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Getting the Message Out:

A two-step model of the role of the Internet in campaign communication flows

during the 2005 British General Election

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Abstract: To date the Internet has apparently had limited impact on changing 'politics as usual' in election campaigns. Parties often fail to make imaginative use of the medium, while relatively few people use it to acquire information about an election. However, while it may be the case that only political activists use the Internet to acquire information about an election, these activists may then disseminate that information more widely because they are particularly likely to talk about the election to their fellow citizens. We find evidence that such a two-step flow of information may well have occurred during the 2005 British election.

Key words: Internet/Election Campaigns/Two-Step Information Flows/

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Introduction

The literature on the role of the Internet in politics has flourished during the last decade. Much of it has concluded that, despite its considerable potential to transform democracy, the Internet has so far had only limited impact on 'politics as usual' among the mass electorate (see, for example, Resnick and Margolis 2000). Two reasons are often offered to support this observation. On the demand-side, few people usually use resources such as party and candidate websites, while the minority that do so often comprises those who are already amongst the most engaged. As a result, political websites often 'preach to the converted' rather than expand the pool of engaged citizens (Norris 2006). On the supply-side, party and candidate websites commonly replicate materials that are already published offline while the interactive potential of the new technologies is often neglected. Like 'Waiting for Godot', as the Internet has gone mainstream, succeeding elections have seen a revival of journalistic hype that new technologies will transform the campaign as we know it, only to be followed by another wave of academic scepticism as a result of empirical research about the actual role of the Internet.

One reason why the popular commentary may in fact be closer to the mark than the 'politics-as-usual' school suggests, is that the standard academic approach to measuring the impact of the Internet on the electorate is, while important, also limited. Studies have usually focused on assessing the direct impact of exposure or attention to campaign information on the cognitive beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour of the mass public. Typically they have compared the impact of a range of new communication and information technologies with that of more traditional channels of campaign communications such as television and newspapers (see, for example,

Davis and Owen 1998; Davis 1999; Hill and Hughes 1998; Bimber 1998; Kamarck and Nye 1999; Corrado 2000; Curtice and Norris 2004; Norris 2006). In short while they have carefully examined the direct or 'one-step' flow of information from the Internet, they have left aside the possibility of indirect or 'two-step' flows.

Yet the possible importance of two-step information flows has long been recognized. This idea first emerged in Lazarsfeld et al's (1944) pioneering study of the effects of mass communication in the US Presidential election of 1940, and it was then subsequently developed in Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) This approach emphasizes that certain types of communications can be expected to have their greatest impact upon 'opinion leaders', such as local candidates and active partisans, who are most attentive to political information sources during election campaigns. In turn, however, opinion leaders are most likely to engage in interpersonal political discussion and persuasion with friends, neighbors and colleagues. Katz and Lazarsfeld's influential account has generated an extensive literature over the years (Weimann and Brosius 1994; Shah and Scheufele 2006). Even a half century later, it has recently spawned studies of opinion leaders in the process of agenda-setting (Brosius and Weimann 1996) and in the formation of social capital (Burt 1999), together with an examination of the role of the Internet and physicians in the two-step transmission of specialized medical knowledge (Case et al 2004; Jones, Denham, and Springston 2006). Interest in the interaction between information derived from the mass media and that disseminated via interpersonal discussion has also been revived by recent accounts of deliberative democracy and by new work that re-examines the role of local campaigns. From all this evidence it is apparent that if the Internet does facilitate two-step flows of information during election campaigns, then previous

studies may have underestimated the full impact of this medium on elections and politics.

This paper examines new evidence that the Internet may have instigated two-step communication flows in the general election held in Britain on May 5th 2005, *Part I* discusses the theoretical framework and core propositions that arise from the literature. *Part II* summarizes the research design and gives details of the data source. *Part III* analyzes the evidence of *one*-step communication flows from both digital and more traditional sources of information during the election. *Part IV* examines evidence for two-step information flows from those same sources. In particular, the Internet seems likely to have served this function if those British citizens who used the Internet to acquire information about the election are found to be more likely than average to engage in discussions about the election with others, whether in person or online. The conclusion in *Part V* summarizes the major findings and considers their implications for our understanding of the role of the Internet in election campaigns.

