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Political Communication

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1. Introduction

The general area of political communication cuts across almost all of communication study. The very name of the subject area gives a sense of what it encompasses, but with something so broad, definition poses a challenge. In her introduction to an important handbook on the subject Kaid (2004a) acknowledges many definitions but concludes “Perhaps the best is the simplest: Chaffee’s (1975) suggestion that political communication is the ‘role of communication in the political process’ (p. 15)” (Kaid, 2004b, p. xiii). Graber and Smith (2005) offer an expanded sense of the area:

The field of political communication . . . encompasses the construction, sending, receiving, and processing of messages that potentially have a significant direct or indirect impact on politics. The message senders or message receivers may be politicians, journalists, members of interest groups, or private, unorganized citizens. “The key element is that the message has a significant political effect on the thinking, beliefs, and behaviors of individuals, groups, institutions, and whole societies and the environments in which they exist” (Graber, 1993, p. 305). There are many other definitions, of course, but all encompass the same essential elements. (p. 479).

These definitions come from two examinations of political communication. The contributors to the handbook edited by Kaid (2004a) look back, reporting on the state of political communication in the early 21st century while Graber and Smith (2005) look forward, to where political communication study might go.

Both views acknowledge history. Graber and Smith call attention to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric and Politics*, dating from the fourth century BCE as a starting point (2005, p. 479); for Aristotle, the purposes of the art of rhetoric included deliberative and persuasive discourse to guide decision making in the body politic. According to Rogers (2004), in his essay in Kaid (2004a), the history of political communication study begins more recently, after World War I with Lippmann’s *Public Opinion* (1922) and Lasswell’s

propaganda studies (1927). Also writing in Kaid’s handbook, Sanders (2004) looks at academic starting points: “the creation in 1973 of the Political Communication Division within the International Communication Association”; “the teaching of courses, beginning in about 1968, and the development of graduate programs”; and “the publication of the first *Handbook of Political Communication* (Nimmo & Sanders, 1981), one of the earliest efforts to provide some synthesis and give some structure to this ‘pluralistic’ undertaking” (p. xi). Sanders highlights one key aspect of any attempt to study political communication: determining just what its study entails.

Political communication forms an enormously complex field. Interdisciplinary from its start in political science and in communication, it has grown more so in the decades since Nimmo and Sanders described its outlines. Some key theoretical areas, such as media effects or agenda setting, could well deserve separate reviews given the amount of research devoted to them. However, seeing the kinds of things studied in political communication does allow a person to get a better sense of its definition and its place within communication study. Kaid (2004a) organizes her handbook into six broad areas: theories and approaches (marketing, research, key words); political messages (rhetoric, advertising, debates); news coverage of politics (campaign coverage, agenda setting, gatekeeping, presidential coverage); political communication and public opinion (the spiral of silence, information processing, democratic engagement, gender differences); political communication from an international perspective (Europe, Asia); and new trends (pp. xiv–xviii). Graber and Smith (2005) begin with a content analysis of four years of political communication publications and organize their view of the field into four categories. “Well-covered topics” include election campaigns, new media, civic engagement, international relations, information processing, public opinion, campaign advertising, framing, agenda setting, and similar things (p. 482). “Political communication theories” count the-

ories from communication, political science, and psychology: information processing theories, media impact theories, and subjective theories based on interpretist or deconstructionist approaches (pp. 487–490). “Research methods” encompass content analysis, public opinion polls, surveys, focus groups, experiments, and various data analysis techniques (pp. 491–494). Finally, “future directions” move out from these to key topics like policy formation, information campaigns, global differences in politics, and political socialization (pp. 495ff).

The last five years has seen increasing activity in political communication research. Publishers have issued a number of books, among them a notable series on political communication in European context. A search of just two databases (Ebsco Communication and Mass Media Complete and Ebsco Political Science

Complete) yields almost 2,500 entries from 2008 to the present. Based on these but focused mostly on the last two years, this review attempts a general introduction to political communication, highlighting recent work on 10 areas: introductions and overviews; theory; key areas of study; reaching the voters; voters and their sources of information; network and interpersonal studies; new media and the Internet; political communication outside the U.S.; research methods; and new directions. This review seeks to introduce political communication by showing the kinds of studies currently published. Of necessity not complete, it does not list every study nor does it include every possible approach to political communication, but only those published in the sample of journals—one hopes enough to indicate the scope of this wide area of communication study.

2. Introductory and Overview Works

A. Textbooks

Because political communication study features in so many undergraduate courses, publishers continually update or release textbooks or compendia to introduce the subject.

McNair (2011) develops an approach to political communication that balances the communication between the media and their sources, examining both in the context of contemporary democratic government. Updated regularly, this text looks to both the development of communication messages and their impact, drawing on examples mostly from the UK.

Also addressing students, Wolfsfeld (2011) proposes “five basic principles . . . concerning politics and the news media” as a framework for understanding the larger processes of political communication (p. 1). The principles include “political power can usually be translated into power over the news media” (p. 2); “when the authorities lose control over the political environment, they also lose control over the news” (p. 3); “there is no such thing as objective journalism” (p. 4); “the media are dedicated more than anything else to telling a good story and this can often have a major impact on the political process” (p. 4); and “the most important effects of the news media on citizens tend to be unintentional and unnoticed” (p. 5). Each principle

anchors a reading of the research, in an overall approach to media effects in the political realm.

Foster (2010) offers a general introduction to political communication study in the UK and the U.S. with a brief history of political party communication and a discussion of contemporary communication strategies, looking to how the campaign strategies have changed in the contemporary world. The book then takes up specific topics in political communication, loosely grouped around competing interests of the political party—political advertising, media management (“spin doctors”), government communication—and the news media—media power, media effects, media bias. The final chapters offer a different frame to this struggle for influence, that of the control of the media through government media policy, either in terms of ownership or regulation of content.

Davis (2010) frames an introduction to political communication in terms of social theory, introducing theories of democracy, comparative politics, media sociology, and popular culture. Within this approach he treats the typical topics for political communication from campaigning to marketing to media influence to policy making; he includes the role of new media, particularly as they might relate to direct democracy. Focused on the UK, the book draws on interviews with both politicians and journalists to develop its points.

The Semetko and Scammell handbook (2012) provides an up-to-date survey of the main trends in political communication, focused on the impact of “continuous connectivity.” Each of its five parts highlights a key area: macro-level influences, social networks, methodologies for study, power, and international or comparative approaches to political communication. Chapters in the first part explore the political impact of entertainment media, blogging, political organizations and online campaigns, popular culture, government communication, and ways to evaluate political communication studies. The second part specifically examines digital media: their impact on citizenship, on youth engagement in politics, civic knowledge, women’s participation, the impact of negative campaigning, and more traditional social networks such as those fostered by public service broadcasters. The section on methodology

B. Overarching theory and directions

As the study of political communication advances, scholars have reflected on the state of the study, particularly when faced with new political events. The “Arab Spring” uprisings of 2011 provided one such occasion as does the rise of new communication technologies. Moy, Bimber, Rojecki, Xenos, and Iyengar (2012) comment on the change of politics from a broadcast (one-to-many) model to a network model. This latter model re-imagines the audience “as only one in a hierarchy that includes specialized content providers and audiences across a range of sizes, specialized ‘lifestyle’ interests, and partisan preferences” (p. 248). Besides this, they identify other key changes in political communication:

- moving beyond the U.S.–non-U.S. divide (p. 248),
- expanding the boundaries of citizenship (p. 249), and
- new methodologies of study (p. 250)

In looking forward, they call for more sustained theoretical development: “the paucity of theory in the field is an ongoing concern for those who are critical of studies that prize data analysis over theoretical insight” (p. 252). Their hope lies in the development of both explanatory and predictive models.

Moy, Mazzoleni, and Rojas (2012) note two different approaches to political communication: examining it as a phenomenon (that is, people engaged in the political process or producing political materials) or examining it as an academic discipline. Moy and her colleagues call attention to the fact that the political phenomenon approach often takes the U.S. political

system (the electoral system, presidential leadership, the news media as watchdog, the entertainment media) as a default (p. 242), though other countries may follow parliamentary systems and party systems with a different role for the press. Similarly, the study of political communication has tended to follow a U.S. lead. Their extended comment helps to explain why:

Insightful contributions of American scholars have been widely replicated abroad, such as those related to agenda-setting, framing, and priming effects, to mention a few. One can speculate that the international “success” of these phenomena—as measured by their prevalence of study outside the United States—might be due to their emphasis on content and effects rather than on production. Agenda-setting, at its heart concerned with the quantity of media coverage of an issue, focuses on the perceived importance of that issue as a consequence of that coverage. Though there is a growing body of scholarship related to the entities that shape the media’s agenda, agenda-setting effects are independent of the type of political system under which the media operate. Similarly, studies of priming, often deemed extensions of agenda-setting, investigate the processes by which individuals make evaluations or judgments. Researchers who study priming are not explicitly interested in the larger institutional context in which the message was constructed. And while framing as an area of inquiry encompasses the construction and effects of specific media content, the latter emphasizes individual-level processes that make one more or less receptive to adopting the views presented in the media. (p. 243).

