated and others rejected.

### **The Broadcast Revolution in American Campaign Communication**

The roles of competitiveness and challenger status in innovating became most perceptible with the technological advances brought on by broadcast media. During the 1920s the massive diffusion of the radio allowed candidates to speak directly to the American public, which transformed the delivery, audience, and content of political messages. A live, direct political message sent simultaneously to millions of radio listeners nationwide changed campaigning forever.<sup>333</sup> Over the course of 100 days during the 1896 campaign, the tireless William Jennings Bryan made 600 speeches in 27 states while traveling over 18,000 miles in order to reach five million people.<sup>334</sup> In a single radio address a few decades later, Franklin Roosevelt would reach over 60 million.<sup>335</sup> No longer was a railway whistle-stop tour necessary to reach millions of potential supporters.<sup>336</sup> Political communication and campaigning would never be the same.

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<sup>331</sup> Although Harrison won the election he died after serving as President for only nine months.

<sup>332</sup> Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, 8-15.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

<sup>334</sup> William Jennings Bryan, *The First Battle. A Story of the Campaign of 1896* (Chicago: W. B. Conkey Company, 1896).

<sup>335</sup> Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, 19-20.

<sup>336</sup> However this strategy was not scrapped, and actually played a substantial role in the surprising election of Harry Truman in 1948.



Before Franklin Roosevelt could speak to millions in his fireside chats, the initial cohort of radio politicians began experimenting with the medium. Though Woodrow Wilson was the first president to send his voice over the radio in 1919, the first innovators to experiment with the use of radio for campaigning were New York City Mayor John F. Hylan and his Republican challenger Henry F. Curran in 1921.<sup>337</sup> Although less than one percent of American households owned a radio in 1921, New York was by far the largest and most densely populated city in America with over twice as many people than Chicago, the second largest city.<sup>338</sup> In fact, this was the first mayoral election in U.S. history in which over one million people voted. Thus the concentration of radio listeners and potential voters in New York City was the largest in the country making the radio more politically viable in New York than anywhere else.<sup>339</sup> Radio was still a relatively immature medium at that point with nearly all broadcasts remaining local. It made sense, then, that a local race would actually be more likely to innovate with radio use before national campaigns.<sup>340</sup> This is very similar to what amounted to campaigning during the first decades of the nation. Newspapers were entirely local at that time and local candidates and voluntary organizations would regularly create politicized celebrations, usually ending in political or campaign speeches primarily for the purpose of having it written into the next issue of the local paper.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 141.

<sup>338</sup> The population of New York City in 1920 was 5.6 million with a population density of 18,796 people per square mile. Chicago had 2.7 million residents that year and a population density of 14,013 per square mile. United States Bureau of the Census, "United States Census," ed. United States Census Bureau (Washington D.C.1920).

<sup>339</sup> The 1921 election did not prove to be a very competitive one with Hylan, the Democratic incumbent winning by 35.7 percent of the vote.

<sup>340</sup> Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 140-41.

<sup>341</sup> Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, 4-5.

On the presidential stage, Calvin Coolidge became the first president to use the radio as a means of regular political communication and advancement.<sup>342</sup> In 1924, Coolidge spoke an average of 9,000 words per month by radio.<sup>343</sup> Even so, radio campaigning was still in its infancy as Coolidge only used the radio twice during his presidential campaign.<sup>344</sup> Coolidge's limited use of the radio for his 1924 campaign was due in large part to the lack of political incentive. In 1923, under three percent of American households owned radios, a number that jumped to 54 percent by the time he completed his term in 1929.<sup>345</sup> It is no surprise that Coolidge successfully innovated his communication style while in office to target this growing radio audience and enhance his public image.<sup>346</sup> In a preview of what would happen again with the introduction of television and the internet, political campaigns became much more technologically savvy in the course of one or two national campaign cycles.

Most analysts agree that the presidential race in 1928 between Republican Herbert Hoover and Al Smith, the New York Democrat, was the first true radio campaign, with both sides understanding its nuances and utilizing it extensively. Both campaigns had enough funding to purchase substantial radio time and had the clear incentive to use the radio, which had reached nearly 50 percent household penetration rate by 1928. In short, both campaigns innovated because they had the necessary resources and this was the first presidential election after the radio gained political viability. The Republican National Committee (RNC) set out \$350,000 for radio broadcasts during the campaign, representing nine percent of its total budget and 17

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<sup>342</sup> Coolidge did not make addresses specifically for radio, instead broadcasting speeches to live audiences, with radio acting as a technological extension bringing the event to millions around the country. Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 142.

<sup>343</sup> While this may at first glance bring into question why Roosevelt's fireside chats were considered groundbreaking, it is important to note that the majority of Coolidge's radio time during 1924 was the airing of speeches not specifically intended for a radio audience. Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, 25.

<sup>344</sup> Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar, *The Media Game: American Politics in the Television Age*, 72.

<sup>345</sup> Bowden and Offer, "Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain since the 1920s."

<sup>346</sup> Gleason L. Archer, *History of Radio to 1926* (New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1938). Elmer E. Cornwell, *Presidential Leadership of Public Opinion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1965).

percent of its publicity budget. The Democrats gave even greater importance to radio, dedicating \$600,000 or 17.5 percent of their total budget to the radio, the largest single expense of the campaign.<sup>347</sup> The *New York Times* summarized the importance of the radio in 1928 in a headline that read: “The New Instrument of Democracy Has Brought the Candidates into the Home, Enabled Them to Reach All of the People, and Radically Changed the Traditional Form of Political Appeal.”<sup>348</sup>

While many radio innovations continued during the mid-late 1920s, the 1932 election brought the unquestioned champion of radio politics, Franklin Roosevelt, to a national stage. Despite the larger Republican budget, no one believed that the incumbent Hoover outperformed the Democratic challenger Franklin Roosevelt during the campaign. He was an insurgent candidate who had both the experience and financial resources needed to revolutionize the way that radio was used in national politics. Long before Roosevelt broadcast from the White House, he refined his radio style at the state level. This experience built his confidence in the utility of the radio for political communication. As he said before he entered the White House: “Time after time, in meeting legislative opposition in my own state...I have taken an issue directly to the voters by radio, and invariably I have met a most heartening response.”<sup>349</sup> Roosevelt took his broadcasting technique very seriously and completed dozens of addresses yearly, including his compelling and historic fireside chats.<sup>350</sup>

The power of political communication over the radio waves grew significantly through the Roosevelt presidency due to the increase in quality political programming, his mastery of the

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<sup>347</sup> When the RNC ultimately made its final expenditure tallies at the end of the campaign it too found that radio was the largest single expense coming in at \$436,000. Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 147.

<sup>348</sup> Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, 25.

<sup>349</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Coming of a New Deal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959). as quoted in Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*.

<sup>350</sup> Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 143-66.

medium, and, most importantly, the huge growth in the number of radio sets nationwide, which topped the 90 percent diffusion rate by 1933.<sup>351</sup> High diffusion assured the political viability of the radio. The result was a tenfold increase in political radio audience in one decade – from 6.3 million radio listeners to an FDR address in 1932 to the 61.4 million who tuned in to hear him on February 23, 1942.<sup>352</sup> Eight years after the radio was first used in presidential campaigns, Roosevelt successfully innovated its use by incorporating it into the way he communicated and related with the public, both during his campaign and his terms in office. His style of Presidential communication, highlighted by his use of the radio, changed the very nature of presidential communication.

The early 1930s not only witnessed the dominance of the radio in terms of its diffusion across the nation, but it served as the period that launched the sophisticated and strategic multimedia campaigns that we have become accustomed to today. The 1934 California race for Governor was a particularly crazy affair that was famously chronicled in Greg Mitchell's *Campaign of the Century*.<sup>353</sup> The election featured Upton Sinclair, the famous socialist, muckraker, and author of *The Jungle* and his extremely progressive campaign promise known as EPIC (End Poverty in California). Sinclair offered a remarkably progressive plan that put the New Deal leading Roosevelt in a difficult position.<sup>354</sup> Even with these captivating political elements, Mitchell dubbed this the campaign of the century because it gave rise to the multimedia campaign, most notably through the overwhelming media power of Hollywood executives who opposed Sinclair's leftist promises.

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<sup>351</sup> Bowden and Offer, "Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain since the 1920s."

<sup>352</sup> Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, 28.

<sup>353</sup> Greg Mitchell, *The Campaign of the Century: Upton Sinclair and the Birth of Media Politics* (New York: Random House, 1992).

<sup>354</sup> A Washington Post columnist summarized Roosevelt's dilemma surrounding the 1934 California Governor's race in verse: "This is the question that's thinning my hair; What'll I do about Upton Sinclair?" Ibid., xiii.

The negative campaign against Sinclair was unprecedented in its ruthlessness and innovativeness up to that point. To smear Sinclair, experts made innovative use of film, radio, direct mail, opinion polls, phony leaflets, national fundraising, and false advertising. Perhaps the most innovative of all was the use of powerful short propaganda films. MGM's Irving Thalberg produced incredibly partisan short films, and used moving pictures to strategically dismantle a candidate for the first time.<sup>355</sup> Hollywood put all its professional and financial resources into action against a Sinclair. Louis B. Mayer, a die-hard Republican and head of MGM studies, led much of this effort by rallying studio executives to raise enormous sums of money, intimidate their employees and produce propaganda films.<sup>356</sup> The result was one of the most dramatic and entertaining campaigns in American political history, including hilarious stunts, blatant lies, and influential public figures. Hollywood stars entered American politics for the first time. And all of this occurred shortly after the peak of the Great Depression.

Ultimately Sinclair earned fewer than 800,000 votes, equivalent to 38 percent of the popular vote, eleven points behind incumbent Republican Frank Merriam who ended up winning by a wide margin. Much of this win was attributed to the powerful multimedia smear campaign against Sinclair, but there were also other candidates splitting the more progressive votes including Raymond Haight who ran in the political center and pulled many traditional Democrats (and Republicans) who feared Sinclair's progressivism that many viewed as extreme. In retrospect, the 1934 California Governors race ushered in a new wave of innovative campaign

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid; Herbert Mitgang, "Books of the Times; a Dirty Little Precursor of Sound Bites and Polls," *The New York Times*, May 6, 1992 1992.

strategies including incorporating broadcast media weapons with speeches and analog material as a unified strategic multimedia cudgel.<sup>357</sup>

Television entered the political scene in the 1940s and quickly grew to dominate political communication. Politicians made the transition from the radio to television relatively smoothly because both mediums share a consistent network infrastructure, institutions, regulations, and communication strategies. The success of the radio and the speed of television diffusion reduced the perceived risk of trying to use the television for political communications.<sup>358</sup>

While the television quickly became a politically viable medium, politicians did not substantially innovate their campaign tactics to incorporate television for over a decade. By 1948 there were about 70 stations and several million sets across the nation,<sup>359</sup> representing one percent of households.<sup>360</sup> It is not a coincidence that the 1948 campaign was the first one in which presidential campaigns purchased television time.<sup>361</sup> However, campaign spending was a miniscule part of overall campaign spending during that campaign and Truman's victory was largely credited to his whistle-stop railroad tour instead of his radio or television campaigning. By 1951 a coast-to-coast television network had been established,<sup>362</sup> and the number of televisions across the country grew at an exceptional rate, rising from 35 percent of American households to 81 percent by 1956.<sup>363</sup> During the 1952 election Dwight Eisenhower became the

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<sup>357</sup> Sinclair's response to losing the campaign was to write a campaign memoir, of course. His book entitled *I, Candidate for Governor – and How I Got Licked*, was written quickly and sold and distributed through newspapers around the country who released it in serial format. The multimedia campaign had been born, but the power of print was far from dead. Mitchell, *The Campaign of the Century: Upton Sinclair and the Birth of Media Politics*, 544-45.

<sup>358</sup> However the high costs of television time limited early innovators to national politicians and their campaigns, which had the budgets large enough to afford television time.

<sup>359</sup> Berkman and Kitch, *Politics in the Media Age*, 34.

<sup>360</sup> Bowden and Offer, "Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain since the 1920s," 729.

<sup>361</sup> Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, 34.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Bowden and Offer, "Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain since the 1920s."

first presidential campaign to experiment with paid television campaign advertising.<sup>364</sup> While it is true that the television spot, perhaps the defining feature of the television campaign,<sup>365</sup> began in 1952, both Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson conducted most of their campaign efforts through local party organizations.<sup>366</sup> Both Eisenhower and Stevenson continued their campaign strategies during the 1956 rematch creating few notable innovations and no change in the electoral result with Ike winning in a more lopsided election than four years earlier.<sup>367</sup>

The great leap forward for television campaigning took place in 1960. Kennedy was a young, Catholic, first-term senator when he declared his candidacy to be the Democratic nominee for the 1960 election. At the time he was considered a political long-shot both within his party and especially in his campaign for the White House. He rehearsed regularly in front of the camera and surprised many by using his youthful and dynamic image on television to first defeat Democratic favorite Hubert Humphrey for the nomination and then to best Richard Nixon in the general election. Kennedy's election victory is often credited to his performance during the first nationally televised presidential debate.<sup>368</sup> The debates between Kennedy and Nixon drew uninterrupted coverage from all three networks and attracted an estimated audience of 60 to 75 million viewers.<sup>369</sup> As detailed in chapter two, it has been famously repeated that the television

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<sup>364</sup> Armstrong, *The Next Hurrah*; Sabato, *The Rise of Political Consultants*.

<sup>365</sup> Campaign advertisements could serve as a more specific case study of the process of political communication innovation. This may be added in future versions of the paper. For more on the development of political advertising see Edwin Diamond and Stephen Bates, *The Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on Television*, Third Edition ed. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992); Sig Mickelson, *From Whistle Stop to Sound Bite: Four Decades of Politics and Television* (New York: Praeger, 1989).

<sup>366</sup> One experiment by the Eisenhower campaign in 1952 was allowing media advisor Ben Duffy, who had a long-standing relationship with the Republican Party, to make strategic suggestions about President Eisenhower's television campaign. This was very unusual as early media advisors of the 1940s and 1950s existed essentially to check the technical aspects of radio and television addresses, far from the modern media consultants who strategically manage a campaign's multimedia image today. Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, 35; Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar, *The Media Game: American Politics in the Television Age*, 73.

<sup>367</sup> Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, 58-68.

<sup>368</sup> Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar, *The Media Game: American Politics in the Television Age*, 73-74.

<sup>369</sup> Bergreen, *Look Now, Pay Later: The Rise of Network Broadcasting*, 221.

viewers overwhelmingly felt that Kennedy had won the debates, while listeners on the radio believed the winner was Nixon, though the actual evidence supporting this is limited.<sup>370</sup>

However no one disputes that fact that Kennedy appeared more prepared for TV.<sup>371</sup>

Kennedy clearly fit the challenger role, with little to lose and everything to gain by innovating his campaign for the television. In addition he had the resources available and was motivated by an incredibly competitive election with only .1 percent of the popular votes ultimately separating Kennedy and Nixon. In short, the challenger and resource claims were both clearly met in this campaign, which changed the way national campaigns were conducted forever. While President Truman and Eisenhower had both used television to address the nation while in office, President Kennedy was the first to use it strategically to campaign and govern. The broadcast era of image-driven, candidate-centered campaigning had arrived, displacing the central position that political parties traditionally played in campaigns for national office.<sup>372</sup>

### **Political Choice and Campaign Innovation in the Internet Era**

Starting in the early 1990s, political campaigns began experimenting with innovating their campaign tactics to include the internet in various forms, what researchers have commonly called digital communication technologies (DCTs).<sup>373</sup> It became clear that utilizing these DCTs offered the public quality information about political actors and policy positions while making it easier for the public to become politically expressive. Both offered obvious incentives to

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<sup>370</sup> Vancil and Pendell, "The Myth of Viewer-Listener Disagreement in the First Kennedy-Nixon Debate; "Debate Score: Kennedy up, Nixon Down."

<sup>371</sup> Druckman, "The Power of Television Images: The First Kennedy-Nixon Debates Revisited; Kraus, *Televised Presidential Debates and Public Policy*.

<sup>372</sup> One important reason the parties lost influence at this time was a shift toward primaries, which took control of the nomination process out of the hands of the parties.

<sup>373</sup> Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*.



campaign strategists.<sup>374</sup> Bill Clinton, the Democratic challenger and political long shot early in the 1992 race, was the first to use the internet for a campaign. Dee Dee Myers, Bill Clinton's first White House Press Secretary recounted these strategies one year after his electoral victory:

“One little-noticed development that illustrates the interactive nature of modern technology is the use of electronic mail. During the general election campaign, the text of all Bill Clinton's speeches as well as his daily schedule, press releases, and position papers were made available through on-line computer services, such as CompuServe and Prodigy. For the first time, ordinary citizens had an easy way to obtain information that was previously available only to the national press corps...This inventive technology has already become a new medium of communication.”<sup>375</sup>

Besides the adorably quaint ways that web-based campaign communication was described in 1993, it is necessary to clarify why these innovations were “little-noticed.” In 1992 access to the internet was so minimal that its use by the Clinton campaign did little more than attract some nominal interest from academics.<sup>376</sup> It had no measurable effect on the election outcome whatsoever. However, as the popularity of the internet began to mushroom in the mid 1990s, more presidential campaigns began to use it as a campaign tool.<sup>377</sup>

Generally speaking the early adoption of campaign websites was done by the largest and most heavily funded campaigns. In 1996 online campaigning did not extend much beyond the race for the White House, with only a minority of federal congressional campaigns developing an online presence.<sup>378</sup> But the 1996 presidential campaign was the first that featured campaign websites widely, and several campaigns tried some relatively innovative uses of the website with

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<sup>374</sup> Philip Howard, "Deep Democracy, Thin Citizenship: The Impact of Digital Media in Political Campaign Strategy," *The Annals of the American Academy* 1, no. 1 (2005).

<sup>375</sup> Dee Dee Myers, "New Technology and the 1992 Clinton Presidential Campaign," *American Behavioral Scientist* 37, no. 2 (1993).

<sup>376</sup> Bimber and Davis, *Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. Elections*, 23-24.

<sup>377</sup> The Clinton Administration unveiled the first White House website in 1994 and, although it was extremely simplistic by modern standards, it indicated the beginning of the use of the internet as a communication tool used to govern from the highest level of national office.

<sup>378</sup> Though most major presidential candidates had campaign websites in 1996, the majority generally offered digital versions of their campaign brochures, earning the nickname “brouchureware.” Bimber and Davis, *Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. Elections*, 24-25.

nearly nonexistent citizen participation.<sup>379</sup> That year Bob Dole, a Republican challenger, announced his campaign website during a televised presidential debate, concluding his remarks by stating "If you really want to get involved, just tap into my home page, www.dolekemp96org." Unfortunately for the Dole campaign, he left out the "dot" before the org and at that point in the relatively nascent internet, many viewers followed his directions to the letter and only received an error message.<sup>380</sup> Nevertheless, this marked the first time that a candidate used a traditional media forum to advertise their internet presence, an innovation once again adopted by a challenger campaign.

In the late 1990s online campaigning innovations diffused to congressional and gubernatorial races, but once again, the resources needed to campaign on the internet allowed statewide campaigns to innovate earlier than House races. One study showed the fast adoption rate of campaign websites from 1996 to 1998. In 1996 two-thirds of major Senate candidates (46.8 percent of all Senate campaigns) and 22.2 percent of major House campaigns (16.1 percent of all House campaigns) had websites. In the midterm election two years later, those numbers jumped to 80 percent of major Senate campaigns (and 63.2 percent of all), and 43.6 percent of major House campaigns (and 40.6 percent of all).<sup>381</sup> Interestingly, it appears that candidates for executive offices were more likely to develop campaign websites earlier, as over 95 percent of major party candidates for governor had websites in 1998.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*, 27-40.

<sup>380</sup> Cornelia Grumman, "Dole Error Hurts Web Site Plug: Deleted 'Dot' Sends Some into Cyberether," *Chicago Tribune*, October 8, 1996.

<sup>381</sup> Dave D'Alessio, "Adoption of the World Wide Web by American Political Candidates, 1996-1998," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 44, no. 4 (2000). During the 1998-midterm elections the number of campaign websites swelled, with over 70 percent of major party Senate candidates and over one-third of major party candidates for the House of Representatives offering campaign websites. In competitive races these numbers rose to 100 percent of Senate candidates and 57 percent of U.S. House candidates using campaign websites. Bimber and Davis, *Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. Elections*, 24-25.

<sup>382</sup> D'Alessio, "Adoption of the World Wide Web by American Political Candidates, 1996-1998."

The internet's roll in political communication continued to grow during the 2000 election cycle, which was seen by many as the beginning of modern internet campaigning. Overall the theme of digital media strategies in the 2000 campaign was experimentation, which fits well with the early political choice phase of the PCC.<sup>383</sup> Thanks to a 1999 Federal Election Commission (FEC) ruling, candidates were allowed to raise money online and receive matching funds for those donations. Although several candidates used the internet to receive credit card donations in 1998, the FCC ruling incentivized campaigns to incorporate fundraising into their online campaign strategies. By fall 1999 Bill Bradley, a Democratic challenger to Vice President Al Gore, had collected \$600,000 from 3,700 online donations averaging \$162 apiece. At the same time Republican challenger John McCain had gathered \$260,000. But the McCain campaign was willing to experiment as well.<sup>384</sup> In fact, the most impressive online fundraising feat during the 2000 election belonged to the McCain campaign, which raised \$1.4 million over the three days following his surprising New Hampshire primary victory.<sup>385</sup> Though less innovative, Bush campaign utilized web-based fundraising very well, eventually averaging over \$200,000 per email solicitation.

The innovations of the 2000 presidential campaigns did not stop at online fundraising. Most of the campaigns began integrating their websites into campaign volunteer and political mobilization efforts including options for traditional volunteering as well as online activism. Online toolkits were provided by many campaigns including instructions and information that supporters could use to conduct letter-writing campaigns, organize events in their community,

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<sup>383</sup> Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*, 41.

<sup>384</sup> For a nice overview of the challenger innovations led by the Bradley and McCain campaigns see *ibid.*, 65-66; Bimber and Davis, *Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. Elections*, 38.

<sup>385</sup> At the peak of this online donating blitz, his campaign was receiving \$18,000 an hour. The McCain campaign was also the most innovative in its use of the internet for fundraising, employing new online fundraising strategies like inviting supporters to a live chat with the candidate if they first donated at least \$100. *Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. Elections*, 38-39.

and fundraise without ever speaking directly with a member of the official campaign team.

Meanwhile each campaign was actively building email lists of supporters that they could use to mobilize, fundraise, and target throughout the campaign. It should come as no surprise that these innovations came about during an election so competitive that it took a Supreme Court ruling to decide it.

The 2000 election witnessed the earliest innovations in online campaign tactics that utilized the interactivity of the internet and the 2004 campaign represented a maturation of sophisticated internet campaigns. Most major candidates relied heavily on their web presence during the 2004 campaign, including Senator John Edwards, who announced his candidacy through his website. However, by far the most innovative use of online campaigning belonged to Democratic challenger Howard Dean, the former Governor of Vermont.<sup>386</sup>

The Dean campaign can be credited with three major innovations in the evolution of online campaigning. First was interactive communication between the campaign and its supporters.<sup>387</sup> Dean was the first politician to really utilize the power of online grassroots organizing, known as netroots. For instance, he was the first presidential candidate to create a blog and was heavily influenced by Jerome Armstrong, one of the most successful pioneers of political blogging.<sup>388</sup> While blogging provided an important interactive component to the Dean campaign, even more innovative was the promise that he made to take the best ideas from his

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<sup>386</sup> Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back*.

<sup>387</sup> Dennis W. Johnson, *Campaigning in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 5.

<sup>388</sup> Jerome Armstrong created his blog called myDD.com in 2000 following the controversial presidential election. Following the lead of just a few bloggers at the time he started allowing readers to comment on his posts. The response was enormous including an aggressive writer known as “Kos,” the screen name for Markos Moulitsas Zuniga who later created his own blog, the now dominant DailyKos.com. In 2002 Armstrong, often known as the “Blogfather” for his pioneering role in the blogosphere, wrote in his blog that Dean needed to “exploit the internet... His current website is sparse, not updated, and not very interesting. What he needs to develop is a website that gravitates the online discussion of 2004 toward him.” Armstrong then went on to create an unofficial site and showed it to Dean himself. Soon the pioneer of the political blog was playing an active role in the Dean campaign. Bai, *The Argument : Billionaires, Bloggers, and the Battle to Remake Democratic Politics*, 133-34. Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back*, 44-50.

supporters and incorporate them into his campaign. This was one of the earliest attempts to crowdsource ideas about a campaign, asking for ideas from supporters that would actually help direct the campaign itself. It represented a break from the purely professionally directed, top-down campaign defining the twentieth century campaign model.<sup>389</sup>

The Dean campaign's second major innovation was the use of online communication tools to organize and coordinate offline political activities that brought groups of supporters together. The campaign collaborated with Meetup.com, a website that allowed users to sign up online to find out about real world meetings in their area.<sup>390</sup> Meetup.com sought to use the internet to bring people together, and the campaign used it to attract thousands of Dean supporters to house parties in towns and cities around the country.<sup>391</sup> This web-based mobilization effort was the first to link netroots and traditional grassroots organizing on a national political campaign and represented a campaign's use of social networking in its infancy.

Finally, Dean brought online campaign fundraising to a new level. The Dean campaign raised approximately \$22 million online in the lead up to the Iowa Caucuses, relying heavily on small donors as opposed to nearly all of his opponents.<sup>392</sup> While the Dean campaign was not the first campaign to have a team devoted to online communications, it was the first to place the internet operations at the center of the campaign.<sup>393</sup> In doing so, the Dean campaign exploited the interactivity of the internet to show how the medium could be used to recruit, mobilize, and interact with legions of political supporters. However, its potential was not maximized and ended

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<sup>389</sup> Johnson, *Campaigning in the Twenty-First Century*, 5.

<sup>390</sup> This goal was shaped largely by the work of Robert Putnam on Social Capital, especially his Seminal work *Bowling Alone*. Stephen E. Frantzich, "E-Politics and the 2008 Presidential Campaign: Has the Internet Arrived?," in *Winning the Presidency 2008*, ed. William J. Crotty (Boulder: Paradigm, 2009); Hunt, "Thinking Outside the Tube: Why Insurgent Campaigns Drive Internet Innovation."

<sup>391</sup> Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back*, 41-44; Bai, *The Argument : Billionaires, Bloggers, and the Battle to Remake Democratic Politics*, 135-36. Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*, 89-91.

<sup>392</sup> Matthew Hindman, *The Myth of Digital Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 29.

<sup>393</sup> Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back*, 46.

soon after his third place finish in Iowa and a notorious scream.<sup>394</sup> In the end, the most consistent and effective, albeit less innovative, online campaign of 2004 belonged to the Bush-Cheney reelection campaign.

The contrast between Dean's ultimate failure to secure the Democratic nomination, and the Bush-Cheney electoral success demonstrates an important lesson about political communication innovations and adoption -- those who innovate first are rarely the most successful politically. Though Dean's insurgent campaign faded quickly after the Iowa caucuses, the innovations from his online efforts were effectively incorporated into future campaigns. The innovations of the Dean campaign were impressive, but they did not just happen. These innovations were a result of an amalgam of decisions from dozens of important decision-makers within the campaign. Thus perhaps more important than any individual innovation imitated by future campaigns, the staffers, consultants and technologists from the Dean campaign brought their experience, data, and new technologies to other Democratic organizations and future campaigns. These decision-making networks were made of many of the earliest experts in digital media campaigning. And after the Dean campaign ended many of these experts founded a number of important Democratic and progressive organizations, and migrated to other campaigns including the historic Obama campaign four short years later.<sup>395</sup> After the 2004 election it became possible to dramatically innovate an online campaign and win, if sufficient resources were integrated with campaign strategy effectively. In the words of Stromer-Galley "If the 2004 presidential campaigns experimented with digital communication technologies (DCTs) to alter

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<sup>394</sup> Johnson, *Campaigning in the Twenty-First Century*, 5.

<sup>395</sup> Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back*, 12-14.

the power dynamic between campaigns and supporters, the 2008 election shifted from experimentation to control.”<sup>396</sup>

### **The 2008 Obama Campaign: Establishing a Model of Online Campaign Success**

While the evolution of online campaigning from 1992-2004 was truly amazing, the model of a strategically innovative and politically successful internet campaign remained elusive until 2008. The early innovators in online campaigning experimented with the internet as a new information center and source of campaign donations during the mid-late 1990s. From 2000-2006, every major candidate had a web presence and many, like Dean, found success at expanding their influence by experimenting with new dynamic and interactive online strategies. However, no highly innovative campaign had yet to demonstrate the power of the new ICT to help a candidate win an election as Roosevelt did with the radio and Kennedy achieved with the television. To be explicit, online communication success for a campaign means using web-based tools to strategically disseminate information, mobilize support, and earn an electoral victory. By the end of the 2008 election the Obama campaign had provided a definitive model of successful innovation utilizing DCTs.

From the outset of the 2008 election cycle, every presidential candidate had a multifaceted website and utilized interactive netroots in some way or another. No candidate was driven by online activists early in the campaign as much as Republican and former Libertarian candidate Ron Paul. Just as they did for Dean four years earlier, bloggers and meetups organized in support of Paul; however, this time they worked largely independently from the campaign. Paul supporters demonstrated how a handful of people could become an online movement, hinting at the true potential of grassroots campaigning. As of January 2008 there were more than

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<sup>396</sup> Jennifer Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age* ibid. (2014), 104.

1,140 Paul meetup groups in 900 cities with more than 67,000 members. Furthermore, they raised tremendous sums for the campaign, including a one-day total of over four million dollars, which was a record among the Republicans running for president at that time.<sup>397</sup> Paul's campaign was impressive during the early months of the campaign, and was clearly led by enthusiastic supporters using the interactive power of the internet. As such, the Paul campaign provided another case of experimental and innovative internet campaigning, a case study in high level innovation with too little top-down control.<sup>398</sup>

Although every candidate had a substantial online presence in 2008, Barack Obama's campaign was the most successful of the internet era, possibly in all of American political history. In terms of scale, the Obama campaign took every existing internet campaign strategy, email, fundraising, mobilization, organizing, multimedia, and social networking, and did it bigger and better than ever before. Second, the comprehensive scale of the Obama web presence grew out of the campaign's internet strategy, which was integrated into every facet of the overall campaign strategy. The Obama campaign internet strategy was not a series of experiments testing what the internet could do for the improbable candidate. Instead the web campaign was organized to maximize the recruitment of volunteers regardless of political background. The overall web strategy of the Obama campaign was carefully designed and tested by a team that took the internet seriously and understood its unique power to translate online interest and social networking into political action. Most importantly, unlike the innovators before him, Obama won, marking a clearly identifiable use of internet campaign tactics that were powerful, comprehensive, sophisticated and politically successful.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> Katharine Q. Seelye and Leslie Watne, "The Web Takes Ron Paul for a Ride," *The New York Times*, November 11 2007.

<sup>398</sup> Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*, 129-30.

<sup>399</sup> Hunt, "Thinking Outside the Tube: Why Insurgent Campaigns Drive Internet Innovation."



There are several reasons why the watershed internet campaign took place in 2008 and why Barack Obama was such a likely candidate to create this transformative campaign. As detailed in the chapter three, the diffusion rate of a new ICT dramatically influences its political viability. The internet, like the radio and television before it, diffused at an incredibly fast pace. This fast diffusion rate had a large impact on both when the new ICTs were first used for campaign communication and also when the first successful innovation occurred. As displayed in Table 5.1 campaigns first experimented with these ICTs when a tiny fraction of the American public used the new technology. In other words, campaign innovation started at a time when only the earliest innovators had adopted the new ICT, not nearly enough people to have a substantial affect on an election outcome.

However, by the time that the radio, television, and the internet were used in a successful innovative campaign, the vast majority of the American public had these ICTs in their home.<sup>400</sup> Besides the comparable diffusion rates, the length of time between first experimental campaign use and the successful integration was very similar between these three ICTs: 11 years for the radio, 12 for the television, and 16 for the internet or approximately 3-4 presidential election cycles for each (see Table 5.1). Using these three ICTs to build a predictive model, it appears that once the penetration rate of a new ICT tops 70 percent and there have been at least a decade worth of campaign innovation, then a truly successful innovative campaign could occur.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> By 2008 the internet was not only in 73% of American homes but for the first time more than half of all adults were using it for political purposes. In the buildup to the election 74 percent of all adult internet users went online to get information about or participate in the 2008 election making up 55 percent of all adults in America. More specifically 60 percent of internet users (44 percent of all adults) used the internet to get information or news about politics in 2008 up from 33 percent of internet users in 2000 and 22 percent in 1996. Aaron Smith and Lee Rainie, "The Internet's Role in Campaign 2008," (Washington D.C.: Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2009).

<sup>401</sup> This may be one of the most important takeaways from this chapter and it is related to an idea that noted innovations scholar Steven Johnson described in his book *Where Good Ideas Come From*. Johnson noted correctly how the most important developments in mass communication during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century have been adopted at the same social innovation rate. He called the repeated pattern the 10/10 rule, a decade to build a

**Table 5.1 Comparison of Time From First Campaign Use to Successful Political Model:  
Radio, Television, and the Internet<sup>402</sup>**

	<b>Radio</b>	<b>Television</b>	<b>Internet</b>
<b>Year Nationwide Penetration Rate Reached One Percent</b>	1923	1948	1990
<b>First Year Used for Campaigning (Percent Diffusion in That Year)</b>	1921 NYC Mayor Race (Hylan v. Curran) ( $< .4\%$ )	1948 Truman (2.3%)	1992 Clinton (About 1%)
<b>Year of Successful Campaign Model (Percent Diffusion in That Year)</b>	1932 Roosevelt (81.7%)	1960 Kennedy (89.4%)	2008 Obama (74%)
<b>Years Between First Use and Successful Model</b>	11	12	16

While the table was set for the first politically successful innovative internet campaign in 2008, Obama was particularly well situated to be the candidate to create one. He fit perfectly all of the expected characteristics of a likely innovator. First, Obama was a political challenger in every way. He was a first-term senator from the party out of power, much like Kennedy when he ran for the White House in 1960. Even within the Democratic Party, Obama was seen as an unlikely candidate from the outset, likely no match for Hillary Clinton, the clear favorite early in the campaign. Additionally, striving to be the first black candidate to become president made

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new platform, and a decade for it to find a mass audience. Johnson's 10/10 rule is related to the 30-year rule, a concept originally created by renowned technology forecaster and writer Paul Saffo, and expanded on by Roger Fidler. The 30-year rule is a guide for how long new ideas take to be accepted into a culture. Increasing excitement but limited growth is seen in the first decade corresponding with little perceived need. The second decade witnesses increasing market penetration, followed by acceptance in the final decade. The same timeframe is essentially what I found in terms of campaign communication innovation as well, which suggests that the general theory may be able to be extended to more specific political communication innovations. Steven Johnson, *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010), 11-16; Fidler, *Mediamorphosis: Understanding New Media*; Paul Saffo, "The 30-Year Rule," *Design World* 1992.

<sup>402</sup> All data for the diffusion rates of radio and television are from Bowden and Offer, "Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain since the 1920s," 729. American internet access from 2000-2010 taken from the Pew Research Center's ongoing surveys about internet access. All surveys prior to March 2000 were conducted by the Pew Research Center for People & the Press. For 2000-2004, internet users include people who ever go online to access the internet or to send and receive email. All data prior to 1995 was taken from International Telecommunications Union estimates. "Online News Survey." International Telecommunications Union, "Ict Statistics"; Duggan and Perrin, "Americans' Internet Access 2000-2015."

Obama a challenger both politically and historically, providing tremendous incentive to innovate. While the 2008 general election results did not suggest a particularly competitive election, polls stayed close until the Wall Street collapse in late September. Moreover, the Democratic nomination was extremely competitive, and Obama had to innovate strategically from the beginning of his campaign in order to compete with the heavily favored Clinton. David Axelrod, the chief campaign advisor to Obama, later recalled the early days of the Obama campaign saying “The eight people that made up the entirety of the Obama campaign sat around and thought about how we could get a black man named Barack Hussein Obama to beat Hillary Clinton, the biggest powerhouse in the party. The answer was technology.”<sup>403</sup>

The Obama campaign had tremendous technological and financial resources, and used both extremely well. The candidate was personally comfortable with new communication technology, but more important, the Obama campaign hired staff that was focused on integrating the internet and web metrics into campaign activities than any other in history. Additionally, the Obama campaign was enormously effective at fundraising online and offline; so much so that his campaign chose to be the first ever to turn down public financing during the presidential general election which would have included \$84.1 million from the U.S. Treasury and a ban on any additional private fundraising.<sup>404</sup> Ultimately the decision served the campaign well, as it raised a record of around \$775 million, over \$500 million of which came from online donations.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Axelrod.

<sup>404</sup> Adam Nagourney, Jeff Zeleny, and Michael Cooper, "Obama Forgoes Public Funds in First for Major Candidate," *The New York Times*, June 20, 2008 2008.

<sup>405</sup> It is misleading to suggest that online fundraising drove his early campaign. Obama had a well-organized traditional fundraising operation, which he relied on heavily during the first year of his campaign. internet donations totaled only 15 percent of his total through 2007. Once Obama had early campaign successes, especially in the Iowa Caucus, he was seen as a viable candidate and the floodgates of online donations began to open. Ultimately the Obama campaign raised over \$500 million in online donations from three million donors who donated a total of six and a half million times. The half billion dollars was raised with an astonishingly low average donation of only 80 dollars. In September 2008, Obama's single biggest month of fundraising, he raised 100 million dollars online, and 150 million dollars in total. After

The specific innovations that the Obama campaign brought to online campaigns offered a potential blueprint for future online campaigns.<sup>406</sup> Among the most important of these innovations, the campaign built an enormous email list, a cost-effective and direct online multimedia message machine, and personalized online political mobilization tools, all directed toward creating a sense of community among Obama supporters.