I: Theoretical Framework

According to the classic argument originally developed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), information channels can be expected to differ in whether they primarily influence communications via a 'one-step' or a 'two-step' process. Those that communicate primarily via a one-step process reach their audience directly. For example, political messages contained in mainstream broadcasting channels that reach a mass audience, the campaign coverage carried in the main evening news bulletins, and headlines about politics on the front page of a national daily newspaper, are all expected to reach the mass public directly. By contrast, information contained in more specialized outlets, such as messages issued by parties and candidates on websites or

statements made at local party rallies or on partisan email web-logs, can only be expected to reach a more limited niche audience consisting disproportionately of party supporters and campaign workers. If those activists in turn discuss the information they have derived from these sources with a wider general public, however, that information may then reach a larger audience via a two-step process. Messages percolate downwards from party managers through activists to the mass electorate.

There are two main reasons why one step processes may now be less common in contemporary British general election campaigns. First, the audience for evening television news has diminished thanks to an expansion in the number of television and radio channels as a result of deregulation and the spread of satellite, cable, digital, and video technologies (Norris et al 1999; Social Trends 2006, Table 13.2). People can easily 'tune out' of an election campaign if they wish. During the 1992 election campaign the main BBC1 news bulletins attracted total audiences of 14.6 million (reaching roughly one third of the electorate). By 2005, this had fallen to 9.6 million (reaching roughly one fifth of the electorate). The audiences for the main ITV bulletins over the same period fell even more dramatically, from 12.3 million to 7.1 million, a 42% decline (Bartle 2005).[1]

Second, the readership of national daily newspapers has plummeted. According to the British Social Attitudes survey, in 1983 just over three quarters of people regularly read a daily morning newspaper. By 2005 barely half did so (Curtice

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[1] BBC1 and ITV are the two main terrestrial television channels in the United Kingdom.

and Mair, 2008). Moreover, the decline has been sharpest amongst those with least interest in politics, and who thus are least likely to acquire political information from other sources. There is also some evidence that the national press has become less partisan in recent years, with the result that parties can no longer rely as much as they once did on particular newspapers to promulgate the messages the parties themselves are trying to promote (see, for example, Kavanagh and Butler 2005)

As a result of the growing difficulties of reaching their supporters through the traditional news media, as well as changes in campaign management and communication technologies, in recent years British parties have displayed a renewed emphasis on utilizing other channels of communications. Ever since the expansion of the franchise in the second half of the nineteenth century, local canvassing has always been one of the ways that parties and candidates have sought to identify potential supporters in order to get out the vote on polling day. This activity might be expected to have eroded with falling party membership, but recent British general elections have seen more centrally-organized but locally-focused telephone and doorstep canvassing in selected marginal target constituencies (Denver and Hands 2004). Moreover there is considerable evidence that local campaigning activity can have an impact (Denver and Hands, 2004; Whiteley and Seyd, 2003). In any event, whatever their role for Labour and the Conservatives, interpersonal discussion in local campaigns seems likely to be particularly important for third parties and for independent candidates – who have limited coverage in the news media - as well as in low-key local and by-elections.

These developments have been accompanied by the spread of new information and communication technologies, including access to the Internet and text messaging,

and a plethora of websites from parties, the news media, independent election blogs, and podcasts (Bromley 2004; Curtice and Norris 2004; Gibson and Ward 2000). New technologies are widely acknowledged to have the potential to transform traditional campaigns, mainly because they make it easier for ordinary citizens to acquire information and exchange opinion directly. By May 2005, more than half of all UK households (56%) had an Internet connection, up from roughly one third at the time of the 2001 general election. Meanwhile, the 2005 British Social Attitudes survey indicated that 60% of all adults used the Internet or World Wide Web for any reason other than their work. Moreover at least half of all UK households that have an internet connection are connected via broadband, thereby allowing faster downloads and richer multimedia experiences online than possible with older dial-up connections (Social Trends 2006 Table 13.3).