Moy, Mazzoleni, and Rojas also note that the study of political communication in the U.S. tends to emphasize data and quantitative methods where political communication study in other countries has seen more theoretical concerns and critiques (p. 244). This situation, they suggest, has changed somewhat with the events of the last few years.

C. Literature reviews

In addition to general introductions to political communication, some authors include literature reviews to specific areas of study.

Visual image. Depending as it does on visual media like television and video, political communication gravitates towards visual symbols, not only in political advertising but also in campaigning, with some candidates, for example, carefully managing even the back-

grounds of photo opportunities. Schill (2012) explores how visual symbols work in politics. More importantly, he provides a comprehensive literature review of the area, with a bibliography running to eight printed pages. Offering a theoretical overview as well, he reviews data on how candidates use visuals, particularly through what he terms the “image bite” in a concept parallel to the sound bite (pp. 120–122). The bulk of his review examines political visual communication under 10 headings or functions: the image as an argument function; the agenda-setting function; the dramatization function; the emotional function; the image-building function; the identification function; the documentation function; the societal symbol function; the transportation function (that is, transporting the audience to a different time or place); and the ambiguity function. He concludes, “While research in each of the functions is necessary, scholars should expand our understanding of visuals by focusing on four areas (1) how visual symbols are constructed, (2) how visual symbols operate rhetorically, (3) how visual symbols are received by audiences, and (4) the normative implications of visual symbols in politics” (pp. 133–134).

Faced with an increasingly visual communication environment, particularly in the political realm, Frosh (2011) asks two key questions:

- “What does the conceptual indebtedness to visual metaphors portend for the study of communication?”
- “What can be learned about the metaphoricality of concepts, and their impact upon analytical discourse, from the use of images and visual tropes in communication studies?” (p. 91)

Using the metaphors of pictures and frames, Frosh explores “whether reliance on key visual metaphors tends systematically to encourage certain kinds of thinking about communication—and the kinds

of power relationships that communication seemingly entails—while discouraging others” (p. 91).

Dress, gender. In an application of the visual, Flicker (2013) considers the difficult situation that women in politics face due to the “global visual political communication in [the] media.” If women “perform and dress along feminine patterns, they might be looked as deficient actors in the hard field of politics. When they refuse typical female looks and submit to male dress code, their performance is commented as conspicuous.” Flicker considers that this “visualized lose-lose situation for female politicians is conceived as symbolical violence” (p. 201) and proposes a visual discourse analysis that includes cultural practice and “macrostructural principles of the gender order” to better understand the “fashion practices marking the fields of masculinity and power” (p. 201).

A study of political communication in Germany suggests a refinement of the visual assumptions of candidate portrayals. This study examines the channels of communication—not the media channels, but the personal channels of perception. Nagel, Maurer, and Reinemann (2012) “investigate the role of verbal, visual, and vocal communication in the process of political impression formation” (p. 833). Despite a commonly accepted view that non-verbal communication carries great weight, little experimental evidence supports it because it remains largely untested. Using a combination of “a second-by-second content analysis of 17 verbal, visual, and vocal message elements . . . [and] a second-by-second analysis of viewers’ immediate impressions using continuous response measurement” the study discovered that “viewers’ immediate impressions are mainly influenced by verbal communication, especially the issues discussed and the argumentative structure used” (p. 833). In debates, at least, the verbal matters more than the visual.

3. Theory

A. Political philosophy

Some political communication study begins with questioning or restating what may seem obvious in order to lay bare assumptions and to clarify key concepts. Turska-Kawa and Wojtasik (2013) set out “to describe one of the basic functions of the elections, executed at both normative and empirical levels—the

communication function, in the context of changes in the structure of Western societies, changes in methods and strategies of political communication, and evolution of forms of electoral participation” (p. 36). They see communication as a means for the various political actors to interact, with the subsequent “character transformation” and “changes in the political sphere.”

Similarly, Henn, Dohle, and Vowe (2013) aim to examine “political communication” as a term or concept. Using “prototype semantics,” they seek “to work out what the core of the understanding of this concept is within the scientific community, and what [is at] the margin.” After working with a factorial survey of a modest sample of lecturers and students, they found that “at the heart of the understanding of the concept are communication participants deeply involved in the political system in a context of mass media communication” (p. 367).

B. Deliberation

How does the communication of candidates influence or inform voters? Two models theorize this in terms either of deliberation—a process that seeks “to enable participants to arrive at a decision that is consequential for some kind of governing process”—or of dialogue or issue convergence where two candidates focus on or debate the merits of the same issues (Lipsitz, 2013, pp. 843–844). The theoretical model builds on “the general argument . . . that issue convergence will promote more thoughtful, considered opinions in voters” (p. 844). Lipsitz challenges this received wisdom: “Using a lagged weekly measure of issue convergence in political advertising about specific campaign issues from the 2000 and 2004 presidential campaigns, I show that dialogue, as it is currently defined by campaigns and elections scholars, is as likely to harm voters as it is to help them” (p. 843). In other words, the data analysis shows “that issue convergence can boost knowledge, but it finds more evidence that it confuses voters” (p. 848). Minozzi (2014) argues that the basic models do not capture the complexity of what happens in issue convergence. Other factors also affect the impact of issues on voters: which candidate “owns” or has an advantage on a given issue, the salience of the issue to the voters, the advantage a candidate can have

with an issue, the interaction of different candidates with issues. To tease out the competing variables, Minozzi (2014) “develops a theory of conditional convergence, in which a race’s competitiveness and the salience of an issue combine to alter whether candidates campaign on issues that they do not own” (p. 73). Testing the model on several elections to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, he found the need to account for a the candidates’ issue “ownership’s dynamic interaction with salience [to voters] and competitiveness [of the campaign]” (p. 73). The model recognizes that candidates change their strategies as campaigns progress and as information about voter interest emerges.

Ordinary citizens also face a challenge from the digital methods used in political campaigns. Bessant (2014) argues that such methods have changed the public sphere and that this change in turn has affected the inquiry into political communication. She urges the case for “framing this inquiry in terms of imaginaries.” Such an imaginary would identify the requirements for “deliberative democratic practice in a way that shifts us away from the dominant liberal-utilitarian political imaginary that currently informs the political value systems of most Western nations” (p. 33). Working from the philosophical political theories of Habermas and Dahlgren, she proposes a series of propositions useful in studying public deliberation, particularly that occurring in the spaces created by digital media.

Stepping back from the day-to-day political communication practices, Holba (2010) considers the role of leisure in the process. “Leisure helps to cultivate communication competence for one’s participation in any form of political engagement” (p. 20). Arguing from classic texts in politics (from Aristotle, Cicero, and John of Salisbury), she urges more attention to how leisure contributes to politics and the public sphere.

4. Key Areas of Study

With such a long history within communication study, political communication has developed a relationship with other communication or media studies areas and theoretical approaches. These include persuasion, political and product advertising, framing, agenda-setting, media effects, influence, and so on. Many political communication scholars still work with

these areas, continually refining their understanding of the processes involved.

A. Agenda setting

Agenda setting research has formed an important part of political communication study since McCombs and Shaw (1972) proposed the theoretical model for it,

by examining mass media and campaigns. In defining the theoretical concept, McCombs and Shaw (1977) claim that it historically extends beyond their initial 1971 approaches. “The general notion of agenda-setting—the ability of the media to influence the salience of events in the public mind—has been part of our political culture for at least half a century” (p. 5), dating at least to Lippmann (1922). The concept has led to over 40 years of research and ever more refined measurements.

Writing from Mexico, Dorantes y Aguilar (2014) offers what he terms an “intellectual history” of agenda-setting in modern democracy as it sheds “light on the relationship between the media, public opinion, politics and by extension, electoral processes and campaigns.” He views agenda setting as active on two levels—“the agenda of topics and the agenda of attributes”—and argues that the agenda of electoral campaigns depends “on media and public agendas, whose content and dynamics are both interrelated and inscribed into the cultural, political and social context wherein it embodies” (p. 143).

Ragas and Kiouisis (2010) apply agenda setting to online media. They “tested for intermedia agenda-setting effects among explicitly partisan news media coverage and political activist group, citizen activist, and official campaign advertisements on YouTube,” during the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, specifically in terms of the “‘Obama in 30 Seconds’ online ad contest.” Results showed “evidence of first- and second-level agenda-setting relationships. Partial correlations revealed that the citizen activist issue agenda, as articulated in the contest ads, was most strongly related to the partisan media coverage, rather than to the issue priorities of the official Obama or MoveOn.org ads on YouTube” (p. 560). Lancendorfer and Lee (2010) studied a different kind of agenda-setting in which the candidates set the agenda through press releases and statements (“agenda-building”) in a Michigan gubernatorial election. Through content analysis of the statements and subsequent press coverage, they found “positive cross-lagged correlations between candidate and media issue agendas at certain times of the campaign.” They also noted “a reciprocal effect, indicating that candidates also run the risk of being influenced by the same media they are attempting to influence” (p. 186). Studies like these highlight the complex communication interactions between candidates, the press, and the voters.