The first major innovation of the Obama campaign was to build and fine-tune a list of dedicated supporters and potential donors through an enormous, strategically implemented email list. This innovation has a decidedly low-tech historical precursor, direct mail, which emerged nearly 50 years earlier. Direct mail is essentially “junk mail,” but there is little doubt that it is very effective junk.<sup>407</sup> Political direct mail has been used primarily for fundraising for interest groups and campaigns. Direct mail identifies people that may be interested in supporting or donating to a political cause. Through a series of increasingly detailed and personalized mailings, a list of dedicated political contributors are identified and used over and over again for political causes. More valuable than any single campaign is the list of potential donors and politically active individuals that direct mail strategies produces over time.<sup>408</sup>

Anyone studying the history of political direct mail knows that the growth of the practice can be credited to Richard Viguerie, the conservative direct mail pioneer who helped to revolutionize Republican and conservative politics by making it more accessible to the public

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Republican Vice Presidential nominee Sarah Palin dismissed the value of community organizing in her acceptance speech saying “I guess a small-town mayor is sort of like a community organizer, except that you have actual responsibilities,” Obama raised ten million dollars in 24 hours. Richard Wolffe, *Renegade: The Making of a President* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2009). Jose Antonio Vargas, “Obama Raised Half a Billion Online,” *Washington Post*, November 20 2008.

<sup>406</sup> It’s important to point out that many of these innovations were improvements built on innovative attempts by earlier campaigns and that those innovations filtered to the Obama campaign largely through shared networks of people who worked on early Democratic or progressive campaigns. Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*, 104-05. Daniel Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back* *ibid.* (2012).

<sup>407</sup> Armstrong, *The Next Hurrah*.

<sup>408</sup> Sabato, *The Rise of Political Consultants*, 226-40; Armstrong, *The Next Hurrah*, 35-135.

and remarkably more effective at fundraising. Viguerie's first direct mail campaign was for Texan John Tower, a young conservative Republican, running against Lyndon Johnson for the U.S. Senate in 1960.<sup>409</sup> Johnson defeated Tower handily but after Johnson became Vice President, Tower won a special election becoming the first Republican Senator elected from Texas since reconstruction. The direct mail campaign was not credited with having a sizable effect on the election result but peaked Viguerie's interest and led to his shift to specializing in the practice.

In 1965 Viguerie formed a direct-mail corporation known as the Richard A. Viguerie Company (or RAVCO) based initially on the membership list of the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). Starting with \$400, he grossed \$100,000 for YAF by the end of 1965. Four years later he was mailing over 20 million letters per year. And by 1977 he had collected and stored more than 30 million names of conservative-leaning individuals, a group that was thought to be extreme political outsiders when he started working for John Tower in 1960.<sup>410</sup>

The 1964 Goldwater presidential campaign was the most sophisticated national direct mail campaign up to that point. One important reason for this was an entirely apolitical infrastructure upgrade, the ZIP code, which was introduced one year earlier to make the postal service more efficient. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the subsidization of the newspapers and expansion of the postal service created the opportunity for newspapers to expand their circulation and political impact dramatically.<sup>411</sup> The increasing sophistication of the post office in the early 1960s offered the same opportunity for those looking to use the mail for specialized political and

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<sup>409</sup> *The Next Hurrah*.

<sup>410</sup> Sabato, *The Rise of Political Consultants*.

<sup>411</sup> John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse*.

commercial purposes. The GOP nurtured the donor list originated by the Goldwater campaign in 1964 and by 1972 The Republican Party had produced a highly effective direct-mail machine.<sup>412</sup>

On the Democratic side, the 1972 McGovern campaign created a 12 million dollar list of potential Democratic contributors and, after losing the election handed the list over to the DNC. The DNC proceeded to essentially ignore this enormously powerful list of potential donors for years, mainly because they were still in the driver's seat in national politics at that point and didn't see the need for major strategic upgrades.<sup>413</sup> Despite the electoral loss, the overall position of the Democratic party was anything but a challenger at that time. However, thanks to Viguerie and many others, the conservative wing of the GOP moved from outsiders in national politics in the early 1960s to the dominant force in American politics by 1980 serving as a great example of challengers' incentive to innovate regardless of how cutting edge the technology they are using.

The successful model for direct mail was clearly established by the 1970s and was imitated and updated over the next two decades. One study found that Congressional campaign expenditures on direct mail increased about 300 percent between 1982 and 1990, when controlling for inflation, and that incumbents increased their spending on direct mail more than challengers.<sup>414</sup> By the 1990s direct mail was no longer a new innovation used by political outsiders, it was an essential tactic used for successful national campaigns.

The strategic building and maintenance of contact and donor lists played a central role in the direct mail strategies of the 1960s – 1990s, just as it did for Obama's web-based efforts in 2008. The key for Obama was to capitalize on growing enthusiasm to capture supporters' email addresses, and use them strategically. The vast majority of those who signed up for the Obama

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<sup>412</sup> Armstrong, *The Next Hurrah*.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid., 121-22.

<sup>414</sup> Ruth Ann Weaver-Lariscy and Spencer F. Tinkham, "Use and Impact of Direct Mail in the Context of Integrated Marketing Communications: U.S. Congressional Campaigns in 1982 and 1990," *Journal of Business Research* 37, no. 3 (1996).

email list through 2007 did so without solicitation. One quarter of them donated online and nearly all volunteered to help the campaign. The campaign recognized immediately how active these early supporters were and actively tried to build its email list.<sup>415</sup> Email was the main method of communication between the campaign and its supporters, and each message was carefully crafted with a mix of text, pictures, and hyperlinks, including a link to donate to the campaign. The campaign emphasized short and concise emails that conveyed an intimate and inclusive tone.<sup>416</sup> The campaign also used big events to increase their lists, including advertising that the first announcement of Obama's selection of his running mate would be sent via text message, motivating thousands to sign up online.<sup>417</sup> By the end of the campaign the email list had grown to 11 million.

The Obama campaign also set the bar in terms of online multimedia, thoroughly dominating all other candidates in the 2008 election. This was particularly evident in the online videos posted by the campaign. By Election Day the campaign had posted over 1,800 videos on its YouTube channel totaling 110 million views, while McCain, his Republican opponent, had posted 330 videos with only 25.5 million views (see Table 5.2).<sup>418</sup> The videos posted by the Obama campaign served several purposes. First, the campaign posted television ads and other messages to essentially gain free advertising opportunities.<sup>419</sup> Along with saving a tremendous amount of campaign resources, online videos help to provide a direct message to supporters,

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<sup>415</sup> David Plouffe, *The Audacity to Win: How Obama Won and How We Can Beat the Party of Limbaugh, Beck, and Palin* (New York: Penguin, 2010), 327.

<sup>416</sup> Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back*; Rahaf Harfoush, *Yes We Did: An inside Look at How Social Media Built the Obama Brand* (Berkeley, CA: New Riders, 2009). and for more information on how the campaign used A/B testing to continually refine the style and effectiveness of emails see Dan Siroker, *How We Used Data to Win the Presidential Election*, (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford Center for Professional Development), Guest Lecture to Computer Science 547: Human-Computer Interaction Seminar, Stanford University.

<sup>417</sup> Adam Nagourney and Jeff Zeleny, "Obama Chooses Biden as Running Mate," *The New York Times*, August 23 2008.

<sup>418</sup> Peter Fenn, "Communication Wars: Television and New Media," in *Campaigning for President 2008: Strategy and Tactics, New Voices and New Techniques*, ed. Dennis W. Johnson (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>419</sup> Andrew Rasiej and Micah L. Sifry, "The Web: 2008's Winning Ticket," *Politico*, November 12 2008.

including messages meant to encourage them, share campaign strategy, and create a sense of community.<sup>420</sup>

**Table 5.2: Online Metrics for the 2008 Presidential Campaign<sup>421</sup>**

	Obama	McCain
Facebook friends on Election Day	2,397,253	622,860
Number of Twitter followers	125,639	5,319
Unique visits to campaign websites on week ending Nov. 1, 2008	4,851,069	1,464,544
Online videos mentioning candidate	104,454	64,092
Campaign-made videos posted on YouTube	1,822	330
Total hours people spent watching campaign videos (as of Oct. 23, 2008)	14,600,000	488,000
Cost of equivalent purchase of 30-second TV ads	\$46.9 million	\$1.5 million
References to campaign voters contact operation on Google	479,000	325
Number of direct links to the campaign's voter contact tool	475	18

The Obama campaign's single most important original tactical innovation was the development of a website that was empowering, interactive, and fully integrated with the rest of the campaign. Research has shown that most visitors to campaign websites are not swing voters, but rather are those with strong allegiances to particular parties, and are thus more likely to be ready and willing to actively get involved in a campaign.<sup>422</sup> David Plouffe describes how the Obama campaign strategically aimed to capitalize on these potential volunteers by realizing "that a smart, and large, internet presence was the best way to provide people with the opportunity and

<sup>420</sup> Perhaps the most effective style of these direct messages to supporters were volunteer testimonials which featured Obama supporters sharing their experiences and reasons for supporting the campaign and urging others to do the same. Hunt, "Thinking Outside the Tube: Why Insurgent Campaigns Drive Internet Innovation," 27.

<sup>421</sup> Rasiej and Sifry, "The Web: 2008's Winning Ticket."

<sup>422</sup> Kirsten A Foot and Steven M. Schneider, *Web Campaigning* (Boston: MIT Press, 2006); Bimber and Davis, *Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. Elections*; Hindman, *The Myth of Digital Democracy*.



tools to get involved with the campaign – they were already immersed in the world of technology and would be more likely to encounter us there.”<sup>423</sup>

The centerpiece of this web presence in the 2008 campaign was my.barackobama.com, generally called “MyBO,” a custom built social networking site fully embedded into the official campaign website. MyBO offered a personalized web-based action center where users could directly connect to local campaign activity or issues they found most important, and served as the most direct link between netroots activity and more traditional grassroots organizing offering hundreds of thousands of opportunities for real world political action.<sup>424</sup> Where the 2004 Dean campaign was the first to utilize social networking, the Obama campaign integrated social networking into its entire web strategy, linking online networks to offline campaign activity. As with other social networking sites, users could personalize this site by creating profiles, posting pictures, and writing blogs, and they were given the tools to take political action such as making campaign calls from home and creating personal fundraising pages.<sup>425</sup> In addition, MyBO included interactive features such as meetup coordination, videos, and links to a wide variety of third party social networking sites.<sup>426</sup> All of these integrated tools amounted to what Stromer-Galley calls controlled interactivity, something that the Obama campaign modeled in a way never before seen in modern campaigning.<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Plouffe, *The Audacity to Win: How Obama Won and How We Can Beat the Party of Limbaugh, Beck, and Palin*.

<sup>424</sup> Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*, 132-38.

<sup>425</sup> Over two million profiles were created on mybarackobama.com. In addition, 200,000 offline events were planned, about 400,000 blog posts were written and more than 35,000 volunteer groups were created. Individuals could create their own personal fundraising pages using this site and 70,000 were created raising over 30 million dollars. Vargas, “Obama Raised Half a Billion Online.”

<sup>426</sup> The site also includes links to the largest social networking sites including facebook.com and myspace.com. The campaign also created profiles on similar sites targeting various subsets of the population that were linked to the Obama site include migente.com and MyBatanga.com for the American Hispanic population, Black Planet for African Americans, AsianAve.com for Asian Americans, Faithbase.com for faith-focused Christians, eons.com, for Baby Boomers, and Glee.com for the Gay, Lesbian, Transsexual, and bisexual communities. “Change We Can Believe in - Home,” <http://www.barackobama.com/index.php>.

<sup>427</sup> Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*, 132-38.

Each of these online campaign activities awarded users points, creating additional incentives for supporters, and were monitored by the campaign so it could identify highly active volunteers it might want to recruit into official campaign service. The campaign also frequently featured goal-oriented challenges, such as making a certain number of calls or raising a specified fundraising total. Taken together, this was the most successful example of the gamification of online campaigning.<sup>428</sup>

The campaign's online presence was constantly monitored and analyzed in order to maximize efficiency and utility. The campaign used A/B testing to evaluate multiple variations of the same email in order to assess the impact of a header, the value of embedding video versus audio, and whether a donate button might be more effective than a text link.<sup>429</sup> The careful data analysis provided strong metrics that helped gather and use information from all online supporters in a way that would not have been possible without the sophisticated MyBO centerpiece and the data-capturing abilities of the internet.<sup>430</sup> Ultimately the tools and refinement of the online campaign were used to aid and build an enormously effective offline campaign, including canvassing, phone calls, and get out the vote (GOTV) efforts.

Much of the credit for the nuanced, interactive, and dynamic online presence goes to Chris Hughes, a cofounder of Facebook, who was hired by the Obama campaign as Director of

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<sup>428</sup> Gamification refers to incentivizing political participation by creating game-like activities like awarding points for activities, allowing supporters to reach different levels of commitment, and providing incentives for political action like matching donations. Although most candidates in 2008 used some forms of gamification of their sites, the Obama campaign integrated this process in the most seamless and effective manner. However 2008 was not the first time this strategy was used with some tracing the earliest attempts at awarding supporters points in order to gamify campaign websites back to the 2000 Bush campaign. *Personal Interview with Fritz Chaleff*, (2011).

<sup>429</sup> Harfoush, *Yes We Did: An inside Look at How Social Media Built the Obama Brand*, 159; Siroker, *How We Used Data to Win the Presidential Election*. Issenberg, *The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns*.

<sup>430</sup> For a detailed account of how data was used to constantly refine the 2008 online campaign see Siroker, *How We Used Data to Win the Presidential Election*.

Online Organizing and played an important role in the design of MyBO.<sup>431</sup> Hughes was just one of many important people in the Obama campaign that motivated innovative choices for the campaign. Dan Siroker, a former Google staffer was hired as the Director of Analytics for the 2008 Obama campaign and led many innovative analytics efforts for the campaign including its A/B testing.<sup>432</sup> His value to the campaign was evident and he was also asked to serve as the Deputy New Media Director for the presidential transition after the Obama victory.<sup>433</sup>

Obama and his campaign professionals created the first politically successful online campaign by strategically integrating the interactive and analytically rich power of the internet with its political goals at a time when the American public was ready and able to respond. Obama was a political challenger who had to fight for his political life during the Democratic primaries, and in doing so built a prolific fundraising, data collection, and political mobilization machine.

### **Online Political Change Since 2008: Establishing Some Norms in Digital Campaigning**

While the 2008 Obama campaign served as the template for successful modern campaigning utilizing DCTs, the balance between imitation of the successful model and continued incremental innovation has varied greatly. Campaigns share political communication goals, so it would make sense that campaigns would have an incentive to imitate what worked in 2008. However, copying will only occur if effective campaign innovations are easily replicable by other campaigns, meaning they are feasible to try based on the costs, expertise, and technological requirements of copying such an innovation. Each of these potential barriers helps

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<sup>431</sup> Plouffe, *The Audacity to Win: How Obama Won and How We Can Beat the Party of Limbaugh, Beck, and Palin*, 92. Harfoush, *Yes We Did: An inside Look at How Social Media Built the Obama Brand*, 74.

<sup>432</sup> Siroker, *How We Used Data to Win the Presidential Election*; Kreiss, *Prototype Politics: Technology-Intensive Campaigning and the Data of Democracy*; *Taking Our Country Back*.

<sup>433</sup> Dan Siroker went on to found Optimizely, a popular data analytics firm that uses some of the same techniques used by the Obama campaign, including A/B testing to optimize and personalize web solutions for companies and not-for-profits.

to suggest why some of the innovations of the Obama campaign were imitated and others were not. Additionally, campaigns are risk-averse. Regardless of how helpful new digital tools seem to be, consultants and staffers are often reluctant to use them because they are not sure they will actually bring them votes.<sup>434</sup> This is especially true of campaigns have less resources and staffers with less personal experience using newer tools and strategies.

The evolution of how social media has been used in political campaigning offers a good example. The first Obama campaign was active in over 15 fledgling social networking sites starting early in the campaign cycle. In addition, they created MyBO, which served as their embedded social network. But in the years that followed the social networking landscape began to stabilize which became evident in how campaigns built on the success of Obama in 2008. Williams and Gulati conducted several studies of website design and social networking use by campaigns and have seen dramatic changes over the past few election cycles.<sup>435</sup> In 2010, one study evaluated how 836 Congressional campaigns used Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and noted both a high adoption rate and very fast diffusion rate over just a few election cycles. Facebook was launched in early 2004, with YouTube beginning a year later and Twitter emerging mid-2006. Facebook was first available to candidates during the 2006 campaign, and only 16% of Democrats and Republicans running for the House adopted a Facebook profile that

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<sup>434</sup> Baldwin-Philippi, *Using Technology, Building Democracy: Digital Campaigning and the Construction of Citizenship*, 19.

<sup>435</sup> See Christine B. Williams and Girish J. Gulati, "Social Networks in Political Campaigns: Facebook and the 2006 Midterm Elections" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, 2007); "Closing Gaps, Moving Hurdles: Candidate Web Site Communication in the 2006 Campaigns for Congress," in *Politicking Online: The Transformation of Election Campaign Communications*, ed. Costas Panagopoulos (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009); "Facebook Grows Up: An Empirical Assessment of Its Role in the 2008 Congressional Elections," in *Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association* (Chicago 2009); "Congressional Candidates' Use of Youtube in 2008: It's Frequency and Rationale," *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 7, no. 2-3 (2010); "Communicating with Constituents in 140 Characters or Less: Twitter and the Diffusion of Innovation in the United States Congress," in *Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association* (Chicago 2010).

year. By 2008 that number had spiked to 72%, and increased again to 82% in 2010.<sup>436</sup> There is strong evidence that this Facebook engagement was consequential as users were more likely to participate both online and off the during 2008 cycle.<sup>437</sup> The 2010 midterm election marked only the second election in which YouTube was available to Congressional candidates, with use again jumping from 28% in 2008 to 72% in 2010. Twitter is the youngest of the social networking sites,<sup>438</sup> and although 2010 was the first election cycle in which it was available, nearly three-fourths (74%) of all House candidates adopted a Twitter account, even more than YouTube although it had been available during previous election cycles.<sup>439</sup>

Just like the early days of online political campaigns, Senate campaigns, which are larger, better funded and have a larger target audience, innovated at a faster rate and used each of the social networking platforms to a higher degree than those running for the House. By 2010, a striking 98% of Senate candidates had a Facebook account, 90% had a YouTube channel, and 94% opened a Twitter account in the first election where it was available.<sup>440</sup> This is especially impressive when compared to communication methods that did not use social networking sites. In 2010, these sites were used by about the same number of campaigns as sending email updates (96%) and over twice as often as sending text message updates (42%).<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> "Social Media in the 2010 Congressional Elections," *ibid.* (2011).

<sup>437</sup> Leticia Bode, "Facebooking It to the Polls: A Study in Online Social Networking and Political Behavior," *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 9, no. 4 (2012).

<sup>438</sup> Some have argued that Twitter is less of a social networking platform than others like Facebook because messages are primarily public and essentially broadcast while others can follow Twitter users without actually interacting or knowing one another at all.

<sup>439</sup> Williams and Gulati, "Social Media in the 2010 Congressional Elections," 13.

<sup>440</sup> One of the best studies measuring the remarkable growth in the volume and variety of Congressional Twitter use over time is Leticia Bode and David S. Lassen, "Social Media Coming of Age: Developing Patterns of Congressional Twitter Use, 2007-14," in *Twitter and Elections around the World: Campaigning in 140 Characters or Less*, ed. Richard Davis, Christina Holtz Bacha, and Marion R. Just, *Routledge Studies in Global Information, Politics and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>441</sup> Epstein, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised Anymore: New Technology, Political Choice, and Changes in Political Communication from the Newspaper to the Internet."

One possible reason for the surprisingly low imitation rate of personalized social media sites like MyBO is the high level of resources and technological expertise needed to incorporate these tools into a campaign. Yet, a more salient reason may have been the fact that many campaigns may have simply not felt that these innovations were cost-effective. The data suggest that, at least in 2010, they may not have been. While 64.3% of those who created a personalized site won their primary, 68.1% of those without the sites won. The effectiveness of these sites is even less evident when it came to general elections, as only 35.7% of those with the sites won compared to 43.1% of those without.<sup>442</sup> If campaigns have the choice of constructing a new embedded interactive campaign site that may, or may not be conclusively consequential, or using proven third party social media sites like Facebook, the choice became an obvious one.<sup>443</sup>

The 2012 election offered evidence of how ubiquitous some practices can become in one presidential cycle. The use of a MyBO style site was less necessary as the social networking and website were more fluidly integrated with third party sites like Facebook and Twitter. Most campaign resources and meetups existed within the main websites. While these features were nearly universal among presidential campaigns in 2012, the effectiveness of online campaigning was far from equal with Obama building upon his dominance in terms of how user friendly, accessible, and powerful the online tools proved to be.<sup>444</sup> Much more important than the tools

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<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

<sup>443</sup> Bode, "Facebooking It to the Polls: A Study in Online Social Networking and Political Behavior." Robert M Bond et al., "A 61-Million-Person Experiment in Social Influence and Political Mobilization," *Nature* 489, no. 7415 (2012); Katherine Elizabeth Haenschen, "Get @ the Vote: Using Facebook and Email to Increase Voter Turnout" (Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2016).

<sup>444</sup> One study explored the difference in the online influence of the various campaigns involved in the 2012 election, showing, among other things, a new way to measure Obama's dominance in social media in 2012. Leticia Bode and Ben Epstein, "Campaign Klout: Measuring Online Influence During the 2012 Election," *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 12, no. 2 (2015).

available in 2012 was the remarkable inequality in how the two leading parties invested in IT resources including people, software, and hardware.<sup>445</sup>

More than anything else, the 2012 election indicated how much more sophisticated the data-driven campaign could become. Where the controlled interactivity of 2008 seemed to be the game changer, 2012 showed that the advantage in the long game is won with data, something that controlled web-based interactive campaigning can collect, organize and use to a strategic level unheard of in earlier eras. And this data is built over multiple election cycles. Dating back to 2001 the Democrats started building the Voter Activation Network (VAN) in Iowa, first developed to reconcile and organize the myriad of Democratic supporters and potential caucus goers. By 2006, the Democrats had two competing national databases and the VAN emerged from a number of state specific interfaces to become the national standard for voter contact from the Democratic Party and their campaigns. The VAN was the web interface that field organizers used to interact with the massive databases maintained by the campaigns.<sup>446</sup> Through the 2008 campaign, with all of its controlled interactivity, email list building, and fundraising success, an enormous amount of data was collected and organized. In total data from over 100 million Americans was collected, analyzed and organized.<sup>447</sup>

The transition from 2008 to 2012 included shifting this data-collection and analytics to a much more central location in digital campaign strategies. The VAN, which had collected and merged a tremendous amount of voter information, including providing everyone a seven digit VAN identification number that could move with them, much like a social security number.<sup>448</sup> However the VAN was becoming insufficient on its own to meet the needs of presidential

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<sup>445</sup> Sean Gallagher, "How Team Obama's Tech Efficiency Left Romney It in the Dust," *arstechnica*, November 20, 2012.

<sup>446</sup> Issenberg, *The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns*, 244-45.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*, 245-46.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

campaigning in 2012 because of all the additional web-based data that had been collected. One incredible advantage of the Obama reelection campaign was their massive database, but it was unwieldy in 2008. To make the massive amount of data more user-friendly and malleable, the campaign worked on Project Narwhal, meant to be the white whale of all combined voter and online files.<sup>449</sup> Once completed, this single data file could be interfaced by campaign staff to run various analyses to do everything from targeted email messages to community specific door knocking to experimentation and predictions.<sup>450</sup> It could be used to track and target Americans over time and across campaigns or issues.

During the 2012 campaign the Obama campaign used all of the information they had about voters to run experiments and successfully parcel potential voters into individual units, creating micro-targeting opportunities that mark a dramatic shift in campaign communication possibilities. Among many innovative communication strategies, the 2012 Obama campaign purchased massive information collected from digital video recorders (DVRs) across the nation, about what shows were being watched and cross-matched that against the social, political, and voter data they had already collected. This allowed the campaign to buy ads on rarely used, and substantially cheaper cable networks, like TV Land, that were more effective at reaching the specific voters they were targeting.<sup>451</sup> Ultimately the larger the amount of data that a campaign has and the ability they have to process it, the more narrowly focused their campaign communication techniques can be.

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<sup>449</sup> Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*, 162. Daniel Kreiss, *Prototype Politics: Technology-Intensive Campaigning and the Data of Democracy* ibid. (2016).

<sup>450</sup> Jennifer Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age* ibid. (2014), 162. Sasha Issenberg, "A More Perfect Union: How President Obama's Campaign Used Big Data to Rally Individual Voters," *MIT Technology Review*, December 19, 2012.

<sup>451</sup> "A More Perfect Union: How President Obama's Campaign Used Big Data to Rally Individual Voters."



Overall the 2012 election was an instructive example of the complexities of how and when campaigns innovate political communications tactics as they move through the PCC. Mitt Romney was the challenger, and his campaign had similarly massive resources compared to the Obama campaign. Yet they didn't innovate their digital practices in particularly notable ways, and remained well behind the targeted innovative efforts of Obama 2012. Why? Once again the networks and expertise of the people within these campaigns are key. The Obama reelection campaign had built a massive advantage in data and expertise. Therefore, the incentive to innovate for the challenger Romney was clearly there but the capacity, relative to the Obama campaign, was not. In 2012, the expertise, technological tools, coordination, and time advantage all served the incumbent.

Eight years earlier, the Bush reelection campaign also ended up winning, even with all the pioneering innovations from the Dean campaign. But since 2004, the technological advantage belonged to the Democrats for the most part. This advantage had been built over several election cycles as Democrats had invested much more heavily in technology, data, and analytics, recruited many more people from related industries, and founded many more firms and organizations with these networks from 2004-2012.<sup>452</sup> In one notable study, Kreiss and Saffer measured campaign innovation over this time period by applying a network analytic approach to campaign and party organization staff, teams, and individuals. They found that the Democratic Presidential campaigns from 2004-2012 were more likely to pull people in from various outside industries, but also that they were more likely to ground the teams working together in their commonalities so that their resources and expertise could be linked more easily and

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<sup>452</sup> Daniel Kreiss and Christopher Jasinski, "The Tech Industry Meets Presidential Politics: Explaining the Democratic Party's Technological Advantage in Electoral Campaigning, 2004–2012," *Political Communication* 33, no. 4 (2016).

innovation would be more likely.<sup>453</sup> Thus it is clear that all innovations will not come from challengers, though the incentive is there. This is especially true as the networks of those experienced in using newer communication technology toward political goals continue to refine tools and tactics. In other words, from 2004-2012 political campaigns moved through much of the political choice phase of the PCC and began to stabilize how digital tools were used. During that time, challenger status was less important in determining innovativeness than networks of experienced staffers that could be organized to innovate the digital communications of campaigns.

Within this context, the 2016 presidential election was likely to witness fewer innovations in political communications than earlier campaigns, despite the election itself being wholly unpredictable. Neither President Obama nor Vice President Joe Biden were running, but Democratic advantages built over the previous cycles were likely to help the party and its eventual nominee, Hillary Clinton. Clinton's 2016 campaign was a powerhouse in every perceivable way. Her campaign assembled a massive staff that brought with them experience used to coordinate digital strategies in the most coordinated campaign to date. Everything about the campaign was big, including its war chest. Between campaign contributions and money donated to outside SuperPACs she raised nearly \$800 million dollars.<sup>454</sup> They mobilized massive social media efforts including real-time fact checking, regular video creation, and easily sharable messages on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Further they bombarded their email lists at a level unmatched by any other campaigns. But surprisingly the campaign made the decision to

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<sup>453</sup> Kreiss and Saffer, "Networks and Innovation in the Production of Communication: Explaining Innovations in U.S. Electoral Campaigning from 2004 to 2012."

<sup>454</sup> Center for Responsive Politics, "2016 Presidential Race," <https://www.opensecrets.org/pres16/>.

stop directly emailing those who were passively receiving emails around two months before election day, just as many started to pay attention more and more.<sup>455</sup>

Ultimately the massive multimedia Clinton juggernaut was remarkably well organized but never particularly innovative. Many saw her as less authentic when compared to the more populist Trump and Sanders campaigns. Nevertheless she was expected to win by nearly everyone up to election night. In terms of political communication, the Clinton campaign was the most obvious extension of the networks, strategy, and expertise built during the Obama campaigns. These resources and organization maintained Democratic technological advantages but did not help her to victory.

Before she could battle Trump in the general election Clinton had to best the upstart Sanders campaign which emerged from the humblest of beginnings to captivate millions. Those working on the campaign employed a dynamic strategy combining online and offline tools to mobilize and promote the grassroots populist campaign of the wild-haired Senator from Vermont. One central cog in the operation was Connect with Bernie (CWB), an online platform that enabled supporters to coordinate with one another and the campaign.<sup>456</sup> In some ways this was a throwback to MyBO, but it exemplified the controlled interactivity that has continued to develop as online campaigning matured and stabilized.<sup>457</sup> Once supporters signed up with CWB they were taken to a page where they received action alerts to post on their social media accounts and provided integrated share buttons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Tumblr.

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<sup>455</sup> Broxmeyer and Epstein, "The (Surprisingly Interesting) Story of Email in the 2016 Presidential Election."

<sup>456</sup> Joel Penney, "Social Media and Citizen Participation in "Official" and "Unofficial" Electoral Promotion: A Structural Analysis of Hte 2016 Bernie Sanders Digital Campaign," *Journal of Communication* 67, no. 3 (2017).

<sup>457</sup> Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age*; Penney, "Social Media and Citizen Participation in "Official" and "Unofficial" Electoral Promotion: A Structural Analysis of Hte 2016 Bernie Sanders Digital Campaign."

The Sanders campaign primarily used CWB to coordinate the thousands of local groups who were already active, and transform them into methodical conduits for the campaign's social media messages.<sup>458</sup> While the official digital campaign was more formal, there was a self-organized, free-form crowdsourced network of supporters that were constantly in motion, and at times their actions helped direct the Sanders campaign. One example was the #feelthebern hashtag, which was spread so much that the official campaign took it on as a part of their campaign frame.<sup>459</sup> All told, the Sanders campaign captivated many, used social media in very coordinated and savvy ways, and outperformed all expectations. A few new technological wrinkles were used very well but it was a great example of what an innovative campaign of a challenger looks like during a stabilizing period.

Despite major efforts to improve the data gathering and analytics by the GOP after 2012, Donald Trump, the 2016 Republican nominee openly rejected the use of data for his campaign until its final months. To say Trump's campaign was not a sophisticated digital operation would be a massive understatement. Up until mid-2016, Trump's digital team consisted mainly of one man, Brad Parscale, a marketing entrepreneur. In June the Trump campaign hired Cambridge Analytica, the British based marketing firm that touted its innovative use of psychometric targeting which uses data to categorize people by personality types.<sup>460</sup> There is no question that the use of data and strategic communication aimed at courting Trump supporters and targeting non-supporters increased after June 2016. However the practical affects of Cambridge Analytica's claims of psychometric targeting faced heavy skepticism until they eventually

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<sup>458</sup> "Social Media and Citizen Participation in "Official" and "Unofficial" Electoral Promotion: A Structural Analysis of Hte 2016 Bernie Sanders Digital Campaign."

<sup>459</sup> Ibid.

<sup>460</sup> Hannes Grassegger and Mikael Krogerus, "The Data That Turned the World Upside Down," *Motherboard*, January 28 2017.

admitted that it was not used during the campaign.<sup>461</sup> The lack of digital and data strategy by the Trump campaign until the last months was important for several reasons. The gap between parties in terms of sophistication of data and digital strategies expanded in 2016. This includes growing deficit in trained and experienced staffers using these tools for GOP campaigns and conservative organizations.<sup>462</sup>

However the fact that Trump won the election may suggest to future campaigns that a sophisticated technological operation and data and digital strategy is less important than the style of digital campaigning moving forward. The political communication innovations that the Trump campaign offered were not in what ICTs or data were used, but *how* existing web and TV tools were applied. Trump upended the traditional strategies of television ads and strategic web-based communication and replaced them with reality-show-style antics that polarized the public but brought everyone to the television and Twitter feed to see the latest brash, controversial, or offensive statement.<sup>463</sup> And he made himself readily accessible, at least early on. During the first months of the campaign Trump willingly took virtually all opportunities to answer questions and appear on cable television.<sup>464</sup> He also held massive rallies throughout the campaign in which he railed against any and all perceived enemies using vitriolic language rarely ever heard in modern presidential politics. He espoused nationalistic themes centered on the campaign theme “Make

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<sup>461</sup> Nicholas Confessore and Danny Hakim, "Data Firm Says 'Secret Sauce' Aided Trump; Many Scoff," *The New York Times* 2017; David Karpf, "Will the Real Psychometric Targeters Please Stand Up: A Skeptic's Take on Trump's Purported Big Data Juggernaut, Cambridge Analytica," *Civicist*, <https://civichall.org/civicist/will-the-real-psychometric-targeters-please-stand-up/>.

<sup>462</sup> Darr, "Trump's Scorning of Data May Not Hurt Him, but It'll Hurt the Gop"; Jody Avirgan and Daniel Kreiss, "A History of Data in American Politics (Part 3): The 2016 Primaries," *FiveThirtyEight.com*, <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/a-history-of-data-in-american-politics-part-3-the-2016-primaries/>; Kreiss and Jasinski, "The Tech Industry Meets Presidential Politics: Explaining the Democratic Party's Technological Advantage in Electoral Campaigning, 2004–2012."

<sup>463</sup> Munoz, "Trump Undersends Clinton on Tv Ads, Relying on Social Media: Nbc; Haberman and Martin, "Donald Trump Scraps the Usual Campaign Playbook, Including Tv Ads."

<sup>464</sup> Later, as the Trump campaign gained traction they notably blacklisted many media organizations from their rallies that they identified as unfairly critical of the campaign including the Washington Post, BuzzFeed, Huffington Post, the Des Moines Register and Politico among others. Hadas Gold, "Trump Campaign Ends Media Blacklist," *Politico*, September 7 2016.

America Great Again,” that often labeled immigrants and Muslims as a source of American distress. He spoke to the fears that many had, and inspired fear in many others repulsed by his language, positions, or demeanor. He rejected political correctness as much as possible.

Whether TV viewers or social media users loved candidate Trump or hated him, they watched him. MediaQuant, a firm that tracks media coverage of each candidate computed a dollar value based on advertising rates and incorporated traditional media of all types, print, broadcast or otherwise, as well as online-only sources like Facebook, Twitter or Reddit. They found that by March 2016 Trump had spent only \$10 million on media but had earned nearly \$2 billion in free or earned media of all types. That was 2.5 times as much as Hillary Clinton, nearly six times as much as Bernie Sanders and Ted Cruz, and over nine times as much as Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush.<sup>465</sup> That value was expected to reach nearly \$5 billion by Election Day.<sup>466</sup>

Like all campaigns Trump used email but his use of email was notable for two reasons. First was the stunning lack of email overall. The campaign barely used email at all until July of 2016, weeks after securing the GOP nomination. Then they ramped up their email outreach during each of the months leading to Election Day. Second, was the style of email. The emails sent by the Trump campaign were less sophisticated than many from his rivals and included notably more emails asking supporters for their insights or to RSVP for upcoming events as opposed to fundraising appeals. Thus the experience of receiving Trump campaign emails was much more populist than any other 2016 campaign.<sup>467</sup>

Beyond his rallies and TV appearances the majority of his digital campaign centered around Facebook and Twitter, and among all digital approaches, no single strategy was as

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<sup>465</sup> Confessore and Yourish, "\$2 Billion Worth of Free Media for Donald Trump."

<sup>466</sup> Munoz, "Trump Underspends Clinton on Tv Ads, Relying on Social Media: Nbc."

<sup>467</sup> Broxmeyer and Epstein, "The (Surprisingly Interesting) Story of Email in the 2016 Presidential Election."

powerful for Trump as a 140-character tweet.<sup>468</sup> As a candidate, and later as President, Trump used Twitter to stoke fear and bash any and all people or organizations that posed a threat, including political opponents, journalists, celebrities and citizens alike. In one of his more striking campaign moments, Trump took to Twitter to attack Khizr Khan, the Muslim-American gold star father of a fallen war hero Humayan Khan after Khan was launched into the political spotlight during a rousing speech at the Democratic National Convention. In attacking the Khan family Trump proved he was willing to use Twitter to go after even those seen as political kryptonite.

In the end, Donald Trump not only survived politically by using these strategies but thrived. In winning the election he proved that he could use all of these unconventional tactics and win. His unlikely victory in 2016 proved he was the most successful political demagogue in U.S. history. In the end it is easy to see why Van Jones, the TV pundit from CNN, labeled Trump the “first social media and reality TV president.” However social media and reality TV weren’t new in 2016, they were merely new in how they were used for political campaigning. There is no doubt that Trump’s controversial Twitter account helped him succeed, facts and civility be damned. But the innovations in style were more notable than any connected to technology. Perhaps scholars will look back on 2016 as an election that ushered in a new era of how social media was used to achieve electoral victory. But any lasting innovation from the Trump campaign will not be based on the tools used but how the campaign used them.

The extent to which others will copy Trump’s Twitter style is currently unclear, but history offers some helpful comparisons and contrasts.<sup>469</sup> Ronald Reagan was a former actor, who applied his comfort and skill in front of a camera to achieve unquestionable success in

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<sup>468</sup> For a remarkably useful tool to search and compare tweets by Donald Trump see Brendan Brown, “Trump Twitter Archive,” <http://www.trumptwitterarchive.com/>.

<sup>469</sup> Glasser, “Do Democrats Need to Tweet More Like Trump.”

reaching the masses through TV broadcasts. But Trump is no Reagan. Trump was a successful reality TV star and his skills include the ability to manufacture media events that grab attention and dominate the discussion regardless of their tact, truthfulness, or civility. He successfully brought those skills to political campaigning. Most politicians that followed Reagan could not, and did not copy his media presence. I suspect the same lessons will apply to Trump.