Nevertheless despite hopes that the spread of new technologies might generate new opportunities for parties to communicate with the public (and vice-versa), in fact most studies report that so far the Internet has not had much impact on British general election campaigns. There are two main reasons. First, campaign managers and candidates seem to have reacted fairly cautiously to the new technologies. Studies examining the contents of British party websites in a series of general and European elections have generally concluded that these represented 'politics as usual' rather than a radical break with traditional channels of party communications or the introduction of innovative new forms of interactive participation (Gibson, Margolis and Ward 1998; Yates and Perrone 1998; Gibson and Ward 2000; Gibson, Margolis and Resnick 2003; Lusoli and Ward 2005; Bartle 2005). Hence, during the 2005 election, as in 1997 and 2001, the major parties used their official websites mainly to

distribute their manifestos, press releases, and leaflets, along with some supplementary information. Moreover, irrespective of what parties do, on the demand-side, studies of previous election campaigns have concluded that few use the Internet as a major source of political information. In the 2004 European elections, for example, Lusoli and Ward (2005) report that only 7% of the British electorate used the Internet to acquire electoral information. A small minority of political anoraks engage enthusiastically in political blogs and chat-rooms, and so far the Internet is not widely used by the broader electorate to follow election campaigns. It has thus not proved to be a mechanism for reaching out to the public via a one step process.

Yet evidence of the direct use of the Internet may underestimate its full role in election campaigns. If party websites and related online resources reach opinion leaders and if, in turn, opinion leaders are among those most keen on initiating discussions about politics with fellow citizens and on engaging in persuasion, then what appears on the Internet may reach the wider public via a two step process. Indeed with the decline of newspaper readership and in the audience for television news, the importance of such processes may well be well more important in election campaigns.

These observations suggest three important questions that should be asked about the role of the Internet in the 2005 British general election. First, what was the direct (one-step) reach of the internet and how does it compare with more traditional channels of campaign communication, such as party election broadcasts or campaign leaflets? Second, who used the Internet? Was the profile of those who did use the medium to find out about the election much the same as that of those who used more traditional sources? Or was the Internet used by different kinds of people? Finally, is

there evidence that those who accessed party websites were 'opinion leaders', more prone than average to discussing politics and trying to persuade others how to vote, thereby providing evidence of a possible two-step flow of information? We pursue each of these questions in turn.

Part II: Evidence and survey data

Our empirical evidence is drawn from a special battery of survey questions that ascertained people's use of different sources of information during the 2005 British general election, together with information about the extent to which they communicated with others about the election during the campaign. This battery formed part of a wider module of questions designed to examine the impact of the Internet on political engagement and social capital included on the 2005 British Social Attitudes survey.[2] This is an annual survey designed to yield a representative sample of adults (aged 18 and over) and is comparable to the General Social Survey in the United States (Park et al, 2007). The sampling method involved a multistage design based on post-code sectors, household addresses and individuals. The questionnaire was administered in the summer of 2005 following the election in May. Fieldwork was administered using face-to-face computer-assisted interviewing supplemented by

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[2] The dataset and documentation for the complete survey are deposited at the UK Data Archive at the University of Essex (study no. 5618) and is freely available to bona-fide researchers either directly or via similar national archives outside the UK. Full details of the key variables used in our analysis in this paper are provided in a technical appendix at the end of this paper.

a self-completion questionnaire that was completed by 83% of those responding to the main interview. Altogether the survey was administered in four versions to an achieved sample of 4,268 respondents, representing a response rate of 55%. Most of the questions analysed here appeared on three of those four versions, and thus to 3,167 respondents. Data were weighted to take account both of differential probability of selection (primarily those living in large households were less likely than those living in small ones to be selected for interview) and differential response rates.