The communication practices, or even aims, of the public, journalists, and political parties do not always

align. Gaber (2013) investigates such situations in the UK general elections of the past 20 years. Examining news and news agendas, he notes “the extent to which, with the exception of generalized debate about the state of the economy, there was an almost total absence of policy discussion by the parties and the media during the 2010 campaign.” He attributes this to “the impact of the first-ever leaders’ televised debates, ideological convergence between the parties, and the fact that the two issues of greatest concern to the public—government spending cuts and immigration—were issues that the parties felt were ‘too hot to handle’” (p. 211). The study raises interesting questions about the information available to voters and the options for information gathering open to the public.

As a complement to agenda-setting studies of how media sources might influence voter knowledge, other studies seek to understand how audiences or voters process those potential influences. Jung, Kim, and de Zuniga (2011) propose and test a model of indirect influence: “the role of political knowledge and efficacy as mediators between communication and online/offline political participation within the framework of an O-S-R-O-R (Orientation-Stimulus-Reasoning-Orientation-Response) model of communication effects” (p. 407). They found both political knowledge and efficacy to be mediators and they note the increasing role of the Internet as a predictor of political participation.

B. Rhetoric

Rhetoric lies at the heart of political communication. Characterized, critiqued, and described by Plato and Aristotle as the art of persuasion, it underlies argumentation and has long formed the basis of public civic engagement. While all political communication fits into the concept of speech, some literally does mean speaking rather than a category encompassing campaigns, advertising, television, and so on.

Martin (2014) provides an introduction to rhetoric in public life and politics. The textbook examines its role in political theory and the ways in which questions of political power and identity form part of the rhetorical tradition. An understanding of rhetoric, Martin argues, allows informed citizens to resist manipulation and empty persuasion. In addition to reviewing classical rhetoric, the book introduces ideas from discourse theory to help illustrate contemporary politics.

Schroedel, Bligh, Merolla, and Gonzalez (2013) apply rhetorical analysis to the 2008 U.S. presidential

campaign, focusing on what they term “charismatic rhetoric.” Working in a tradition of those researchers who “have attempted to deconstruct and analyze the different components of rhetorical speech,” they conducted a computer-assisted content analysis to map “the prevalence of different types of rhetoric and then . . . examine the impact of partisanship and electoral context (primary vs. general election) on rhetorical choices (p. 101). A number of studies have suggested that the level of complexity of political rhetoric changes during elections. Conway, Gornick, Burfeind, Mandella, Kuenzli, Houck, and Fullerton (2012) ask whether this change helps political success. They conducted two studies. The first “demonstrates that, during the Democratic Party primary debates in 2003-2004, the eventual winners of the party nomination showed a steeper drop in integrative complexity as the election season progressed than non-winning candidates” while the second noted that Obama’s rhetorical complexity did not affect college voters but that McCain’s complexity “was significantly positively correlated with their likelihood of voting for him.” They conclude that there is little support for the “simple is better” view; rather the findings are “consistent with a compensatory view: Effective use of complexity (or simplicity) may compensate for perceived weaknesses. Thus, appropriately timed shifts in complexity levels, and/or violations of negative expectations relevant to complexity, may be an effective means of winning elections” (p. 599).

C. Persuasion

Much political communication behavior focuses on persuasion: supplying information to potential voters, for example, to influence their choice or to inform their decision making. Boudreau (2013) experimentally examined the effects of conflicting information. She found that less sophisticated subjects tended to make worse decisions when they received conflicting information from high-credibility and low-credibility sources. “When a credible source of information suggests the welfare-improving choice and a less credible source simultaneously suggests a choice that will make subjects worse off, subjects make worse decisions than when only the credible source is available. This occurs because many subjects base their decisions upon the less credible source or forgo participation” (p. 193).

How much does the way a politician frames an argument matter? Catellani and Coveilli (2013) investigate counterfactual thinking (“If . . . then”) in political discourse, studying the on-air statements of politicians. Results showed that “upward, controllable, and additive counterfactuals were more frequent than

downward, uncontrollable, and subtractive counterfactuals, respectively. . . . While politicians more often employed upward controllable counterfactuals when speaking about targets other than themselves, they more often used downward controllable and upward uncontrollable counterfactuals when referring to themselves” (p. 480). This kind of comparison of persuasion strategies has long formed a staple of political communication research.

D. Framing

Framing refers to the ways in which politicians or the news media present issues, that is, to the frame of reference in which they present ideas. For example, one could present the need for mass transit construction in the frame of safer and more efficient travel or in the frame of higher transportation taxes. Voter support may well depend on how an individual frames the issue.

D’Angelo (2012) argues that framing can integrate political communication study. He suggests two dimensions for thinking about framing: “bring together” and “fit into.” Using these concepts, he argues “that within a given piece of framing research, the bring-together approach leads to a focus on the operational level of design rather than the level of concept explication and theory development, which is the province of the fit-into approach” (p. 353). Most studies that employ framing should use both images, though many do so with an unconscious tension.

Chong and Druckman (2013) offer a study on “counterframing,” that is, the process by which candidates offer views alternative to those of their opponents over the course of a campaign. They investigate “how the timing and repetition of counterframes affect their success” and found, through experiment, that “counterframing effects depend on the extent to which people hold strong or weak opinions” (p. 1).

Matthes and Schemer (2012) develop a diachronic approach to framing. Noting that prior theory envisions framing as occurring over time but that most studies measure it after one exposure, they reiterate “that framing effects are diachronic in nature; that is, framing effects at some given point in time can be diminished or reversed at a later point in time.” Further, they propose “that the longevity of framing effects depends on how certain people are when they form their initial opinions” (p. 319). The strength of people’s opinions helps to explain the impact of framing.

Bertolotti, Catellani, Douglas, and Sutton (2013) carried out experimental studies of framing in different countries. For the studies people read about a politician

in one of two frames where a politician answered “to leadership- versus morality-related allegations using either downward counterfactuals (“things could have been worse, if”) or upward counterfactuals (“things could have been better, if”).” They found that the first case “increased the perception of the politician’s leadership, while both downward and upward messages increased morality perception” (p. 117). They also found differences based on characteristics of the participants (political knowledge or sophistication) but no differences across national backgrounds.

E. Priming

Priming in political communication or media effects studies refers to “the effect of some preceding stimulus or event on how we react, broadly defined, to

some subsequent stimulus” (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Dillman Carpentier, 2002, p. 97). Typically such priming takes place in political situations through media reporting or candidate positioning.

Schneider (2014) applies priming theory to gender in political campaigns. Political scientists know that gender play a role but have not completely understood it. Schneider examines “candidates’ strategies based on gender stereotypes, that is, how voters are influenced by rhetoric that is either consistent (gender-reinforcing) or inconsistent (gender-bending) with gender stereotypes” (p. 55). Based on an experiment, Schneider (2014) “found that male and female candidates who used gender-bending rhetoric were able to overturn stereotypes by persuading and priming voters” (p. 55).

5. Reaching the Voters

A. Campaigns

Political campaigns provide a focal point for a great deal of political communication research, as they serve as major moments for candidates and parties to communicate with voters, attempting to inform and persuade them. Campaigns employ almost all communication media and message forms, from broadcasting to Twitter, from political advertising to email. Campaigns also give an opportunity for political communication scholars to observe the impact of different variables on audiences.

Campaign communication has grown in importance in countries like Mexico that have seen more competitive elections due to changes in party structure or laws. Espino-Sánchez (2011) traces this process in three Mexican presidential elections between 1994 and 2006. He notes a series of key changes, which include “the displacement of the traditional centers of power; . . . the breakdown of the corporatist compliances that characterized the media-government relations; . . . the establishment of a plural spectrum of powerful media whose barons act as powerful pressure groups; and the instability of Mexican electorate.” He concludes “that candidate’s media and communication strategies during the 2006 presidential campaigns were the most influential factors of the election” (p. 59).

A special issue of *Communication Studies* (November/December 2013) presents studies of the

2012 U.S. elections, highlighting campaign strategies and media tools. McKinney (2013) introduces that issue, noting the importance of new technologies in campaigns and the polarizing nature of political debates. Individual contributions examine the campaign from the perspective of moral reasoning in advertising (Ohl, Pfister, Nader, & Griffin, 2013); the function and impact of candidate debates (Warner, & McKinney, 2013; Rowland, 2013); and how tweeting affected viewer attitudes and knowledge (Houston, McKinney, Hawthorne, & Spialek, 2013).