In retrospect the fireworks and drama of the 2016 election were caused largely by the bombast of candidate Trump, his dominance of media attention of all types, and the failure of everyone who challenged him. It was importantly not caused by major innovations in digital tools, but communication style. With all of the twists and turns and drama of the 2016 election it can be easy to miss that most of the story of political communication in the 2016 election fits neatly into the political communication cycle (PCC). By 2016, web campaigning had moved to a more mature and stable phase of the political communication cycle. Digital strategies had been refined and stabilized over several cycles.

Despite an unconventional campaign overall, web-campaigning became more uniform in 2016. Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump all created a more controlled and less interactive web experience.<sup>470</sup> None of the three campaign websites offered supporters the opportunity to make profiles or create personalized fundraising pages that were so novel and exciting to Obama supporters in 2008. Campaigns also removed specific constituency groups created by the campaigns to speak to and rally groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, geography, profession, military or veteran status.<sup>471</sup> These groups had been used extensively by campaigns in 2008 and 2012. While the specific news content and social media strategies of the leading 2016 campaigns varied greatly, the campaigns were all using the same

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<sup>470</sup> Pew Research Center, "Election 2016: Campaigns as a Direct Source of News," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2016).

<sup>471</sup> Ibid.



platforms by 2016. As Table 5.3 shows, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram had become standard, suggesting a normalization in types of social media used by campaigns which makes sense as we are entering the stabilizing phase of the latest political communication cycle.

**Table 5.3: Links to Social Networking Sites from Campaign Websites 2008-2016<sup>472</sup>**

	<b>2008</b>		<b>2012</b>		<b>2016</b>		
	<b>Obama</b>	<b>McCain</b>	<b>Obama</b>	<b>Romney</b>	<b>Sanders</b>	<b>Clinton</b>	<b>Trump</b>
<b>Facebook</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Twitter</b>			X	X	X	X	X
<b>YouTube</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Instagram</b>			X		X	X	X
<b>Pinterest</b>			X			X	
<b>Tumblr</b>			X		X		
<b>Google+</b>			X	X			
<b>Flickr</b>	X	X	X	X			
<b>Spotify</b>			X				
<b>Myspace</b>	X	X					

## Conclusion

Campaigns have innovated their communication strategies since the earliest days of party activity in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century. As demonstrated by the campaigns that first utilized the radio, television, and the internet, the earliest innovators are rarely successful politically, and when they are, it is not because of their ICT innovations. Yet once the ICT has diffused to the majority of society, innovators with enough resources can use the ICT strategically to achieve political victory. There is no better example of this process than the Obama internet campaign in 2008. Obama was a clear outsider who had abundant resources and systematically integrated his online presence into his entire campaign. The result was MyBO, the most sophisticated and strategically integrated set of mobilization and communication tools ever unveiled by a campaign.

<sup>472</sup> Chart recreated based on data from *ibid.*

The tools mastered by the Obama campaign provided a model that others could follow. In the wake of the 2008 election, many, but not all of these innovative tools were imitated and additional improvements in campaign strategies were added. The difference between those that were copied and those that were not may be based in how the tools were used as opposed to simply whether they were duplicated by others. The Obama campaign set out to integrate its online tools with a strategic plan from day one, and created a highly sophisticated site with numerous mobilization tools and personalized areas. Others who want to copy this successful model need to hire those who are capable of setting up and running sites with MyBO style sophistication. A cottage industry of internet firms have sprouted up offering political groups of all kinds customizable packages of tools making this a more common and less costly venture moving forward.<sup>473</sup> However all successful innovations are not, and should not be copied by other campaigns. MyBO was remarkably effective for the Obama campaign but its size, infrastructure, and utility were not automatically transferable to other, smaller campaigns. Further, evidence suggests that they might not have been as effective and that other, cheaper third party options including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are now able to be used to achieve many of these same goals.

The experienced pool of digital campaign staff and third party organizations, at least on the Democratic side, can be traced back to the Dean campaign.<sup>474</sup> It takes time to build and maintain this network, something that the Republican Party is still working to match. The 2012 and 2016 elections illustrated how tools used in online campaigning are becoming more

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<sup>473</sup> Only 38% of Senate campaigns named their website creator although many others surely used outside firms to create and maintain their interactive and personalized networking sites.

<sup>474</sup> Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back*, 13; Kreiss and Saffer, "Networks and Innovation in the Production of Communication: Explaining Innovations in U.S. Electoral Campaigning from 2004 to 2012; Kreiss and Jasinski, "The Tech Industry Meets Presidential Politics: Explaining the Democratic Party's Technological Advantage in Electoral Campaigning, 2004–2012."

consistent, and controlled. Donald Trump's rejection of data and web analytics has dug the GOP further into the hole in terms of experienced staffers and actual data collected, though his surprising electoral victory may mask that a bit. What can be lost in this story is how people-centered campaigns continue to be. New data metrics do not replace the thousands of people-phone banking, canvassing, organizing, and connecting with individual voters across the country, often aided by new ICTs and data.<sup>475</sup>

Overall, the historical current of campaign innovation provided support for my claims that campaigns run by political challengers and those with more resources were likely to innovate earlier than others. There is substantial historical evidence that campaigns involved in more competitive elections are also more likely to try innovative techniques than others. Non-incumbent challengers were clearly more innovative than incumbents. Campaigns with the greatest resources and those competing in the closest races were more likely to innovate earlier than others. Yet the willingness to innovate does not mean that it will be effective. It is only after several election cycles that innovation can be strategically incorporated into the larger campaign in a way that can bring great political success. This makes sense because most campaigns are notoriously risk-averse and are focused on the bottom line of turning out voters on election day.<sup>476</sup> In the end, the political choices regarding if, when, and how campaigns adopt communication innovations are made by the people involved. The earliest to adopt are often those with the least to lose and the most to spend, and rarely do these innovations make a positive difference. By the time innovative political communication decisions are making major difference in the electoral outcomes of elections, the challenger status and resource advantage are

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<sup>475</sup> Nielsen, *Ground Wars: Personalized Communication in Political Campaigns*.

<sup>476</sup> Baldwin-Philippi, *Using Technology, Building Democracy: Digital Campaigning and the Construction of Citizenship*, 19.

no longer as pronounced as they were during the earliest experimental stages of the political choice phase.

## Chapter 6: Innovation by Political Outsiders: Why Social Movements Innovate Early and Why it Rarely Matters

“If Paul Revere had been a modern day citizen, he wouldn't have ridden down Main Street. He would have tweeted.”<sup>477</sup> — Alec Ross

In order to gain a greater understanding of how various types of political organizations may make different political choices about political communication innovation, we now turn our attention from the political insiders that run campaigns to the outsiders who organize social movements. Social movements vary tremendously in terms of scope, goals, tactics and impact. Some have revolutionized the political or social structure of society and others have acted to resist social change. Several famous movements have been widely successful both politically and socially; yet countless others have failed quietly, disappearing before many knew they existed in the first place. Though varied, social movements are typically grassroots in nature and are conducted by political outsiders who don't have access to political decision makers or much influence on political discourse. Movement activists share a sense of grievance and believe their common ills are caused by systemic inequalities or injustices. And while social movements vary in size, shape, and impact, they all have a limited life cycle and do not last indefinitely. After emerging, either due to an initiating catalyst<sup>478</sup> or emerging political opportunities,<sup>479</sup> movements unify, often through organization, and they act in any number of politically or socially disruptive ways.<sup>480</sup> Ultimately all social movements fade and end, though this end could come after

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<sup>477</sup> Paul Revere was brave during his ride to rally fellow revolutionaries in 1775. However far fewer know about Sybil Ludington, who two years later rode twice as far as Revere, nearly 40 miles, through a rainy night to spread word and recruit troops. She was 16 years old at the time and unlike Revere she was not caught by a British patrol while on her ride. I first learned about this young brave heroine from my daughter Eliana, who was six at the time.

<sup>478</sup> Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (Free Press, 1962).

<sup>479</sup> Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, Second ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

<sup>480</sup> Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

anything from major political success, to failure at the hands of powerful repression, to co-optation by outside groups or absorption into mainstream social or political norms.

Any organized movement consisting of political outsiders faces numerous challenges. Doug McAdam specifies six hurdles that successful movements groups must overcome. He argues they must: 1) attract new recruits, 2) sustain morale and commitment of current supporters, 3) generate media coverage, 4) mobilize the support of “bystander publics,” those not currently involved in the conflict who may be able to build outside pressure to help achieve political goals, 5) constrain the social control of its opponents, and 6) shape public policy and state action.<sup>481</sup> It is notable that many of these goals focus specifically on political communication. These are daunting goals for any political group, but those who are on the outside of the reach of political, economic, and social power levers find them especially difficult to realize. Nevertheless, many movements have led to dramatic social and political change in American history, due in part to their willingness to innovate their political communication tactics by utilizing new tools and constantly working to shape how the larger society views the particular grievance at hand. Successful movements often work for decades, until various factors align to bring movement success.

This chapter examines a few case studies of social movements that took place primarily in different political communication eras. First, I will explore the communications strategies of the woman’s suffrage movement, which lasted over 70 years from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century until the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1920. Next, I will detail innovations in the long lasting fight against racial discrimination, which led to the modern civil rights movement starting in the print era, but coming of age along with the television during the 1950s and 1960s. Both the woman’s suffrage movement and civil rights movement utilized innovative tactics with similarly

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<sup>481</sup> McAdam, "The Case of the American Civil Rights Movement."

mild results, and both ultimately gained tangible legislative victories due, in part, to changing tactics regarding ICTs and media use. Finally, I will briefly compare these historical movements with recent movements emerging during the internet era including the early Tea Party, Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and the Resist movement. While the tangible political victories for these movements vary, historical cases are helpful in illustrating how social movements' innovations in the internet era and what tactics may be more or less successful.

### **Innovation, Diffusion and Social Movements**

The adoption of new communication tools is far from automatic. As discussed at length in chapter four, diffusion scholars agree that the likelihood that technological innovations spread through society is based on the characteristics of not only the innovation but also the potential adopters.<sup>482</sup> Political actors go through a decision making process in which they must carefully weigh many different considerations before incorporating new technologies into their political communication activities, because each innovation has advantages and drawbacks associated with it.<sup>483</sup>

Several factors influence whether political actors innovate their political communication activities or not. The main claims laid out earlier regarding innovativeness are very helpful in understanding innovation patterns of social movements across time. Organizations with more resources and those occupying a challenger or outsider role are more likely to innovate earlier than political organizations that do not have these characteristics. Social movements may vary in their access to financial and technological resources, but clearly occupy an outsider political role.

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<sup>482</sup> See Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*; Wejnert, "Integrating Models of Diffusion of Innovations: A Conceptual Framework."

<sup>483</sup> Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin, "The Technological Development of Candidate Web Sites: How and Why Candidates Use Web Innovations."

The level of resources available is largely a function of organizational and financial capacity, particular challenges for many movements.<sup>484</sup> However, for political outsiders, the political risks of innovating their political communication tactics are universally small. Political campaigns or interest groups might understandably fear the political price of innovation could such as a reduction in audience size, influence, or control of message. However, social movements occupy a distinct outsider role with a relatively limited audience and marginal political influence. Thus movements have no such concerns. At the same time, using new communication tools could aid a movement to influence public discourse and political agenda setting in a way that they could not have without innovating.

### **Linking Social Movement Scholarship to Innovation**

Social movement scholarship has largely grown out of three important camps.<sup>485</sup> First the classical model of social movements which groups many of the early studies of social movements together because they each describe a causal model where some structural strain, possibly caused by real or perceived inequality or injustice,<sup>486</sup> or social change,<sup>487</sup> creates mounting psychological pressure on those affected, eventually building until action is taken.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*; "The Case of the American Civil Rights Movement."

<sup>485</sup> This is obviously an oversimplification of the rich, mainly sociological research on social movements over the past 60 years, however it is fruitful in understanding how the current study connects with the larger research.

<sup>486</sup> Edward O. Laumann and David R. Segal, "Status Inconsistency and Ethnoreligious Group Membership as Determinants of Social Participation and Political Attitudes," *American Journal of Sociology* 77, no. 1 (1971); Gerhard E. Lenski, "Status Crystallization: A Non-Verbal Dimension of Social Status," *American Sociological Review* 19, no. 4 (1954).

<sup>487</sup> Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior*; Joseph R. Gusfeld, "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change," *American Journal of Sociology* 72, no. 4 (1967).

<sup>488</sup> McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, 7.



The classical model, though very important in general, offers little for this book because it refers to social movements as a psychological function and not a political one.<sup>489</sup>

Much more important for the study of innovations in political communication and media is the widely supported resource mobilization approach.<sup>490</sup> Unlike classical theorists, those advocating resource mobilization believe that discontent among disadvantaged groups is fairly constant and that the activists are political actors. Resources mobilization advocates argue that insurgency arises based on the amount of social, political, or economic resources available. However, resource availability does not precipitate a social movement on its own, nor does it create political or social change. It is the activists themselves who must realize opportunities, organize and strategically employ resources in order to build successful movements.<sup>491</sup> This process is essentially the political choice phase of the PCC for social movements. According to resource mobilization proponents, movement activists are considered rational actors who take the relationships with external groups into account. Finally, scholars supporting the resource mobilization model understand, perhaps obviously, that movement organizations require resources, though these resources are rarely defined, and that emotion and frustration are not enough to create a movement on their own.<sup>492</sup>

Third, is the political process approach, articulated by sociologist Doug McAdam as a more practical model for describing the various political actors and elements involved in social

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<sup>489</sup> Ibid., 16-19.

<sup>490</sup> see John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977); J. Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow, "Insurgency of the Powerless: Farm Worker Movements (1946-1972)," *American Sociological Review* 42, no. 2 (1977); *ibid.* J. Craig Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 9(1983). William A. Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1975); Anthony Oberschall, *Social Conflict and Social Movements* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-hall, 1973); James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1978).

<sup>491</sup> McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, 21.

<sup>492</sup> Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements; McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, 21-23.

movement activity. This approach links broad socioeconomic processes, often connected to the classical approach, with political opportunities and sustained political organization needed for movement success. This model incorporates the necessity of organizations, stability and leadership for long-term movement success. This is in direct opposition to Piven and Cloward (1979) who articulate disorganization, spontaneity, and social and political disruption as the keys for movement success.<sup>493</sup> Despite this important opposing theory, the political process model most clearly details the types of activists, and organizations, associated with social movements and how their internal and external communication networks specifically enhance movement success.<sup>494</sup>

### **Innovation During The Woman's Suffrage Movement**

One of the most staggering dates in the history of American rights expansion is August 18, 1920, the date that the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified giving all women the right to vote. This political victory was achieved a full 50 years after the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment legally expanded suffrage rights to all men regardless of race or national origin.<sup>495</sup> The movement to extend suffrage rights to women spanned the better part of the preceding century, most of which was marked by disparaging, insulting, and misogynistic voices from the majority of men of authority who chose to mention the reform movement at all. But mostly the long movement was characterized by a distinct silence from nearly everyone outside of the reformers themselves. The woman's suffrage movement is generally considered the major thrust of the women's movement as it existed during the mid 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, though it clearly does not

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<sup>493</sup> Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*.

<sup>494</sup> McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, 36-59.

<sup>495</sup> The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified on March 30, 1870 but it was not until 95 years later when the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed that the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment was enforced.

embody the entirety of women's reform efforts during that era which also included efforts for property rights and less conservative standards of dress.<sup>496</sup>

Based on a powerful article by Martha Lear in *The New York Times Magazine* in 1968, the early era of a women's activism has been referred as the "first-wave feminism," distinguished from the more radical "second-wave" feminism of the 1960s-1980s that fought valiantly for equal pay, reproductive rights, protections against domestic violence, and greater professional and political equality.<sup>497</sup> This section will analyze the earlier movement, which spanned a print only era, as a point of comparison to other movements that also extended during the broadcast and later internet eras.

The women's suffrage movement officially started in 1848 when approximately 300 activists met for the first woman's rights convention in United States history in Seneca Falls, a small town in the finger-lakes region of upstate New York. The Seneca Falls convention, organized primarily by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, along with Lucretia Coffin Mott, Martha Coffin Wright, and many female Quakers from the region, was organized "to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of woman."<sup>498</sup> The convention successfully brought together not only staunch suffragists, but also prohibitionists, radical Quakers, and others arguing for social reform.<sup>499</sup> The most famous creation of the convention was a Declaration of Sentiments, modeled after the Declaration of Independence, written principally by Stanton and signed by 100 of the activists including 68 women and 32 men. The Declaration articulated the many demands of the activists and the nascent women's rights movement.

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<sup>496</sup> Patricia A. Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920: Politics, Health and Art* (Kent State University Press, 2003).

<sup>497</sup> Martha W. Lear, "The Second Feminist Wave," *The New York Times Magazine*, March 10, 1968; Astrid Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

<sup>498</sup> Judith Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman's Rights Convention* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

While the entire document was controversial, the inclusion of suffrage rights were clearly the most shocking of the demands included at the time. Voting rights were seen as too extreme a demand by many attendees and controversial enough to potentially derail other efforts such as increased property rights and the temperance movement led largely by women. After much debate, the suffrage rights were left in the document after a strong argument for its inclusion from Frederick Douglass, who understood as well as anyone at the convention, the difficult road toward suffrage.

With the exception of 1857, national women's rights conventions were held yearly from 1850-1860, representing the most public articulation of the shared sentiments of women as lacking freedoms and rights including the right to vote. Just like the earlier Seneca Falls Convention, these yearly conventions received limited newspaper coverage and the stories that did make it to print were largely incomplete or unflattering, a trend that would continue for decades.<sup>500</sup>

While the first-wave feminism movement reform efforts took very active and public forms with the conventions in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the earliest attempts at utilizing new political communication tactics in the name of women's rights emerged two full decades before Seneca Falls. In 1828, Frances Wright, an early spokesperson for women's rights started editing the *Free Enquirer*, a newspaper established "for the purpose of fearless and unbiased inquiry on all subjects."<sup>501</sup> Numerous specialized reform newspapers and periodicals emerged over the following 20 years including those targeting moral and legal issues like intemperance, infidelity,

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<sup>500</sup> E. Claire Jerry, "The Role of Newspapers in the Nineteenth-Century Woman's Movement," in *A Voice of Their Own*, ed. Martha M. Solomon (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 19.

<sup>501</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage: Vol. 1: 1848-1861*, 2nd ed. (Rochester, N.Y.: Charles Mann, 1886), 45. as quoted in Jerry, "The Role of Newspapers in the Nineteenth-Century Woman's Movement," 20.

vice, prostitution, and abolition of slavery.<sup>502</sup> Eventually women's papers expanded from single-issue concerns to papers with wide-ranging reformist agendas. These multi-issue papers coincided with the emergence of national women's rights conventions in the early 1850s. The first of these papers was Elizabeth Aldrich's *Genius of Liberty*, published in Cincinnati from 1851-1853. The *Pioneer and Woman's Advocate*, published in 1852 in Providence, Rhode Island was the first paper to focus on woman's rights, as a specific cause.<sup>503</sup> These papers represented huge innovations in the political communication strategies of the women's rights movement but were minimal in impact when compared to the conventions of the 1850s. Yet, the conventions were largely ignored or flatly discredited or ridiculed by the traditional press, leaving these women's rights papers as the only consistent voice supporting reforms, albeit a weak one.

The timing of these early innovative efforts is important as they overlap with the first political communication revolution (PCR), which emerged during the late 1820s and 1830s. This PCR arose due to a combination of technological, political and social contexts. Specifically, the first PCR witnessed new printing technology making newspaper printing cheaper and faster and newspaper dissemination subsidized by the federal government.<sup>504</sup> Along with cheaper and faster printing, the demand for newspapers increased substantially due to expanded political access and interest during the Jacksonian era and an increasingly literate population. There is no doubt that among the new newspaper readers at that time, women made up a substantial percentage,

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<sup>502</sup> Along with many single issue papers, and perhaps the most shocking in its tradition shattering aim was the paper *American Woman*, starting in 1845, which was announced as "a denunciation of masculine failings." "The Role of Newspapers in the Nineteenth-Century Woman's Movement," 20.

<sup>503</sup> Ibid.

<sup>504</sup> For more on the changes in printing technology see chapter two. Schudson, *Discovering the News : A Social History of American Newspapers*; Moran, *Printing Presses: History and Development from the Fifteenth Century to Modern Times*; Starr, *The Creation of the Media : Political Origins of Modern Communications*; John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse*.

especially using papers as a means to connect with the outside world in what was largely an isolated existence for most American women in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>505</sup>

The 1860s proved to be pivotal in the emergence of a distinct women's suffrage movement and the increasingly organized political communication tools that emerged to support it. The women's rights movement, as it existed during the encouraging 1850s disappeared during the Civil War due to a lack of opportunity, and a general shift in strategy amongst Northern reformers to support the Union cause and the abolitionist movement embedded within it.<sup>506</sup> At the end of the war, the Republican Party pushed for enfranchisement of African Americans but ignored any joint effort to provide voting rights to women. As states began to debate the issue of black male suffrage, women began to organize for women's voting rights, first in the states and then in a broader national campaign. The first major campaign for woman and black suffrage took place in Kansas in 1867 resulting in a major loss for women's suffrage rights. The experience led Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to realize that women's suffrage would be sacrificed in order to gain black male suffrage and recognize the need for women to fight for suffrage independently.<sup>507</sup>

One of the first steps was to establish a women's suffrage newspaper, much like the establishment of political parties decades earlier. Toward this end, Stanton and Anthony founded *The Revolution* in 1868 in New York City with funding from George Francis Train, a proslavery Democrat.<sup>508</sup> *The Revolution* published for just over two years and never had more than 3,000

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<sup>505</sup> Jerry, "The Role of Newspapers in the Nineteenth-Century Woman's Movement."

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>507</sup> The vote in Kansas was not close with women's suffrage losing by a vote of 21,000 to 9,000. Ibid.

<sup>508</sup> Train was an eccentric entrepreneur and businessman who made his fortune through trade and, conveniently, the emerging railroad and rail car industry. He was controversial for many reasons including his outspoken traditional views on race. Train's extravagance included a trip around the world in 1870 and by many accounts Train was the inspiration for Phileas Fogg, the main character in *Around the World in 80 Days* penned by Jules Verne. "Streetcars Named Desire...And Some Other Things Too," *Echo Memories*, December 31, 2008.

readers. But it marked a huge turning point in the use of print media to champion the specific cause of woman's suffrage.<sup>509</sup> This paper laid out, for the first time, major nationwide arguments for gender equality that are still being used today and it began a century-long tradition of women's political journalism. In doing so it inspired several other pro-suffrage publications including the *Woman's Tribune* and the *Agitator*.<sup>510</sup>

Representing an unabashedly radical tone, *The Revolution* refused to support traditional abolition/suffrage activists leading the American Equal Rights Association (AERA). AERA was the top organization at the time supporting abolition and increased suffrage rights. It was willing to support the so called "Negro's hour," including the proposed 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment providing suffrage rights for all men, regardless of race, but leaving women out of the ballot-box altogether. In response, Stanton and Anthony held a meeting in the offices of *The Revolution* and, in July 1869, formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) using *The Revolution* as its mouthpiece.<sup>511</sup> Henry Blackwell and Lucy Stone formed the less radical American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), formalizing the rift in the woman's suffrage movement and establishing an alternative newspaper, the *Woman's Journal*, which attracted a much more varied audience including "socially active women not yet prepared to bear the feminist banner."<sup>512</sup> Once *The Revolution* folded in 1870 the *Woman's Journal*, with its more consistent funding, professional editorial team, and less controversial agenda, remained as the sole national woman's suffrage newspaper. In many ways the *Woman's Journal* maintained the delicate balance of pushing for changes in social norms and public policy while staying within

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<sup>509</sup> Bob Ostertag, *People's Movements, People's Press: The Journalism of Social Justice Movements* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

<sup>510</sup> Lynne Masel-Walters, "Their Rights and Nothing More: A History of 'the Revolution,' 1868-1870," *Journalism Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (1976).

<sup>511</sup> Ibid; Jerry, "The Role of Newspapers in the Nineteenth-Century Woman's Movement."

<sup>512</sup> Anne Mather, "A History of Feminist Periodicals, Part I," *Journalism History* 1, no. 3 (1974). as quoted in Jerry, "The Role of Newspapers in the Nineteenth-Century Woman's Movement," 23.

the bounds of what was socially acceptable.<sup>513</sup> The Woman's Journal quickly became the most widely distributed and longest running woman suffrage paper. In over 50 years of continuous publication it did not miss a single issue.<sup>514</sup>

The first major suffrage rights victory took place when women were granted the right to vote in the territory of Wyoming in 1869. Following this watershed event, numerous state and local suffrage newspapers emerged, though many of these papers didn't survive long. According to George P. Lowell's *American Newspaper Directory*, there were four suffrage newspapers in 1873. Six years later there were five such papers in existence but only two had lasted since 1873. By 1884 the number of suffrage papers had risen to nine and by 1890, the year Wyoming became the first state granting women the right to vote, there were 33 suffrage newspapers printed in America.<sup>515</sup> The reunification of the Woman's suffrage movement also took place in 1890 as the NWSA and AWSA merged forming the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), which utilized the Woman's Journal as its unofficial newspaper until it was formally designated as such in 1910.<sup>516</sup>

For over 50 years after the end of the Civil War, consistent calls for suffrage rights through numerous newspapers and a tremendous amount of political activity led to a few victories in small western states but little momentum on a national suffrage amendment.<sup>517</sup> The

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<sup>513</sup> Elisabeth S. Clemens, *The People's Lobby: Organizational Innovation and the Rise of Interest Group Politics in the United States, 1890-1925* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

<sup>514</sup> By 1915, the Woman's Journal reached 27,000 subscribers in 48 states and 39 countries. Ostertag, *People's Movements, People's Press: The Journalism of Social Justice Movements*, 65.

<sup>515</sup> Jerry, "The Role of Newspapers in the Nineteenth-Century Woman's Movement," 23-24.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>517</sup> According to Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Schuler, in their history of the suffrage movement, between 1868 and 1920, American women conducted "56 campaigns of referenda to male voters; 480 campaigns to urge legislatures to submit suffrage amendments to voters; 47 campaigns to induce state constitutional conventions; 277 campaigns to persuade state party conventions to include women suffrage planks; 30 campaigns to urge presidential party conventions to adopt woman suffrage planks in party platforms; and 19 campaigns with 19 successive Congresses." Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Schuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement*, reprint ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970), 107.



period from 1870-1900 was often referred as the doldrums, featuring constant political losses despite extensive activism. Most of the suffragist activity during this time was continually ignored or roundly ridiculed, typified by an editorial published in *The New York Times* on April 2, 1878, which began:

“It is a scientific fact that the peculiar species of woman popularly known as the female reformer is unusually thin and bony. Whether the advocacy of reform has a direct tendency to develop bones, or whether women who are congenitally bony become reformers because they are shut out from the ordinary pleasures and pursuits of plump and pretty women, has never been satisfactorily ascertained.”<sup>518</sup>

The progress toward full women’s suffrage started to increase rapidly in 1917 when New York passed full woman’s suffrage rights.<sup>519</sup> This paved the way for similar amendments in Indiana, Maine, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Tennessee in 1919 and a push for a constitutional amendment. It took just over a year for 36 states to ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and woman’s suffrage became a part of the constitution on August 26, 1920, 72 years after Seneca Falls.<sup>520</sup>

Perhaps the most important takeaway about the role of the press during the push for suffrage rights was that the final years leading up to the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment witnessed a distinct increase in the coverage of woman’s suffrage by traditional newspapers and the disappearance of the suffrage press. Of the 14 suffrage presses in publication in 1900 only two remained after 1917.<sup>521</sup> On the other side of the coin, traditional papers like *The New York Times* began covering the suffragist cause in earnest for the first time. Back in 1852, Henry J. Raymond, who established *The New York Times* as a part of the penny press one year earlier stated that “American women read newspapers much as their liege lords. The paper must accommodate

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<sup>518</sup> “Not an Exception,” *The New York Times*, April 2, 1878 1878.

<sup>519</sup> Holly J. McCammon et al., “How Movements Win: Gendered Opportunity Structures and U.S. Women’s Suffrage Movements, 1866 to 1919,” *American Sociological Review* 66, no. 1 (2001).

<sup>520</sup> Jerry, “The Role of Newspapers in the Nineteenth-Century Woman’s Movement,” 26.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

itself to this fact.<sup>522</sup> However history shows that neither *The New York Times* nor any other major publication paid much attention to female readers or their interests beyond the domestic sphere until the years leading up to the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. According to one study, coverage of women in *The New York Times* started to pick up in 1909 and stayed at a relatively high point into the early 1920s.<sup>523</sup> But coverage of women's suffrage suggests attention did not grow until much closer to ratification (see Fig. 6.1).<sup>524</sup> There was a brief uptick in suffrage articles in 1914, a year when Nevada and Montana passed suffrage rights for women and the newly formed Congressional Union, a more aggressive activist group, broke off from the NAWSA and started lobbying congress during a midterm election year. However, the stories decreased quickly during the American involvement in WWI (1917-1919) and did not shoot up again until 1920, the year the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was finally passed.<sup>525</sup>

**Figure 6.1: Number of News Articles Related to Women's Suffrage Published in the New York Times Per Year 1900-1930**

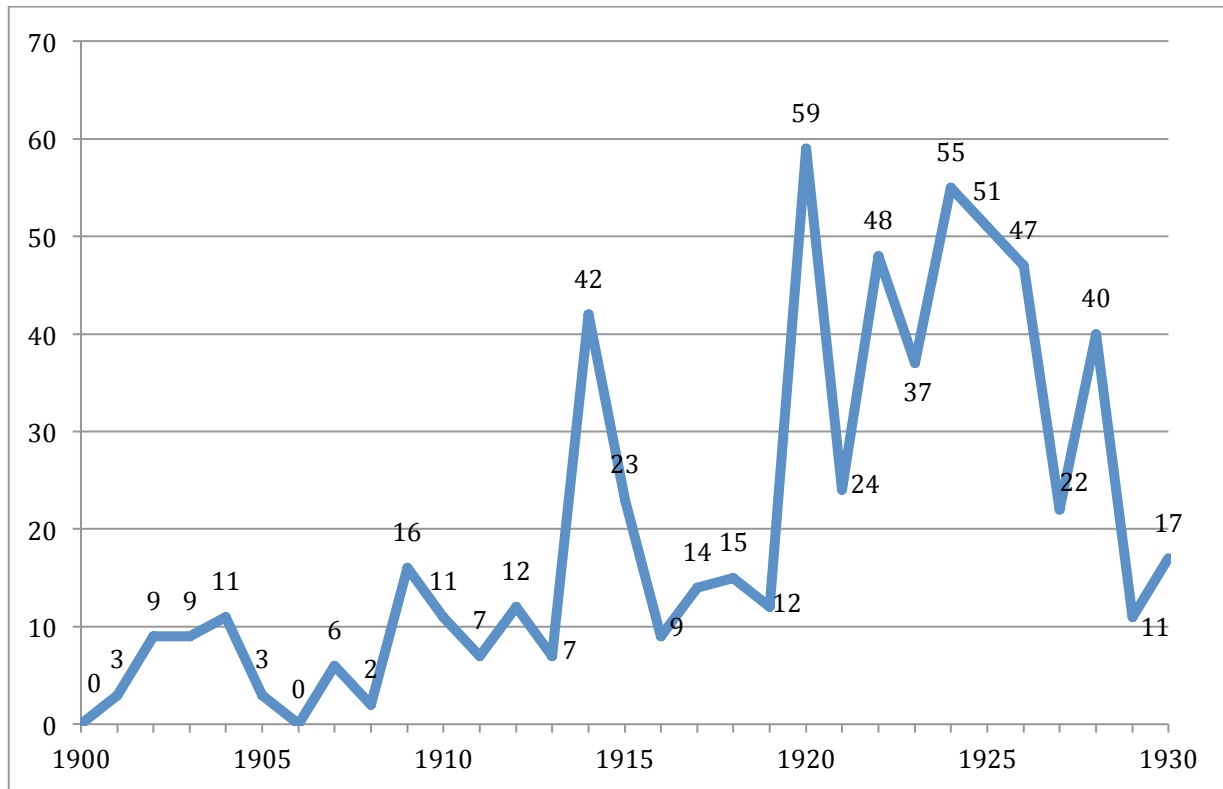
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<sup>522</sup> Willard Grosvenor Bleyer, *Main Currents in the History of American Journalism* (Boston: Houghton, 1927), 242.

<sup>523</sup> Cancian and Ross, "Mass Media and the Women's Movement: 1900-1977."

<sup>524</sup> The data for Fig. 1 was collected using the New York Times "Times Machine," in conjunction with the Times Topics. According the New York Times there were 1,766 news articles including commentary and archival articles published by the New York Times up until January 11, 2014. The data set was created by adding together all of the articles published in each year.

<sup>525</sup> It is interesting to note that from 1920-1930 a distinct pattern emerged in the coverage of women's suffrage with more coverage during election years but a steady overall decline in women's suffrage articles. The number of articles picked up again in the late 1930s.



### Innovation During the Fight Against Racial Discrimination

The modern civil rights movement, similar to the woman's suffrage movement before it, had a long, slow buildup to a frenetic climax. Both movements turned to the printing press early on to spread their calls for justice, freedom, and equality that fell on deaf ears for decades. The first black-owned and operated newspaper in the nation was the *Freedom's Journal*, first published in New York City on March 16, 1827. The paper's editors, John Russwurm and Reverend Samuel E. Cornish stated in the first issue that black Americans wanted to plead their own case stating, "Too long have others spoken for us."<sup>526</sup> The outspoken paper argued for abolition and broader rights for free black people across the nation. Although the *Journal* only published for three years, it started a wave of so called Negro Papers, which spanned the next

<sup>526</sup> Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Awakening of Nation*, 13.

140 years.<sup>527</sup> From 1827-1951, approximately 2,700 Negro newspapers were published in the United States, averaging a nine-year lifespan.<sup>528</sup> While those figures alone are stunning, it is even more remarkable that the majority of whites in the country did not even know they existed.<sup>529</sup>

Just as the increasing suffrage rights for white men during the 1810s and 1820s led to increased demand in political coverage during the first PCR, voting rights associated with the end of the Civil War and the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1870) increased the political coverage and political calls to action of the Negro newspapers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>530</sup> Between 1900 and 1910, several of the most outspoken and effective organs of civil rights advocacy were established, including the *Chicago Defender*, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, The *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, and the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

This was also the era in which Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. DuBois, A. Philip Randolph, and Marcus Garvey, four of the most dynamic, persuasive, and divergent black leaders in American history, spread their messages. As Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff describe in their remarkable history of civil rights journalism, “Each came with his own journalistic base and retinue, each had his own devoted following, and each helped crystalize the debate that Negro editors would wrestle with for the next seventy-five years.” Booker T. Washington’s gradual approach was evident in his newspaper the *New York Age* and other papers that he helped fund. Du Bois, known as an opponent to Washington’s strategy, articulated a more confrontational approach by writing for and editing *The Crisis*, the official monthly magazine of the NAACP. Starting in 1910 with a circulation of 1,000, *The Crisis* grew to sell 95,000 copies a

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<sup>527</sup> Ibid.

<sup>528</sup> Armistead Scott Pride, "Negro Newspapers: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," *Journalism Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1951).

<sup>529</sup> Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Awakening of Nation*.

<sup>530</sup> Obviously the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment only offered the idea of suffrage rights as it was systematically violated by Southern states first through the Black Codes and eventually through the long-lasting Jim Crow era.

month one decade later. A Philip Randolph, co-authored the monthly *Messenger*. And although the socialist magazine didn't receive near the circulation of *The Crisis*, Randolph remained at the forefront of civil rights activism through the crescendo of activity in the 1950s and 1960s. Finally Marcus Garvey, who had been a printer before he became an activist articulating a separatist movement, produced many newspapers, including most notably *The Negro World*, and influenced generations of black activists.<sup>531</sup>

World War I served as fuel for the already burgeoning black press. Although black papers had to be wary of recently passed federal anti-sedition laws, avoiding direct criticism of the national government, the editors of the Negro papers focused broadly on unequal treatment and the heroism of black troops, and their circulation numbers exploded. The Negro papers emerged from World War I reasserting their role as primary crusader against racial discrimination, now armed with increased readership quickly expanding across the nation and deep into the South. For instance, the *Chicago Defender*, with an estimated 150,000 readers, sold more than two thirds of its papers to subscribers outside of Chicago.<sup>532</sup> Negro papers were not a product solely of the Northern cities, in fact more than half of all Negro papers in the 1920s were produced in the South.<sup>533</sup> A final important innovation during the immediate post-war era was the development of several national Negro news services, including the Associated Negro Press (ANP).<sup>534</sup>

The Negro press expanded its reach and its content between the first and second World Wars, and its importance in the ongoing effort to voice the grievances and views of blacks

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<sup>531</sup> Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Awakening of Nation*, 14.

<sup>532</sup> The Chicago Courier, founded in 1905 would claim to have a staggering circulation of 230,000 by 1915. Ibid.

<sup>533</sup> In 1864 during the final years of the Civil War, the *New Orleans Tribune* published the first black daily newspaper in the U.S. published from deep in the Confederacy. PBS, "The Black Press: Soldiers without Swords: Comprehensive Timeline," WTTW, <http://www.pbs.org/blackpress/reslinks/>.

<sup>534</sup> The ANP could not official be considered a wire service because the stories it gathered across the nation were disseminated by mail, and not the telegraph. Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Awakening of Nation*, 15-16.

nationwide cannot be overstated. Examinations of social and economic trends in the South in the decade following WWI concluded that the Negro press had become “the greatest single power in the Negro race.”<sup>535</sup> By the time the U.S. officially joined WWII, the strength of the Negro press was well established though its voice still did not extend much beyond black Americans. Although most whites were not reading these papers, the outspoken criticism of the hypocrisy of fighting for democracy abroad while incredible discrimination remained fixed in the U.S. continued. This theme would become a key frame in the movement of the 1950s and 1960s. As the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* wrote in the spring of 1942: “Our people cry out in anguish: this is no time to stick to a middle of the road policy; help us get some of the blessings of democracy here at home first before you jump on the free-the-other-peoples bandwagon.”<sup>536</sup> The balance between supporting a nation at war and a call for justice was not an either-or choice for the black press as the *Chicago Defender* strongly argued two weeks after the bombing of Pearl Harbor:

“The Negro press will not blemish its magnificent record of sound patriotism by indulging in subversive advocacy to the impairment of the national will. However, unless and until constitutional guarantees are suspended, the Negro press will continue to use its moral force against the mob in its criminal orgy, against such ultra violences as lynching, burning at [the] stake and judicial murder.”<sup>537</sup>

Although whites across the nation were paying little attention, the political clout of black America was growing during the war. This meant that the power of the black press represented a serious threat to support for the war and the New Deal coalition, which Franklin Roosevelt

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<sup>535</sup> Edwin Mims, *The Advancing South* (New York: Doubleday, 1926), 268; Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 924; Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Awakening of Nation*, 16.