Part III: One-step flows of campaign communications

Our first step in looking at the survey evidence is to examine how many and what kinds of people were directly exposed to messages on the Internet about the 2005 British election. If relatively few people were exposed, and those who were comprised much the same kinds of people as those who were more likely to be exposed to more traditional sources of information about the election, we are likely to conclude that the one step flow of communication via the web was limited. Moreover, this is what we would expect to find if the 2005 British election conforms to patterns found elsewhere.

[Table 1 about here]

The 2005 British Social Attitudes survey ascertained from its respondents how much they used a variety of different sources of information about that year's election (see the Technical Appendix for details of question wordings). Table 1 shows the proportion who reported using each source. As expected, traditional sources such as

television, newspapers and printed media predominate. Around half (47-56%) reported using at least one of these sources in the run up to the May 2005 general election. Despite being widely denigrated, party election broadcasts[3] still proved the most common activity of all (see also Worcester at al, 2005: 196), with following specific TV or radio programs or reading specific articles about the election only slightly further behind. The only traditional activity in which few engaged – just 2% - was attending a public meeting about the election, an activity that has been rare for some time (Worcester et al, 2005: 196). The use of digital sources was at least more popular than that - but not by much. Only 6% said that they looked at an official party website while the same proportion viewed a website other than a party one to find out something about the election. Meanwhile, in addition just half of one per cent said they read, let alone joined, in a blog about the election. Overall, over four in five (81%) said that they used at least one of the traditional ways of ascertaining information about an election included in Table 1. In contrast less than one in ten (9%) reported using one of the digital sources.

Much the same imbalance is evident when people were asked whether they were on the receiving end of attempts by a party or candidate to mobilise them. As many as 15% said they were contacted by a party or candidate either in person, by telephone or by letter. Only 1% reported that they received an e-mail from a party or

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[3] These are short broadcasts on the main television and radio channels on which the airtime is made available for free. The number of broadcasts to which each party is entitled is determined by an agreed formula. Paid political advertising on television and radio is outlawed in the United Kingdom.

candidate. Evidently not only did few voters use the web to acquire information about the election, but also parties and candidate did not make widespread use of the medium to try and make direct contact with the electorate.

[Table 2 about here]

But who did use the web to find out about the election? Was it typically much the same kind of person who is more likely to use a traditional source of information? Or did the web reach out to a different kind of constituency? If it was indeed much the same kind of person then we would anticipate from previous research on who watches television news and who reads a newspaper that use of the web to acquire political information will have been the preserve of the politically interested and committed, together with men, older people, those with higher levels of educational attainment and those in middle class occupations (Norris et al 1999). In Table 2 we use regression analysis to ascertain how far each of these characteristics is associated with use of traditional and digital sources of information.

The results show that the strongest predictors of use of traditional forms of campaign information are political interest (which provides the motivation to seek out these sources), educational qualifications (which furnish the cognitive skills that facilitate making sense of political information and participating in public affairs) and political commitment (as measured by strength of party identification and which also furnishes the necessary motivation). In addition, men were more likely than women to use these forms of information, as were older citizens, and to some degree those in middle class occupations. In other words so far as the use of traditional sources of information is concerned we have uncovered precisely the pattern we anticipated.

One thing, however, that does not predict use of traditional sources of information is whether or not someone uses the Internet (for any purpose other than for their work). This suggests it is not inevitable that those who use digital sources of information were the same kinds of people as those who used traditional sources. In practice, however, they do appear largely to have been very similar. So far as political interest, commitment, educational qualifications and gender are concerned, the social profile of those who used digital sources is much the same as that of those who used traditional sources. However, there is one clear exception. Younger people were more likely than older people to use digital sources. Moreover this pattern does not simply arise because of the well-known generational gap in the use of new forms of informational technology in general. Our model controls for use of the Internet in general and, in any event, we obtain much the same result if we confine our analysis to those with access to the web.