An overarching question for both candidates and scholars has to do with the effectiveness of campaign communication. Van Spanje, Boomgaarden, Elenbaas, Vliegenthart, Azrout, Schuck, and de Vreese (2013) raise this precise question in terms of elections to the European Parliament in 2009. Investigating what they term the “perceived effectiveness of political parties’ election campaigns,” they asked how well parties conveyed their messages. Comparing media content analysis data with election survey data, they found that

the more exposed to news about a particular party, the more a voter feels that this party gets its message across. A party’s perceived campaign effectiveness is greater when one or two other parties are also mentioned in a particular news item, which may make the party’s profile more pronounced. Furthermore, the greater a

voter's interest in the campaign, the larger the effect of exposure on party evaluations. (p. 100)

Perceived effectiveness, then, depends on several variables including how well one candidate gets the opponents and the news media to address the issues he or she raises.

Also working in the European context, De Nooy and Kleinnijenhuis (2013) suggest another communication strategy for parliamentary campaigns, particularly those contested by several parties. In addition to negative or advocacy advertising, "political support for another party offers an alternative strategy because it signals preferred government coalitions." Looking to discover what might lead a party to choose such a strategy over negative advertising, they found that in the 2006 Dutch election, "party size, party ideology, and incumbency of the political actors [were] important static predictors" while "dynamic predictors, which indicate how the campaign has evolved thus far, include agreement or disagreement on issues recently raised in the media as well as recent attacks and support statements" (p. 117). The dynamic predictors accounted for the timing of negative and support ads.

Campaign effectiveness also depends, to a great measure, on the characteristics of candidates. Fridkin and Kenney (2011) look into "how candidates shape citizens' impressions of their personal traits during U.S. Senate campaigns." Which personality traits matter to voters? Can candidates change perceptions of personality over time? Fridkin and Kenney found:

that messages from the news media influence people's willingness to rate the candidates on trait dimensions. In addition, negative trait messages emanating from challengers and the press shape citizens' impressions of incumbents. In contrast, voters' evaluations of challengers are unmoved by campaign messages, irrespective of the source or tone of the communications. Finally, we find citizens rely heavily on traits when evaluating competing candidates in U.S. Senate campaigns, even controlling for voters' party, ideological, and issue preferences. (p. 61)

One way that campaigns can shape the perception of both issues and candidates comes through debates. Cho and Ha (2012) focus specifically on debates. How does debate viewing influence potential voters? This study "investigates indirect effects of debate viewing mediated by debate-induced citizen communication." Cho and Ha report that, in the 2004 U.S. campaign, "debate viewing leads to partisan reinforcement and

that these debate effects are in part mediated through post-debate political conversation" (p. 184). This result seems consistent with past research that indicates the importance of interpersonal communication in people's coming to voting decisions. Boydston, Glazier, and Pietryka (2013) p. 254 also examine debates, but from the perspective of "how candidates should and do use agenda setting, framing, and message tone to shape the agenda in debates." Not surprisingly, candidates tend to favor issues in which they have an advantage. But Boydston, Glazier, and Pietryka note, "this agenda control occurs only at the margins because topic salience in public opinion predicts candidate attention and conditions voters' receptiveness to debate rhetoric. [The] findings . . . suggest that topic salience constrains candidates' abilities to focus the agenda strategically" (p. 254). Warner and McKinney (2013b) also studied campaign debates in terms of polarization. Using a quasi-experiment approach to "all presidential general election debates in 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 as well as vice presidential debates in 2008 and 2012, they found that "viewing a debate increased political polarization." Preexisting polarization "moderated this effect such that those viewers with very little polarization experienced the most significant increase and those who were highly polarized prior to viewing a debate experienced no significant change" (p. 508). Such results, of course, raise questions about the effectiveness of debates for voter information and issue understanding.

Timing matters in political campaigns, but voters do not always follow the ideal time line of a campaign. Ellithorpe, Holbert, and Palmer-Wackerly (2013) look at how changes in the media environment affect media consumption and the success of campaign communication. In addition to the expected variables (media environment, perceptions of media quality), they also looked at consumer procrastination as a potential variable to differentiate voters. Not surprisingly, "Media environment complexity predicted lower news use and higher success on . . . political outcome. Procrastination's effect was on media experience perceptions" (p. 561).

Place also matters in campaigns. Many political campaigns target voters according to where they live. Liu (2012) focuses on the "geospatial characteristics" that might influence voter learning. Using analyses of the 2000 U.S. presidential election, Liu found that "contextual-level political advertising and candidate appearances moderate the relationship between newspaper use and political knowledge, and the relationship

between political discussion and political knowledge” (p. 46). Such results point to complex interactions among many variables when researchers try to understand voter information and behaviors.

Political campaigns must not only influence voters but also persuade them to actually vote. Sinclair, McConnell, and Michelson (2013) explore the “relationship between social influence and voter turnout by comparing the effectiveness of face-to-face get-out-the-vote visits by canvassers living in a voter’s local neighborhood against visits by canvassers from other neighborhoods.” The data show that “the effect of being contacted by the campaign is higher in precincts where some canvassers were working in their own neighborhood” (p. 42).

Another study of local campaigns highlights the internal difficulties of depending on often untrained volunteers and the external difficulties of lack of funding to pay for the publicity and media coverage typical of modern campaigns. Curnalia, Mermer, and Tyus (2011) focused on such local campaigns and learned that campaign managers typically relied on grassroots strategies (p. 85).

B. Advertising

Political campaigns seek to make a candidate or party known and to shape the issues for an election. In addition to campaign appearances and the dependence on news reports, campaigns also seek direct influence through advertising. Campaign ads can be simple—introducing the candidate—or complex, seeking to shape emotions or to frame the treatments of issues.

Within communication studies, campaign and issue advertising forms a subset of political marketing. The second edition of Lees-Marshment (2015), a textbook introducing political marketing, goes beyond discussions of advertising to include branding, public relations, crisis management, “delivery marketing,” market research, celebrity marketing, and integrated marketing communications. Each of these offers a candidate or party powerful ways to reach voters; Lees-Marshment also looks at how marketing can serve governments and volunteer organizations seeking to influence voters. As a textbook, the presentations includes case studies, profiles of practitioners, discussion guides, and an online resource site. In another overview, Gouliamos, Theocharous, and Newman (2014) present an edited collection that seeks to provide a contemporary introduction to both theory and practice in this important area. Using the idea of a

“campaign culture,” they examine the interactions among society, politics, and culture. The collection’s 18 chapters examine areas ranging from the role of the Internet in national elections, citizen participation through referendums, the role of public broadcasting, political marketing strategies, the use of social media, and the link between political leadership and charisma.

In a more theoretical approach, del Rey Morató (2011) discusses the key elements of political communication and, within that framework, situates political advertising and marketing (seeing each through the lens of Weber’s ideal types). In this vein, he considers the role of online media as a way to connect political contest with social ties.

Bratu (2013) also looks to develop a theoretical model for the impact of advertising. Using as a focus, “the challenges women candidates face in combating stereotypes, the impact of advertising exposure on reported vote choice, and the magnitude of the persuasive effects of advertising,” Bratu looks to a model that balances key factors such as “the potential of perceptions of ad negativity to influence people’s behaviors and attitudes toward the political system, the relationship between ideological conflict and voter turnout, the political context of electoral behavior, and the capacity of political advertising to inform the electorate about the candidates for office” (p. 5).

How much does advertising matter? Cho (2011) investigated the relationship between the information environment (indicated by the media market and the amount of political advertising during the 2000 U.S. presidential campaign) and citizen’s political engagement. “Results . . . provide evidence that a respondent’s media market was a significant factor for her news attention and interpersonal discussion. That is, . . . residents in high-ad-volume areas were more active in political communication practices than those in low-volume areas” (p. 434). The study indicates an important correlation.

Cho (2013) examines advertising as a method to control issues and shape attitudes to candidate’s traits, looking particularly at advertising tone, that is attack or advocacy ads. Looking at the ads and the candidates supported by the audience in the 2000 U.S. presidential campaign, Cho found that “different types of political advertising elicit a range of emotions about the candidates and that some of these emotions impact the likelihood and nature of political discussion” (p. 1130). Further investigation indicated that “when individuals feel anxious about the candidate they oppose, they only

seek out homogeneous political discussions” (p. 1144); that is, attack ads tend to produce anxiety about a candidate and tend to move the audience to seeking out others with whom they agree.