<sup>536</sup> Lee Finkle, *Forum for Protes: The Black Press During World War II* (Rutherford, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1975), 80.

<sup>537</sup> Patrick S. Washburn, *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press During World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 55-56. and Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Awakening of Nation*, 21. citing “Freedom of the Negro Press,” *Chicago Defender*, December 20, 1941.

needed in order to win reelection in 1944. Fueled by a drive for wartime news, the circulation of black newspapers grew steadily during the war, from 1,265,000 in 1940, to 1,613,255 in 1943 and 1,809,000 in 1945.<sup>538</sup> Roosevelt understood that it would be disastrous to oppose a press that spoke to 13 million black Americans who represented 10 percent of the population and a larger block of Democratic support nationally.<sup>539</sup> The effect of criticism of the government could be just as large on the war front as it could at the ballot box, as the black press was seen as critical to maintaining high morale amongst black troops, who represented an even larger share (16 percent) of enlistments.<sup>540</sup>

Although radio ownership grew dramatically starting in the early 1920s, it was not used in the fight against racial discrimination for decades. One reason for the complete lack of innovative use of the radio by early organizations fighting for civil rights was a practically nonexistent radio presence for blacks among the national radio audience. This was the case for geographic, political, and economic reasons, ironically the same reasons that blacks were such political outsiders and thus most likely to be willing to innovate their political communication tactics.

While radio adoption skyrocketed throughout the nation between World War I and World War II, adoption by black families lagged considerably. In fact, no group was more shut out from interwar radio.<sup>541</sup> Geographically, radio diffusion spread primarily in Northern and urban areas during the 1920s. Meanwhile, most black families lived in the South and in rural areas, despite the great migration, which brought millions to Northern industrial cities like Chicago and Detroit. Of the 12.5 million blacks living in the nation in 1930, 75 percent lived in the South and

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<sup>538</sup> This represented a 43% growth in only five years. John H. Burma, "An Analysis of the Present Negro Press," *Social Forces* 26, no. 1-4 (1947-1948).

<sup>539</sup> Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Awakening of Nation*, 21.

<sup>540</sup> Thomas Sancton, "Something's Happened to the Negro," *The New Republic*, January 8, 1943 1943.

<sup>541</sup> Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 250.

over half lived in rural America.<sup>542</sup> Therefore there were small numbers of blacks among radio listeners, insignificant enough to pressure radio stations to include the tastes and issues of black America on the airwaves.<sup>543</sup> Economically, many blacks were among the poorest people living in the nation between the wars, exacerbating the geographic barriers limiting radio ownership. In 1930, 40 percent of American families owned radios, but only 7.5 percent of African American families. This gap was especially apparent in rural America where 25% of whites owned radios but only .3 percent of blacks, a ratio of over 80:1.<sup>544</sup> Even in the much more prosperous 1940s, two decades into the radio age, only 50 percent of one group of Mississippi sharecroppers owned radios. The gap finally shrunk by the mid 1950s when it was estimated that 94 percent of all black households had a radio, representing 98 percent of Northern black families and 80 percent of Southern, more rural blacks.<sup>545</sup>

The complete lack of black culture and issues on radio during the interwar period resulted from the minimal black radio audience and ownership of radio stations. Among the nation's 778 radio stations in 1939 exactly zero were owned or operated by African Americans.<sup>546</sup> However, this was not for a lack of trying. In 1930 the Harlem Broadcasting Corporation failed in an attempt to buy a radio station in New York City and in 1937 the Gold Star Radio and TV

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<sup>542</sup> Blacks represented less than four percent of the population of the Northeastern and North Central states in 1930. Ibid., 251.

<sup>543</sup> Kathy M. Newman, "The Forgotten Fifteen Million: Black Radio, the "Negro Market and the Civil Rights Movement," *Radical History Review* 76, no. Winter (2000); Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*.

<sup>544</sup> Among rural whites, foreign-born whites actually had higher radio ownership rates (32.2 percent) than native-born whites (24.2 percent). Both clearly towered over the nearly nonexistent radio ownership amongst poor black farmers. Herman S. Hettinger, *A Decade of Radio Advertising* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 49. as cited in Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*.

<sup>545</sup> Newman, "The Forgotten Fifteen Million: Black Radio, the "Negro Market and the Civil Rights Movement," 120-21.

<sup>546</sup> Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 252.



Corporation was similarly unsuccessful in establishing a network of African American stations in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, New Orleans, and Los Angeles.<sup>547</sup>

Other than a few sporadic counterexamples, there was a complete lack of radio programming which included African Americans on the air or targeted them as a primary audience.<sup>548</sup> In 1935, WJTL in Atlanta broadcast a daily 15-minute news bulletin on African American affairs. This was the first attempt to use radio as a beacon of civic information and empowerment intended for black Americans.<sup>549</sup> It was not until October 1948, when WDIA, a country and western station created a year earlier in Memphis, turned to African American programming largely out of desperation. WDIA hired Nat Williams, a popular local black high school teacher and regular contributor to the Negro press, to host the first show intended for a black audience, called "The Tan Town Jamboree." Other shows targeting black listeners were added throughout the next 18 months until WDIA completely converted from its previous format, becoming the first black radio station in America. The success of WDIA was replicated quickly as approximately 100 new black radio stations were created yearly from 1949 – 1958.<sup>550</sup> While radio stations were still not black-owned, a major breakthrough had nonetheless been realized. The national black audience now mattered, and the issues that were important to them were given a platform that was previously absent.

While the modern civil rights movement, as we know it today, did not unify and organize until the mid 1950s, the current of outspoken activism and the voice of the discontent of millions of black Americans had been present for generations through the black press and eventually black radio. The most consistent and long running civil rights activity was organized by local and

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<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

<sup>548</sup> In 1929 Jack Cooper began The All-Negro Hour on WSBC Chicago, a variety show that featured African American performers. Ibid.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>550</sup> Newman, "The Forgotten Fifteen Million: Black Radio, the "Negro Market and the Civil Rights Movement."

national civil rights organizations, most notably the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1909. The NAACP fought consistently using multiple channels, but primarily through the courts. The NAACP won a series of major Supreme Court victories from the late 1930s through 1950 targeting legal segregation, which had been codified in 1896 in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Specifically the NAACP targeted segregation in graduate school,<sup>551</sup> paving the way for *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.<sup>552</sup>

This historical, technological, and political context created an environment that facilitated new political communication strategies that were used to expand the scope of the conflict in the battle over discrimination and segregation issues that would dominate the civil rights movement of the late 1950s and 1960s.<sup>553</sup> As was the case with the radio, there were no black-owned television stations in the 1950s and 1960s. Therefore it was necessary to gain television attention by creating newsworthy events. However, events that were seen as overly radical or difficult to cover were likely to receive less attention.<sup>554</sup> Furthermore, in order to potentially gain supporters beyond the activists, the message transmitted by television news needed to focus on the positive aspects of civil rights actions and frame their cause in a non-threatening way that connected with widely shared beliefs.<sup>555</sup>

Doug McAdam argues persuasively that attracting positive media attention, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) did regularly from 1955 through his death in 1968, was the result of brilliantly staged newsworthy events and a

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<sup>551</sup> *Missouri Ex Rel Gaines V. Canada*, 305 337(1938); *Sweatt V. Painter, Et Al.*, 339 629(1950); *Mclaurin V. Oklahoma State Regents*, 339 637(1950).

<sup>552</sup> *Brown V. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 483(1954).

<sup>553</sup> E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America* (Boston: Cengage, 1975).

<sup>554</sup> Cancian and Ross, "Mass Media and the Women's Movement: 1900-1977."

<sup>555</sup> McAdam, "The Case of the American Civil Rights Movement."

masterful use of framing.<sup>556</sup> As Roberts and Klibanoff recount, the movement came of age just as television news did.<sup>557</sup> SCLC and other nonviolent civil rights organizations including the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) understood how to create disruptive actions that were newsworthy.<sup>558</sup> However, gaining attention through disruptive tactics was one thing, reaching supportive bystanders through national television news coverage was something else. Martin Luther King Jr., among others, generated a more sympathetic and positive tone through masterful framing that used democratic and biblical language to speak to themes and values widely held by white America.<sup>559</sup> Furthermore the activities such as the student led sit-ins in Nashville required substantial training from leaders like Ella Baker and Rev. James Lawson in order to act in a way that would maintain a positive, respectful, and morally justified position, even in the face of threats and violence.

These strategies were not universally successful, however. In Albany, GA, after months of fruitless organized activity by SNCC, Dr. King and SCLC were asked to join the local movement. For many months between 1961-1962 Dr. King and SCLC ran into Albany's strategic police chief Laurie Pritchett who read about King's methods and took steps to minimize conflict and render movement activity less than newsworthy. Pritchett allowed limited protesting and dispersed those arrested to jails anywhere within a 50-mile radius minimizing overcrowding and reducing both stress on the system and any visible conflict. Further, he had those working for him preliminarily release Dr. King, which deflated the urgency of the Albany movement.

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<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Awakening of Nation*.

<sup>558</sup> SNCC emerged out of the student sit-in movement in 1960 and remained separate from existing organizations partially due to advice and support from Ella Baker, one of the most active leaders of the NAACP and SCLC.

<sup>559</sup> McAdam, "The Case of the American Civil Rights Movement."

Ultimately SCLC left with little to show for months of work, leaving the local SNCC chapter to continue to battle Pritchett.<sup>560</sup>

Reeling from the loss in Albany, GA, SCLC learned from their experience and targeting Birmingham, AL, one of the most violently segregated cities in the South with a well-known police chief sure to confront any widespread movement activity with brutality. Eugene “Bull” Connor, the police chief in Birmingham was, in many ways, the anti-Pritchett. Not only was Connor determined to strike down protesters but he did not care how innocent they appeared. It was during this campaign that Dr. King was imprisoned and penned his remarkable letter from a Birmingham jail. While he was in prison, others from SCLC, led by Rev. James Bevel organized Operation “C,” standing for confrontation. They recruited local college and high school students to protest. Faced with a crowd made up mostly of teenagers, Connor unleashed attack dogs and fire hoses, before the march could make it one city block. Newspapers and TV news filled their reports with images and detailed accounts from Birmingham, achieving one of the greatest media victories of the nonviolent movement.<sup>561</sup> Attorney David Vann, who was working on a political compromise while the protests were going on later stated:

“It was a masterpiece of the use of media to explain a cause to the general public of the nation. Because in those days you had 15 minutes of national news and 15 minutes of local news and in marching only one block, they could get enough news film to fill all of the newscasts of all of the television stations of the United States.”<sup>562</sup>

Even with organized action dedicated to attract positive media attention, the mainstream press and television news did not respond immediately. While movement activity increased dramatically starting in 1960, news coverage lagged. Analysis of

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<sup>560</sup> Ibid; Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 256-69; DeVinney and Crossley, “No Easy Walk (1961-1963).”

<sup>561</sup> McAdam, “The Case of the American Civil Rights Movement; Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 256-69; DeVinney and Crossley, “No Easy Walk (1961-1963).”

<sup>562</sup> “No Easy Walk (1961-1963).”

coverage by *The New York Times* showed that a major jump in news coverage of the movement did not occur until 1963, and Birmingham clearly helped to turn the tide. On June 11, exactly one month after the end of the Birmingham movement, President Kennedy appeared on television announcing his intention to send to congress the most sweeping civil rights legislation in the nation's history, stating:

“Now the time has come for this nation to fulfill its promise. The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased the cries for equality that no city or state legislative body can prudently ignore them. The fires of frustration and discord are burning in every city, North and South...It is time to act in the Congress, in your home state, and local legislative bodies, in all of our daily lives...A great change is at hand and our task, our obligation, is to make that revolution, that change, peaceful and constructive for all.”<sup>563</sup>

Following the movement in Birmingham, President Kennedy's first TV address about civil rights, the March on Washington, and Kennedy's tragic assassination, all occurring in 1963, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted on July 2.<sup>564</sup> Much like the woman's suffrage movement before it, mainstream journalists including both print and broadcast covered the movement widely leading up to and immediately following major anti-discrimination legislation, namely the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The lesson was unmistakable and it led movement organizers to engage in one of the most climactic and impactful moments of the civil rights movement. Most of the civil rights leaders agreed that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had little teeth without a national voting law and they looked for a place to increase pressure for just such legislation. The answer was Selma, Alabama picked in large part because Sheriff Jim Clark was running Selma and the surrounding Dallas County. As civil rights icon and U.S. Representative John Lewis stated “Clark was Bull Connor through and through. He had a violent temper, he took everything personally and he

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<sup>563</sup> Quote taken from Lewis and D.Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 199.

<sup>564</sup> Cancian and Ross, "Mass Media and the Women's Movement: 1900-1977," 19-21; Burstein, "Public Opinion, Demonstrations, and the Passage of Antidiscrimination Legislation," 168-69.

always retaliated physically.”<sup>565</sup> The events of the Selma campaign were among the most climactic of the entire movement including waves of violence against protestors by local police, the killing of Jimmy Lee Jackson, and multiple standoffs between Dr. Martin Luther King’s SCLC and SNCC activists and Clark.<sup>566</sup> Reporters were in town covering the events but the interest of editors and news coverage was waning and a proposed march to Montgomery was agreed to in order to heighten the stakes.<sup>567</sup>

The first attempt at the march, led by John Lewis and Hosea Williams, ended quickly with the brutal attack of protestors on the Edmund Pettis Bridge known as “Bloody Sunday,” on March 7, 1965.<sup>568</sup> Roy Reed of The New York Times witnessed the brutality as the troopers charged, writing:

“The troopers rushed forward, their blue uniforms and white helmets blurring into a flying wedge as they moved. The wedge moved with such force that it seemed almost to pass over the waiting column [of protestors] instead of through it. The first 10 or 20 Negroes were swept to the ground screaming, arms and legs flying, and packs and bags went skittering across the grassy divider strip and on the pavement on both sides. Those still on their feet retreated. The troopers continued pushing, using both the force of their bodies and the prodding of their nightsticks. A cheer went up from the white spectators lining the south side of the highway. The mounted posse men spurred their horses and rode at a run into the retreating mass. The Negroes cried out as they crowded together for protection, and the whites on the sideline whooped and cheered.”<sup>569</sup>

At 9:30pm ABC interrupted its Sunday Night Movie and showed fifteen minutes of footage of the assault in Selma and its aftermath. To add even more poignancy to the incredible imagery shown across the country, the movie that was being shown was *Judgment at Nuremberg*, a dramatic study of how Germans had ignored, or acquiesced in, the horrors of

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<sup>565</sup> Lewis and D.Orso, *Walking with the Wind*.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid., 300-62.

<sup>567</sup> Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Awakening of Nation*, 384-85.

<sup>568</sup> Lewis and D.Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 300-62.

<sup>569</sup> Roy Reed, "Alabama Police Use Gas and Clubs to Rout Negroes," *The New York Times*, March 8, 1965.

Nazism.<sup>570</sup> This created the unmistakable comparison between the role of a passive nation in Nazi-led Germany and the current reality of those fighting for civil rights in Alabama. Thousands responded by protesting across the country, including a sit-in at the White House, and hundreds traveled to Montgomery to assist.<sup>571</sup> Just eight days after Bloody Sunday, President Lyndon Johnson personally delivered proposed voting rights legislation to Congress and gave an impassioned speech, covered live on television, in which he called for passage of the law with “no delay, no hesitation, no compromise,” adding “We shall overcome.”<sup>572</sup> The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed into law less than five months later on August 6. This piece of legislation along with the Civil Rights Act passed one year earlier marked the largest political victories of a movement that started to innovate nearly 140 years earlier.

### **Social Movements of the Internet Era**

There have been four social movements of any substantial size that have emerged in the United States during the internet era: the early Tea Party, the Occupy movement, Black Lives Matter (BLM), and the Resist movement. Each are important in terms of evaluating innovative practices of social movements in the digital age, but none have been politically successful like the suffrage movement or civil rights movement, motivating substantial legislative change on their own. Obviously it is not difficult to find numerous social movements around the world in recent years that have helped create major political change including overthrowing totalitarian regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. Many important examples took place within the Arab Spring, a series of movements that swept across the Middle East and northern Africa from late

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<sup>570</sup> Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Awakening of Nation*, 386.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*, 386-88.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*, 388.

2010 through the end of 2011.<sup>573</sup> Several successful movements dating back to the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine in 2004-2005 have successfully used the internet, and later social media, as tools for information dissemination, organization and mobilization. The role of the internet and social media is debated within these movements but there is no doubt that the utility and skills needed by activists and the governments they intend to disrupt are importantly different.<sup>574</sup> While there is little doubt that innovative use of these digital communication technologies (DCTs) aided movements, especially in nations where media is controlled or otherwise absent, these tools alone did not create revolutions. Yet the use of the internet was threatening enough to social and political order that the regimes trying to resist change monitored web use constantly and, in the case of Egypt, completely shut the internet down on the evenings of January 27 and 28, 2011.<sup>575</sup>

In the American context, the Tea Party was criticized by some as being a formulated “astroturf” movement led by large well-funded conservative groups.<sup>576</sup> In fact it initially emerged from a digitally organized movement of fiscal conservatives that quickly grew and was absorbed into the Republican Party.<sup>577</sup> The story of one pioneering activist provides some useful insight into this process. Keli Carender, a 30-year-old math teacher living in the Seattle area helped to spark the early Tea Party in 2009, only one year after she started to follow politics.

Before any Tea Party activity, Keli channeled her political frustrations into a blog that she called

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<sup>573</sup> The Arab Spring deserves substantially more analysis than this book will provide, instead I will focus briefly on the American movements, which were decidedly less clearly politically successful. For more on the Arab Spring and other networked movements see Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2012); Philip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussain, *Democracy's Fourth Wave: Digital Media and the Arab Spring*, ed. Andrew Chadwick and Angela Chnapko, Oxford Studies in Digital Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>574</sup> Steven Lloyd Wilson, "Information and Revolution" (Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2016).

<sup>575</sup> Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, 61-66.

<sup>576</sup> Chris Good, "The Tea Party Movement: Who's in Charge?," *The Atlantic*, April 13, 2009.

<sup>577</sup> Astroturf refers to synthetic grass, which implies that the Tea Party was not a grassroots movement, instead shaped and funded by powerful outside groups. While this is largely true of the Tea Party through much of its history, it was not the case in the early months of the movement. Kate Zernike, "Unlikely Activist Who Got to the Tea Party Early," *The New York Times*, February 27, 2010.



the *Liberty Belle*. Eventually she started organizing a protest at the state capital in Olympia that she called Porkulus, opposing the massive stimulus bill moving quickly through Congress.<sup>578</sup>

Ms. Carender did not know if anyone would join her but she was dedicated. To spread the word she contacted a small group of young Republicans that she had become involved with. She then called, and was rejected by, a local conservative radio host before another agreed to plug her event on air. She broke through by getting conservative pundit and writer Michelle Malkin to mention the protest on her blog (and buy pulled pork for the protesters). All along she gathered a large email list. Ms. Carender's first rally drew only 120 people. A week later, she had 300, and six weeks later, 1,200 people gathered for a Tax Day Tea Party. Almost a year later she was among around 60 Tea Party leaders flown to Washington to be trained in election activism by Freedom Works, the conservative advocacy organization led by Dick Armey, the former House Republican leader.<sup>579</sup> While the early movement achieved limited victory itself, it soon became largely absorbed by the GOP and its supporters won a number of Congressional seats, especially in the Republican wave of 2010. As a result, a Tea Party caucus emerged in Congress, which largely became the freedom caucus today. These members hold down the extremely conservative wing of the Republican party both fiscally and socially and heavily influence the direction of the party. There is no doubt that the Tea Party has therefore been enormously important in influencing American politics, however it was through the role that the Tea Party took on once accepted into the GOP that led to the greatest impact, as opposed to those early months of organizing, collecting email lists, and eating pulled pork sandwiches with likeminded movement activists.

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<sup>578</sup> The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) or "The Stimulus" was signed into law on Feb. 17 2009. It was originally estimated to cost \$787 billion, which was later revised up to \$831 billion.

<sup>579</sup> Zernike, "Unlikely Activist Who Got to the Tea Party Early."

The Occupy movement was, without question, a populist movement, but substantial doubts remain about what, if anything, it successfully accomplished. Starting in July 2011, Canadian-based Adbusters started to call for a movement generally opposing corporate corruption and income inequality utilizing Twitter and the #occupywallstreet label. Following their call, several thousand protesters converged on Zucotti Park, two blocks north of Wall Street on Sept. 17, 2011 and began the Occupy movement in earnest. The movement quickly spread with similar protest camps sprouting up in hundreds of cities across the globe.<sup>580</sup> Widely ridiculed by some political pundits and many conservative politicians, the Occupy movement tried to generate alternative media coverage through live streaming, the creation of their own newspapers including the *Occupy Wall Street Journal*, and the use of social media including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Tumblr, among others.<sup>581</sup>

There were several important distinctive traits of the Occupy movement. First, it did not fill a media void as many of the successful movements working under totalitarian regimes did. Second, the Occupy movement purposefully did not have leaders, which made it difficult to cover and added to its disorganized appearance. Finally, there was a lack of consistent organized media events or strategic frames that had helped earlier movements. Nevertheless, the ideas of the Occupy movement became part of the mainstream political vocabulary, including the concept of the “99 percent.” Additionally, the primary issue of income inequality has been covered much more since the start of the movement in 2011 (See Fig. 6.2). Importantly, the media coverage had virtually no time lag, suggesting that although they were less strategic, social movements in the

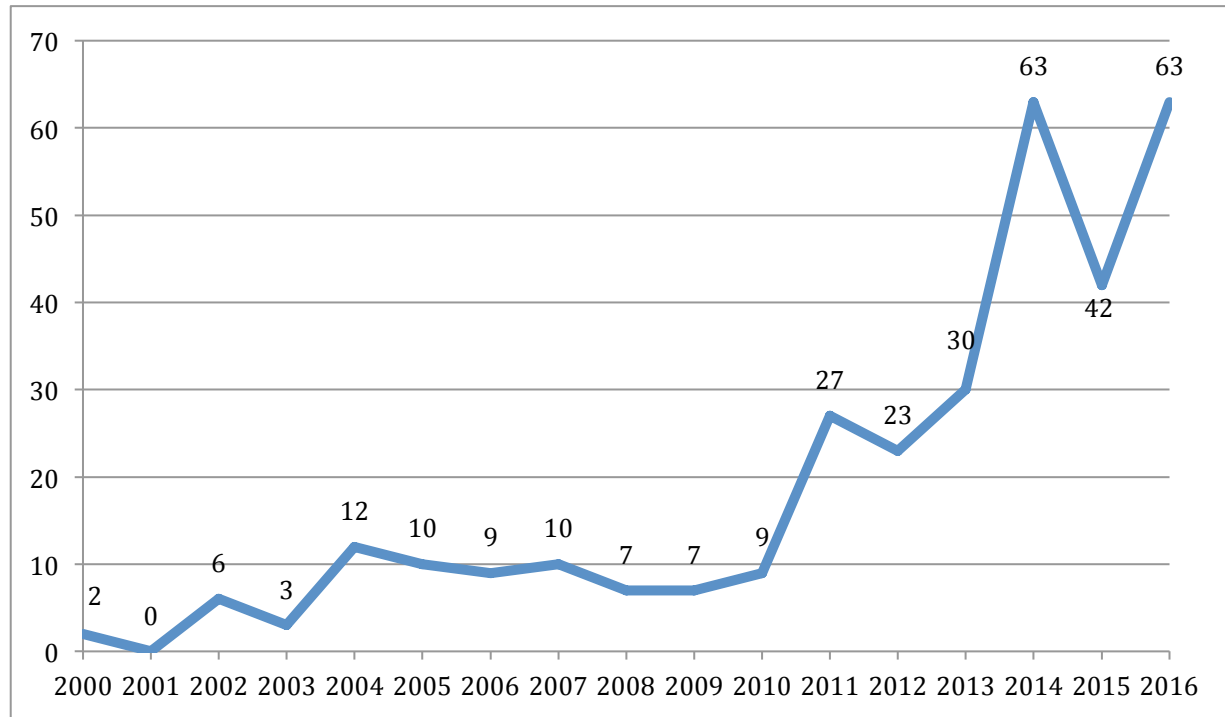
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<sup>580</sup> Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*; OccupyTheory, "How Occupy Wall Street Began."

<sup>581</sup> The importance of personal social media use in online movements like Occupy is most notably explored and detailed in Bennett and Segerberg, *The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics*; W Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, "The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics," *Information, Communication & Society* 15, no. 5 (2012).. For a great example see "We Are the 99 Percent," <http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/>.

internet era can earn nearly immediate media coverage. How well they orchestrate or manipulate that coverage is a very different question.

**Figure 6.2: Number of News Articles Related to Income Inequality in the U.S. Published in The New York Times Per Year, 2000-2016<sup>582</sup>**



For anyone paying attention, The Occupy movement was different in look, feel, and outcome to the Tea Party movement, and even lacked some of the tools of the earlier Tea Party. One of the key reasons for this can be linked to the networks within the innovation process of both movements. Much like the expansion of innovative and experienced campaign staff and consultants spreading through Democratic party politics following the unsuccessful Dean

<sup>582</sup> Data was collected from *The New York Times* article archive by searching for “income inequality U.S.” Results were then coded for those applying to U.S. This does not include articles about wealth inequality, workers rights, Medicaid, or other related economic inequality issues that were also major themes during the main thrust of the Occupy movement. The New York Times, “The New York Times Article Archive,” The New York Times Company, <https://query.nytimes.com/search/sitesearch/#/income+inequality+U.S./from20000101to20161231/allresult/s/1/allauthors/oldest/>.

campaign,<sup>583</sup> organizers of social movements can bring successful tactics, experience, and innovations with them as they become actively involved in other movements. However the overlap between those who supported the Tea Party and those who supported the occupy movement was extremely small due to the ideological divide between the movements. Additionally, each movement adapts media tools to its needs. One study by Vraga et al. demonstrated this by comparing the professionalization, engagement, and amount of scripted content in YouTube videos produced by Occupy and the Proposition 8 movement in California.<sup>584</sup>

Black Lives Matter (BLM) has emerged as, to date, the longest lasting American movement spurred in large part by innovative uses of the internet, and social media. Social media was used by both the Tea Party and Occupy movements but not as exclusively as during BLM. While there are several themes weaving through BLM the central goal has been to build a nationwide movement dedicated to ending police brutality generally, and specifically the disproportionate number of people of color, often young black men, who die as a result of interactions with police.<sup>585</sup>

According to one of the first detailed scholarly analyses of Black Lives Matter and its use of online communication, there are a number of ways that BLM differs from Occupy Wall Street and the earliest days of the Tea Party before it was absorbed into the GOP, but draws similarities to both of the successful historical movements. First, BLM demands specific forms of redress for

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<sup>583</sup> Kreiss, *Prototype Politics: Technology-Intensive Campaigning and the Data of Democracy*; *Taking Our Country Back*; Kreiss and Saffer, "Networks and Innovation in the Production of Communication: Explaining Innovations in U.S. Electoral Campaigning from 2004 to 2012."

<sup>584</sup> Emily K Vraga et al., "The Rules of Engagement: Comparing Two Social Protest Movements on Youtube," *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 17, no. 3 (2014).

<sup>585</sup> Deen Freelon, Charlton D. McIlwain, and Meredith D. Clark, "Beyond the Hashtags: #Ferguson, #Blacklivesmatter, and the Online Struggle for Offline Justice," (Washington D.C.: The Center for Media and Social Impact, American University, 2016).

one relatively well defined political and/or legal issue.<sup>586</sup> Campaign Zero is one organization within BLM that has 10 specific policy solutions they are working toward with the ultimate goal to reduce police violence across the nation. This includes comprehensive policy agendas for the local, state, and national level and evaluations of major candidates for office and legislative proposals currently up for debate.<sup>587</sup> The other recent movements' goals were diffuse, as opposed to specific policy demands. This is important within the broader historical context because successful movements in the past, including the women's suffrage movement and the modern civil rights movement each focused on, and eventually achieved, specific policy aims. It is also important in its connection to the utility of using social media to expose the numbers and brutality involved in these events because the images and video of the events or the aftermath can be easily shared. Just as the police dog attacks in Birmingham in 1963 were carried by every newspaper across the nation, pictures and videos of those killed by during police encounters spread via social media and greatly impacted traditional media on many days. These events included the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, Philandro Castile and Alton Sterling just to name a few, along with the lack of indictments or charges being brought against the police officers involved. Each of these events sparked major protests both online and off, during just the first three years of the movement.

Second, Black Lives Matter is dedicated to helping improve the lives of a specific oppressed community. BLM is focused on improving the well-being, safety, and security of

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<sup>586</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>587</sup> Campaign Zero was organized by many of the early activists leading BLM primarily though Twitter who organized a concrete list of stated goals, the research supporting why these are necessary problems to address and many ways in which activists and supporters can get involved. Campaign Zero, "Join Campaign Zero," <http://www.joincampaignzero.org/>.

black people in general, and black youth in particular.<sup>588</sup> The other modern movements advocated for more broadly defined social groups, such as fiscal conservatives or “the 99%.” Finally, BLM’s members engage with politicians, the press, and the public through both conventional and contentious means.<sup>589</sup> The Tea Party quickly engaged with influential political leaders and soon became a part of the parties but Occupy was strategically leaderless in its structure and did not successfully leverage meetings with the media or political leaders as a result. The earlier movements clearly worked on multiple fronts much the way that BLM has done since it emerged as a movement in 2014. It is not surprising due to all of these similarities that Black Lives Matter has often been dubbed the first civil rights movement of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.<sup>590</sup> It remains to be seen if BLM will achieve the policy changes that the modern civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s did, but it is helpful to recognize the strategic similarities and differences between modern movements and those of earlier eras.

The rise of the Resist movement after the 2016 election offers one final historical parallel. The movement is a loose coalition of various issue and activist groups from the left that grew in opposition to the Trump Presidency. The Resist movement took center stage on the day after Donald Trump was inaugurated with the Women’s March emerged in hundreds of locations all over the world spread primarily through social media. The March was primarily a response to what most activists viewed as openly misogynistic and offensive statements and actions made by Trump. Protesters supported progressive policies including women’s rights, climate change legislation, healthcare reform, reproductive rights, free speech, and human rights broadly. The turnout was simply stunning as somewhere between 3.3 and 4.6 million protesters took part in

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<sup>588</sup> Freelon, McIlwain, and Clark, "Beyond the Hashtags: #Ferguson, #Blacklivesmatter, and the Online Struggle for Offline Justice," 7.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid.

<sup>590</sup> Jay Caspian Kang, "'Our Demand Is Simple: Stop Killing Us:'" *The New York Times Magazine*, May 4, 2015 2015.

marches in nearly 550 cities and towns across the U.S.<sup>591</sup> It was the largest single-day protest in U.S. history, shattering previous marks set by anti-war, civil rights, and LGBTQ marches in the past. Other strands of the Resist movement included a push for immigrant and refugee rights and a rejection of Islamophobia espoused by Trump along with a controversial travel and refugee ban offered in the first week of the Administration. The ban spurred thousands to protest at airports and a series of legal challenges that stalled and weakened the ban eventually leading to a showdown in the Supreme Court.

Other efforts included in this broad movement included specific efforts designed to pressure legislators and others aimed at chipping away at Republican control of both houses of Congress and the Executive Branch. One leading group, Indivisible, grew out of a pamphlet created and spread online by former Democratic staffers. This pamphlet repackaged successful strategies used by conservative activists during the early Tea Party movement to call, question, and meet with elected officials. The Townhall Project uses digital tools to help people locate nearby town halls with elected officials so they can voice their concerns in person. Overall the efforts during the first months of the Resist movement were diverse and reactionary. There are numerous overlapping organizations and issues that are primarily organizing online and disseminating calls for action and tools via social media.<sup>592</sup>

It remains to be seen if a mobilized movement from the left will be incorporated into the Democratic party as the GOP absorbed the Tea Party in the lead up to the 2010 election. But what is clear is that a massive movement from the left has once again superseded a more specific movement dedicated to highlighting injustice and fighting for improved treatment for black

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<sup>591</sup> Kaveh Waddell, "The Exhausting Work of Tallying America's Largest Protest," *The Atlantic*, January 23 2017.

<sup>592</sup> For a spreadsheet of ongoing groups and projects associated with the Resist movement see "Resist Projects List," [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/133PEG\\_17snFhKW6j8k3wL5AjkQd3n\\_kxzyEyHBZIK3o/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/133PEG_17snFhKW6j8k3wL5AjkQd3n_kxzyEyHBZIK3o/edit#gid=0).

America. Black Lives Matter has received decidedly less attention since the 2016 election due, at least in part, to many activists on the political left redirecting their attention to the broad opposition to Trump. How the Resist movement continues and what it means for BLM moving forward has yet to be determined. History suggests there is not enough oxygen for both left leaning movements to thrive at the same time and the larger one (that is more acceptable to white America) is more likely to survive moving forward. Time will tell.

## **Conclusion**

Both the woman's suffrage and civil rights movements can trace their earliest political communications innovations back to the 1820s, the dawn of the first political communication revolution and the emergence of the Mass Political Communication Order. Continual efforts to voice dissent and mobilize action through the press attracted readers for decades but failed to mobilize any bystander publics and reach the political insiders needed to achieve political change. In other words, innovative efforts to use new political communication tactics and ICTs to voice the grievances of political outsiders, organize supporters, and effect political change were limited in number and ineffective in reaching an audience beyond the marginalized groups already involved.

Eventually, a number of social and political contexts aligned to create the political and social opportunities where mainstream media started covering issues, which mobilized political insiders and public bystanders very shortly before legislative victories were achieved. These successfully leveraged political communication tactics did help to gain political victories, but they were hardly innovative at the time of the political victory and took the form of creating media events framed in a particular way, as opposed to creating political communication



themselves. Furthermore in the final few years before legislative victory, the media outlets created by the activists themselves dwindled in number as their readership and messages were amplified, and modified, by the mainstream newspapers, radio and television. Therefore, while the *creation* of innovative political communication tactics by social movements did not achieve major political goals, the *manipulation* of major newspaper and broadcast coverage through the creation of media events and framing of issues was an essential tool for activists in both historical movements.

The lesson is clear, political outsiders central to social movements are most likely to attempt to innovate, however without the means of substantial influence over political communication on a society-wide scale, they are unable to achieve political victories on their own. Instead, they needed to create the consistent communications and media-ready imagery that would quickly expand their message through traditional media sources. That is, at least, until the barriers to influence were dramatically reduced by the advent of the internet and inexpensive social media tools perfectly suited for disseminating information organizing movement activity.

## Chapter 7: Interest Group Innovation: How Different Target Audiences Affect Political Communication Goals

“Innovation is not about saying yes to everything. It's about saying no to all but the most crucial features.” – Steve Jobs

Interest groups are strange and inconsistent beasts, when viewed through a political communication lens. The political communication goals of interest groups are fundamentally different from those of campaigns and social movements. The primary communication goal of interest groups has been to provide political information aimed at influencing policy makers and the policy outcomes they create. The fundamental difference in desired audience size and political communication goals between interest groups and those of social movements and campaigns is essential in understanding the differences in innovative choices made by interest groups over time.

Social movements throughout American history have always aimed to use media to increase visibility of a grievance shared by a group of political outsiders in order to mobilize “bystander publics,” and leverage pressure on policy makers to pass new legislation.<sup>593</sup> Campaigns have constantly used communication tactics to strategically increase the knowledge of, and support for candidates and parties, in order to get out the vote and win elections. Both of these political organizations direct the vast majority of their political communications efforts toward the public. This is fundamentally different from interest groups, which have played insider politics, sometimes described as a “contact game,” for most of their political history, relying on support or money from members, but primarily working in a way that requires less of a broad, public-directed political communication mission.<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>593</sup> McAdam, "The Case of the American Civil Rights Movement."

<sup>594</sup> William P. Browne, *Groups, Interests, and U.S. Public Policy* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1998).

Additionally, this difference suggests that the adoption of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), extremely salient in the early stages of a political communication cycle (PCC),<sup>595</sup> may be less important for interest groups because the popularity of a new medium makes it particularly enticing to political actors only to the extent to which it offers a potentially more effective means of achieving their long standing political communication goals than traditional methods. The communication goals of lobbyists are directed at a small group of political insiders, thus they are less likely to be disrupted by the emergence of the radio, television, or internet as it would be if the target was the broader public. Thus their innovation patterns have been less consistent and substantially less dramatic relative to other political organizations.

Interest groups have existed in America since the colonial era and were recognized by the framers as powerful and permanent forces in American politics. Their structure, goals, and strategies have changed perhaps more dramatically than any other major category of political organization. Yet throughout these changes, interest group politics have embodied a unique paradox within American politics: they are disdained in general but are nonetheless valued and joined by millions.<sup>596</sup> While interest groups have been praised by political scientists like Truman and Dahl who published classic studies advocating for the centrality and virtues of pluralism in the American political system,<sup>597</sup> they have also been criticized by Schattschneider and many others for filling their heavenly chorus with a strong upper-class accent and for their outsized

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<sup>595</sup> Epstein, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised Anymore: New Technology, Political Choice, and Changes in Political Communication from the Newspaper to the Internet; "The Innovative Use of Media by Social Movements in the United States," in *Annual Conference of the Southern Political Science Association* (New Orleans 2015); "From the Fireside Chats to the First Political Tweet: The Origin and Diffusion of Political Communication Innovations from the Radio to the Internet.," in *American Political Science Association Annual Meeting Political Communication Pre-Conference* (Chicago 2013).