Nevertheless, it should be remembered that all that this means is that younger people were more likely than older people to use the web as a means of acquiring information about the election. It does not necessarily mean that digital sources of information were more important than traditional sources amongst younger people. Indeed amongst those aged under 35 as many as 52% read a party leaflet, 50% watched an election broadcast, 44% followed a specific television or radio programme, while 33% read newspaper articles. In contrast just 12% looked at an official party website, while only 10% looked at any other kind of website. Hopes that the web might prove to be a means of reversing the particularly sharp decliine in electoral participation that has occurred amongst younger people in recent British elections (Curtice, 2006) should not be raised too high.

Meanwhile we can see quite directly just how far it is the case that those who used digital sources of information in the election were much the same people as those who used traditional sources. No less than 90% of those who used a digital source also read a party leaflet, 84% watched an election broadcast, 82% followed a specific television or radio programme while 80% read newspaper articles. In other words even those who did use the Internet in the election used it in addition to a traditional source rather than instead of one. Even when information did reach someone directly via the Internet, it evidently only did so in competition with plenty of other sources of such information.

Part IV: Two-step flows

If our analysis were to stop at this stage, we would have to support the 'politics-as-usual' thesis that is sceptical about the capacity of the new information and communication technologies to transform the way in which general election campaigns are conducted. The evidence from the May 2005 contest suggests that traditional channels of political communication continue to reach far more citizens than party websites or party email campaigns. Moreover, with the notable exception of the ability of the Internet to reach younger citizens, those who use the internet tend to be the same kinds of people who use more traditional sources of political information.

But this conclusion would be premature if we can establish that two-step information flows might have occurred. In particular, this thesis would be supported if we found that the small minority who access party websites and online campaign news during the election appeared to be opinion leaders who were more likely than

average to discuss politics with others, either offline or online. As a result, messages from party websites might be disseminated via interpersonal discussions among friends, neighbours and colleagues.

To monitor the discussions about the election in which they might have engaged, respondents were asked whether they had discussed the election with friends or family, either or in person or on the phone, and whether they had tried to persuade someone else how to vote. They were also asked whether they had done these things online. No less than 46% said that they had discussed the election with friends and family in person or on the phone, though only 5% had tried to persuade someone to vote for a particular party or candidate. Meanwhile, just 7% used the Internet to discuss the election with family or friends (of whom 84% also did so in person or by phone), while only 1% said that they used the web to try and persuade somebody about how to vote. In any event those who did any one of these four things may well have conveyed to their fellow discussants information that they had gleaned from other sources, including not least the Internet.

[Table 3 about here]

Table 3 presents the results of a regression model of whether or not someone engaged in any one of these four activities. In so doing our principal aim is to establish whether those who used a digital source of information about the election were particularly likely to talk to others about the election, and thus may have been a conduit for a two-step flow of information. To establish this we first of all include in our model as controls, much the same set of indicators of someone's social background and degree of engagement in politics that we included in Table 2. At the

same time, we also include the number of traditional sources of information about the election that someone used. As we might expect the more such sources of information that someone used, the greater the likelihood that they talked to someone about the election. Indeed this relationship is the strongest of all in the model, and the pattern is just what we would expect to find if indeed a two-step flow of information from traditional sources occurred during the election campaign.

But even when we take this relationship between the use of traditional sources of information and communicating with others about the campaign into account, those who used a digital source of information were still yet more likely to have talked to others about the election – either online or offline. In other words, those who used the Internet to find out about the election were particularly talkative to others about the election, and thus could well have passed on to others who did not use the web information about the election that they themselves had acquired there. Clearly any two-step flow of information from digital sources of information occurred alongside a much bigger such flow from more traditional sources, but it appears that the reach of the internet during the 2005 election campaign was rather greater than appears to bne the case from simply looking at how many people used the internet for themselves to find out about the election.