How long do the effects of political advertising last? Hill, Lo, Vavreck, and Zaller (2013) examined long-term effects of mass media information through case studies of U.S. elections in 2000 and 2006. Beginning with a theoretical model of opinion formation and the effects of persuasive messages, they tested the model “by linking media market-level advertising data with surveys of candidate preference during the 2000 presidential elections and in a set of gubernatorial, Senate, and House elections in the 2006 midterms,” adding in actual voting results in the elections (p. 522). Data analysis led them to three main conclusions: “that the bulk of the persuasive impact of advertising decays quickly, but that some effect in the presidential campaign endures for at least six weeks”; that the results “appear to reflect a mix of memory-based processing (whose effects last only as long as short-term memory lasts) and online processing (whose effects are more durable)”; and that the effects of advertising differed between the national and the local elections (p. 521). In another study of the connection between citizen responsiveness and political advertising, Schemer (2012) studied “self-reinforcing spirals . . . between the negative affect toward asylum seekers and the attention to political advertising in a campaign dealing with the issue of the asylum law restriction.” That is, “political advertising elicited negative affective reactions, such as fear or anxiety toward asylum seekers in the course of the campaign. At the same time, these affective reactions enhanced people’s attention to subsequent political ads” (p. 413). This study not only provides important information about the consequences of emotive ads but also shows a kind of agenda-setting effect by the advertising.

With new media playing an increasingly important role in political information, political advertising has moved online. Roberts (2013) looks for differences between political web ads and political television ads. Using functional theory, Roberts found that “web-only ads were more likely to include attack themes than TV ads, and TV ads were more likely to include acclaim themes than web-only ads. Ads differed little in their use of news-mediated evidence to bolster ad claims” (p. 23).

In another comparative study, but this time across cultures, Pineda, Garrido, and Ramos (2013) look at American and Spanish political ads. Using a content

analysis method of campaign videos, they determined that, in recent presidential campaigns, “in both countries, most videos are candidate-centered. Differences however arise regarding the focus on negative advertising in both countries, as well as the issues used in American and Spanish ads” (p. 73). They also noted that campaigns used the online medium much as they did traditional media—as a delivery mechanism. Another cross-cultural study in political advertising focused on Canada. Daignault, Soroka, and Giasson (2013) looked into the “immediate and simultaneous effects of positive, negative, and mixed-content electoral ads.” Using an experimental design, the study asked voters to view ads “selected for their argumentative multimethod approach combining physiological and cognitive measures” and then measured the impact of negative advertising (p. 167). Veneti and Poulakidakos (2010) examine political television ads in Greece, paying particular attention to “the function, the content, and the morphology of the TV political advertisement.” Building on past work that breaks advertising into key components and video style, they tracked ads in the Greek general elections of 2007 and 2009, noting content and ad form (p. 27).

Finally, Weber and Wirth (2014) turn to another form of advertising: the biographical films that introduce or position political candidates. Do these films affect voter perception or attitudes towards candidates? How much do these films depend on “goal-oriented processing strategies and . . . suspension of disbelief (SOD), a tolerant audience response to a perceived lack of realism”? Using experimental methods, they found “an indirect effect for exaggeration on attitude through SOD as a function of processing strategy” (p. 125). They note that the findings may affect persuasion theory in the context of political narratives.

C. Multiple sources of information

One rising area of exploration has to do with a more complex communication environment. Holbert and Benoit (2009) propose an adjustment to how people study information outlets. They note that past research identified “two types of studies, those which focus on a single outlet and those which look at the comparative influence of multiple outlets.” In contrast, they propose a “theory of political campaign media connectedness,” looking at how multiple political communication sources (talk radio, television news cable news, newspapers, and debates) might “function in coordination with one another to produce a potentially

diverse set of direct and indirect political campaign media effects” (p. 303). Dylko (2010) also examines the multiple source problem, criticizing the methodologies of other researchers but also trying to offer a theoretical account of media sources and political participation. “The study indicates variations in the effect of newspaper reading, listening to political talk radio, and discussing politics on political participation, depending upon the particular type of political participation being focused on” (p. 523). Dylko considers ordinary least square and logistic regression analysis as methods to illustrate the model.

Landreville and LaMarre (2011) address the issue of the interaction of multiple sources of information. They examine how an entertainment film “can impact an individual’s political discussion intent after the same political topic is made salient in a subsequent news story.” What role does emotion play? Or the narrative structure of the film? How might potential voters process the information that may have relevance to a candidate or issue when it first appears as entertainment? While the study tested a number of hypotheses, the “results reveal there was no direct influence of political entertainment film viewing on political discussion intent, but there was an indirect effect through negative emotion. Furthermore, narrative engagement emerged as a predictor of political discussion intent and a mediator of the association between negative emotion and political discussion intent” (p. 200).

6. Voters and Information

A. Public opinion

Public opinion broadly describes how and what citizens and voters think about issues and candidates. Political communication study includes it, both as a measure of how citizens influence political ideas and as a target for parties and politicians who seek to shape public opinion to support their thinking. Mutz and Young (2011) provide an overview of public opinion research, noting the centrality of three themes over the years: “(1) ongoing concerns surrounding the political diversity of the communication environment; (2) selective exposure to political communication; and (3) the interrelationship between mass and interpersonal political communication” (p. 1018). They argue that new technologies have

Kusche (2012) calls into question some assumptions of the systems-theoretical approach to studying political communication that presume a kind of universal or unknown public and encourages researchers to consider “particularistic expectations.” Parties and candidates do go beyond the idea of a mass audience and must bear in mind all kinds of communicative interactions, from client-government to local embeddedness. Similarly, the expectations of the binary government vs. opposition may be too simple to describe the communication before and during elections. She “proposes a perspective that assumes variable weight for this distinction in relation to the more general difference between superior and inferior power in political communication and that tries to identify empirical variants of political differentiation on this basis” (p. 277).

Political communication researchers have hypothesized a “knowledge gap,” that is, an unequal distribution of political knowledge between different segments of voters, dependent upon the media they access (typically newspapers versus television). Jenssen (2012) tests the theory, first developed in the U.S., to the Nordic countries with their different media systems. Jenssen speculates that the “strong tradition of [public] TV and the high rate of newspaper consumption make the Norwegian media environment favorable for political knowledge gain, but it may, for the very same reasons, lead to a widening knowledge gap, according to the knowledge gap hypothesis” (p. 19).

influenced each of the thematic areas, making them even more important to the political process.

How effective are the efforts of media elites to influence public and political opinion? Habel (2012) investigates the success of some media elites in trying to convince voters and politicians to accept their policy preferences. Examining the editorial positions of two major U.S. newspapers and tracking their influence through public opinion measures, he found “that the announced positions of the media have minimal influence. Rather, I find evidence of a movable media, where media opinion shifts in response to changes in the policy positions of politicians” (p. 257). Such findings pose a challenge not only for media outlets but for

long-held theories that propose a strong media influence on politics.

B. The media

A great deal of political communication practice and research focuses on the mass media. In the United States, as noted above, researchers clearly state that the study of political communication began with an awareness of the political impact of the mass medium of newspapers. The groundbreaking agenda-setting studies looked to the influence of the news media. More recent work continues to acknowledge the role of the mass media, as channels of news, as outlets for political advertising, as sources of entertainment, or as ways to reach large audiences.

Historical studies shed light on the growth of political communication. Newspapers played a political role long before specialized political reporting. In the 19th century United States, for example, the political cartoons in New York papers caricatured politicians, and one cartoonist, Thomas Nast, created the cartoon symbols for the Democratic and Republican parties still used to this day. Roberts (2013) “shows how perspectives drawn from visual and cultural studies can be used to shed new light on established areas of historical enquiry . . . [through a] focus . . . on general election cartoons.” Examining cartoons created in the Victorian era in English provincial towns, Roberts opens a window to show “that the character and conduct of later Victorian electoral politics was far from being the elevated, sanitized, and dispassionate affair that conventional accounts have often suggested” (p. 369). As a form of visual communication, the cartoons may have had a broader impact than written reports.

In another historical study, Bruch and Pfister (2014) turn to a later visual medium. They study the political goals and implications of Austrian, British, and French newsreels as well as other European informational films from 1948–1958, a key period in the early development of the European Union. The films and newsreels both informed citizens about economic cooperation and implicitly persuaded them of its benefits. The films “were intended to create a European identity by rewriting a collective cultural and historical memory.” Noting that some films and newsreels were a “part of the public relations campaigns of various European institutions and newsreel companies,” Bruch and Pfister regard these films as a means by which citizens came to accept the idea of “Europe” as a transnational construct. They conclude that “the idea of

European integration’ was not only a result of a political discourse but also a cultural continuation of a centuries-old iconographic tradition” (p. 26).

While no one would question the role or the position that yet another visual medium, television, plays in the political process, many histories of political communication tend to rely on anecdotal information—the Kennedy-Nixon debates, the Johnson “daisy commercial,” and so on. Van Santen and Vliegenthart (2013) note that little systematic data exist about the history, the amount, and the form of political information on television. Limiting themselves to the Netherlands, they examine televised politics from 1957 to 2006. “Results show that over time both public and commercial broadcasters have dedicated more time to information programming, but these programs have moved out of prime time, especially on commercial channels. Overall, time spent on entertainment has gone down, contrary to expectations, while time for infotainment programs has gone up” (p. 397).