<sup>596</sup> Browne, *Groups, Interests, and U.S. Public Policy*, 27-28.

<sup>597</sup> David Truman, *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1951); Robert Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

impact on American politics and policies due to deep pockets and elite insider connections.<sup>598</sup>

Others have made relatively ineffectual arguments that interest groups are in fact much less elite than they are made out to be.<sup>599</sup> Ultimately, interest groups vary in design, aim, and size, yet they share three key features. First, members affiliate voluntarily. Next, these voluntary affiliations are based on members sharing at least one common characteristic or interest. And finally, interest groups seek to advance the collective interest that comes as a result of that shared characteristic or issue through political channels.<sup>600</sup>

One consistent theme through this book is the argument that major and permanent change in political communication activity only occurs through the choices of political actors, whether those actors are individuals or organizations such as interest groups. Mancur Olson's 1965 classic *Logic of Collective Action* highlights the choices faced by individuals whether to participate in collective efforts or not. In his widely accepted view, organizations solve the problem of individuals free riding on the efforts of others by offering selective incentives or adjusting their structure.<sup>601</sup> In much the same way, this chapter will focus on the choices of if, how, and when interest groups choose whether or not to innovate their political communication activities.

The choices about whether or not to innovate political communication tactics are guided by political communication goals and impacted by a number of factors including resources available and the costs involved. While all of the same factors are in play for interest groups they are most distinct in their political communication goals. As described in the introduction, the

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<sup>598</sup> Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*.

<sup>599</sup> Browne, *Groups, Interests, and U.S. Public Policy*, 109-36.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid., 27-29.

<sup>601</sup> Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965); Bimber, Flanagan, and Stohl, *Collective Action in Organizations: Interaction and Engagement in an Era of Technological Change*.

majority of political communication is broadly targeted, aiming to reach a wide audience. Not so for the majority of political communication conducted by interest groups.

Interest groups, which are generally political insiders, target a uniquely smaller audience, which distinguishes them from other organized interests. Political organizations like campaigns and social movements want to disseminate information to the public, attract new supporters, shift public opinion, and/or mobilize political action. They are more likely to see new ICTs as politically viable once they grow in popularity. However, if organizations, like many interest groups, do not intend on expanding what Schattschneider describes as the "scope of conflict," instead focusing primarily on influencing policy makers, then new ICTs may not offer a reasonable incentive to innovate political communication tactics.<sup>602</sup> Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl argue in their nuanced book *Collective Action in Organizations*, that technological innovation has altered the structures and forms of collective action, reducing barriers to organizing and enhancing individual agency in coordinating collective action.<sup>603</sup> They are absolutely right. However when it comes to interest groups, the ICT innovations only started to change political choices on the part of organizations in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century and, for the most part, not until after the internet had become widely adopted in the early 2000s.

### **Studying Interest Groups Over Time**

Interest groups of one form or another have been present throughout U.S. history. During the colonial-era, localized interests emerged. Later in the early years of the republic, larger issue-based, economic organizations developed. And the modern member-based interest groups

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<sup>602</sup> Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*.

<sup>603</sup> Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl, *Collective Action in Organizations: Interaction and Engagement in an Era of Technological Change*.

organizations started to appear in the 1960s.<sup>604</sup> Political interests have, without question, evolved a great deal since the earliest years of our republic, but much of that change has been in organizational structure.

Elisabeth Clemens' historically-rich work, *The People's Lobby* examined how women's rights, farmer, and labor groups innovated their organizational structures from 1890 and 1925 to push for policy changes by branching out and forming modern interest groups.<sup>605</sup> Theda Skocpol, in her widely renowned *Diminished Democracy*, analyzed the breakdown of traditional cross-class federated membership organizations and the emergence of more professionalized advocacy groups in the 1970s.<sup>606</sup> These politically sophisticated organized interests relied on members for dues but fostered little civic activity or active engagement on the part of members, often labeled armchair activists. David Karpf, in his thoughtful book *The MoveOn Effect*, builds on the work of Skocpol and Bimber,<sup>607</sup> and helpfully arranges the organizational level changes into three generations.<sup>608</sup> The first generation lasted from the 1800s-1960s and featured cross-class membership federations that were identity-based and centered on attending meetings in person and participating in civic activities.<sup>609</sup> The second generation lasted from the 1970s through the early 2000s and was typified by single-issue professionally organized, policy-oriented, D.C. based advocacy firms that relied on members for fundraising and relatively passive armchair activism from home. Finally, the third generation emerged in the internet era starting in the early 2000s and included internet-mediated issue-generalist organizations that utilized web-based tools

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<sup>604</sup> Burdett A. Loomis, "Learning to Lobby: Groups, Venues, and Information in Eighteenth-Century America," in *Interest Group Politics*, ed. Burdett A. Loomis and Allan J. Cigler (Washington D. C.: CQ Press, 2012).

<sup>605</sup> Clemens, *The People's Lobby: Organizational Innovation and the Rise of Interest Group Politics in the United States, 1890-1925*.

<sup>606</sup> Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy : From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*.

<sup>607</sup> Bimber, *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*.

<sup>608</sup> Karpf, *The Moveon Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*, 24-27.

<sup>609</sup> Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy : From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*; Karpf, *The Moveon Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*, 26.

to democratize the activity in interest groups and mobilize political activity both on and offline.<sup>610</sup>

### **Early Interest Group Evolution Through the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

A realistic look back at the changes in interest group politics in American history needs to start with the fact that organized interests predate the founding of the nation, albeit not in their modern incarnation. During the colonial era interests organized to not only advocate for their issues, but to create representatives of colonial interests embedded in the British political system. These early forms of American interests provided a reliable exchange of information that benefited colonial and British interests alike. This process was formalized for the first time in 1712 when the South Carolina colonial legislature appointed a permanent agent in London to represent the interests of the colony, not individual people.<sup>611</sup> Over the next several decades, interest group activity within the colonies grew, as did the sophistication of the colonial assemblies.<sup>612</sup> Between 1715 and 1765, the average number of yearly legislative petitions per colony practically tripled from 26.5 to 75.7. While the numbers and activity of interest groups grew during the 18<sup>th</sup> century leading up to the American Revolution, these colonial organizations were largely informal, rudimentary, and small when compared with modern interest groups.<sup>613</sup>

Much of the foundations of the modern outsized role of interest groups in American politics were set as the Constitution was debated and ratified. The foundation of interest group activity through American political history has been rooted in the protections of speech,

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<sup>610</sup> *The Moveon Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*, 25-27.

<sup>611</sup> Loomis, "Learning to Lobby: Groups, Venues, and Information in Eighteenth-Century America," 39.

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>613</sup> For instance, local merchants organized to bribe voters in George Washington's run for the Virginia House of Burgesses, but this was neither modern party politics nor a formal interest group that lobbied for policy goals. Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox, *Interest Groups in American Campaigns: The New Face of Electioneering* (Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 1999). Loomis, "Learning to Lobby: Groups, Venues, and Information in Eighteenth-Century America," 42-43.

assembly, and petition enumerated in the First Amendment. While citizens have criticized lobbying and the actions of powerful interest groups, there have been no strong movements to ban them altogether based on the fundamental protections guaranteed in the Bill of Rights.<sup>614</sup> James Madison, the father of the Constitution, actively helped to move these rights to a central place in the Bill of Rights and understood that organized interests would be a part of the American political process moving forward. In Federalist #10 Madison describes the unavoidable and natural development of factions in society, which he defined as “a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.”<sup>615</sup> Though both modern political parties and interest groups fall under this broad definition, electoral parties did not exist in 1787 while organized interests clearly did.<sup>616</sup> In fact, Madison had seen many factions unite “through organizations to promote, through government, interests like... ‘a landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest.’”<sup>617</sup> While his warning of the dangers of factions resonated in arguably the most famous of the Federalist Papers, the ever-practical Madison helped to foster their beneficial inclusion in the American process and actively participated in a series of groups that advocated on behalf of particular interests.<sup>618</sup>

One remarkable example of the role of organized interests at the time of framing and ratifying the Constitution was the early lobbying efforts conducted by congregational pastor

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<sup>614</sup> "Learning to Lobby: Groups, Venuews, and Information in Eighteenth-Century America," 45-46.

<sup>615</sup> James Madison, "Federalist No. 10: The Same Subject Continued: The Union as a Safeguard against Domestic Faction and Insurrection," in *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter (New York: Signet Classic, 2003).

<sup>616</sup> Loomis, "Learning to Lobby: Groups, Venuews, and Information in Eighteenth-Century America," 46.

<sup>617</sup> James Yoho, "Madison on the Beneficial Effects of Interest Groups: What Was Left Unsaid in 'Federalist' 10," *Polity* 27, no. 4 (1995): 592.

<sup>618</sup> Loomis, "Learning to Lobby: Groups, Venuews, and Information in Eighteenth-Century America; Yoho, "Madison on the Beneficial Effects of Interest Groups: What Was Left Unsaid in 'Federalist' 10."



Manasseh Cutler on behalf of the Ohio Company, a land speculation and trading company founded in 1748. In 1787 the Ohio Company paid the well-read and affable pastor to lobby the U.S. government to sell 1.5 million acres of the newly available Northwest Territory to the company on credit. After only 22 days of successful lobbying in New York, Cutler left with a deal in hand. While this feat can be viewed as both a political coup and remarkable achievement by an individual representative, it is just as remarkable that Cutler was able to return five years later, after one failed attempt, to renegotiate the rate of the deal down to only 20 cents per acre, the equivalent of \$4.80 when adjusted for inflation.<sup>619</sup> To put that in perspective, Cutler secured arrangements for a private company to purchase land larger than the state of Delaware from the national government for the equivalent of \$7.2 million dollars today! It is not surprising that the practice of hiring paid lobbyists continued to grow during the next two centuries.

With Constitutional protections in place, interest groups matured during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. While they did not resemble modern professionalized interest groups of today, they did organize coalitions to increase their voice and, above all, understood the power of information and clear channels of communication with policy makers at the local, state, and federal level.<sup>620</sup> Interest groups did not specifically innovate the ICTs they used during the first century of the new nation, but they did create more sophisticated organizational structures during this era, a trend that would continue in much more dramatic ways in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

### **Changing Organizational Structures and Communication Strategies Before The Internet**

While the role of organized interests evolved greatly during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, the most important change was the emergence of long-lasting, and politically-oriented

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<sup>619</sup> Loomis, "Learning to Lobby: Groups, Venues, and Information in Eighteenth-Century America," 37-38.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid., 49.

interest groups, many of which are still powerful political forces today. Most of the interest groups that developed during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century were economically motivated. One of the earliest economically-minded organized interest groups created specifically for influencing policy outcomes was the United States Brewers' Association (USBA). The USBA was formed in August 1862 by German immigrant beer brewers in New York City in direct response to an increase in the tax on beer that had gone into effect three weeks earlier.<sup>621</sup> The successful lobbying by the USBA led to a repeal of the lager tax in 1863, and no increase in the beer tax for the next 35 years. The USBA again successfully lobbied for the removal of a nationwide beer tax in 1902, passed four years earlier to help pay for the Spanish American War.<sup>622</sup> The USBA reorganized in 1986 to include interests in other parts of the beer trade including bottlers and hops and barley growers. It was renamed the Beer Institute and remains the most powerful lobby supporting the interest of the beer industry, albeit relatively unknown to most outside the industry.<sup>623</sup>

Over the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a number of other organizations formed that originally coalesced around common interests and eventually grew into powerful political interest groups in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Two of the most prominent interest groups fitting this profile were the National Rifle Association (NRA) founded in 1871,<sup>624</sup> and the Sierra Club

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<sup>621</sup> The United States Brewers' Association was originally named the Lager-Beer Brewers Association. The German-immigrant organization started allowing American born members in 1863 and the name was officially changed to the United States Brewers' Association in 1864. Amy Mittelman, *Brewing Battles* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2007); Charles Bamforth, *Beer*, Third ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>622</sup> Mittelman, *Brewing Battles*, 45.

<sup>623</sup> The Beer Institute has spent over \$2.1 million each year since 2013 on lobbying. Center for Responsive Politics, "Open Secrets: Beer Institute Lobbying Totals , 1998-2014," <http://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/lobby.php?id=D000047678>; Beer Institute, "About Us," <http://www.beerinstitute.org/bi/about-us>.

<sup>624</sup> The National Rifle Association, "A Brief History of the Nra," <https://www.nrahq.org/history.asp>.

originating in 1892.<sup>625</sup> These two organizations became the leading U.S. interest groups fighting for policies supporting the Second Amendment and conservation respectively. However they were largely apolitical until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The NRA was originally founded to promote marksmanship and shooting sports. They eventually grew to include active rifle clubs at many colleges and universities across the country and youth programs including gun safety, training, and competitions. Starting in its early years, the NRA continually expanded and innovated its publishing to both expand membership and visibility of issues. Arthur Gould, an avid shooter and member of the Massachusetts Rifle Association published *The Rifle* starting in 1885 which was soon renamed *Shooting and Fishing*. In 1894 Gould attended NRA matches and was extremely impressed, later writing several editorials urging people to join the NRA.<sup>626</sup> This call led to a major increase in the vitality of the organization and the publication has continued to play a large roll in the NRA ever since, though it was not officially owned and operated by the NRA until 1916.<sup>627</sup> In 1923 the magazine was renamed for the final time and *The American Rifleman* has published continually ever since with a circulation of over 2 million today.<sup>628</sup> In order to focus on different issues and constituencies the NRA began publishing *The American Hunter* in 1973. In 1997 *The American Hunter* and *The American Rifleman* were joined by *The American Guardian*, later renamed *America's 1<sup>st</sup> Freedom*, which was less technical than the *Rifleman* and focused broadly on self-defense and recreational use of firearms.<sup>629</sup>

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<sup>625</sup> Michael P. Cohen, "History: Origins and Early Outings," Sierra Club, <http://vault.sierraclub.org/history/origins/>.

<sup>626</sup> James E. Serven, *Americans and Their Guns: The National Rifle Association Story through Nearly a Century of Service to the Nation* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1967), 114.

<sup>627</sup> The title shifted once again in 1916 to *Arms and Man*. Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> The average circulation of *The American Rifleman* for the final six months of 2014 was 2,094,346. Alliance for Audited Media, "Consumer Magazines," Alliance for Audited Media, <http://abcas3.auditedmedia.com/ecirc/magtitlesearch.asp>.

<sup>629</sup> The National Rifle Association, "A Brief History of the Nra".

Today's fiercely political NRA is a relatively modern development. In response to threats to the Second Amendment the NRA founded a Legislative Affairs Division in 1934 though the NRA did not actively lobby until 1975 when the Institute for Legislative Action (ILA) was formed. Instead the Legislative Affairs Division mailed out legislative facts, analyses, and firearms bills mainly through *The American Rifleman* for the 41 years before the ILA was created.<sup>630</sup> Thus the NRA publications served as a primary means of information dissemination to its members, though the organization rarely pushed to mobilize political action until the 1970s.

The Sierra Club, while less polarizing than the NRA, followed a similarly delayed path toward politics. The Sierra Club founded in 1892 as a club of outdoors enthusiasts and scientists unified in their love of hiking, exploring, and learning about the wilderness of the Sierra Nevada region in California, and eventually the rest of the nation. Within a year of founding, the group started publishing the *Sierra Club Bulletin*, later renamed *Sierra*. The official publication was used to disseminate reports about the Club's activities, geographic guides, scientific papers, and to publicize changes in events organized by the Sierra Club each year.<sup>631</sup> Similar to *The American Rifleman*, *Sierra's* circulation has grown considerably, though it was not used for political mobilization until the past two decades.<sup>632</sup> The Sierra Club also published Sierra Club Books, starting in 1960, which were popular and included amazing nature photography. Initially book publishing provided important funding to the group, however they started losing money on the operation in the middle of the 1960s. Nevertheless the Sierra Club continued to publish books until May 2015.<sup>633</sup>

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<sup>630</sup> Ibid.

<sup>631</sup> Cohen, "History: Origins and Early Outings".

<sup>632</sup> The average circulation of *Sierra* for the final six months of 2014 was 505,002. Alliance for Audited Media, "Consumer Magazines".

<sup>633</sup> Sierra Club, "Sierra Club Closes Book Publishing Program," Sierra Club, <http://content.sierraclub.org/press-releases/2015/05/sierra-club-closes-book-publishing-program>.

It was not until mid-century when the Club's growing concerns about federal management of America's wild lands led to the organization's first political activity. In 1949 the Sierra Club hosted a conference attended by federal and state land managers, outing leaders, and professional outfitters and guides to discuss conservation issues. Two years later the Club's official statement of purpose was altered to include "the preservation of the Sierra Nevada and other scenic resources of the United States." The success of the first conference and a shifting focus toward land management led to biennial conferences lasting over two decades, which greatly influenced conservation policies during the 1950s and 60s.<sup>634</sup>

Both the NRA and Sierra Club are diminutive when compared to AARP, the largest interest group in America today, with over 37 million members.<sup>635</sup> AARP was known as the American Association of Retired Persons until the full name was dropped in 1999 for the more inclusive acronym.<sup>636</sup> AARP was founded in 1958 by retired high school principal Ethel Percy Andrus. It evolved from the National Retired Teachers Association, and developed a mission to improve the health benefits of people over 65 years of age and promote the philosophy of productive aging.<sup>637</sup> The organization has continually expanded its target member base and political influence. However for much of its existence AARP has embodied the "dynamics of the classic interest group, in which members do not see one another or interact and whose role historically has been simply to pay dues and then respond to appeals to act by leaders."<sup>638</sup>

Just like the NRA and Sierra Club, AARP has used magazine publishing as a means to

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<sup>634</sup> Cohen, "History: Origins and Early Outings".

<sup>635</sup> AARP is the only interest group that can safely say that over one percent of the U.S. population are members of its organization. Because all households receive a copy of *AARP The Magazine*, AARP can also boast that it has the magazine with the largest circulation in world. AARP, "Who We Are," AARP, <http://www.aarp.org/about-aarp/?intcmp=FTR-LINKS-WWA-ABOUT>.

<sup>636</sup> Bimber, Flanagan, and Stohl, *Collective Action in Organizations: Interaction and Engagement in an Era of Technological Change*.

<sup>637</sup> AARP, "Aarp History," AARP, <http://www.aarp.org/about-aarp/info-2009/History.html>.

<sup>638</sup> Bimber, Flanagan, and Stohl, *Collective Action in Organizations: Interaction and Engagement in an Era of Technological Change*.

engage and inform its members. However AARP has taken interest group publication to unparalleled levels. The primary publication of the organization was originally called *Modern Maturity* and struck a relatively geriatric tone. The recent incarnation, known as *AARP The Magazine* since 2002, is much more youthful, engaging, and dynamic addressing broader issues and interests.<sup>639</sup> AARP later added the more issue-oriented *AARP Bulletin* published once a month, and these two magazines are, by far, the most widely circulated magazines in the world, each with an average circulation of around 23 million in 2016. In fact they have three times the circulation of the third and fourth most circulated magazines in America, *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Game Informer*.<sup>640</sup> The magazines are not only a powerful method of informing and entertaining members but they are big moneymakers as well. From 2009 to 2010, in the midst of the recession, ad revenue for the 235 largest magazines grew at a rate of 6.2 percent, adding only 1.1 percent of ad pages during that same time. During that same time AARP saw revenues and ad pages jump 14.5 and 10.4 percent respectively.<sup>641</sup> AARP has not only added publications and a nuanced online network just like the NRA, but they have even started creating a more specified traditional print publication based on the age of the member with a slightly different magazine being sent to members in their 50s, 60s, and those over 70.<sup>642</sup>

### Interest Group Communication in the Internet Era

Interest groups became more politically-oriented and professionalized starting in the 1960s and many required substantially less activity on the part of members because policy

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<sup>639</sup> Andrew Adam Newman, "A Magazine Now Tailored to the Not Necessarily Retired," *The New York Times*, August 24, 2010 2010.

<sup>640</sup> The average circulation of *AARP The Magazine* for the first six months of 2016 was 23,144,225, and 22,700,945 for the *AARP Bulletin*. For that same time period *Better Homes and Gardens* was third in circulation with an average of 7,645,364, and *Game Informer* was fourth averaging 6,353,075. A number of magazines have circulations between 2 and 4 million. Alliance for Audited Media, "Consumer Magazines".

<sup>641</sup> Newman, "A Magazine Now Tailored to the Not Necessarily Retired."

<sup>642</sup> Ibid.

change was best served leveraging membership dues toward insider politics in D.C.<sup>643</sup> That changed as interest groups started testing and eventually flocking toward web-based tools to reach potential supporters, shape public opinion, frame issues, fundraise, and mobilize political action. In other words, interest groups started to follow the PCC much like social movements and campaigns, but only after the transition toward Karpf's third generation organization.<sup>644</sup>

The third generation of interest group organizations is an internet-mediated, issue-generalist organization that embraces a wide range of issues and motivates offline and online political activity as opposed to the single-issue advocacy groups that dominated the prior professionalized generation.<sup>645</sup> The organization often named as the archetype of this new generation of interest groups is MoveOn.org. Wes Boyd and Joan Blades, two software entrepreneurs from Silicon Valley, founded MoveOn in 1998. The married couple created an online petition during the Clinton impeachment and trial that urged legislators to abandon the impeachment effort and "move on" to other concerns. Today, MoveOn is comprised of a nonprofit advocacy organization working on various progressive causes and campaigns, as well as one of the largest political action committees in the country.<sup>646</sup>

Other organizations have mimicked the model of MoveOn creating what Karpf has titled the MoveOn effect.<sup>647</sup> First, they have started to redefine organizational membership as something other than paying annual dues.<sup>648</sup> MoveOn started this wave by defining members as any individual who have signed up to receive email updates for any of the various progressive issues that MoveOn is actively engaged. From the outset, the MoveOn website, unlike most

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<sup>643</sup> Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy : From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*.

<sup>644</sup> Karpf, *The Moveon Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*.

<sup>645</sup> Ibid.

<sup>646</sup> Bimber, Flanagan, and Stohl, *Collective Action in Organizations: Interaction and Engagement in an Era of Technological Change*; Karpf, *The Moveon Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*; MoveOn.org, "What Is Moveon," <http://front.moveon.org/about/#.VSve7hfDGDo>.

<sup>647</sup> Karpf, *The Moveon Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*.

<sup>648</sup> "How Will the Internet Change American Interest Groups," 122.

online petitions, allowed the organization to capture the email addresses of participants.<sup>649</sup> This has led to a quickly growing stated membership that exceeds eight million as of July 2015,<sup>650</sup> making it the second largest interest group in the nation behind AARP, with nearly double the membership of the NRA and over three times that of the Sierra Club. Second, internet-mediated interest groups are constantly using analytics, unavailable in previous generations, to fine tune particularly effective messages for specific members, much like modern campaigns. Finally, the focus on multi-issue portfolios as opposed to single issue traditional organizations welcomes many more potential members that can be attracted by changing events and mobilized in multiple directions at the same time.<sup>651</sup>

Victoria Carty argues that the MoveOn model requires a new theorizing of internet-mediated interest groups.<sup>652</sup> Not only does MoveOn facilitate two-way communication between its miniscule staff and its members, but it empowers its members by asking them to direct the actions of the organization including what issues to prioritize and which candidates to endorse. Two such examples were the crowdsourced decisions by members to endorse Barack Obama early in the 2008 primary campaign, and Bernie Sanders early in 2016.<sup>653</sup> MoveOn also uses very effective internet-mediated efforts to motivate real-world political mobilization. One study found that their web-based “netroots” model was used in 2004 to increase voter turnout by seven

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<sup>649</sup> Bimber, Flanagan, and Stohl, *Collective Action in Organizations: Interaction and Engagement in an Era of Technological Change*.

<sup>650</sup> MoveOn.org, "What Is Moveon".

<sup>651</sup> Karpf, "How Will the Internet Change American Interest Groups," 122.

<sup>652</sup> *The Moveon Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*; Victoria Carty, "Multi-Issue, Internet-Mediated Interest Organizations and Their Implications for Us Politics: A Case of Moveon.Org," *Social Movement Studies* 10, no. 3 (2011).

<sup>653</sup> Karpf, *The Moveon Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*, 37-40; Carty, "Multi-Issue, Internet-Mediated Interest Organizations and Their Implications for Us Politics: A Case of Moveon.Org."



percentage points.<sup>654</sup> Part of this effort was the Call for Change, which was found to be the most effective volunteer calling program ever studied in the United States up to that point. The Call for Change alone accounted for four-percentage point change in turnout.<sup>655</sup>

Web-based innovations have been embraced by older “legacy” interest groups to a large degree helping many of these organizations thrive. Since the emergence of the internet, AARP has innovated its outreach and continued to grow quickly. In 1998, on its fortieth anniversary, AARP reported its membership to be close to thirty million, up to nearly forty million by 2015.<sup>656</sup> This membership explosion is due in large part to the aging U.S. population, as the baby boomers increasingly join AARP. But, the organization has also been very successful at employing technology in order to expand and enrich membership.<sup>657</sup>

Many traditional interest groups are utilizing the internet to achieve traditional political goals. The NRA, like many groups, uses the web to welcome people who are not members and who do not contribute money to participate in its activities. Although it attempts to entice people to join with various member services and discounts, it also makes available to anyone many of its publications, blog, schedules of various programs, and news stream, all part of what the organization calls the NRA Network.<sup>658</sup> While this seems to go against the recommendations of Mancur Olson by giving away for free some of the key selective incentives that it might

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<sup>654</sup> Joel A. Middleton and Donald P. Green, "Do Community-Based Mobilization Campaigns Work Even in Battleground States? Evaluating the Effectiveness of Moveon 2004 Outreach Campaign," *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 3(2008).

<sup>655</sup> Ibid; Carty, "Multi-Issue, Internet-Mediated Interest Organizations and Their Implications for Us Politics: A Case of Moveon.Org," 273.

<sup>656</sup> Bimber, Flanagan, and Stohl, *Collective Action in Organizations: Interaction and Engagement in an Era of Technological Change*.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid.

otherwise use to overcome the free-rider problem,<sup>659</sup> the interactive and media rich internet era has restructured the risks associated with offering something for free.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the largest organization advocating for maximize personal freedoms, takes these anti-Olsonian steps further, not only posting reports and its congressional scorecard for the public but also "action alerts" mobilizing the public to act, and guides to activism with such tips as how to be an effective caller to talk-radio shows.<sup>660</sup> The ACLU has also added smartphone apps that are available to everyone including the newsworthy Mobile Justice app. This app allows users to record videos of law enforcement and have the videos sent to ACLU even if the smartphones are confiscated. This app is tailored for many in the growing movement including Black Lives Matter and the Million Hoodies Movement for Justice, who are taking action against racial profiling and excessive force used by the police, especially against people of color. Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl skillfully point out that these efforts by the NRA and the ACLU, like so many other traditional organizations, suggest the internet is weakening one of the most important boundaries in traditional views of interest groups, the boundary between members and nonmembers.<sup>661</sup>

Interest groups are clearly using the internet to innovate their political communications strategies but studies have found that a generational divide exists in terms of how interest groups use web-based communication tools to promote citizen participation, raise money, and influence the broader political agenda.<sup>662</sup> Traditional organizations are updating and innovating their political communications tactics utilizing web-based tools, however there is strong evidence that interest groups formed after 2000 are increasingly copying the MoveOn model, including both

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<sup>659</sup> Ibid.

<sup>660</sup> Ibid.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid.

<sup>662</sup> Karpf, "How Will the Internet Change American Interest Groups," 123.

the organization's minimal structure and communications strategies.<sup>663</sup> Organized interests such as the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, Democracy for America, Colorofchange.org, and avaaz.org are just a few of the progressive organizations that have followed the MoveOn model.<sup>664</sup>

One study found notable differences between the types of fundraising emails sent by political groups of different generations. These emails were organized into three categories: general appeals which simply ask supporters to donate funds to the organization, targeted appeals requesting support for a specific action, and pass-through appeal directing money toward an issue or candidate but funneled through the organization which serves as a bundler. Legacy organizations founded before 1996 use general appeals nearly twice as much as newer interest groups born in the internet era. These older organizations like AARP, the NRA, and Sierra Club need to support large staff and infrastructure built in the professionalized second generation of interest groups. They have often shifted their general fundraising appeals tactics refined using direct mail to the digital area without updating their strategies very much.<sup>665</sup> Another notable distinction between older and newer interest groups is that the issue-generalist organizations, following the MoveOn model, tend to shift their strategies based on the changing issues and political environment much more than older organizations. Newer organizations follow the media agenda much more, and older interest groups try to shift the agenda in order to create more receptive public positions for their issues.<sup>666</sup> Different generations of interest groups clearly have different strategies in terms of how they want to shape public opinion.

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<sup>663</sup> *The Moveon Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*, 29-42.

<sup>664</sup> *Ibid.*, 29; Carty, "Multi-Issue, Internet-Mediated Interest Organizations and Their Implications for Us Politics: A Case of Moveon.Org," 278.

<sup>665</sup> Karpf, "How Will the Internet Change American Interest Groups," 135-36.

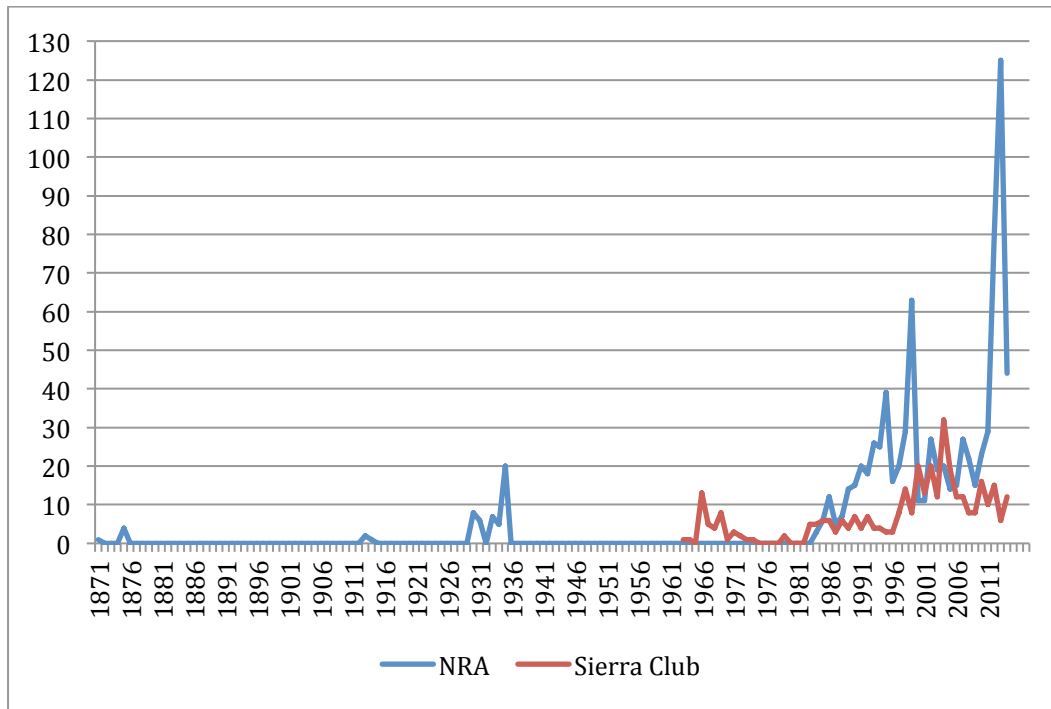
<sup>666</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

Over time, interest groups increasingly favored direct issue appeals, often targeting journalists. This was done in order to set the media agenda in order to create favorable public opinion and more supportive political climate in which to lobby public officials.<sup>667</sup> Most policy-oriented interest groups try to affect the public agenda and framing of issues they support, while trying to avoid becoming the story themselves. For instance, Figure 7.1 shows the number of times the Sierra Club and the NRA, two of the oldest lasting interest groups, were mentioned in *The New York Times*.<sup>668</sup> Other than a couple of minor blips, these organizations were essentially invisible until decades after they became powerful political players. It wasn't until the 1980s when either showed up on the national media radar, and even then it was largely based on outside events and not strategic efforts by the interest groups. Figure 7.2 shows *The New York Times* article count mentioning the NRA, and Sierra Club, along with AARP and MoveOn.org since 1980. All remained out of the spotlight for the most part except for a couple of examples motivated by events not directed by the organizations themselves. The two largest spikes in New York Times coverage were for the NRA after the tragic Columbine High School shooting in Littleton, CO in 1999 and the Newtown, CT shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary school in December 2012. During the aftermath of these two tragedies the NRA took a more aggressive stance in supporting gun rights and the Second Amendment as opposed to the strategy of relative silence the organization has successfully used in the aftermath of other mass shootings.

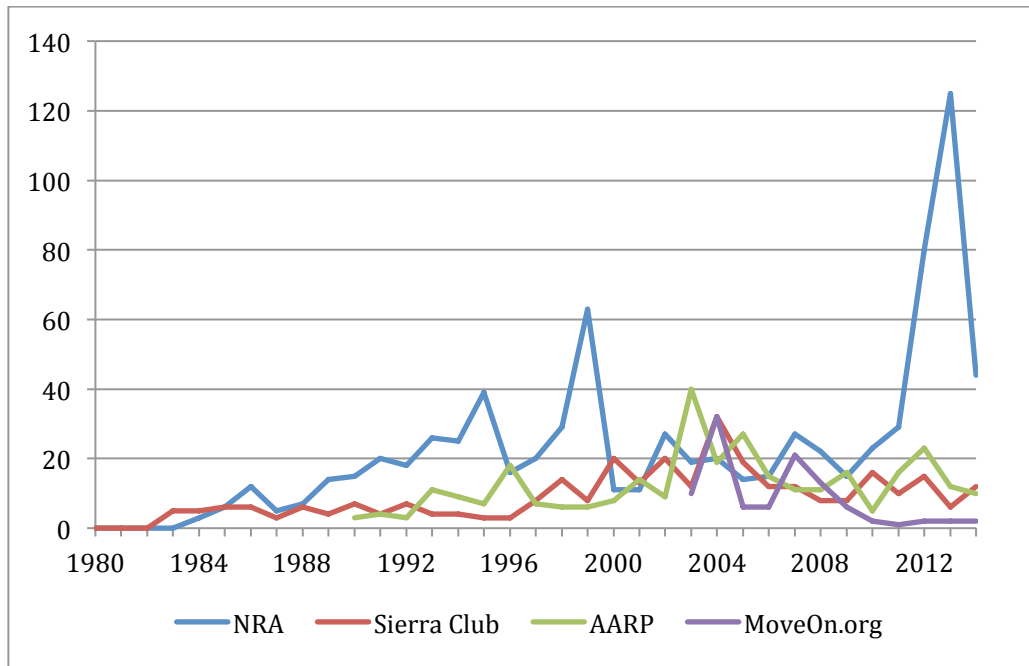
**Figure 7.1: Yearly Count of New York Times Articles Mentioning The National Rifle Association and Sierra Club 1871-2014**

<sup>667</sup> Browne, *Groups, Interests, and U.S. Public Policy*, 95-102.

<sup>668</sup> The article counts were conducted by accessing The New York Times archives via the Times Topics option available at NYTimes.com. Then the appropriate organization or issue was selected and a manual count of articles for each year up to 2014 was conducted. This is a similar methodology as was used to review changing New York Times coverage of issues and organizations connected to woman's suffrage and civil rights movements for a similar paper exploring media innovations in social movements over time. Epstein, "The Innovative Use of Media by Social Movements in the United States."



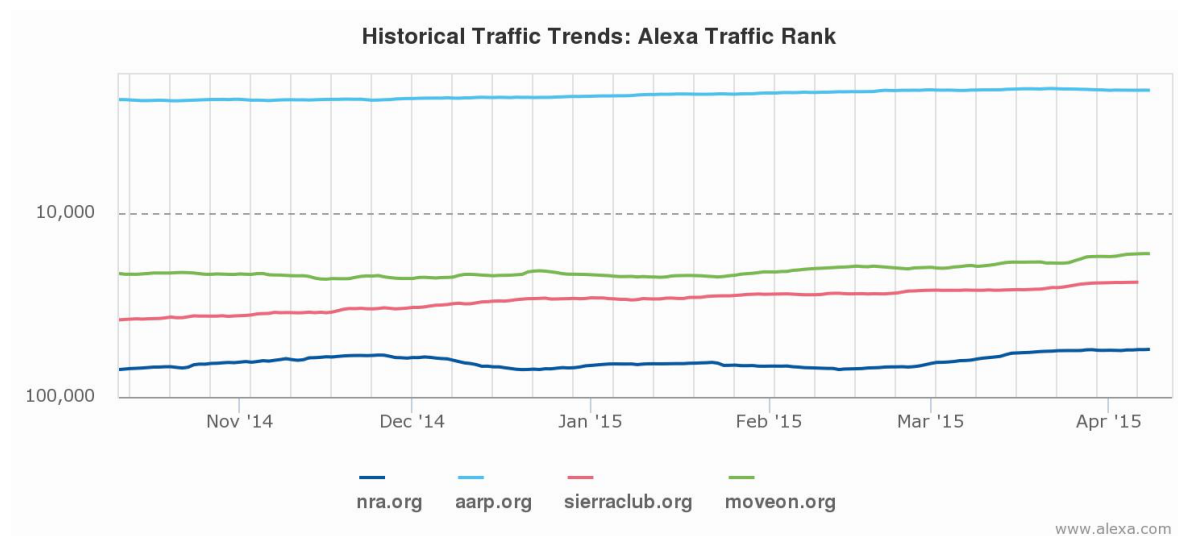
**Figure 7.2: Yearly Count of New York Times Articles Mentioning The National Rifle Association, Sierra Club, AARP, and MoveOn.org 1980-2014**



It would be misguided to end my brief analysis of modern media of interest groups coverage only by measuring articles in *The New York Times*. To create a more complete picture I also used Alexa.com, until recently one of the most widely used analytics tools for web activity, in order to compare the web traffic of the four main interest groups included in this study. Figure 7.4 compares the global web traffic of the NRA, AARP, MoveOn.org, and Sierra Club by looking at the rank of each website's traffic. Lower ranks indicate more traffic, and these appear higher on the chart. The popularity of the websites generally match the differences in their memberships with AARP.org dominating in terms of web traffic, with the notable exception that Sierra Club's site receives much more traffic than would be expected based purely on its membership. It is also interesting to compare the changes in traffic rates of different groups. While AARP's site has continually gained more traffic (Figure 7.5), NRA.org has ebbed and

flowed much like its membership numbers (Figure 7.6).<sup>669</sup> While stability in web traffic doesn't necessarily translate into political communication success, it does mean that its web-based communication is continually reaching a larger and larger audience, which suggests growth in terms of supportive members of the general public at the very least.