V: Conclusions

Ever since the mid-1990s, when the first graphical browser became available and use of the World Wide Web started to popularize the Internet, there has been interest in whether new technologies are capable of altering patterns of electoral politics. As use of these technologies has gradually widened, successive elections and different types of contest have allowed the role of new technologies to be evaluated.

The predominant view in the body of literature to date is that there have indeed been some innovations in campaigning, exemplified by the rapid adoption of candidate websites for fund-raising in American elections, and the expansion of the blogosphere to rival traditional news journalism. Nevertheless, the use of the Internet as a mechanism to develop new participatory forms of interaction with parties and candidates, or to widen the circle of those who are politically active, has failed to meet early optimistic predictions.

This paper has sought to examine use of the Internet in the 2005 British general election to see whether this medium might instigate a two-step flow of information flow, initially from party managers to local online activists and then rippling out further, via personal discussions and persuasion, from online activists to the broader electorate. The evidence we have considered suggests that this process may well occur. Certainly those who use the new digital forms of information are more likely than average to talk to others at election time, and thus they may well disseminate what they have ascertained from the Internet to others.

At the same time, however, the Internet is far from unique in this respect. Use of more traditional sources of information also seems to be associated with a similar process. The Internet may have a rather bigger role to play in enabling parties and politicians to reach out to the wider public than it might appear to have at first sight. But at the moment at least it is also no more than one player in a crowded market.

Table 1 Information sources used during the 2005 British General

Election

	%
Watched a party election broadcast	56
Read a party or candidate leaflet	56
Watched/listened to TV/radio programme about election	51
Read newspaper articles about election	47
Looked at official party website	*6*
Looked at any other kind of website for election info	*6*
Attended an election meeting or event	2

Note: Digital activities are italicised; traditional activities are in normal type.

Source: British Social Attitudes survey 2005

Table 2 Logistic regression of use of traditional and digital sources of information

	Traditional Sources		Digital sources	
	Coefficient (St. Error)	Wald Statistic	Coefficient (St. Error)	Wald Statistic
Gender: Male	0.36 (.09)*	15.62	0.37 (.15)*	5.78
Age		22.66		51.33
18-24	-0.55 (.20)*		2.44 (.54)*	
25-34	-0.56 (.17)*		2.32 (.52)*	
35-44	-0.33 (.16)*		1.62 (.52)*	
45-54	0.00 (.16)		1.60 (.55)*	
55-64	-0.01 (.15)		0.86 (.55)*	
(65 plus)				
Highest Qualification		54.52		23.98
Degree	1.24 (.18)*		1.29 (.42)*	
Professional	0.74 (.17)*		1.09 (.43)*	
A Level	0.70 (.16)*		1.03 (.42)*	
GCSE A-C	0.61 (.15)*		0.26 (.44)	
GCSE D-G	0.14 (.18)		0.35 (.54)	
(None)				

ONS Socio-Economic Classification		9.13		3.00
Professional & Managerial	0.30 (.13)*		0.25 (.25)	
Intermediate	0.31 (.15)*		0.44 (.29)	
Small Employers	-0,05 (.18)		0.45 (.33)	
Supervisory	0.15 (.15)		0.27 (.29)	
(Semi-routine & routine)				
Strength of party id	0.39 (.06)*	41.98	0.30 (.10)*	8.57
Interest in politics	0.80 (.05)*	265.12	0.69 (.08)*	69.19
Use Internet	0.22 (.12)	3.49	2.32 (.46)*	25.28
Nagelkerke R^2	35%		33%	

N=2984

Note: In the case of traditional sources of information the dependent variable comprises those who used three or more of the traditional sources listed in table 1 vs. those who used two or less. The former group comprises 42% of

the sample. Much the same results are obtained if an ordinal regression is conducted of the original non-dichotomised variable (except that social class as measured by the ONS Socio-Economic Classification becomes not significant). In the case of digital sources of information the dependent variable is whether respondent engaged in such activities or not. Similar results are obtained if the analysis is confined to those who are Internet users. For details of the ONS Socio-economic classification see Office for National Statistics (2005). 'A' Level is an examination usually taken at age 18 and is the principal qualification for university entrance. The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is a less advanced examination usually taken at age 16.