Some scholars seek to understand more about why visual media work so well in political communication. Many cite the anecdotal evidence that in the 1960 U.S. campaign debates, people who saw the televised debates felt that John Kennedy defeated Richard Nixon while those who listened on the radio reached the opposite conclusion. Visual information can somehow shape political impressions and attitudes. Maoz (2012) builds on research that “indicates that exposure to visual information on the facial appearance of politicians from one’s own state or country affects the favorability of attitudes towards these politicians as well as affecting voting intentions” by examining the impact of visual cues (facial features) expressed by opponents. In an experiment that manipulated facial features in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Maoz found a younger looking politician “was judged as more trustworthy than [a] mature-faced version of the same photograph” (p. 243). Similarly press reports of proposals received more support when presented as coming from the younger-faced politician. Maoz theorizes that the support is associated with the judgment of trustworthiness.

Others have looked at different theoretical explanations for the power of the media in politics. According to Takens, van Atteveldt, van Hoof, and Kleinnijenhuis (2013), “the media logic thesis holds that the content of political news is the product of news values and format requirements that media make use of to attract news consumers.” Does such logic work in political communication? Takens and his colleagues

investigated whether three media characteristics common in political reporting (a personalized approach, reporting on elections as contests or races, and negative news) fit into the media logic theory. They also looked into whether a single media logic cutting across media outlets exists. Their study of Dutch national election campaigns “shows that personalized, contest, and negative coverage form three indicators of a single logic that is shared by different media,” but that the practice of this logic has decreased over time (p. 277). Haßler, Maurer, and Oschatz (2014) also ask how much the logic of the media influences political discourse and practice. Political campaigns have adapted to mass media practices over the years in order to reach voters and may even have accepted media practices that do not work well in informing voters. Taking advantage of the rise of new online opportunities in politics, the research group compared the logic of the presentation and the messages regarding the United Nations Climate Change Conferences 2011 and 2012 in “the seven most frequently used German offline news outlets (print and TV) and their online counterparts, as well as political offline and online communication channels like parliamentary speeches and websites of the six parties represented in the German parliament.” They found that “in the context of regular political communication, political actors seem to follow media logic to a lesser extent than in the context of election campaigns”; the impact, though, of online forms did not seem strong in shifting political logic patterns (p. 326).

Within the practices of a media logic, some have noted a negative outcome. The large role that the mass media play in the political process has led to charges of bias—that media organizations have become partisan or that the media system itself is inherently biased. Does this perception affect political participation? Ho, Binder, Becker, Moy, Scheufele, Brossard, and Gunther (2011) look at “the interplay of perceptions of media bias, trust in government, and political efficacy on individuals’ levels of general and issue-specific political participation.” They found that the perception of media bias does relate negatively to general political participation but “positively . . . with issue-specific participation” (p. 343). They feel that such counter-intuitive results need clarification in theories of both political participation and media bias.

Even if one rejects the idea of a media bias, one still must deal with partisan news sources. The nature of political communication has changed with the availability of alternative channels for reporting. In a return

to the early days of the partisan press in the United States, cable television and other sources have increased the number of partisan news outlets. Levendusky (2013) asks whether “watching partisan news sources make citizens dislike and distrust the other party.” Developing a theoretical model from social identity theory, he models how partisan news affects its viewers and, in testing the model, finds that using such partisan sources “leads viewers to perceive the other party more negatively, to trust them less, and to be less supportive of bipartisanship” (p. 565). In an academic development led by some publishers, Levendusky makes much of the data supporting the study available online through the journal *Political Communication*. In another exploration of partisan news outlets, Arceneaux, Johnson, and Murphy (2012) examine the “hostile media effect,” that is where “people see bias in balanced reporting on political controversies.” Theorizing that partisan news, with its ideological perspectives “may cause viewers to become increasingly suspicious of and antagonistic toward news media (an “oppositional media hostility”), they ask whether the abundance of news sources may allow viewers to select only news with which they agree, thus “moderat[ing] oppositional media hostility.” Laboratory experiments found “that counter-attitudinal news programming is more likely to induce hostile media perceptions than pro-attitudinal programming, but that the presence of choice blunts oppositional media hostility” (p. 174).

The availability of information and the number of media channels (whether partisan or neutral) can affect people’s political information-seeking behavior. Elenbaas, Boomgaarden, Schudk, and de Vreese (2013) investigated whether “differences in information acquisition correspond with differences in the information available specifically in those sources that citizens choose to use on a routine basis.” That is, people with access to a number of channels of information may not make use of all available channels. They found “that citizens are more likely to learn facts about political performance when their preferred sources offer a greater quantity of performance-relevant information. [They] also find that motivation moderates the influence of availability, such that strongly motivated individuals gain comparatively the most from a greater supply of information” (p. 1).

Nir (2012) explores gaps in political knowledge, comparing countries and media systems. Arguing that “fragmentation of the broadcast news landscape pro-

vides citizens with differential opportunities to become informed” and that a “shared (less fragmented) news landscape in a country offsets the advantages of individual motivation and ability to seek political information,” Nir analyzed news and citizen information in 13 countries to find support for the theory (p. 578).

Louw (2010) attempts to synthesize much of the theory about the mass media and the political process. Louw’s textbook on the impact of the media on politics explores how growing “mediatization” influences the political process for both good and ill. Using case studies, Louw examines the place of images and media in politics and the complementary and conflicting roles of media professionals (reporters, public affairs staff, news consultants, image consultants, and so on) in the political communication process. These result in what Louw terms a symbiotic relationship between the media and the politicians. The second part of the book considers identity and communication while the third part specifically examines the growing role of the media in politics through analyses of spin doctors, public relations in politics, the cult of celebrity, propaganda in “selling war,” terrorism, and creating foreign relations.

If the role of the spin doctor is to help the candidate or party position itself with the news media and to somehow control the image they set forth, contemporary political news coverage has seen the rise of experts, called in to offer commentary on all aspects of campaigning. Horsbøl (2010) sees this as a counter-strategy by journalists to combat the rise of professional media advisers and planners by parties and candidates. The “study investigates how the media uses political communication experts in prime time news programs from the 2005 parliamentary election campaign in Denmark” through an analysis of the “expert voice.” Horsbøl uses a “public sphere perspective on the power relations between politics and media” to indicate the relative importance of each role (p. 29). The contest between candidates’ spin doctors and journalists’ experts matters because appearing in the media benefits politicians. To what extent, then, does media coverage legitimize political leaders? Bos, van der Brug, and de Vreese (2011) examine this question of media power by comparing coverage of two right-wing populists with coverage of established party leaders in a 2006 Dutch election. Using methodology akin to agenda-setting studies, they compare “repeated measurements of the party leaders’ public images with a systematic content

analysis of 17 media outlets . . . on the basis of the media consumption of individual respondents.” They found significant effects for the media coverage, but “only in one case (out of 10) [was] there a significant difference between right-wing populist party leaders and leaders of other parties in the strength of media effects.” They conclude “that leaders of right-wing populist parties are just as dependent upon the media as leaders of other parties” (p. 182). Given this phenomenon of legitimation through media appearances, both candidates and elected officials work to keep themselves in the public, that is, media eye. Candidate appearances on entertainment programming and in particular on television talk shows have increased in the U.S. in the last 20 years. In a book-length study of the phenomenon, Parkin (2014) counts over 200 candidate appearances on such shows, noting that most presidential candidates, even those with only small support, have tried the strategy. Parkin describes the overall strategy behind this somewhat new kind of campaigning through the media, the candidate appearances themselves, the communication management involved, and the outcomes. In some ways, using entertainment to reach out to voters is not new, but perhaps just another form of campaign rally. However, the mediated format allows both a vastly wider reach and, depending on the venue, a fairly targeted and often friendly audience.

As Parkin (2014) demonstrates, political communication researchers interested in the impact of the media have directed their attention beyond the news media. In addition to candidate appearances, scholars realize that entertainment programming can also have an effect on the political discourse. Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2013) puts this into a larger perspective where entertainment interacts within an intertextual world, either commenting on political events or itself becoming a politically controversial statement. Examining the reception of two politically themed docudramas, Tenenboim-Weinblatt makes “a distinction between ‘issue substance’ and ‘media substance’ as the two major types of political substance that emerge in the discourse surrounding controversial texts.” She then suggests that a similar analysis could look at “the contribution of media-centered political scandals to public discourse, the conditions under which entertainment texts spur substantive political discussions, and the complex interactions between journalism, entertainment, and politics in contemporary media environments” (p. 582).

Another kind of media appearance has a long history, but one often controlled by political leaders. Politicians, especially U.S. presidents, aim to work with the news media in directing political discourse; many do so through the use of press conferences. Eshbaugh-Soha (2013) describes these events as presenting “a unique venue that allows presidents to grapple with their policy and political decisions in a highly public and interactive format with journalists.” He then analyzes the timing, frequency, and factors such as reelection campaigns that characterize the press conferences. He notes that “lower approval ratings and unified government lead to more solo press conferences and less time between them. Whereas re-election years and political scandal decrease the number of solo press conferences, only re-election years increase the time between them” (p. 471).