**Figure 7.4: Global Ranking of Website Traffic for NRA.org, AARP.org, Sierraclub.org, and MoveOn.org Oct. 2014-May 2015<sup>670</sup>**

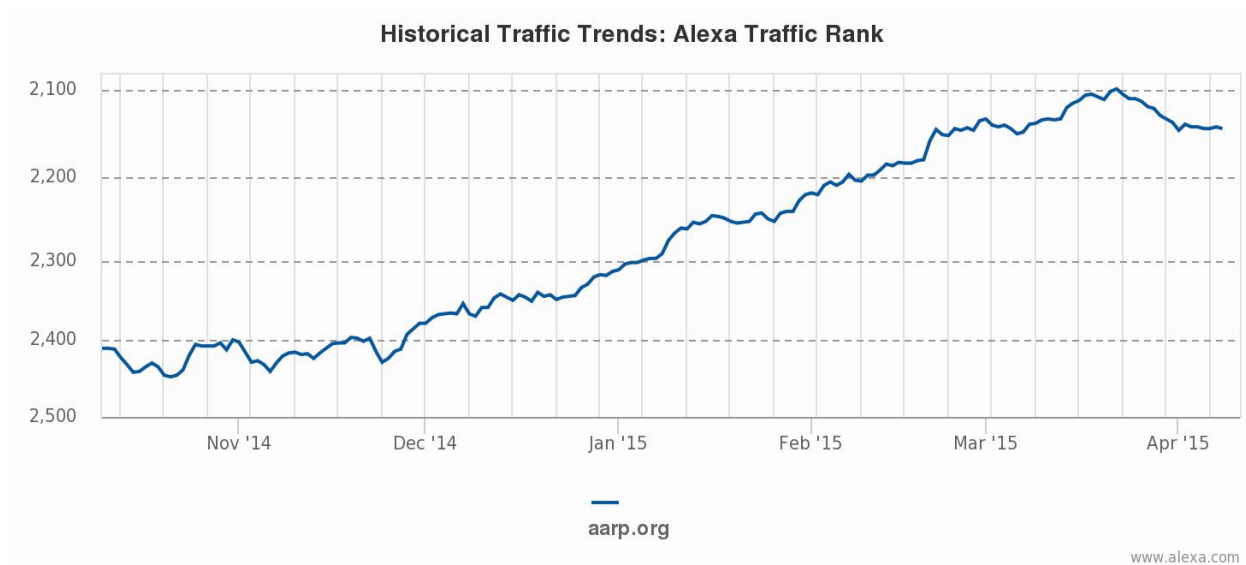


**Figure 7.5: Global Ranking of Website Traffic AARP.org Oct. 2014-May 2015<sup>671</sup>**

<sup>669</sup> Glenn Kessler, "Does the Nra Really Have More Than 4.5 Million Members?," *The Washington Post*, Feb. 8, 2013 2013; Neal Caren, "Nra Membership, 2013 Edition," <https://scatter.wordpress.com/2013/08/14/nra-membership-2013-edition/>.

<sup>670</sup> Each is showing the global *rank* of each website's traffic, as opposed to their traffic in *numbers of visitors* to each site. Therefore lower ranks indicate more traffic, and these are, in fact higher on the chart. Alexa Internet, Amazon, [www.Alexa.com](http://www.Alexa.com).

<sup>671</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 7.6: Global Ranking of Website Traffic NRA.org Oct. 2014-May 2015<sup>672</sup>**



More important than these global rankings are their rankings for users specifically in the U.S. AARP's site is extremely impressive, ranking as the 606<sup>th</sup> most popular site in the U.S. with visitors spending a shocking eight minutes and 20 seconds per visit on the site.<sup>673</sup> After AARP,

<sup>672</sup> Ibid.

<sup>673</sup> To put this amount of time in perspective, visitors to the NYTimes.com spend over 10 minutes per day on the site. But AARP.org visitors spend more time per day on the site than visitors to twitter.com (7:18), Washingtonpost.com (3:50), and even Netflix.com (5:38)!



MoveOn.org, the digital native, is visited second most often, ranking 3,224<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. and spending just under three minutes per visit on the site. With 2.4 million members and supporters, substantially less than the NRA, the Sierra Club's website is much more popular. It ranks as the 5,500<sup>th</sup> most popular site in America, with visitors spending on average nearly three and a half minutes on the site per visit. By comparison NRA.org, including its multifaceted NRA Network ranks 10,833<sup>rd</sup> nationally with visitors spending under two and half minutes per visit.<sup>674</sup> Based on these basic descriptive statistics, the NRA lags in its online presence, though that has not minimized its extraordinary influence in Washington and in state legislatures across the nation.

### **Conclusion:**

Organized political interests predate the founding of this country and were embedded within its founding fabric. The First Amendment protected the rights necessary to lobby policy makers to influence their decisions and no major effort to remove these rights has taken place in American history, despite the constant criticism of the elitist and oversized influence that interest groups have on our politics and policies. While the political communication strategies of interest groups did not change much over the first 200 years of American history, the organizational structure of interest groups changed dramatically. Karpf organizes these changes into three generations of organized interests. Rudimentary local interests gave way to economically motivated groups in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Later, organizations originally brought together by shared common apolitical interests, like the NRA and Sierra Club, became much more politically oriented. These groups used their publications to share views and mobilize political action starting in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Starting in the 1960s interest groups shifted to the second generation, becoming much more professionalized and D.C.-focused relying on membership

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<sup>674</sup> All web traffic data was collected using alexa.com and represents statistics as of April 13, 2015. Alexa Internet.

dues and passive armchair activism from their supporters. In the new millennium, the third generation emerged ushered in by the internet and organizations like MoveOn.org. These groups are internet-based issue-generalist organizations that follow the MoveOn.org model of streamlined organization infrastructure, redefined membership, analytically-driven web communication, and organized real-world mobilization empowering supporters on a number of issues simultaneously. Additionally, the internet helped older interest groups innovate how they went about trying to achieve their political communication goals, and some, most notably AARP, have flourished.

Overall this chapter explored the historical developments of interest groups in America in order to determine if, when, and how interest groups innovated their political communication strategies. Due to the powerful positions of interest groups within the American political system and the limited target audience of interest group communications throughout most of American history, interest groups proved to be far less innovative than other political organizations like campaigns and social movements, each of which aim to attract interest from and influence the opinions and political activity of the general public. Because of the differences in political communication goals, interest group innovation was not motivated by the widespread adoption of ICTs prior to the internet. The communication innovations that interest groups did adopt included direct mail for fundraising in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, increasing reliance on varied publications to disseminate information about relevant issues and policies to members, and eventually web-based tools to connect to their members on a regular basis.

The interactivity of the internet created an opportunity for interest groups to not only innovate their political communication strategies but actually adjust their communication goals, a rarity for any political organization. Some interest groups now see the benefit of disseminating

information and offering tools and services to a broader audience including non-members. If interest groups shift their goals to include a broad targeted audience, then their innovativeness increases dramatically and they start to follow the PCC much like campaigns and social movements. However most interest groups do not have these broad political communication goals. Most strive to be more like the Grover Norquist-led Americans for Tax Reform, which has enormous influence on conservative fiscal policy in America but is only known by a small percentage of Americans.

James Madison wrote beautifully about the inevitable, and potentially dangerous existence of faction in our political system. One form of these factions, interest groups, have developed and changed in many ways throughout American political history. While many would still call them dangerous, they are now able to leverage traditional and digital communications tools alike to achieve political communication goals and maintain an outsized role in our policy environment. Though interest groups are far less innovative in their adoption of new political communication tools than other political organizations, they continue to hold an extremely influential position in American politics, arguably more powerful than at any point in their long history.

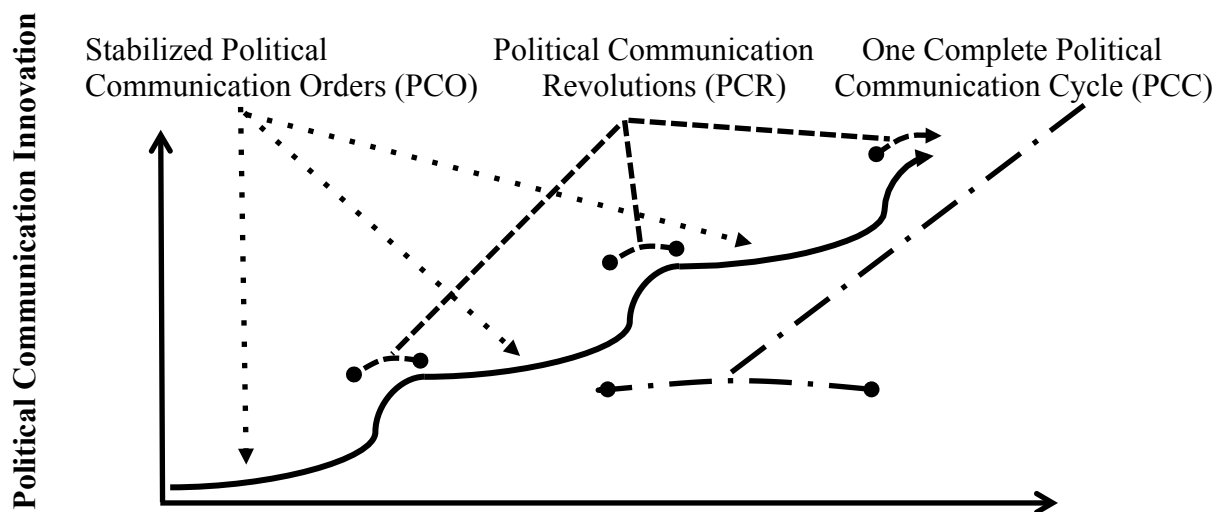
## Chapter 8: The Stabilization Process Then and Now

“Disorder is inherent in stability. Civilized man doesn't understand stability. He's confused it with rigidity. Our political and economic and social leaders drool about stability constantly. It's their favorite word, next to power. – Tom Robbins

"The most profound technologies are those that disappear. They weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it." – Mark Weiser<sup>675</sup>

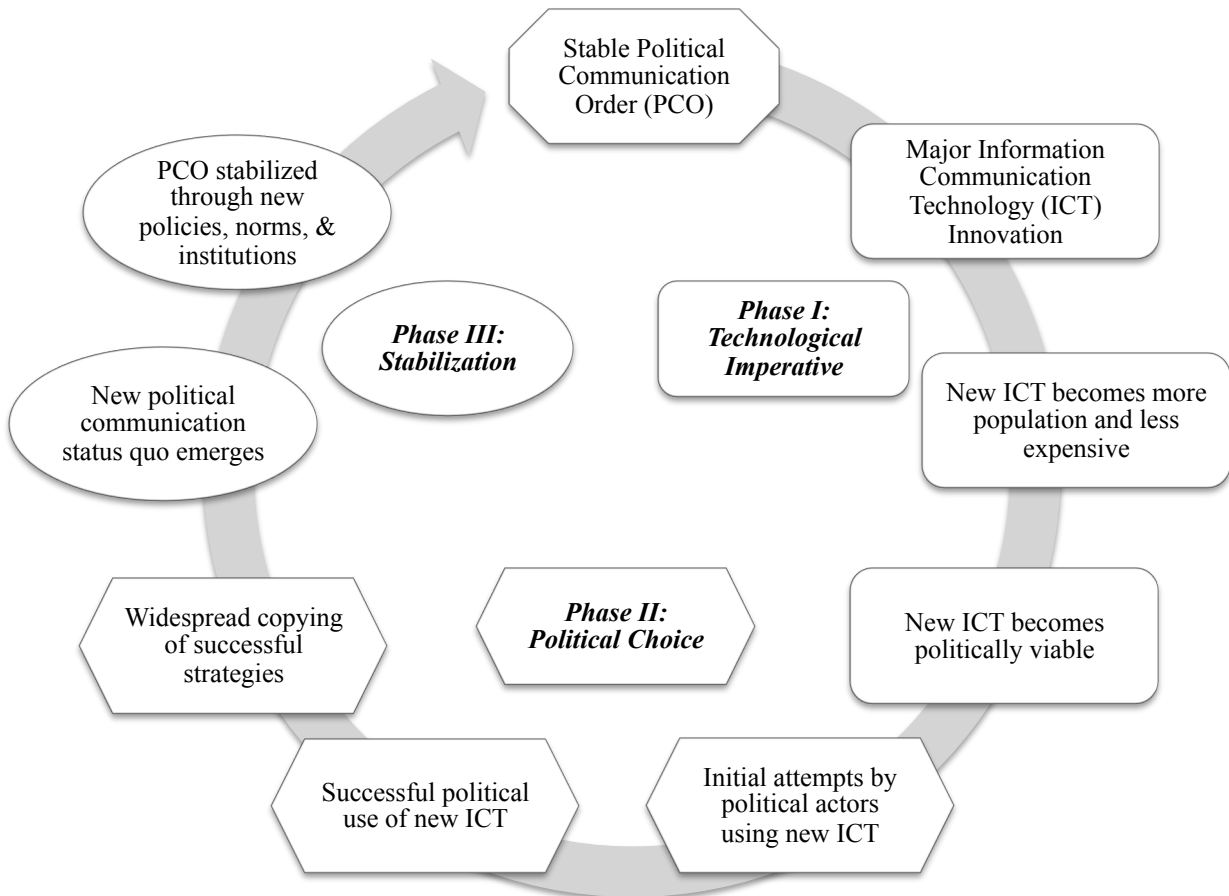
The technological and behavioral phases of the political communication cycle (PCC), have occurred repeatedly through American political history lurching political communication forward during periods of dramatic and durable change. While the disruption of previously stable periods of political communication activity have been relatively sudden and jarring, the final stabilization phase of the PCC has been much more gradual (see Figure 8.1). During the stabilization phase of the PCC a new political communication order (PCO) takes shape through the building of norms, institutions, and regulations that serve to fix the newly established status quo in place (see Figure 8.2).

**Figure 8.1: Political Communication Innovation Over Time**



<sup>675</sup> Quoted in Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl, *Collective Action in Organizations: Interaction and Engagement in an Era of Technological Change*. and Karpf, "How Will the Internet Change American Interest Groups," 124.

Time

**Figure 8.2: The Political Communication Revolution Cycle**

The stabilization of the PCC is inevitable once substantial and permanent changes in political communication activity become the status quo. Yet the form of the stabilized order is not predetermined and varies considerably based on choices of many different relevant actors and the characteristics of the communication media bring used. The choices of political actors determine the types of innovative political communication activities that become the new standard. The choices of regulatory institutions, chiefly the Federal Communication Commission (FCC), help determine the level and type of control that the government wields over the political content in broadcast media and online. Finally, the choices of the media companies themselves

are enormously important in the loosely regulated communications environment, which has existed throughout most of American history and continues today.

In this chapter I evaluate the stabilization phase in real terms by first expanding briefly on how norms, regulations, and institutions have been established for different mediums. Next, the history of how the broadcast PCC was regulated, focusing on the radio, which not only completed the second PCR but has many direct parallels to the current regulatory environment surrounding the future of the internet. Finally, the status of internet regulation occurring today is surveyed. The exploration of the current regulatory course shows that it is very much in process, suggesting that there are still opportunities to direct the stabilization of the current political communication revolution.

### **Establishing (Powerfully) Mundane Political Communication Norms**

The elements that stabilize a PCR result from activity both inside and outside of the political realm. Political communication norms grow out of the choices of political actors while the institutions and regulations that create the infrastructure and laws to maintain the new order emerge from a combination of government and private sources. The historical evolution of media regulations and the creation of influential private and government institutions have created a historical narrative that is very instructive. But the establishment of political communications norms is a less visible part of the stabilization process and deserves some attention first. Political communication norms are established through: 1) the widespread imitation of political communication innovations that 2) successfully achieve long-standing political communication goals in more efficient or effective ways, and 3) the standardization of these once innovative activities. Unsurprisingly, the more any particular political communication activity is copied, the

further it moves from a cutting edge innovation and the more becomes the new norm. The flashiest innovations are rarely those that become the most impactful, though they can generate a lot of interest from media and academics alike. In fact, it is often the most ordinary version of communication that is the most powerful for political organizations in terms of reaching and mobilizing the public.

In the case of the internet, each new social media option, analytical tool, and cutting edge mobile innovation may be helpful, but the “killer apps” are still email, search, and a good website. These powerful, yet boring, resources are what Rasmus Kleis Nielsen rightly describes as mundane internet tools.<sup>676</sup> These mundane tools are used much more, and much more effectively than some of the newer, seemingly more innovative internet tools available. And it is the fact that they are no longer considered innovative that establishes them as the new norm and gives them staying power in establishing the next political communication order.

Nielsen goes further, distinguishing mundane internet tools from emerging tools, those considered most innovative and used by the earliest of adopters, and specialized tools which are owned or operated by a particular political organization for a particular purpose.<sup>677</sup> During the 2008 campaign, emerging tools, like Facebook, were used by a number of campaigns but with relatively limited effect compared to more established internet tools. During that same election, MyBO, the campaign created social media and mobilization toolbox embedded within the 2008 Obama campaign site was enormously impressive and effective, but was a great example of a specialized tool and was built and operated within the Obama campaign, a very costly

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<sup>676</sup> Nielsen, "Mundane Internet Tools, Mobilizing Practices, and Coproduction of Citizenship in Political Campaigns."

<sup>677</sup> Nielsen's mundane internet tools correspond closely to the latter stages of Paul Saffo's 30-year rule described earlier. It is that third decade of the roll out of a new technology that Saffo describes as acceptance. Nearly everyone uses the new technology, and no one is excited about it anymore. There is something new to be excited about, but the new shiny object will not have the power of the older, established and very mundane tool. Ibid; Saffo, "The 30-Year Rule."

endeavor.<sup>678</sup> As detailed in chapter five, the power of MyBO did wonders for the Obama campaign, but did not become the universal standard of all future campaigns because it was costly and many of those tools could be either purchased for less from outside firms specializing in the practice post-2008, or replicated by the dominant social media platforms today: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Both specialized and emerging tools can become mundane in time, but rarely do. Today all campaigns will use Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube for instance. And while the use of these tools by the general public is becoming more ubiquitous, they are far from universal and are still relatively new. For instance as of April 2016, 79 percent of adult internet users in the U.S. (68 percent of all American adults) were on Facebook compared to 63 percent of internet users using YouTube, 32 percent using Instagram (28 percent of all American adults) and only 24 percent using Twitter (21 percent of all American adults).<sup>679</sup> These emerging tools are powerful, but they are no email, at least not yet. The process of stabilization is a process of transition. Baldwin-Philippi, who provides a rich analysis of the political communication choices in the 2010 midterms, explains this well. She found that the 2010 cycle provided great insight into an important moment of transition when campaigns felt the need to “go digital” in light of the overwhelming success of the Obama campaign’s victory in 2008, while actually building the

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<sup>678</sup> Nielsen, "Mundane Internet Tools, Mobilizing Practices, and Coproduction of Citizenship in Political Campaigns; Plouffe, *The Audacity to Win: How Obama Won and How We Can Beat the Party of Limbaugh, Beck, and Palin*; Michael Cornfield, "Game Changers: New Technology and the 2008 Presidential Election," in *The Year of Obama: How Barack Obama Won the White House*, ed. Larry Sabato (New York: Longman, 2010); Harfoush, *Yes We Did: An inside Look at How Social Media Built the Obama Brand*.

<sup>679</sup> Maeve Duggan, "Mobile Messaging and Social Media 2015," (Pew Research Center, 2015); Monica Anderson, "Five Facts About Online Video, for Youtube's 10th Birthday," Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/02/12/5-facts-about-online-video-for-youtubes-10th-birthday/>; Greenwood, Perrin, and Duggan, "Social Media Update 2016."



increasingly stable developments of the 2012 and 2014 election cycles that followed.<sup>680</sup> The transition into a political communication revolution is driven by human choices and social networks, and is messy. The stabilization of a PCR toward a lasting order is just as inconsistent.

I will offer more about the stabilization of the internet-dominated information PCO later in this chapter, but it is important to note that mundane tools are not new in the internet era. As radios shifted from the playthings of hobbyists and tinkerers at the turn of the century to a dominant mainstream ICT during the 1930s and 1940s, they became mundane. The vast majority of American households had a radio, everyone knew how to use them, and no one considered them new, but they were enormously powerful. *Stabilization is the process of becoming mundane, shaped initially by the choices of political actors, and later by the regulations built to try to maintain them.*

### **The Construction of Political Communication Regulation in the United States**

The institutions and regulations that shape communication in general and political communication in particular, are formed by a combination of private and public forces. The regulations themselves often vary greatly depending on the communication medium under scrutiny. Newspaper content, along with all printed material, has remained the least regulated media form, protected primarily by the First Amendment. The seeds for the freedom of the press were planted during the colonial printing era. The earliest printed newspaper in the colonies, *Publick Occurrences*, was shut down after only one printing in 1690 because it lacked official approval from the Massachusetts government.<sup>681</sup> Newspapers with official government approval

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<sup>680</sup> Baldwin-Philippi, *Using Technology, Building Democracy: Digital Campaigning and the Construction of Citizenship*, 9.

<sup>681</sup> For more see chapter two. Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper*; Pasley, "The Tyranny of Printers": *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*.

reemerged starting in 1704, and in 1720, Governor Shute of Massachusetts tried to shut down newspapers that were voicing criticisms of the royal government, but the colonial representatives, with whom he needed to consult, did not support his cause. With little support, even from his own royal council, he abandoned requiring legal censorship of the press in Massachusetts by a government licenser. The following year the Governor asked for a new license law that would renew his authority to control the writers of “seditious pamphlets.” The local assembly again rebuked his request, and was disbanded. But the issue had been settled in Massachusetts, government censorship of the press would no longer be allowed.<sup>682</sup>

The most wide-reaching legal support for freedom of the press in colonial America came in 1735, when John Peter Zenger, a German immigrant and printer of the *New York Weekly Journal* was sued and jailed for seditious libel after several wealthy lawyers wrote anonymous articles criticizing the Royal Governor of New York. Even though Zenger kept the authors’ identities a secret, the jury refused to convict him, establishing the precedent that free press should be protected as long as it did not consciously misrepresent the truth to libel an individual or group.<sup>683</sup> Later efforts to increase the government’s ability to censor newspaper publication, such as the Sedition Acts of 1798 and 1918 were quickly repealed, had their constitutionality questioned by later court decisions, and are considered black marks on our generally consistent history of freedom of speech and the freedom of the press.<sup>684</sup>

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<sup>682</sup> Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper*, 29-30.

<sup>683</sup> See Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*.

<sup>684</sup> While most politicians have had an adversarial relationship with the press, the Trump Administration has gone farther than any in the modern era to specifically oppose the majority of the press including regular attacks at rallies, on cable television, and on Twitter attacking all critical news coverage as “Fake News”. This has led to a continued decline in trust of the media among Republicans and the widest partisan divide ever in how the public views the role and trustworthiness of the news media. Michael Barthel and Amy Mitchell, “Americans’ Attitudes About the News Media Deeply Divided Along Partisan Lines,” (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017).

Although individuals can be held responsible for actions resulting from their speech, the First Amendment has been interpreted to prevent the censorship of printed content before it is actually printed. This concept, known as prior restraint, is the bedrock of the freedom of the press and has been defended throughout nearly all of American legal history. Prior restraint was solidified in the landmark Supreme Court Case *Near v. Minnesota* (1931). The case focused on the *Saturday Press*, a weekly newspaper published in Minneapolis in 1927, which made numerous anti-Semitic claims as well as nasty and slanderous statements about prominent local political and legal figures. Hennepin County attorney and future Minnesota Governor Floyd Olson, one of those singled out by the paper, filed a complaint against Jay Near, one of the publishers of the paper. Under the “Minnesota Gag Law,” permanent injunctions could be brought against those who were creating a public nuisance by “regularly or customarily producing, publishing, or circulating an obscene, lewd, and lascivious... or a malicious, scandalous, and defamatory newspaper, magazine, or other periodical...” The Minnesota Gag Law was the first to provide for actual suppression of the public press since the passage of the Sedition Act in 1918.<sup>685</sup> After the injunction was granted by a judge and defended by the Minnesota Supreme Court, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the Minnesota Gag Law when it held that books, magazines, and newspapers could not be subject to prior censorship based on the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which incorporated the First Amendment and applied it to the states. This set the precedent that was applied in many censorship cases since, including the notable *New York Times v. United States* decision in 1971.<sup>686</sup>

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<sup>685</sup> John E. Hartmann, "The Minnesota Gag Law and the Fourteenth Amendment," *Minnesota History*, December 1960.

<sup>686</sup> Easily one of the most important prior restraint cases was the 1971 Supreme Court case *New York Times v. United States*. In a 6-3 decision the Supreme Court allowed *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* to publish ten leaked and classified Pentagon Papers because the U.S. government was not able to sufficiently prove their release would damage the Vietnam War effort. This set the standard that, in order to

Unlike print media, which receives nearly complete protection under the First Amendment, broadcast communications including radio and television face significant regulation. Historically, the justification for government regulation was twofold. First, access to the airwaves needed to be limited in order to keep radio and later television waves free from interference. Often labeled the scarcity theory, useful radio and television frequencies were initially limited resources, and thus the competition for signals required regulation.<sup>687</sup> Second, the pervasive presence theory states that because radio and television bring messages into American homes, those messages can be censored in order to make them suitable for families and children. Applying these heightened regulations to the radio, and then television, proved that the First Amendment did not protect all mediums equally, and offered a wider array of possibilities in terms of what regulations imposed by private or governmental organizations might look like in the future.

### **A Case Study of Stabilization: The Regulation of Radio**

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries radio was a tool for hobbyists and private enthusiasts. This was an era before a radio network, before regular broadcasts and before regulation. Individuals purchased radio kits and constructed devices that could be used for person-to-person communication. Placing this era within the PCC it was the early days of the technological imperative phase, when so few people had access to radios that that it could not

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successfully invoke prior restraint, the government needed to provide strong evidence that the publication would cause a “grave and irreparable” danger to the nation.

<sup>687</sup> Although frequencies are infinite in number, the distance between frequencies must be far enough apart so as to avoid interference. This has obviously changed with the addition of cable and satellite television, and digital media. However, the regulations were established when broadcast frequencies were very much a scarce resource. Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar, *The Media Game: American Politics in the Television Age*, 13-14.

qualify as a mass media let alone something pervasive enough to require regulation from industry or government.

The era of unregulated wireless ended in 1921 when Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover started to regulate the infant industry.<sup>688</sup> Hoover's conception of radio regulation was based on associationalism, a concept that envisaged industrial, governmental, and community organizations as partners bridging private and public interests. Hoover argued that the role of government was to assist self-regulation of the radio that supported harmonious competition, and that radio use must be promoted in the public interest.<sup>689</sup> The first radio campaigns developed during this period of self-regulation and the number of political broadcasts grew so quickly that by the election of 1924 the major broadcasting companies had developed their own common policy on political broadcasting, with no clear oversight by the Commerce Department.<sup>690</sup>

Hoover maintained his control until legal challenges during the mid 1920s dismantled his authority over radio regulation. In December 1925, Eugene McDonald, president of both the Zenith Corporation and the National Association of Broadcasters brazenly challenged Hoover's authority by using frequencies reserved for Canadians. When Hoover ordered him to stop, McDonald sued, challenging the secretary's right to control frequencies, and a federal district court found that Hoover lacked the authority all along.<sup>691</sup> This lack of authority, along with mounting pressure from industry leaders calling for a stronger regulatory body, led Congress to pass the Radio Act of 1927, which created the Federal Radio Commission (FRC).

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<sup>688</sup> The Radio Act of 1912 gave the regulatory power over radio to the secretary of commerce, but the power was significantly limited by the wording of the law. The secretary had no power to deny broadcast licenses and questionable authority to allocate frequencies and broadcast hours. Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 45-46.

<sup>689</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>690</sup> The major companies involved were AT&T, RCA, Westinghouse, and General Electric Company (GEC). They also limited their political coverage to an hour a day suggesting the large demand for political coverage by the political campaigns. Ibid., 117.

<sup>691</sup> Wu, *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires*, 82; Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 48.

The FRC was an independent commission that very quickly replaced Hoover's concept of self-regulation with a more forceful distinction between how large and small stations would be regulated in the new era. The Commission sided with the large, networked broadcasters from the beginning, and soon announced, "There is not room in the broadcast band for every school of thought, religious, political, social, and economic, each to have its separate broadcasting station, its mouthpiece in the ether."<sup>692</sup> Perhaps nothing could more clearly mark the distinction between the emerging broadcast regulation and the established First Amendment protections granted to printed speech. The ideology of the FRC was closely aligned with those of RCA, NBC, and the rest of the broadcast industry leaders that had shaped their business practice around gaining the largest audiences possible to increase advertisement revenue. As a result, the FRC quickly took action to remove the majority of small stations from the radio dial. The FRC's General Order No. 32 demanded that 164 smaller stations show cause why they should not be eliminated. The regulatory body went further with General Order No. 40, which reset the radio dial and made room for forty nationwide "clear channels" by removing or reducing hundreds of smaller stations.<sup>693</sup> These changes had the effect of fortifying the networks, which produced quality programming, nationwide audiences, and consequently made the radio viable for political use on a national scale. The result was a powerful, albeit short-lived, regulatory body that was wedded to the industrial companies it was entrusted to regulate.<sup>694</sup> This offered a clear example of communication industry winners seeking to influence policy during the stabilization phase in order to institutionalize their leader status, a pattern that has repeated itself recently regarding online communication.

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<sup>692</sup> From the FRC Third Annual Report as quoted in Steven J. Simmons, *The Fairness Doctrine and the Media* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 32.

<sup>693</sup> Ibid., 83-84.

<sup>694</sup> Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*, 59-77.

Following the recommendation of President Roosevelt, Congress drafted and passed the Communications Act of 1934 with relatively little resistance from industry leaders. The Communications Act is the longest-lasting and farthest-reaching communications policy in the history of the U.S. The new Act, as it related to radio broadcasting, made only minor changes to the Radio Act of 1927, maintaining and even strengthening the leading broadcasters' hold on the radio market. Importantly, the 1934 act created the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), an independent regulatory commission, to replace the FRC.<sup>695</sup> The FCC has maintained control over communications regulatory policy ever since.

Outside of the FCC, the other major players in communications policy include Congress, the President, the media industry itself, and the courts.<sup>696</sup> Congress controls federal funding, including defense and interstate commerce; areas that are becoming more and more digital. Congress also obviously has the power to write laws directly related to communication and media such as the Communications Act of 1934 and the most substantial update to the 1934 Act, The Telecommunications Act of 1996. The White House wields power by appointing members of the FCC (subject to congressional approval) but also has the power to influence communications policy agenda. Arguably the most consistent player in the communications policy arena are the leaders of the media industry itself, who have not only lobbied consistently but have had substantial say in the formation of communications policy throughout the broadcast era and are aiming to do the same with the internet today.

Communications policies have consistently supported broadcasters, yet they have also tried to balance commercial interests with the idea that radio is a utility that was meant for public good. The restriction of congested airwaves through the licensing power of the FCC led to the

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<sup>695</sup> Ibid., 86-88.

<sup>696</sup> The Supreme Court and district court of appeals for Washington D.C. have had the most consistent oversight over communications regulation.

reduction in the number of broadcasters, creating many local broadcasting monopolies. These monopolies threatened the availability of balanced discussion about public affairs and politics, one of the core democratic capabilities of the radio championed by early radio advocates.<sup>697</sup> The Communications Act of 1934 tried to solve this conflict by treating broadcasters as trustees for the benefit of the public. Broadcasters were granted free and exclusive licenses as long as they acted as agents for the “public interest, convenience, and necessity,” though the act said little about what this meant or how it could be enforced. The act also established the equal time rule, which required a broadcaster that sold time to a legally qualified political candidate to provide the same opportunity to any other qualified candidates.<sup>698</sup> The FCC later sought to encourage open discussion of public issues by implementing the fairness doctrine in 1949, which required broadcasters to provide airtime for controversial issues of public importance and offer opportunities to present contrasting viewpoints concerning these issues.

During the 1980s and 1990s substantial steps were taken to deregulate the communications industry, including the repeal of the fairness doctrine in 1987 by the FCC, and the addition of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton.<sup>699</sup> One important result of the 1996 Act was the deregulation of station licensing rules, which aimed to reduce prices and increase competition, but which resulted in further consolidation of radio and television stations and programming under just a few huge broadcasting networks.<sup>700</sup>

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<sup>697</sup> Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar, *The Media Game: American Politics in the Television Age*, 18.

<sup>698</sup> Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, 28; Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar, *The Media Game: American Politics in the Television Age*, 18.

<sup>699</sup> The fairness doctrine was repealed, in part, due to technological advances, which made it possible to offer many stations in a particular location. This weakened the original impetus for the rule: creating fair and open discussions using broadcast frequencies, which were a very scarce resource. *The Media Game: American Politics in the Television Age*, 19-21.

<sup>700</sup> The Telecommunications Act of 1996 was the first major overhaul to the Communications Act of 1934. The 1996 law included the internet in communications regulation for the first time and clarified the roll of the



### **The Process of Stabilization Today: The Regulation of the Internet**

The major political players, institutions, and regulatory policies of the 1920s and 1930s are very similar to those involved in the battles over internet regulation have emerged over the past 10-15 years. Just like the radio, the internet started as a completely unregulated playland for hobbyists and computer programmers remaining largely out of the public eye. The creation of the World Wide Web by Sir Tim Berners-Lee in 1989 paved the way for the modern internet and web browsers like Prodigy, Netscape, and America Online brought the web to millions of American homes starting in the mid 1990s. This was the beginning of the internet industry, as a growing number of internet service providers (ISPs) brought the internet to millions of consumers. Content service providers, those companies that create the sites and information consumed by most internet users, grew quickly with goliaths such as Google, Amazon, YouTube (later bought by Google), and Facebook emerging in the 2000s.<sup>701</sup>

All of this occurred with virtually no regulation designed specifically for the internet and web-based communication. Initial attempts to pass legislation to regulate speech online using similar decency standards guiding broadcast regulation were repeatedly struck down. Most notably Supreme Court held in *Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union* (1997) that the Communications Decency Act (CDA), part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, was overly broad when applied to the internet, and was thus an unconstitutional violation of the First Amendment.<sup>702</sup> Thus the internet grew in an unregulated culture where freedom of speech was protected just as it was for the press, and all information available online was available to anyone

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FCC regulatory powers regarding the increasingly complicated communications industry including cable and satellite television. Wu, *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires*, 243-45.

<sup>701</sup> For much more detailed description of this evolution see chapter two.

<sup>702</sup> Kenneth C. Creech, *Electronic Media Law and Regulation*, Fifth ed. (New York: Focal Press, 2007), 56-57, 412-15.

in the U.S. with internet access. However, like the radio before it, the loosely regulated formative years of the internet have shifted to one in which regulations are increasingly common and will likely affect many aspects of web use in the future.

One of the main regulatory issues that will shape the next stabilized political communication order is net neutrality, a concept that has garnered increasing news coverage over the last few years.<sup>703</sup> Net neutrality, sometimes referred to as the open internet, means that any owner of a part of the internet's infrastructure must offer the whole internet to all who use its services to access the web. In other words, all information available online must be treated equally by those companies that are providing access to the internet. Net neutrality is a 21<sup>st</sup> Century version of common carriage, the concept describing certain businesses that are so important for the public good, or so powerful, that they must be compelled to conduct their affairs in a nondiscriminatory way, giving everyone equal opportunity to use its services. This concept can be traced back to 15<sup>th</sup> Century England where many services that today are conducted by governments, like roads or ferries, were owned and operated by private entities.<sup>704</sup> Tim Wu, the creator of the term net neutrality, effectively argues in *The Master Switch* (2010) that net neutrality is an essential aspect of free expression online that must be maintained through regulation.<sup>705</sup> Net neutrality is essentially the internet as we have always known it, where all information online is available to all users, and ISPs who manage and maintain the delivery of

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<sup>703</sup> Net neutrality is, by no means, the only regulatory issue that will shape the stabilization of the Information PCO. Two other leading issues include the consolidation of media companies, which is addressed a bit later in the chapter, and privacy issues in the wake of the Edward Snowden revelations in 2013. While, privacy and fourth Amendment issues are not new, the extent to which the government can use the internet and new technology to in the surveillance of Americans is a new issue based both on the technological advances involved and the political and legal issues involved in the "War on Terror," post 9/11.

<sup>704</sup> Wu, *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires*, 57-60.

<sup>705</sup> Tim Wu, a law professor and former employee of major cable and satellite companies, is credited as coming up with the term net neutrality. He has been one of the leading advocates for net neutrality since he coined the phrase in 2003. Ibid; "Network Neutrality, Broadband Discrimination," *Journal on Telecommunications and High Technology Law* 2, no. 1 (2003).

the web and the internet itself, do not discriminate, slow down, or block any information or sites online.