Source: British Social Attitudes survey 2005

Table 3 Logistic Regression of communicating with others during election campaign

	Coefficient (St. Error)	Wald Statistic
Gender: Male	-0.23 (.10)*	5.74
Age		55.04
18-24	0.93 (.20)*	
25-34	1.11 (.17)*	
35-44	0.96 (.16)*	
45-54	0.89 (.16)	
55-64	0.51 (.16)	
(65 plus)		
Highest Qualification		34.35
Degree	0.63 (.18)*	
Professional	0.42 (.17)*	
A Level	0.81 (.16)*	
GCSE A-C	0.20 (.15)*	
GCSE D-G	-0.20 (.18)	
(None)		

ONS Socio-Economic Classification		3.08
Professional & Managerial	0.21 (.13)	
Intermediate	0.30 (.16)	
Small Employers	0.26 (.98)	
Supervisory	0.14 (.15)	
(Semi-routine & routine)		
Strength of party id	0.19 (.06)*	8.99
Interest in politics	0.43 (.05)*	68.38
Traditional information sources	0.58 (.04)*	224.24
Digital information source	1.57 (.26)*	36.16
Nagelkerke R^2	42%	
N=2984		

Dependent variable is whether the respondent communicated with

family/friends about the election (either in person, on the phone, or via the

Internet) versus not doing so. Similar results are obtained if the dependent

variable is just those who spoke to someone about the election in person or

on the phone (versus not doing so). The variable, 'traditional information

sources' refers to the total number of such sources (as listed in Table 1) that

someone used. The results are robust if this variable is instead either

dichotomised or treated as a categorical variable. 'Digital information source'

refers to whether the respondent accessed any kind of website about the

election or not.

Source: British Social Attitudes survey 2005

Technical Appendix

The following table gives details of those questions that were asked in the 2005 British Social Attitudes survey to ascertain people's use of traditional and digital sources of information and communication.

TRADITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION	
During the campaign in the run up to the general election on May the 5th, did you do any of the things listed on this card? *PROBE: Which others?* CODE ALL THAT APPLY Multicoded (Maximum of 10 codes)	Variable name in dataset
1.Read a leaflet or other printed material produced by a party or candidate	[GECmLeaf]
2.Watched a Party Election Broadcast or film produced by a party or candidate	[GECmPEB]
3.Contacted someone from a political party or a candidate in person, by phone, or by letter	[GECmCont]
4.Watched a TV programme or listened to a radio show specifically about the election	[GECmTVPr]
5.Read articles in a newspaper specifically about the election	[GECmNPap]
6.NOT USED IN THIS PAPER	
7.Attended a public meeting or event about the election	[GECmMeet]
8.Was contacted by someone from a party or candidate in person or by phone	[GECmWCon]
9.Discussed the election with friends or family in person or by phone	[GECmDisc]
10.Tried to persuade someone else to vote for a particular party or candidate by phone	[GECmPers]
DIGITAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION	
Still thinking about the general election campaign, did you do any of the things listed on this card? PROBE: Any others? CODE ALL THAT APPLY Multicoded (Maximum of 8 codes)	

1.Looked at the official website of a political party or candidate	*[GECWPWeb]*
2.Read or joined in a weblog ("blog") about the election	*[GECWBlog]*
3. Looked at any other kind of website for information about the election	*[GECWOWeb]*
4.NOT USED IN THIS PAPER	
5.Was emailed by a political party or a candidate	*[GECWWEMl]*
6.Emailed a newspaper, television or radio programme about the election	*[GECWNPap]*
7.Discussed the election with friends or family via the internet or email	*[GECWPers]*
8.Tried to persuade someone else to vote for a particular party or candidate via email or the internet	*[GECWPers]*

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