The availability of political communication—news, entertainment (talk shows, etc.), managed appearance or press conferences—makes a difference for voters. Zhang (2012) asks how interpersonal political communication interacts with the use of political news. Originally theorized as a two-step flow (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948), the use of these two communication forms may be more sophisticated. Zhang compares two Asian countries with different political systems (Taiwan and Singapore) and finds that “in both societies, the effects of political news use and political discussion have to be conditioned on the type of political participation as well as the nature of the political system. Both mass and interpersonal communications are confirmed to positively influence contact and campaign participation, to different degrees depending upon the political system” (p. 474). The political system, particularly authoritarian ones, significantly influences participation whatever the news use.

Researchers outside the U.S. have also noted the same practices and themes in political communication. Observing the political situation in Chile, with its relatively recent return to democratic processes, Santander (2013) investigates “the relationship between journalists covering the political arena and the communication advisors of the Chilean elite.” Journalists were “ambivalent” about the role of the communication strategists and showed relatively little “critical thought regarding their impact on journalistic autonomy” (p. 95). The result is somewhat surprising given the amount of discussion of these roles in the political communication literature and the highly developed function of strategists in other democracies.

Luengo and Coimbra-Mesquita (2013) examine the relationship between the news media and political dysfunction, but in Brazil and Spain. Starting with existing research that shows a “negative relationship between media exposure and civic engagement,” they empirically measured the interaction between institutional trust and media exposure in the two countries. They found “different impacts of the media in each country, brought [about] by the peculiarities of their political systems, as well as differences in media consumption behavior” (p. 115). In another demonstration of the power of political communication, Popoola (2012) provides a careful case study of the role of radio and television in the Nigerian political context, in elections and in post-election violence. Beginning with a theory of the media in a democracy, the case study examines “political programs of radio stations and TV in Nigeria during the elections. . . . Due to the sensitive nature of politics, it is expected that every piece of information that is aired is thoroughly investigated and authenticated to guard against any thing that could induce violence.” Popoola argues, on the basis of content analyses, “that the post-election violence which erupted in the Old Ondo state was due to non-adherence to the broadcasting code, partisanship and the unprofessional conduct of media men” (p. 148).

The rise of globalization and convenient transborder media links can also affect political communication. Expatriates and migrants can not only keep in touch with loved ones at home, they can also participate in “transnational civic and political” activities. Hickerson (2013) combines the “literature from transnational and communication studies” with material on political participation. In a study of Mexicans in the U.S. and “their communication habits and civic and political participation in Mexico,” he found “differential effects on participation based on preferences for certain media and pre-existing attitudes” (p. 143).

Finally, some scholars have begun to examine how news coverage of politics has changed with the introduction of new media channels. Boczowski, Mitchelstein, and Walter (2012) compare stories that American news sites prominently display with those most read by visitors to the sites. They note that “during a time of routine political activity, there is a sizable gap between the news choices of journalists and consumers in which the former give more prominence to public affairs news (stories about politics, economics, and international topics) than the latter, but, during the campaign, this gap changes variously across the sites

studied” (p. 347). They also noted some differences in terms of timing, of how close the activity was to an election day.

All of these studies reinforce the long held scholarly and party professional view that mass communica-

tion plays a significant role in the political process. More and more of them seek to explain the mechanism for media influence and, as described in this section, a number of researchers have tested these theories through empirical observations and case studies.

7. Network and Interpersonal Studies

Political communication scholars have long recognized that some of the most influential communication takes place among groups of people, with Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948) first describing what they termed “opinion leaders” whose interpersonal communication shaped the political ideas of their groups. The study of such networks of individuals continues to hold an important place in political communication. From the time of Lazarsfeld and his colleagues, many have wrestled not only with the relationship between media and interpersonal influences but also with how best to theoretically explain it. Eveland, Morey, and Hutchens (2011) acknowledge recent work in “political conversation,” but “argue that the emphasis of the literature on political conversation as a weak form of deliberation or as an afterthought from the media effects perspective has led to neglect of important aspects of the interpersonal communication process that require careful consideration” (p. 1082). They review the relevant literature and through a critique of the limitations reveals there suggest other directions for research that addresses how individuals act as communicators.

Tian (2011) tests an “advanced social cognitive approach” as a theoretical model of how mass communication and interpersonal communication influence the “interrelations among political orientations, communication behaviors, and political participation.” The model tested is “the theoretical framework of the Orientation 1–Stimulus–Orientation 2–Response model.” Tian found that “both political interest and need for cognition had direct effects on political media use, whereas political interest and need to evaluate had direct effects on interpersonal political discussion. These results suggest that need for cognition and need to evaluate—two important personality constructs—affect political communication on two different levels” (p. 380). Other variables (political interest, political extremity, need to evaluate) also play a role. The model suggests an extremely

complex set of interrelationship with both mass communication and interpersonal communication affecting each other as well as political participation. The interpersonal model postulates that voters will minimize their costs of obtaining information by, for example, conferring with those who have already obtained information. Ahn, Huckfeldt, Mayer, and Ryan (2013) try to explain what happens when local experts are not available. Having to seek political information from beyond their own interpersonal networks imposes added costs. They note that “the availability of ideal informants varies across groups and settings, with the potential to produce (1) context-dependent patterns of informant centrality, which in turn generate (2) varying levels of polarization among groups and (3) biases in favor of some groups at the expense of others.” To better understand the process, they studied small group communication “with aggregate implications addressed using a simple agent-based model” (p. 357).

The interpersonal-mass communication interaction sometimes appears as a mediation model. Lee (2012) applies that model to late-night comedy programs to look at the relationship of such satire, interpersonal discussion of the comedy, and political participation. He tested the model with different research designs and concludes that the studies “provide considerable support for the model, demonstrating that various structural features of interpersonal talk (e.g., discussion frequency, online interaction, and network size) positively mediate the association between late-night comedy viewing and political participation” (p. 647). In addition the findings show “that late-night comedy can draw a higher level of political involvement from those who are highly educated.”

As in any speech setting, listening matters as much as speaking. However, Dobson (2012) argues that “good listening has been almost completely ignored in that form of political conversation we know as democracy.” In other words, scholars attend to

speaking, whether by candidates or by people in discussion groups. In his theoretical overview, Dobson notes, “To ask why listening has been ignored is to inquire into the very nature of politics, and to suggest a range of ways in which listening could both improve political processes (particularly democratic ones) and enhance our understanding of them—including where they do not always work as well as we might want them to.” He then suggests that listening can help democracy by “enhancing legitimacy, helping to deal with deep disagreements, improving understanding, and increasing empowerment” (p. 843). Finally, he suggests that attention to listening, ignored in Habermas’ theory of communicative rationality, will aid deliberative democracy.

Schmitt-Beck and Lup (2013) bring together an overview of recent empirical studies in the area of “ordinary citizens’ everyday political communication, its phenomenology, determinants, consequences, and relevance for democratic politics” (p. 513). In addition to presenting a summary of findings, the review also discusses methodological issues affecting interpersonal political communication research. Among reviewed variables are “political preferences, participation, cognitive involvement with politics as well as orientations towards fellow citizens and towards the democratic political system” (p. 513). As with most literature reviews, Schmitt-Beck and Lup (2013) conclude with suggestions for future research directions.

If the practice of interpersonal communication matters so much to politics, why does it not appear more centrally in political communication studies? Huckfeldt (2012) attributes a lack of sophisticated theoretical attention paid to the interpersonal aspect of political communication study to the methodologies used by political communication scholars. “This state of affairs is less a consequence of theoretically articulated models of behavior than it is an unintentional methodological byproduct. Powerful, productive, and creative methods of analysis, based on the observational platforms of both sample surveys and laboratory experiments, tend to separate interdependent actors from one another” (p. 83). In turn, this leads to a focus on the individual rather than on the social groups or networks within which they interact. Huckfeldt proposes several ways “to reintroduce political interdependence among citizens within the normal scope of political analysis” (p. 83), that is to attend to both societal levels of measurement and group levels. Eveland, Hutchens, and Morey (2013) propose another method-

ological adjustment to better capture the role of interpersonal networks in political communication. Judging that the impact of interpersonal networks is stronger than currently estimated because research methods tend to undercount network size, they used “multiple data sets and alternative measurement approaches” and found that some individuals had very large interpersonal networks. Further they found that “the summary network size measure reveals the expected differences in communicative, personality, and political variables across network size better than” existing approaches (p. 371). They conclude that current research has systematically underestimated the impact of interpersonal networks on political decisions.