During the past decade, a number of legislative and legal issues have emerged focusing on whether regulatory legislation is needed in order to maintain net neutrality, or whether such regulation would unfairly limit private industry. Proponents of net neutrality legislation believe it is a prerequisite for internet freedom and helps to maintain a level playing field necessary for continued competition for ideas and business online. Major companies like Google have argued that without net neutrality, companies such as theirs would have been unable to innovate and compete with established leaders in the web-based marketplace. Proponents also argue that net neutrality is as important as the First Amendment when it comes to ensuring free and democratic discourse online, because it limits the ability to censor speech that is unpopular politically or socially, or speech that goes against the interests of certain ISPs.<sup>706</sup>

On the other side are those who argue that net neutrality regulation interferes with how private companies operate, and therefore runs counter to real internet freedom. They argue that private companies should have the right to manage their networks in the most efficient way possible including treating consumers who access vastly different amounts of data differently.<sup>707</sup> Some also argue that regulation will inhibit innovation by preventing providers from capitalizing on their investments and reinvesting the money into better services. Finally, many have suggested that net neutrality regulation is a solution without a problem because there is little indication that ISPs have censored content in the past. The best way to keep companies honest, these opponents argue, is to allow the market to work freely.

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<sup>706</sup> *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires*; MacKinnon, *Consent of the Networked*, 120.

<sup>707</sup> *Consent of the Networked*, 120.

Unfortunately for these opponents, many recent examples of ISPs and content providers attempting to restrict internet content in America and around the world have shown that net neutrality regulation is targeting a very real threat.<sup>708</sup> In addition, proposed legislation over the past few years including the Stop Online Privacy Act (SOPA), Protect IP Act (PIPA), and Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act (CISPA), have been proposed and defeated in Congress. If passed, any one of these laws would have threatened net neutrality and free expression online, one reason why SOPA and PIPA prompted protests in person and online with hundreds of websites blacking themselves out in early 2012 including Wikipedia and Reddit.

Perhaps the most glaring weakness in the free market arguments opposing net neutrality regulation is a clear lack of choice for most Americans when it comes to their ISPs. Market forces only work when there is substantial competition and the cost to change providers is low; two elements that are simply not present in America today. The maps below detail the areas of the United States that have access to any wired broadband like cable, dsl, and fiber (Figure 8.3), and compare those areas with only one choice of ISPs (Figure 8.4) with those who have choice between two or more ISPs (Figure 8.5).<sup>709</sup> Its obvious that the vast majority of the nation enjoys either no choice among wired broadband ISPs or no wired broadband access at all.

**Figure 8.3: Area with Access to Any Wired Broadband Internet Service Providers, 2014<sup>710</sup>**

<sup>708</sup> Ibid; Morozov, *The Net Delusion*; Sam Thielman, "Major Internet Providers Slowing Traffic Speeds for Thousands across U.S.," *The Guardian*, June 22, 2015 2015.

<sup>709</sup> The latest data collected for these maps was from June 30, 2014 due to funding being cut off. Some data collection continues at the state level but has not been aggregated since that date. National Telecommunications & Information Administration, "National Broadband Map: Number of Broadband Providers," United States Department of Commerce, <http://www.broadbandmap.gov/number-of-providers>.

<sup>710</sup> Ibid.

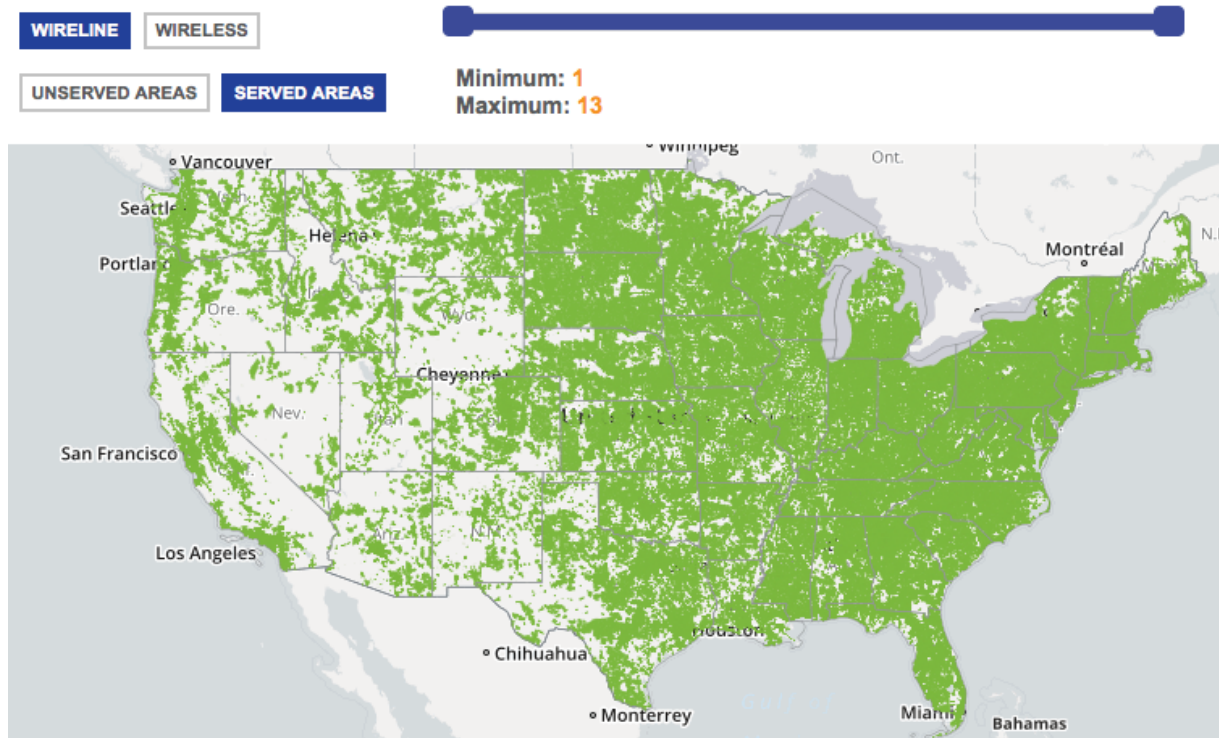
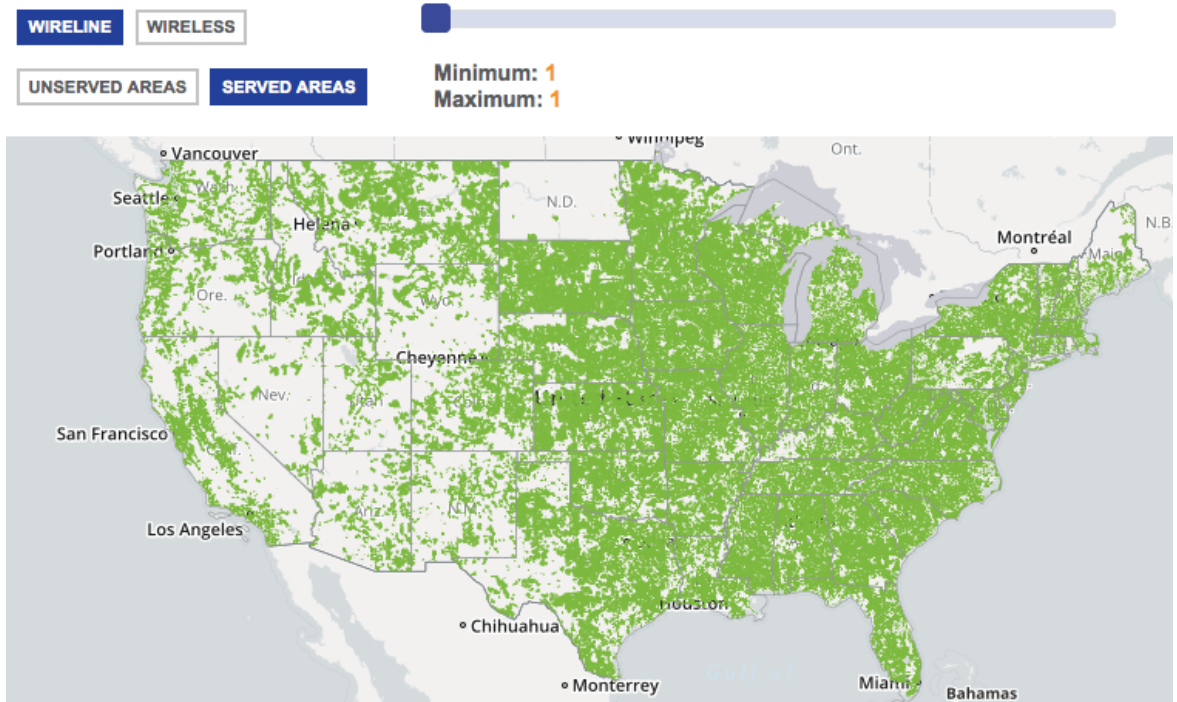
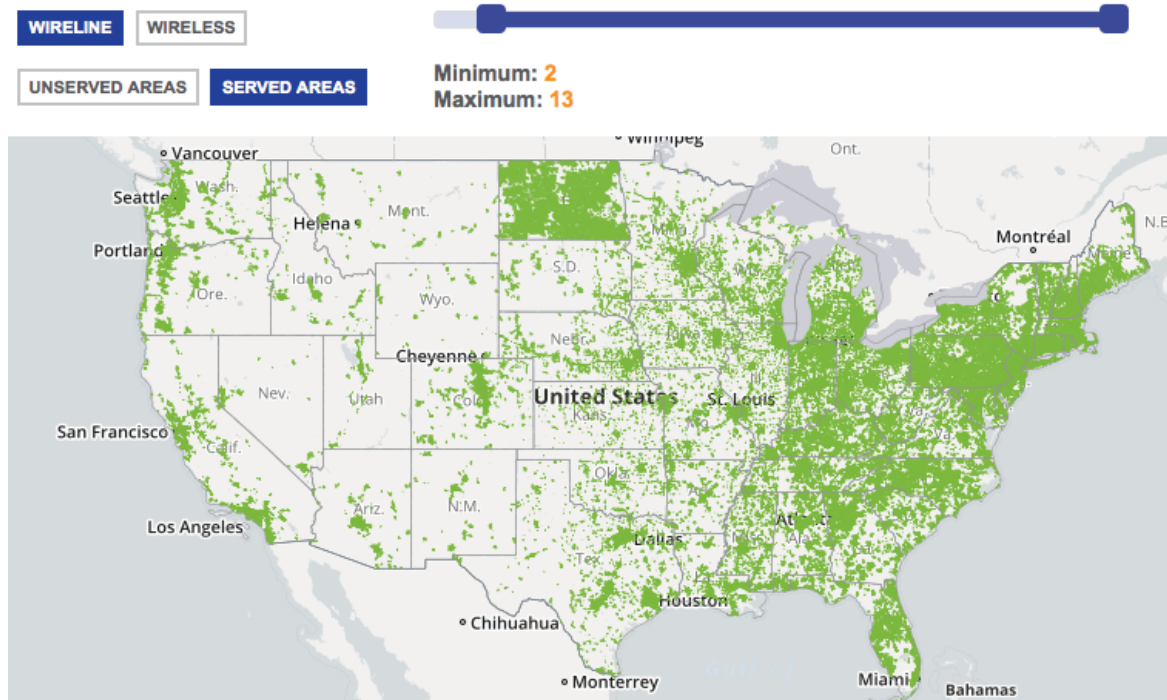


Figure 8.4: Area with Only One Wired Broadband Internet Service Provider, 2014<sup>711</sup>



<sup>711</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 8.5: Area with Choice Between Two or More Wired Broadband Internet Service Providers, 2014<sup>712</sup>**



Furthermore, the level of competition among ISPs is likely to get smaller as proposed mergers of service providers mount. The most notable of these proposed mergers was announced in February 2014 when Comcast, the largest cable and ISP provider in the nation, proposed acquiring the second largest company Time Warner.<sup>713</sup> This merger fell apart in the face of substantial opposition from Congress and the FCC. However, if it were approved, the Comcast Time-Warner merger would have created a goliath cable company but shockingly, would not have immediately affected competition because the nation had been neatly divided between the two industry giants so that they did not directly compete with one another.<sup>714</sup> Three months after the Comcast-Time Warner merger was announced, a comparable merger was proposed in the wireless internet sphere when AT&T proposed a \$48 billion acquisition of DirecTV. Once again this would consolidate the number of ISPs and give greater leverage to a dominant player, this

<sup>712</sup> Ibid.

<sup>713</sup> David Gelles, "Comcast Deal Seeks to Unite 2 Cable Giants," *The New York Times*, February 12, 2014.

<sup>714</sup> William Alden, "The Comcast-Time Warner Deal, by the Numbers," *ibid.*, February 13, 2014.

time AT&T.<sup>715</sup> Unlike the Comcast-Time Warner failure, the AT&T and DirectTV merger was approved by the FCC and finalized in July 2015 creating the largest television distributor, surpassing Comcast.<sup>716</sup> Along with net neutrality, the way that federal regulators treat these potential mergers, the consolidation of ISPs, and increasing dominance of certain industry leaders will largely shape how the current stabilization process develops.

### **The Emergence of Internet Regulation**

The FCC remained largely quiet regarding internet regulations until 2005 when they went public with four principles of open internet, a nonbinding wish list for the growing industry which later proved unenforceable. These principles outlined the rights and expectations that consumers are entitled to with respect to broadband service. According to the 2005 FCC open internet principles consumers should be able to: 1) access the lawful internet content of their choice; 2) run applications and use services of their choice, subject to the needs of law enforcement; 3) connect their choice of legal devices that do not harm the network; and 4) enjoy competition among network providers, application and service providers, and content providers.<sup>717</sup>

In 2007 the FCC attempted to stop Comcast from blocking or slowing some peer-to-peer file sharing. The FCC claimed that it had ancillary jurisdiction over the internet providers actions rooted in the Communications Act of 1934. This marked the first time the FCC actively tried to enforce its net neutrality provisions. A unanimous decision by the U.S. District Court of Appeals in Washington D.C. sided with Comcast, substantially weakening the power of the FCC to

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<sup>715</sup> Michael J. De La Merced and David Gelles, "At&T to Buy Directv for \$48.5 Billion in Move to Expand Clout," *ibid.*, May 18, 2014.

<sup>716</sup> Additionally there are a series of other cable and telecom mergers under consideration at the time this book went to press Emily Steel, "F.C.C. Approves at&T-Directv Deal," *ibid.*, July 24, 2015.

<sup>717</sup> Federal Communication Commission, "Open Internet," <http://www.fcc.gov/openinternet>.

enforce net neutrality.<sup>718</sup> This was a major blow to the FCC, and set the stage for weakened net neutrality rules that would come about later that year, a near perfect parallel to the way that the courts weakened Commerce Secretary Hoover's regulatory power before the FRC and FCC were established.

In the wake of this court decision, the FCC adopted the Open Internet Report and Order on Dec. 21, 2010, which formally established three overarching rules, designed to preserve the free and open internet. First the FCC mandated transparency by requiring providers to disclose information regarding their network management practices, performance, and the commercial terms of their broadband services.<sup>719</sup> Next, the FCC detailed a no blocking policy, in which fixed, or wired, broadband providers (such as DSL, cable modem, or fixed wireless providers) may not block lawful content, applications, services, or non-harmful devices. Mobile, or wireless broadband providers may not block lawful websites, or applications that compete with their voice or video telephony services. Finally the FCC banned "unreasonable" discrimination by stating that fixed broadband providers may not unreasonably discriminate in transmitting lawful network traffic over a consumer's broadband internet access service. Unreasonable discrimination of network traffic could take the form of particular services or websites appearing slower or degraded in quality.<sup>720</sup>

The FCC Open Internet Report and Order represented the first formalized net neutrality law in the United States, thus angering net neutrality opponents. But, this law equally frustrated net neutrality advocates because of the clear distinction drawn between fixed and mobile (or wireless) broadband. In short, the FCC created two classes of internet access. Fixed line broadband was to be highly regulated, essentially enforcing net neutrality. Wireless broadband

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<sup>718</sup> Edward Wyatt, "U.S. Court Curbs F.C.C. Authority of Web Traffic," *The New York Times*.

<sup>719</sup> Brian Stelter, "F.C.C. Is Set to Regulate Net Access," *ibid.*, December 20, 2010.

<sup>720</sup> Federal Communication Commission, "Open Internet".



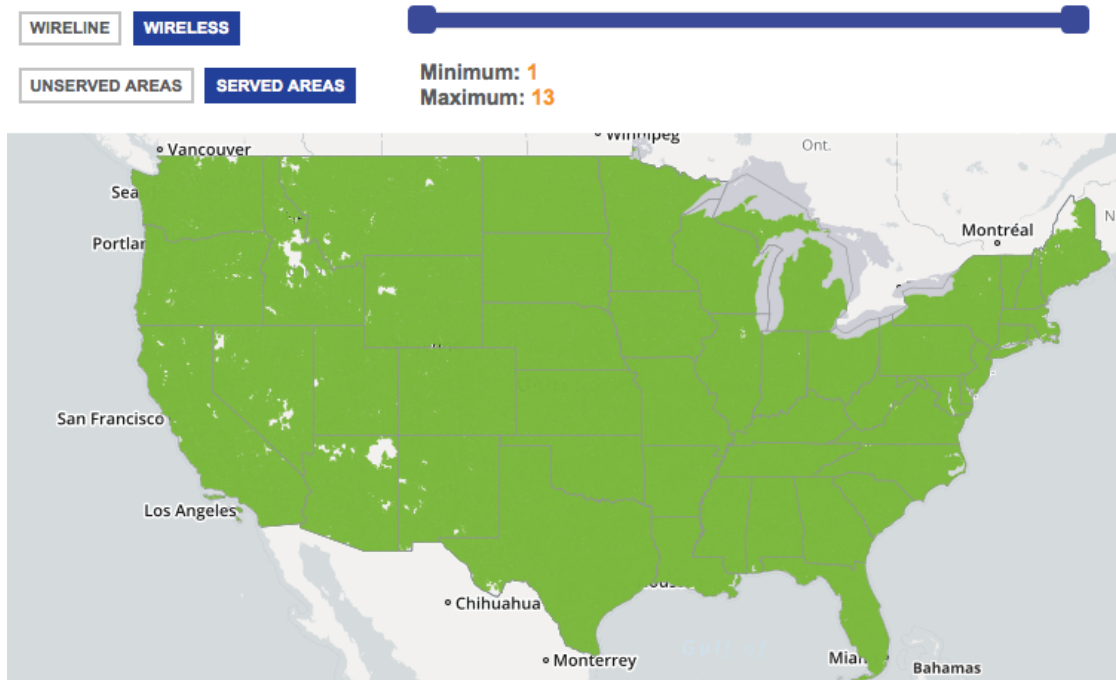
was to be subjected to far looser regulation including a weakened no blocking policy and an exemption from any unreasonable discrimination limitations. In addition, the Open Internet Report and Order the Commission states that the FCC recognized “that an open, robust, and well-functioning internet requires that broadband providers have the flexibility to manage their networks, including but not limited to efforts to block spam and ensure that heavy users don’t crowd out other users. For this reason, the no blocking and no discrimination rules are subject to reasonable network management.” Net neutrality advocates rightly point out that this opened the door to strategies like tiered service that would charge for more use or for certain high bandwidth services like Skype, YouTube, and Pandora, a prediction that has proved prophetic in the years since.

The weaker wireless regulations were especially important because this is both the type of broadband available to the greatest number of Americans (see Figures 8.6-8.8 below) and is an increasingly common form of broadband access. Wireless or mobile broadband access is by far the most easily accessible form of broadband and the one offering the greatest level of competition, though choices that do exist are often small in number. The acceleration of the adoption of mobile internet ready devices such as smart phones and tablets means that the internet enjoyed by more and more Americans would have had markedly less guaranteed neutrality than the hard-wired internet under the 2010 Open Internet Report and Order that will become increasingly obsolete over the next five to ten years.

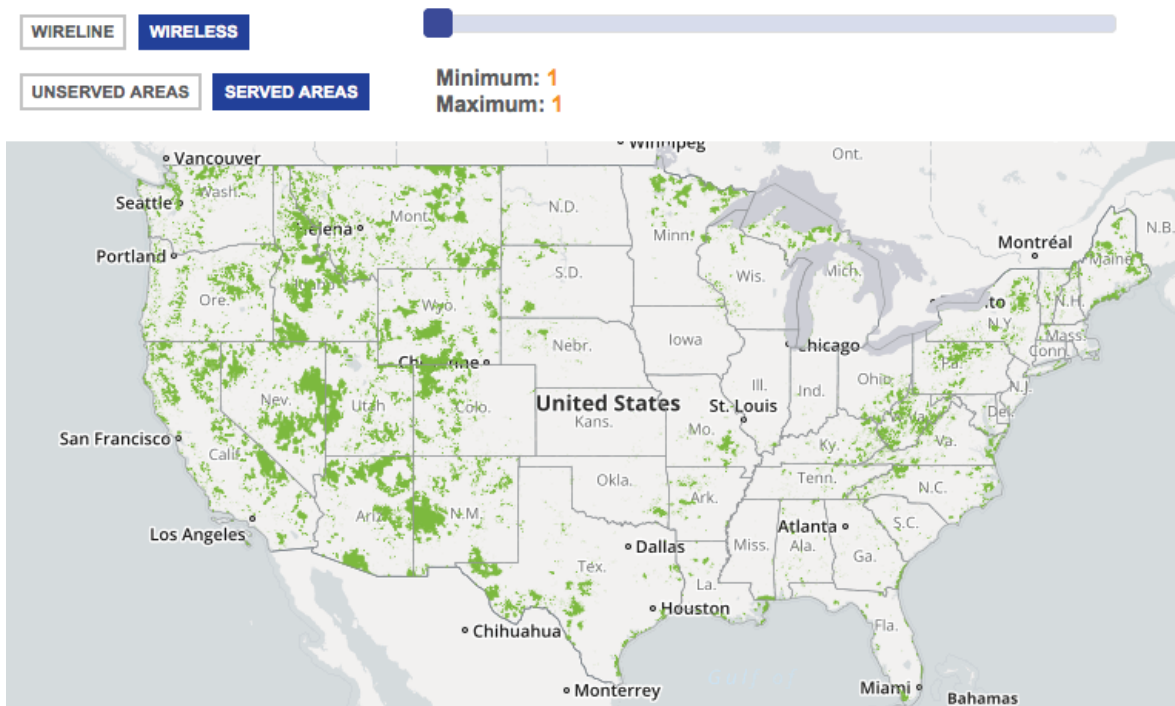
**Figure 8.6: Area with Access to Wireless Broadband Internet Service Providers, 2014<sup>721</sup>**

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<sup>721</sup> National Telecommunications & Information Administration, "National Broadband Map: Number of Broadband Providers".



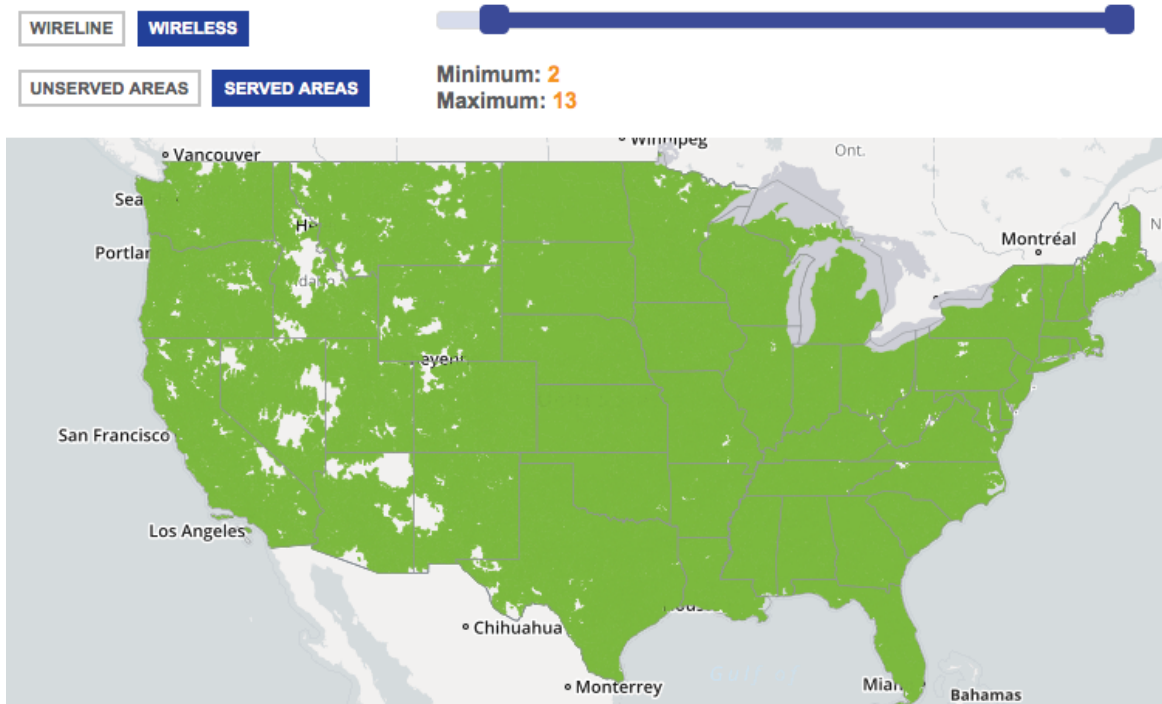
**Figure 8.7: Area with Only One Choice of Wireless Broadband Internet Service Providers, 2014<sup>722</sup>**



**Figure 8.8: Area with Choice Between Two or More Wireless Broadband Internet Service Providers, 2014<sup>723</sup>**

<sup>722</sup> Ibid.

<sup>723</sup> Ibid.



Furthermore, some portions of the population are more likely to access the internet via mobile devices than others including young Americans, racial and ethnic minorities, and the less educated and less wealthy. Among teens 12-17 years old, 91 percent access the internet by using mobile devices at least occasionally,<sup>724</sup> For young adults aged 18-29, 42 percent use cell phones as their primary method of internet access.

Evidence suggests that those who have been on the losing end of the digital divide for years are making up some of the gap by accessing the internet exclusively through mobile devices. Nineteen percent of Americans are described as smartphone-dependent, meaning they have very limited means of accessing broadband internet other than their smartphones. This group includes a number of demographics that have long been on a losing end of the digital divide including the young, poor, uneducated, and non-white. As of January 2017, over one in

<sup>724</sup> As of 2013, 25 percent use these devices as their main method of accessing the internet. Amanda Lenhart, "Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview 2015," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2015). Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, "Teens and Technology 2013," (Washington D.C. 2013).

ten Americans are labeled smartphone-dependent, including 17 percent of young adults aged 18-29, and 21 percent of those with household incomes under \$30,000, compared with only five percent of those with household incomes over \$75,000. This corresponds to the discrepancy based on education level, with 27 percent of Americans with less than a high school degree being smartphone-dependent, while only five percent of college graduates are. In addition, 15 percent of African Americans and 23 percent of Latinos are smartphone-dependent compared to nine percent of whites. Together the smartphone-dependent represent an underappreciated aspect of the modern digital divide in terms of the quality of internet access beyond whether or not it exists at all.<sup>725</sup> This should be a great concern broadly, and a focus of internet providers and regulators alike.

The 2010 Order effectively angered people on both sides of the net neutrality debate. In fact, some of the only groups that supported the FCC ruling were a few of the leading internet service and content providers. In August of 2010, Google and Verizon worked out a common position on net neutrality policy that wired internet would not be allowed to discriminate certain types of internet content but that wireless broadband providers should be exempt from such regulation.<sup>726</sup> In effect, the FCC ruling, which came about four months later, formalized the policy developed by the leaders of the industry it is supposed to regulate.

Importantly, the 2010 Open Internet Report and Order was ruled invalid less than four years later. Verizon challenged the authority of the FCC just as Comcast had successfully done just a few years earlier. In January of 2014, The United States Court of Appeals of D.C. Circuit

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<sup>725</sup> Smith, "Record Shares of Americans Now Own Smartphones, Have Home Broadband; Pew Research Center, "Smartphone Dependency," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017); "Smartphone Dependency by Race," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017); "Smartphone Dependency by Age," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017); "Smartphone Dependency by Income," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017); "Smartphone Dependency by Education," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017).

<sup>726</sup> MacKinnon, *Consent of the Networked*, 122-23.

ruled in Verizon's favor, wiping out the 2010 law. While the Court recognized the FCC's authority to regulate the internet, it stated clearly that the 2010 Open Internet Report and Order overstepped its authority based on the way that the internet is classified by the FCC itself.<sup>727</sup>

The FCC has various types of services that it groups together, each of which has a different threshold of regulations imposed on it. Up until 2002, the internet was classified by the FCC as a Title II telecommunications company, like the telephone, which is characterized as a utility and subject to strict regulation. In 2002, under the leadership of FCC Chairman and Republican appointee Michael Powell, the internet was reclassified as an information service, subject to substantially fewer regulations, with the goal of deregulating the industry. The Court of Appeals found that the 2010 Order, while reasonable under the telecommunications classification was no longer appropriate for an information service.<sup>728</sup> The result was the elimination of the first and only set of regulations that included any form of net neutrality protections.

While industry leaders clearly had their way in determining the course of internet regulations from 2010-2014, the Court of Appeals ruling left the door open for the FCC to chart a new path. They could have accepted the ruling outright, appealed it to the Supreme Court, established new limited regulations that abided by the ruling, or reclassified the internet as a utility-like telecommunications industry as it was before 2002.<sup>729</sup> Attention shifted immediately to the recently appointed FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler, who had come to the FCC after gaining extensive industry experience over the previous 30 years including serving as president of the

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<sup>727</sup> Edward Wyatt, "The Nuts and Bolts of Network Neutrality," *The New York Times*, January 14, 2014; Edward Wyatt and Ashwin Seshagiri, "Appeals Court Opinion Rejecting F.C.C. Net Neutrality Rules," *ibid.*

<sup>728</sup> Edward Wyatt, "The Nuts and Bolts of Network Neutrality," *ibid.*

<sup>729</sup> *Ibid.*

National Cable Television Association (NCTA) and CEO of the Cellular Communications and Internet Association (CITE) the two leading lobbying organizations in the industry.<sup>730</sup>

Under Wheeler's leadership the FCC immediately announced they would not appeal the ruling and instead crafted new regulations that would abide by the Courts ruling. Chairman Wheeler offered a proposal in April, 2014 for a new set of regulations that would open up to possibility for content providers like Disney, Google, and Netflix to pay internet Service Providers (ISPs) for faster speeds of their content including audio and video services. These so called fast lanes, or tiered service, while being offered equally to everyone, run in direct opposition to net neutrality as it would allow for ISPs to treat data that it provides unequally. Under the proposal, broadband providers would have had to disclose how they treat all internet traffic and on what terms they offer more rapid lanes, and would be required to act "in a commercially reasonable manner," though no clarification was offered what might be considered reasonable.<sup>731</sup>

In May 2014 the FCC agreed to open up the proposal for public comments for several months before officially voting on the proposal in the fall. During the early stages of this comment period, there was little indication that the FCC was seriously considering reclassifying the internet as a telecommunications utility, thus continuing the regulatory path favoring big industry leaders written by those leaders themselves, just as it happened some 80 years earlier with the radio. But then the story changed. Propelled by dozens of internet companies, organizations fighting for net neutrality regulations, and a segment on This Week Tonight by

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<sup>730</sup> Overall Wheeler worked at the NITA for eight years, serving as president for five. He was the CEO of the CITE for 12 years from 1992-2004. Other than these leading industry positions Tom Wheeler served various roles in several technology and communications start-ups and has extensive experience in all aspects of the communications, cable, and internet industries. There were some organizations that were concerned upon his appointment due to his experience as a leading lobbyist but the concerns were not universal and his Senate confirmation did not face major opposition. Brooks Boliek and Tony Romm, "Tom Wheeler to Be Nominated for Fcc Head Source Says," *Politico*, April 30, 2013.

<sup>731</sup> Edward Wyatt, "F.C.C., in a Shift, Backs Fast Lanes for Web Traffic," *The New York Times*, April 23, 2014.

John Oliver that went viral, 3.7 million comments poured into the FCC. This shattered the previous record of 1.4 million comments sent after Janet Jackson's Super Bowl halftime show "wardrobe malfunction" in 2004. The overwhelming majority of the net neutrality comments were in support of new regulations with only one percent clearly opposed and another five percent voicing wide ranging anti-regulatory sentiments.<sup>732</sup>

In the face of this strong public opposition, and an outspoken President Obama supporting net neutrality, Tom Wheeler and the FCC reversed course. In February 2015, a new proposal was passed by a vote of 3-2 that not only rejected the fast lanes of the earlier proposal but reclassified both wired and wireless internet as a Title II telecommunications company, though applying this classification in a selective a la carte fashion.<sup>733</sup> In other words, the FCC established the most enforceable and universal net neutrality regulations ever, directly opposing the powerful telecommunications companies that had so recently held an upper hand in the net neutrality battle. The victory for net neutrality advocates was important in helping to stabilize the Information PCO and as an example of internet-mediated advocacy that utilized the interactivity of web-based tools to shift policy. However the stabilization phase of the current PCC is far from over and the ongoing battles over regulations and the relative power of federal regulators and the private content providers and service providers is anything but locked in place.

There is no doubt that the stabilization of the current PCC is further along than it was just a few years ago, but it is equally clear that it is far from stable. Challenges to the net neutrality regulations continue from ISPs, including some arguing that the FCC ruling not only was overly

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<sup>732</sup> "Net Neutrality Comments to F.C.C. Overwhelmingly One-Sided, Study Says," *ibid.*, September 18, 2014.

<sup>733</sup> Rebecca R. Ruiz and Steve Lohr, "F.C.C. Approves Net Neutrality Rules, Classifying Broadband Internet Service as a Utility," *ibid.*, February 26, 2015.

burdensome but that it actually hurt corporate free speech.<sup>734</sup> The first major suit was launched a few months later by AT&T and USTelcom, the largest group representing the top internet providers, who sued the FCC over its Net Neutrality ruling. In June 2016, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit officially ruled on the case, defending the FCC and dealing the ISPs a major legal blow. This put to rest, at least for a time, the question about whether the internet was vital enough to be regulated like other major utilities and suggested the latest Net Neutrality regulations are likely to have a much stronger footing than prior efforts.<sup>735</sup> However, the balance of power in the FCC has shifted since the 2016 election, as they often do when a new President takes over.

The 2016 campaign included a few notable mentions of net neutrality. Clinton stood strongly in favor of maintaining net neutrality protections, while Trump was clearly opposed to it. After the surprising Trump victory, Tom Wheeler, the FCC chairman said he would step down as chair and did just that on January 20, 2017. Trump chose to nominate Ajit Pai, who formerly worked for the Justice Department, as lead attorney for Verizon, and as a member of the FCC serving under Wheeler. He was also the most outspoken critic of net neutrality during the ongoing debate during recent years and was one of the two dissenting votes on the February 2015 vote to reclassify the internet.

In the first months of the Trump administration, Pai has moved swiftly to ease regulations on ISPs and content service providers and has started the process of reversing the reclassification of the internet under Title II. A proposal has been put forth and a new massive wave of

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<sup>734</sup> Brian Fung, "Net Neutrality Could Become the Biggest Face-Off on Corporate Speech since Citizens United," *The Washington Post*, September 28, 2015.

<sup>735</sup> "Cable and Telecom Companies Just Lost a Huge Court Battle on Net Neutrality," *ibid.*, June 14, 2016.



comments has started to flood the FCC site.<sup>736</sup> The future of these recent proposals have not yet been determined, but the important takeaway is that the overall story of net neutrality is one in which there is no set of regulations that have been locked in.

In addition there are a number of other issues beyond net neutrality that will greatly impact the stabilized order that is currently forming. Perhaps the most important is the increased power that individual companies have over our interactions, information, and political outreach online. Companies like Facebook, Apple, and Google have grown increasingly powerful in terms of their dominance over the information we see. Additionally the public is moving more and more toward a mobile, app-mediated information flow. This means that the choices that these content producers make about how political information can be created and shared will play an increasingly important framing role. Fundamentally, internet regulation is stabilizing, but is not yet stable. How this stabilization phase plays out and where we are likely to go from here is the main topic for the next and final chapter.

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<sup>736</sup> Many of these comments were once again motivated by John Oliver who devoted another long segment on his This Week Tonight show to net neutrality in early 2017.

## **Chapter 9: Conclusion: Where We Are and Where We Might Be Headed**

You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you are going, because you might not get there. – Yogi Berra

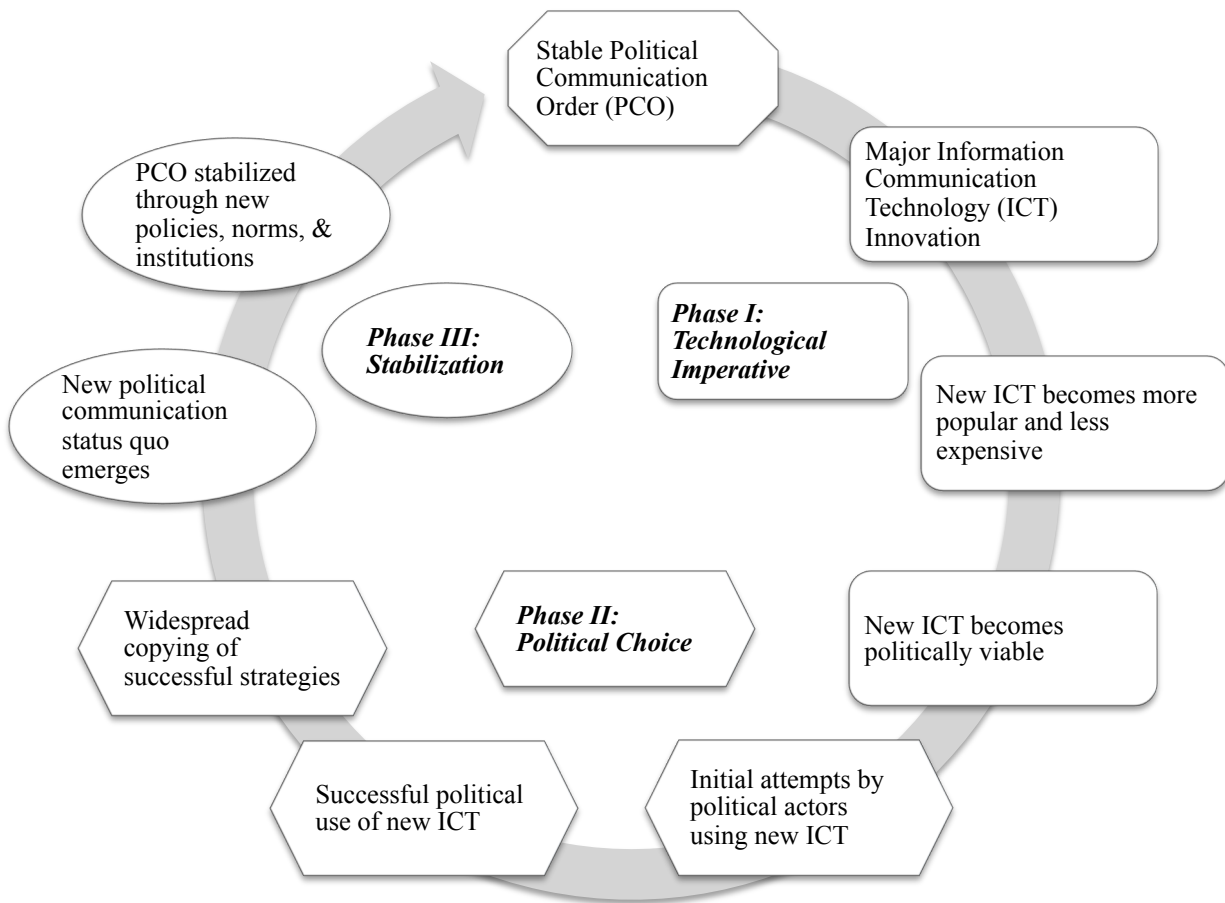
I spent six years teaching high school history and have been asked hundreds of times why study the past. The simple answer is often the best one: History helps us understand today, and gives us much greater purchase over future choices. This final chapter offers a great opportunity to look back at the political communication cycle (PCC) so that we might better be able to use it to understand the dynamic political communication environment today. First this chapter summarizes the major aspects and utility of the political communication cycle, highlighting the major claims and the most important findings from the book. This chapter then importantly applies the political communication cycle to the current status of political communication, and sketches possible paths forward. Then, I use the historical lessons from the book to present ideas about the increasing role of interactivity and decentralization in web-based political communication. Ultimately this book ends by clarifying what this book did and suggests related areas that could become subjects of future studies.

### **The Political Communication Cycle and Why it Matters**

Above all else, this book is about the PCC, a new model that helps to chart the recurring process of political communication change spanning American political history. The PCC is a multiple stage process that incorporates the technological, behavioral and political components that interact to create long lasting political communication changes (see Figure 9.1). These changes disrupt stable political communication orders (PCO) during turbulent periods of permanent change that I call political communication revolutions (PCR). Both information

communication technologies (ICT) and political actors play important roles in creating PCR. In order for a PCR to occur, an ICT must be introduced that achieves political viability, meaning that it is used widely throughout society and offers political organizations tools that could potentially be used to achieve political communication goals more efficiently or effectively. These steps make up the first phase of the PCC known as the technological imperative.

Importantly, widespread adoption of a new ICT like the telegraph, radio, or internet does not create a political communication revolution on its own. As I stated in the introduction, one of the most fundamental findings of this book and the historical process it documents is that *throughout history changes have been made by political actors and organizations that have chosen innovative communication approaches over traditional ones*. It is these choices, often messy, always human, that make up the second political choice phase of the PCC and serves as the key element in creating a political communication revolution. Early adopters try new tools and find little to no perceivable political benefit. But others build on their experiences as new ICTs become more widely used, cheaper, and gain political utility. Eventually strategically innovative strategies are shown to be able to achieve long-standing political communication goals more efficiently and/or effectively than traditional communication options. After this point, some strategies are copied, tweaked and built into a new status quo. Once this happens these new practices are stabilized through the implementation of norms, regulations, and institutions during the third stabilization phase of the PCC. In short, the PCC includes the development of a new ICT, the growth of its popularity and political viability, early political experimentation, widespread copying of successful political communication innovations, and eventually the stabilization of a new political communication order.

**Figure 9.1: The Political Communication Revolution Cycle**

Through the course of American political history four political communication orders (PCOs) have existed: the Elite, Mass, Broadcast, and Information Political Communication Orders. During these four PCOs, the fundamental form and function of political communication, as well as in the political relationships between political elites and the public remained stable. Both the PCOs and the PCRs that disrupted them are extremely valuable lenses through which to view changes in political communication through American history and gain a better understanding of where we are and which potential directions we might be headed.

Perhaps the most important takeaway from the political communication cycle is that while new technological tools are important components in major political communication change, it takes a series of conscious choices about if, how, and when to innovate political communication activities by political actors and organizations to create lasting changes. While it is essential to detail the characteristics and uses of a new ICT which leads to its political viability, it is even more important to show the key role that political actors play in transforming a politically viable communication tool into a powerful political weapon. These elements come together to form a well-supported model of systemic political communication change that can be used to compare different disruptive periods over time.

Early in the book I advanced three claims regarding how characteristics of ICTs, political organizations and their goals interact to motivate or hinder disruptions in political communications activity and how they have shaped political communication change. The first claim focuses on the cost of new ICTs and the final two stress the role of political choice about new ICTs and political communication strategies. The three claims are:

1. *Cost: As the cost of new ICTs declines, the potential for its incorporation in political communication activity increases.*
2. *Resources: those political actors with greater financial and technological resources are more likely to innovate earlier than those without such resources.*
3. *Challenger: political challengers or outsiders are more likely to innovate earlier than those in power.*

These claims play a central role in explaining how the first two phases of the PCC work in practice, and how various types of political actors and organizations fit into the political communication cycle overall. They also work in conjunction with one another. For instance, the

cost of new ICTs affects both the political viability of the technology and also the choices that political actors make about whether or not to use it. Because the cost of using new ICTs is initially very high, political actors will only be able to innovate if they have sufficient resources to do so. However the cost and resource claims evolve as the political communication cycle progresses. By the time the new ICT is widely diffused it is no longer extremely expensive. Thus the resources claim applies less over time as ICT costs decrease.

Regardless of the specific costs involved, political organizations will be much more motivated to invest the time and resources to innovate if the political risks are low and potential advantages are high. Political challengers and outsiders who lose under the current system are motivated to experiment with new approaches. Therefore, when new ICTs become politically viable, challengers and outsiders are more likely to be the first to incorporate these technologies into their political activities. The combination of the resource claim and challenger status claim created the political actor innovativeness matrix (see chapter four) which helps to identify which political actors are likely to innovate their political communication practices earlier than others.

The political calculations about whether or not to innovate political communication tactics are not simple. Different types of organizations vary in their characteristics and goals, and these weigh heavily on if and how they choose to innovate their communication practices. Campaigns, with the most clearly defined political communication goals and most concrete timeframe, offer a great opportunity to look at changes over time. Historical analysis of campaigns shows that challengers, those with more resources, and those involved in more competitive elections were likely to innovate earlier than others. Yet the willingness to innovate does not mean that it will be effective. In fact early adopters of communication innovations are rarely successful at translating those innovations into tangible political successes. It is only after

several election cycles that innovation can be strategically incorporated into the larger campaign in a way that can bring great political success along the lines of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, John F. Kennedy in 1960, and Barack Obama in 2008.

In 2008 many believed that everything the Obama campaign did online would be copied as closely as possible by future campaigns. The truth is that some aspects did become new norms like social media, while others did not (i.e. an embedded social media platform like MyBO). This offers an interesting modern reference point that we can use to examine how future campaigns, or political elites more generally, use social media and ongoing innovations moving forward. This book does not promise to have all the answers, but the PCC can be used to help put what transpired in 2016, at least in terms of political communication innovation, in context and can provide some early clues about what to look for moving forward.

If campaigns are the most consistent type of political organization in terms of goals, social movements, are the most consistent in terms of challenger status. The fact that social movements, by definition fall outside of the traditional insider levers of power makes them a particularly important type of organized interest to study in terms of changing political communication over time and the PCC. Detailed historical comparisons of the women's suffrage movement and the movement against racial discrimination culminating in the modern civil rights movement showed that political outsiders central to social movements are most likely to attempt to innovate, with both of these movements utilizing innovative approaches dating back to the 1820s. However without the means of substantial influence over political communication on a society-wide scale, they are unable to achieve political victories on their own. Historical analysis suggests that the *creation* of innovative political communication tactics by social movements did not achieve major political goals, but the *manipulation* of major newspaper and broadcast

coverage through the creation of media events and framing of issues was an essential tool for activists in both historical movements. However, this may be changing as the barriers to creating widely dispersed and viewed media have dramatically diminished following the advent of the internet. The internet and all digital communication technologies (DCTs), including extremely inexpensive social media tools, are perfectly suited for disseminating information and organizing movement activity.

The obvious and important outlier in this historical narrative was that of interest groups. Interest groups have innovated their political communication tactics in noticeably different ways and at a very different rate than campaigns and social movements, though all have been powerful organized interests throughout most of American political history. Due to the powerful positions of interest groups within the American political system and the limited size of the target audience of interest group communications throughout most of American history, interest groups proved to be far less innovative than other political organizations like campaigns and social movements. In other words because of the differences in political communication goals, primarily connected to the small size of the target audience, interest group innovation was not motivated by the widespread adoption of ICTs prior to the internet. The innovativeness of interest groups has picked up dramatically during the current political communication revolution as organizations like MoveOn.org have focused on gaining power first through members of the public, as opposed to members of congress.

### **The Disruptive Power of the Internet's Inherent Interactivity**

There have been major changes in the interactivity available via prior ICT innovations. Each new ICT varies in terms of interactivity between one to one, one to many, and many to



many forms of communication. Conversations over the telephone, and eventually wireless radio were just two of many transformational moments expanding our abilities to interact with one another. But the seismic shift in interactivity occurred with the development of the internet. The internet is a complex and dynamic combination of so many things. I have followed the lead of others like Bimber and Karpf and have not tried to specify what is or is not narrowly defined by this expansive ICT. Regardless of whether we are talking about dialing in to AOL on a modem, or running countless apps simultaneously on the newest smartphone, the internet has always been inherently interactive.

There is nothing bold about asserting that the internet has always been interactive nor that it offers dramatically improved interactivity over prior ICTs. More important in the context of this book is the fact that the internet has shifted the directionality of political communication away from a single source. Those traditionally considered the political audience, who received political communication messages from political and media elites, are now able to use the internet for their political purposes, which now includes easily creating and sharing political messages. The political audience is now also a potential source of political communication. This increased interactivity at the heart of the current PCR is reshaping political communication in America away from the traditional top-down model more than at any point in American history.

The democratization of political communication, most notably during the emerging information order has been evident in communication tactics by campaigns, interest groups and social movements alike, and has spurred countless citizen groups to organize and gain public attention in ways that would have been very difficult before the internet. The internet has spurred political engagement by citizens since its early days through new avenues to gain access to

information, connect with others, and create political messages.<sup>737</sup> This decentralizing effect is occurring because the costs, risks, and political barriers limiting the influence of individual citizens or citizen groups are greatly reduced by the internet generally and by social media specifically.<sup>738</sup>

Tim Berners-Lee did not envision social media when he designed the plans for the web. However, there is no doubt as to the political impact of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and even social media platforms that have faded like Friendster, MySpace and Google+. Tragic videos shared on these platforms have been the catalysts sparking the Black Lives Matter movement.<sup>739</sup> Individual politicians have used these platforms to greatly enhance their prominence and voice. Former Newark Mayor and current New Jersey Senator Cory Booker was an early pioneer, using Twitter to engage with constituents. Booker famously used Twitter to interact with constituents to help direct snow removal after a major blizzard in 2010. At times, the response included Booker himself arriving with supplies and a shovel. In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, Booker used Twitter to invite neighbors to his house if their power was out to recharge items. The popularity of Booker in New Jersey and around the nation grew right along with the number of people following, and interacting with him on Twitter, because he wasn't just responsive, he was charismatic and funny. On November 5, 2012 Lee Daly sent a tweet to Mayor Booker asking if he could help with a pothole outside his house. After looking into the matter, Booker hilariously replied: "Sir, It looks like you live in Dublin, Ireland. I've got 99 problems & your ditch ain't one."

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<sup>737</sup> Erik P. Bucy and Kimberly S. Gregson, "Media Participation: A Legitimizing Mechanism of Mass Democracy," *New Media and Society* 3, no. 3 (2001).

<sup>738</sup> Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*.

<sup>739</sup> Freelon, McIlwain, and Clark, "Beyond the Hashtags: #Ferguson, #Blacklivesmatter, and the Online Struggle for Offline Justice."

The personal connection available through Twitter was, without question, one of Donald Trump's greatest tools during the 2016 campaign. As president he has continued to tweet from his personal account, and with each 140-character message he directs media and public attention. While they have very different styles both Trump and Booker have used the social media platform to connect to the people by channeling their personality in a way that reaches millions. But there are risks involved to be sure. Many polls have consistently displayed the unpopularity of Trump's use of Twitter, especially since becoming president. Less than six months into his presidency the vast majority of Americans and even the majority of Republicans believe that Trump tweets too much. In one Morning Consult/Politico poll from June, 2017, 69 percent thought Trump tweeted too much, including 51 percent of those who voted for him, compared with only four percent who thought he didn't tweet enough. That same poll showed well over half of Americans thought his tweeting was hurting his presidency, American security, and U.S. standing in the world.<sup>740</sup> His tweets, often bullying and crass are seen by many to be exceedingly unpresidential, yet are official statements of the White House and have already been used to stall several policy proposals and have created unexpected political minefields for the Republican-led Congress looking to move forward with their agenda with a unified government in hand. Trump's use of the platform has offered political advantages and pitfalls, and it is far from clear that others will copy his techniques.

### **Where We are in the Political Communication Cycle**

Many chapters have explored the various phases of the political communication cycle and the technological, political, and behavior roles in the undulating and repeating model of change

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<sup>740</sup> The Morning Consult and Politico poll had 1999 respondents and a margin of error of +/- 2. Steven Shepard, "Poll: Voters Want Trump to Get Off Twitter," *Politico* 2017; Morning Consult and Politico, "National Tracking Poll," (Morning Consult and Politico, 2017).

over time. One essential question remains: where are we now? Using the major steps that make up the three phases of the PCC, and applying them to all of the events so far in the current PCR leading to the emerging information PCO, the answer becomes clear. We have made it through the technological imperative phase of the PCC as computers and tablets and smartphones have become nearly ubiquitous and are clearly political viable as they are used for political purposes by political groups and citizens alike. Early attempts to try to use the internet to innovate political communication strategies largely crashed and burned. But through this experience successful tactics have been identified and used consistently. Thus while the specifics of our devices and the types of web and phone based applications we use will continue to change, the political choice phase is also over.

Today we are safely in phase three: stabilization. A new status quo is developing in terms of the types of platforms and strategies that political organizations and actors are utilizing to achieve their political communication goals. Major companies are playing increasingly important roles in how political elites reach the public, how the public communicates with powerful political organizations and how we all can communicate about politics with one another. Interactivity is powerful, and complicating. But the tools being used to interact are becoming more standard. Google, Apple, Facebook, and Twitter along with perhaps a half a dozen other companies, have become fixtures. They are not leaving the political communication sphere for a very long time. Further, some tools, often the far less flashy, are universally used and maintain enormous power, earning the title of “mundane internet tool” according to Nielsen.<sup>741</sup> Stabilization is, in many ways, the process in which innovative activities become mundane.

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<sup>741</sup> Nielsen, "Mundane Internet Tools, Mobilizing Practices, and Coproduction of Citizenship in Political Campaigns."

The legacy of the current PCR will be shaped, in part, through ongoing choices by political actors, government regulators and internet providers about the norms, institutions, and policies that will structure online communication. We are now in a remarkable time when the internet pervades so much of our information and entertainment culture but remains only loosely regulated. We are moving ever so clearly from an entirely unregulated open internet, to regulation by governments and corporations.<sup>742</sup> The best historical parallel to our current transitional period was the emergence of radio, which moved from open access to tight regulations influenced by leading broadcasters. Just as during the 1920s and 1930s, the industry leaders are wielding tremendous influence on policy making that will affect the emerging regulations of the internet.

Perhaps the best evidence of this influence is the growth and overall size of the lobby representing these industries today. The size of the wide-ranging communications, computer and internet lobby is shockingly large, ranking in the top five of all lobbying sectors in terms of money spent during each year dating back to at least 1998.<sup>743</sup> Perhaps, more important is the speed at which the spending has increased for various industries within this sector. In 1998 a total of \$23.9 million was spent on behalf of telecom services,<sup>744</sup> an amount that doubled by 2003, and has ranged from \$85 to \$108 million every year since 2006 (see Figure 9.2). Even more stunning is the growth money spent on behalf of the internet lobby,<sup>745</sup> which has grown

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<sup>742</sup> For a great description on how many private corporations including content and service providers are increasingly modifying what we see and experience online see Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*.

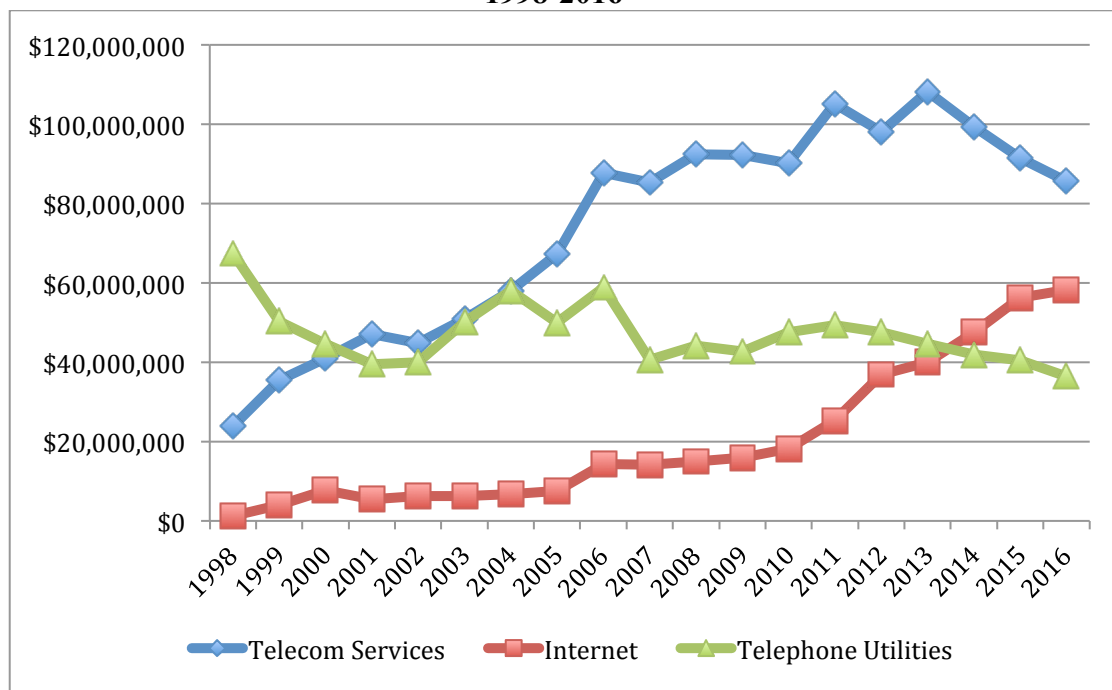
<sup>743</sup> Only the pharmaceutical, insurance, and oil and gas industries spent more on lobbying. Data from 1998 is the oldest reported by the Center for Responsive Politics. The Center for Responsive Politics, "Lobbying," <https://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/>.

<sup>744</sup> Telecom Services includes organizations like Comcast, the National Internet and Television Association, Charter Communications, Cox, Samsung, DISH and others.

<sup>745</sup> Organizations in the internet lobby include Alphabet (parent company of Google), Facebook, Amazon, Yahoo, eBay, Ailibaba, Netflix, Spotify, and many others.

steadily from a scant \$1.2 million in 1998 to over \$58 million in 2016 (see Figure 9.2).<sup>746</sup> Taking a closer look at the companies that spend the most in terms of federal lobbying, giant ISP and content providers AT&T, Alphabet (parent company of Google), Comcast, and Amazon are all in the top 20, along with the National Association of Broadcasters and the National Cable and Telecommunications Association (NCTA), the primary lobby for each respective industry.<sup>747</sup> Together, the broadcasters, ISPs and content service providers like are all increasingly spending enormous amounts of money to influence the direction of communications and internet policy.

**Figure 9.2: Money Spent Lobbying for Telecom, Telephone Utilities and Internet Services 1998-2016**<sup>748</sup>



<sup>746</sup> Another startling measure of the growth of spending were the donations by people and PACs supporting the industry. In 1990 the people and PACs supporting the computer and internet industry collectively spent \$1.7 million, ranking 53<sup>rd</sup> and by 2008 those numbers jumped to \$41.4 million and 13<sup>th</sup> on the list of top contributors. The Center for Responsive Politics, "Lobbying".

<sup>747</sup> Ibid.

<sup>748</sup> Telephone Utilities include companies like AT&T, Verizon, CenturyLink, and various collective telephone lobby organizations among others. Ibid.

While there were opportunities to maintain open networks in the past, such as the open radio system that Hoover regulated during the 1920s, choices were made that exclusively benefited the network broadcasters. These huge corporations, which both created and delivered content, were extremely concentrated during the formation of radio and television regulatory policy and yielded great influence over government decisions. Recently, as net neutrality decisions were being made, and then inevitably challenged, internet content providers and ISPs were making efforts to merge, forming corporations that will have the monopolizing power to selectively control the speed of web content or to censor it outright if net neutrality is no longer guaranteed.

These corporations constantly try to influence the FCC just as the radio and television broadcasters have since it was established in 1934.<sup>749</sup> And until recently, those corporations were consistently winning these legal and regulatory battles. But the story took a new direction thanks to the interactive power of the internet. The millions of comments that poured in to the FCC overwhelmingly supporting net neutrality, along with strong support from President Obama, pushed the FCC to reverse their course and secure the most wide ranging and legally grounded net neutrality protections in the history of the internet in February, 2015. This ruling has already been challenged, and defended in the U.S. Court of Appeals. While the actions taken in 2015 were the most concrete regulatory decisions to date involving the current PCR, future court decisions and the actions of the FCC could very well change recent trends. Laws change and since the 2016 election the FCC, and its new chair Ajit Pai, have started to take actions to weaken regulations on the industry including net neutrality. This back and forth continues to show that net neutrality and internet regulation is far from fixed, and powerful industry leaders

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<sup>749</sup> Free Press, "Save the Internet: Frequently Asked Questions," <http://www.savetheinternet.com/frequently-asked-questions>.

continue to hold a seat at the head of the table. We are currently living in a period where there is an opportunity to affect this regulation before the current PCR is fully stabilized and the next PCO is established. However the opportunity for the interested public to intervene in how the current PCR will be stabilized is fading quickly.

Beyond regulatory changes, the changing business model of communication continues to have a dramatic effect on the evolution of online political communication. However, what has practically disappeared in the current era of cable television, broadband internet, streaming services, and smartphones, is the possibility of buying a piece of hardware that offers unlimited free content. This free content was available for the radio and television, the two ICTs with the fastest diffusion rates in American history. This change has implications for who adopts ICTs and the inequality in the information available. The stabilization of the current PCR that is transforming our modern hybrid media environment is not yet complete, and the cost structure(s) that become most common will play a large role in determining the access, diversity, and quality of information many can receive in the future.

Political communication using digital communication technologies (DCTs) of any kind requires internet access. Nearly all home broadband services offered by cable, DSL or fiber do so at flat rates for unlimited access. But examining the cost of that flat rate shows precisely how steep the financial barrier of unlimited internet data actually is, especially when compared to the rest of the western world. While it is possible to get home broadband speeds among the fastest in the world in the few cities in the U.S. with fiber service, it is extremely expensive. There were only five cities in the U.S. that offered home broadband reaching 1000 Mbps download speed in 2014.<sup>750</sup> To access this extremely fast speed it cost 70 dollars per month in Chattanooga, TN and

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<sup>750</sup> Four if you combine Kansas City, KS and Kansas City, MO which were both served by the same Google Fiber service.



Kansas City, \$110 in Lafayette, LA, and \$320 in Bristol, VA.<sup>751</sup> The same speed access cost between 30 and 40 dollars in Seoul, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Bucharest, and Paris.<sup>752</sup> In fact in findings from a study of major cities around the world, the cities in the U.S. averaged higher costs and slower speeds than most cities in Europe and Asia.<sup>753</sup>

Due to the high cost of home broadband costs and proliferation of smartphones and tablets, many across the nation are labeled smartphone-dependent and only have access to broadband internet via data plans offered through their mobile phone company. Nearly all of these offer different tiers of data available per month, and greatly reduced speeds compared to home broadband. This especially affects non-white, poorer, and less educated Americans who have always trailed in terms of equality of internet access.<sup>754</sup> Overall, mobile broadband users, regardless of whether they have home broadband or not, are limited in the volume and quality of the information they are able to access. Though the tiers of data allow for the most cost effective options, they are still limiting and among the most expensive in the world. According to a report by the International Telecommunications Union from late 2013, the average cost of 500 MBs of mobile broadband data cost 85 dollars per month, the highest in the developed world. That same study found that the same data cost only \$4.70 in Austria, over 18 times cheaper.<sup>755</sup> The cost and quality of internet access may become increasingly regulated in the future as the current PCR is stabilized. One recent effort is a federal program called Lifeline, which was expanded in 2016 to

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<sup>751</sup> The 70-dollar per month services were also the only options offering 1000 Mbps upload speed as well. Danielle Kehl et al., "The Cost of Connectivity 2014," Open Technology Institute at New America, <https://www.newamerica.org/oti/the-cost-of-connectivity-2014/>.

<sup>752</sup> Ibid.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid.

<sup>754</sup> Aaron Smith, "U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015," (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2015).

<sup>755</sup> Ashley Feinberg, "The Price of 500mb of Mobile Data across the World," Gizmodo, <http://gizmodo.com/the-price-of-500mb-of-mobile-data-across-the-world-1442047579>.

offer a \$9.25 per month subsidy to pay for broadband for those in poverty.<sup>756</sup> Others include various public and private initiatives aiming to bring broadband to more rural communities, only 61 percent of which have broadband of reasonable quality available to them as of 2016.<sup>757</sup> How these costs, speeds, and access evolve, along with the ongoing policy debates about net neutrality could greatly impact the types of political communication activities that become standard, both from the political organizations that are trying to reach the masses, and individuals and citizen groups that are increasingly using DCTs to mobilize and affect their political and social surroundings.

### **The Rest of the Cycle: The Three Paths Ahead**

Ultimately the information political communication order will stabilize, likely over the next decade. As inconceivable as it might be that our current world filled with a never-ending new flow of ICTs, mobile devices, apps, sites, and web-based platforms will stabilize, it will, at least as far as political communication goes. Turbulent periods of change have existed before and they will happen again, but they always stabilize. The big question is what political communication will look like in America when the information PCO is fully stabilized and the current PCC completes its cycle? Based on where we are in the PCC today, the lessons learned from the stabilization of the radio industry, and the key factors affecting online political communication today, there are three paths that this stabilization will likely take.

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<sup>756</sup> Recent audits of this Lifeline found that around a third of those receiving the subsidy may have been ineligible and its future is being debated in the FCC.

<sup>757</sup> Joshua Johnson, "Why the Internet Fast Lane Has Bypassed Rural America," in *AI* (Washington D.C.: National Public Radio and WAMU, 2017).

The first path stabilizes online political communication by securing an open internet through strong net neutrality regulations that are enforced by the FCC and supported by the courts. Based on the United States Court of Appeals ruling in January, 2014 and the FCC's actions under the leadership of Chairman Wheeler this seemed all but impossible without a near complete reversal in course. Miraculously for net neutrality advocates, the reversal did come on the heels of an avalanche of public comments calling for web-based data and free speech online to be protected. While this is the path supported most strongly by the FCC reclassification of the internet in early 2015, and the clear defense in the U.S. Court of Appeals in 2016, it would need to include much more universal regulation and would likely need to extend to the cost structure of internet access to maximize the truly open nature of the internet for the majority of Americans. While this is a path that we have recently moved toward, it has multiple pitfalls in its way. Net neutrality and universal access are lower priorities of the current FCC under the leadership of Pai and other Trump appointments. In addition, a well funded array of ISPs and industry leaders will continue to push for their interests through lobbying and the courts it as long as possible.

A second path would be complete deregulation of the industry, establishing a laissez-faire governmental position supported by opponents of net neutrality, leaving the free market to regulate the services and competition of the industry. This would likely result from regulatory policy written with the clear goal of supporting industry leaders just as it occurred with the radio. The deregulation of the radio and television industries led to less competition and more consolidation. The result for the internet, with its fundamentally different structure and organization, would be less innovation. Startups would have an increasingly difficult time competing with established content providers. There would be greater incentive for content

providers and ISPs to merge, leading to less competition and increasing dominance by current leaders like Facebook, Netflix, Google, and Amazon, and ISPs like Comcast. It remains to be seen what the outcome of current and future proposed mergers will be. However the recent actions of the FCC opposing the proposed Comcast-Time Warner merger until Comcast withdrew, and the stamp of approval given to the AT&T-DirecTV merger shows that they are intent on maintaining some level of regulations over the industry, though in a less than complete and consistent state.

The third, and most likely, path would be a route between these two extremes, and a continuation of what has recently begun: a regulatory middle ground in which transparency is increased, and net neutrality is protected in a piecemeal fashion. The fact that the net neutrality protections applied by the FCC are based on a reclassification of the internet as a common carrier, but only in an a la carte fashion suggests this is likely where our regulations will settle. While this approach is greatly preferable to a completely unregulated internet, it would likely be the beginning of the end of the internet as we know it. There is one World Wide Web, one growing, and seemingly limitless digital marketplace of ideas. Allowing companies to limit or control how we access, shape, and share that information in any way would be detrimental to our understanding of the world, the future of the press, and to our democracy.

The amazing opportunity we have today is the recognition that the current revolution has not yet been stabilized, yet there are very few paying attention. With a lack of oversight in the 1920s and 1930s, the core broadcast regulations were written by the radio networks, which pushed out smaller private radio stations in order to create clear channels dominated by industry leaders. If more individuals and organizations do not start to actively champion net neutrality, open internet regulation, and affordable, high-speed broadband, then a similar course could be

set for the internet. However the increasing role and influence of the public in using the political power of the internet to shape its regulatory course with the recent FCC decision is unquestionably exciting for those who have argued for the increasing democratization of political communication power because of the internet. The internet is currently open. The window is closing to keep it that way.

These three paths outline possible stabilizing regulatory systems that will help establish the new status quo of political communications, however they don't describe the political communications themselves. Stabilized political communication activities are the norms shaped by the political actors themselves and the companies that create the tools that are increasingly defining web-based communications. While I would never pretend to be able to predict the future, there is little doubt that communication socially and politically is becoming increasingly mobile and that access is becoming more and more universal. As mentioned earlier, younger, poorer, and non-white populations in the U.S. are increasingly using smartphones as their preferred, and often only, way to access the internet, a trend that has profound effects on political communication. As mobile broadband becomes more and more standard it will continue to decentralize power and offer new ways to share ideas, organize, reach people, thus lowering the barrier to influence that was once limited to those with access to the source of broadcast or print production. However at the same time it also might limit some of the flexibility upon which the internet has been built. As more of our political information is packaged through social media, or apps designed for smartphones, we will increasingly view our political world through highly filtered lenses. It will take increasing vigilance for individuals to break free from these limitations in order to maximize political communication freedoms in the future.

Without question traditional political actors, including campaigns, social movements, interest groups, governments of all levels, and elite individual political actors will continually use those tools that allow for the greatest reach with the least cost and risk. Those tools that are mundane will be the ones that are talked about less but will likely hold the largest impact in terms of becoming the new norm and reaching the most people. Facebook, for instance, may become nearly as ubiquitous as email. Regardless of whether that occurs, it has been selected by the masses, it has been proven to work for the political elites, and it's locked in. The political actors will decide what works best and they will set the terms of the new norms controlled and limited by the regulations set forth by the FCC and other political bodies.

### **What This Book Did, and What it Didn't Do**

In the opening chapter there is a section entitled "What this book is, and what it isn't," that laid out the arguments for why a historical approach to analyzing political communication change is necessary and why the political communication cycle is useful. I would like to offer some qualifications that can help readers understand how this book and the political communication cycle can be most useful along with offering suggestions about what types of related research might be useful in the future.

Two of the most common criticisms of the political communication cycle have to do with a perceived lack of consistency in technology. In one case, many have asked how could the newspaper, already in place dating back to the American colonies, be an instrumental force of disruptive change in the 1830s and 1840s? And, if so, then how could television, the most popular communication technology dating back to the 1950s, which caused countless social and informational changes in our lives, not be a PCR in and of itself? Good questions, indeed.

My hope is that this book provides a reasonably satisfying answer that once the entire process of change is accounted for, the relationship between the sources and audiences of political messages and the form that those messages took changed *the most*, and *the most dramatically* during the PCRs detailed in the book. The form of change didn't occur because a new ICT emerged, changes happened because political actors were able to use new tools to achieve long standing political communication goals in ways never before possible and redefine the norm of political communication.

In the first case, the cost of printing and selling newspapers plummeted as the political audience skyrocketed. The newspaper was obviously not new but what it meant for political organizations and the American public was radically different from anything before. In the second case, television was a new piece of technology and while I would never suggest that the television was anything less than monumental in the course of political communication, it was used by political organizations, politicians, and the public in much the same way as the radio. In other words, within the PCC, it became the dominant medium but did not completely redefine the role of influential political personalities, the speed of communication, or the role of the largely passive political audience.

Related to the inherent complexity involved in trying to cover so much technological, behavioral, and political history in one place, this book is necessarily stylized and general. This book leaves out major events and people. It glosses over some historical periods and instead focuses mainly on the political communication revolutions in history. This book paints with broad strokes and it misses many trees in order to include the historical forest that I believe has been largely absent in scholarship about political communication and ICTs and politics for some time.

Readers may wonder about whether a particular choice by a campaign, or technological breakthrough fits into the PCC as I have suggested. All of these questions are legitimate and it is because of these questions that I have continued to believe in the strong value of this book. I do not envision this book as the end of the discussion about the process of political communication change. In fact I hope that ongoing scholarship will incorporate the PCC and the historical narratives included in this book as context for their work. Additionally I hope others build upon what was started here by adding more depth to what is, as of now, a book focused on breadth.

Finally, this book is based on the U.S. political context and history. As such, it is guilty of using blinders to focus only on the U.S. while political communication is increasingly evolving as any area of study without borders. I believe that the PCC as a concept can be applied around the world, and I hope future scholarship will test its utility in global contexts in order to provide a more holistic theory moving forward. Through this work scholars may find new abilities to contextualize international and comparative political communication scholarship into a historical and political framework that is useful for all.

## **Looking Forward**

Presenting a model of how political communication has changed across American political history is admittedly bold, and some might say reckless. This book attempts to add historical context and clarity to a political communication reality that seems to many to be in a constant state of change. For scholars, many of whom are conducting wonderful research on particular areas of political communication today, I hope this book offers vocabulary and a theoretical model that can be used to connect related research to one another and to history. I also hope that this book makes a convincing argument that technology matters, but it doesn't affect



political communication in isolation. The behavioral process of change, here labeled political choice, is much more important in determining if, when, and how new technological tools are incorporated into political communication. And all of these choices are based on characteristics of the political organization, including their goals, and the perceived capabilities of the new ICTs available. Finally, this book tried to use varied case studies of political communication innovation to show that the different types of political organizations travel through the political communication cycle in different ways. But that differences are not random, and are in fact, very reasonable once the unique characteristics of the organization, its goals, and the new ICT options are taken into account.

My hope is that readers of this book will think about recent changes in how they access, process, and create political communication, and realize that this process is not new. The political communication cycle continues. Political communication activities will continue to move forward in revolutionary periods of dramatic change triggered by new ICTs and determined by the political choices of political actors trying to achieve their political communication goals. Those goals have rarely budged over the course of American political history, while the political communication activities have changed in remarkable ways. Moving forward, thanks to the increasing interactivity inherent in the current PCR, the public will be able to steer a little bit more than ever before instead of just holding on during the remarkably wild ride. Our current period of change is becoming increasingly stable, and although we don't know exactly when and how the order of political communication will be disrupted next, we should know that we have been through this process before.

## Acronyms

AARP – American Association of Retired People (Name changed to AARP in 1999)  
ABC – American Broadcasting Company  
ACLU – American Civil Liberties Union  
AERA – American Equal Rights Association  
AOL – America Online  
ANP – Associated Negro Press  
APD – American Political Development  
AWSA – American Woman Suffrage Association  
BLM – Black Lives Matter  
CBS – Columbia Broadcasting System  
CDA – Communications Decency Act  
CISPA – Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act  
CITE – Cellular Communications and Internet Association  
CWB – Connect with Bernie  
DCT – Digital Communication Technologies  
DNC – Democratic National Committee  
EPIC – End Poverty in California  
FCC – Federal Communication Commission  
FRC – Federal Radio Commission  
GOP – Grand Old Party (a nickname for the Republican Party)  
ICT – Information and Communication Technology  
ILA – Institute for Legislative Action  
ISP – Internet Service Provider  
MyBO – my.barackobama.com (Obama’s integrated 2008 campaign social media site)  
NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People  
NAWSA – National American Woman Suffrage Association  
NBC – National Broadcasting Company  
NRA – National Rifle Association  
NCTA – National Cable Television Association  
NWSA – National Woman Suffrage Association  
PCC – Political Communication Cycle  
PCO – Political Communication Order  
PCR – Political Communication Revolution  
PIPA – Protect IP Act  
RNC – Republican National Committee  
SCLC – Southern Christian Leadership Conference  
SOPA – Stop Online Privacy Act  
SNCC – Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee  
USBA – United States Brewers’ Association

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