Since political communication begins at some point in an individual’s life, Östman (2013) looks to the role of interpersonal communication in socializing adolescents into the political process. Using survey data from Sweden, he found “that frequency of private political talk predicted the extent of public political expression even when self-selection and previous levels of political expression were accounted for. . . . The overall findings are consistent with the theoretical idea that political talk offers adolescents opportunities to enact participation in safe settings, and that this is a mechanism that can explain why talking about politics is favorable for political development during adolescence” (p. 602). In another look at citizen formation, Hively and Eveland (2009) explore how adolescents enter the political process. Noting a relative lack of scholarship in the area, they examine how the frequency of political discussions, the content, the diversity of the communication network, and parent and school interactions related to “factual and structural knowledge among adolescents.” The study found that the “frequency of discussion is related to both factual and structural knowledge, whereas discussion elaboration is related only to structural knowledge” (p. 30). In addition, both parents and schools play roles in each of the key elements of frequency and elaboration. For college students campus political norms can affect student participation in politics. Looking at different colleges with differing norms, Shulman and Levine (2012) found that “perceptions of political norms converge within universities . . . [and that] frequency of political communication at the group- and individual-level explains increases in normative perceptions” (p. 532). In other words, the group understanding of the political climate influences individuals, at least at the college level.

Socialization of adolescents into political or democratic activity can also occur through the media. Moeller and de Vreese (2013) examine that phenomenon, asking about the media's role in shaping political attitudes and in mobilizing the young. A secondary analysis of the European Social Survey allowed them to compare the impact of news and entertainment programming "on political trust, signing petitions, and consumer politics." They also studied "the impact of the political and educational system on political attitude formation and civic engagement of [the] adolescents" and found "a higher level of engagement in countries with a well-functioning democracy." In addition, they found a relationship between exposure to news media and political engagement in consumer politics, but a negative relationship between consumption of entertainment media and mobilization (p. 309). Lee, Shah, and McLeod (2013) find an important role for the Internet as they look at socializing adolescents into political participation. Examining data about parents and teens, their study "explores the varied roles communication plays in socializing youth into democratic citizenship," with particular attention to "a communication mediation model of youth socialization, in which interdependent communication processes located in the family, schools, media, and peer networks combine to cultivate communication competence, a set of basic communication skills and motives needed for active and informed participation in public life." Among other things, they found "that participation in deliberative classroom activities and democratic peer norms contribute to civic activism among youth," though these influences were indirect and interacted with media and online information seeking. The "findings highlight strong online pathways to participation, centering on news consumption and political expression via digital media technologies, suggesting the key role of the Internet in this dynamic" (p. 669).

Given how much interpersonal communication plays a role in politics, what helps that discussion along? What makes an individual an asset to such discussions? While some research looks at the structures of discussion networks, particularly for people who disagree with each other, Kim, Scheufele, and Han (2011) examine personal qualities of discussants. Using the construct of "discussion orientation—one's willingness to express and listen in political discussion, even when disagreement exists—as a predispositional explanation of the impact of discussion heterogeneity on political participation," Kim and colleagues found a

that individual predispositions to openness did indeed predict greater political participation (p. 502). The kinds of interpersonal networks a person has also influences the kinds of political discussions that individual engages in. Most such discussions occur with family and friends. Morey, Eveland, and Hutchens (2012) note that as these interlocutors "tend to be more politically similar to us than not, the conclusion is that everyday political discussions are overwhelmingly characterized by real or perceived political agreement." They suggest that this common-sense conclusion may miss the fact that we also feel freer to disagree with family and friends and explain that "this study illustrates that although discussion with strong ties increases the probability of agreement, it simultaneously increases the likelihood of discussing disagreement" (p. 86). But if people do tend to engage in political talk with those with whom they agree, does this happen because they seek out those with similar opinions or because the opinions converge over time? To explore this, Lazer, Rubineau, Chetkovich, Katz, and Neblo (2010) used "longitudinal attitudinal and whole network data collected at critical times . . . to identify robustly the determinants of attitudes and affiliations." They found that "individuals shift their political views toward the political views of their associates" and that "political views are notably unimportant as a driver for the formation of relationships" (p. 248). Hopman (2012) found more evidence that social ties do matter in political activity. "Both political attitudes and political behavior are affected by social pressures." While the pressures may not keep people from voting, "political disagreement in interpersonal communication increases the difficulty of deciding for which party to vote" (p. 265).

Campaigns seek to shape interpersonal discussions. Some do so through political advocacy, which Richey and Taylor (2012) describe as "where citizens make clear statements of their beliefs when trying to influence others, which democratic theorists cite as valuable in spreading information in discussion networks." Using regression models on survey data from a 30-year span of U.S. national elections and focusing on the question of campaign spending, they found "that the likelihood of being an advocate correlates with greater political discussion, television usage, interest in politics, partisanship, efficacy, and socioeconomic status" (p. 414). The results also indicated effects of party membership. Further, such results suggest ways at political campaigns can build on and influence interpersonal communication.

Recognizing that interpersonal networks depend more and more on electronic media, Campbell and Kwak (2011) explores “how mobile-mediated discourse with strong ties interacts with characteristics of those ties to predict levels of political participation.” Not surprisingly, such mobile connection did correlate with political activity, but “this relationship is moderated by the size and heterogeneity of one’s network. Participation increases with use of the technology in large networks of like-minded individuals, but declines with use of the technology in homogeneous networks that are small” (p. 1005). New media, and particularly social media, support online interpersonal networks and therefore should have a measurable role in political discussion. Liu and Zhang (2013) examine two factors that can influence political discussions online: “direct government-citizen interactions and perceptions of the importance of new media for online political discussion.” Using data from a national U.S. survey, they found that “citizens’ interactions with both members of their political group and government officials have positive influences on the frequency of online political discussion” (p. 444). Somewhat paradoxically, they also found that the link between online political discussion and people’s online groups grew only when

people did not see new media as a source of political information.

While most research into interpersonal networks for political ends addresses voters, Straus (2013) chose to look at the formal interpersonal networks among elected officials. Using evidence from correspondence urging support for policies or bills among members of the U.S. House of Representatives (so-called “Dear Colleague” letters), he studied whether “seniority, electoral vulnerability, leadership status, and majority party status” affected the use of such formal correspondence. “The analysis demonstrates that rank-and-file majority party members who are electorally ‘safe’ are more likely to use the dear colleague system” (p. 60).

The collective impact of these studies highlights the importance of interpersonal ties and personal networks in voter political behaviors. Many of those focusing their political communication study on the interpersonal have raised serious questions about theoretical models or study designs that do not factor in the interpersonal networks of political actors. Each of these recent studies either directly or indirectly propose more avenues for research, particularly in the integration of the different modes of political engagement.

8. New Media: The Internet

The Internet and all of its offshoots—collectively “new media,” and specifically, streaming media, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, blogging, podcasts, websites, and so on—have significantly changed the communication landscape for politics and for citizen engagement in just about every country around the world. Political communication researchers have certainly paid attention, but these media are so new that scholars still attempt to describe their use and their impact and have only begun to assess them and to offer theories and predictions about them.

In the last five years Routledge has published a number of books introducing and analyzing the Internet and politics, many as part of their “Critical Concepts in Political Science” series. Their *Handbook of Internet Politics* (Chadwick & Howard, 2009) offers an overview, dividing its 31 chapters among four broad topics: institutions, behaviors, identities, and law and policy. The first section contains descriptions of the Internet in U.S. and European politics, both as cam-

paign tools for parties and candidates to reach voters, and as government resources for offices, ministers, and elected representatives to interact with citizens. The second part groups chapters in which researchers examine how people use the Internet in politics: for direct democracy, for information seeking, for engagement, for online news (both creation and consumption), and for journalism. In addition one chapter raises the question of inequality of access to these new media. The third section of the handbook (on identity) offers more theoretical material with chapters on the virtual public sphere, social networks, gender online, the immigrant experience, and political identities under repressive regimes. Finally, the last part offers several essays on key legal or policy issues: censorship, surveillance, property and intellectual rights, ownership, access, and the technical protocols that both enable the Internet and limit its content. Another Routledge publication, Dutton’s (2014) four-volume set, also provides a comprehensive introduction to the Internet’s

role in politics. Encompassing more than just political communication, the volumes include 1. Foundations; 2. Internet Campaigns and Elections; 3. Empowering Individuals, Networks and Political Movements; and 4. Networked Individuals, Political Institutions, and Governance. Each of the volumes reprints essays addressing the potentials and practices of the Internet. Of particular interest for political communication are the second volume's material on the use of the Internet in political campaigns and the communication strategies employed by candidates and parties; the third volume's descriptions of how the Internet changes the public sphere by allowing more immediate and wider citizen participation; and the fourth volume's essays on e-Democracy, the formation and communication of interest groups and non-governmental organizations, and the news system in an online world.

Because many associate the Internet with a younger generation, the collection edited by Loader, Vromen, and Xenos (2014) specifically addresses how young citizens use social media for political participation and civic engagement. Topics include political socialization, the use of social media for political education, and new forms of political participation among the young.

Charles (2012) offers a critical evaluation of the interactivity of the new media. Despite all the promise of the Internet 2.0 for political engagement, he asks whether that engagement really happens. Though the book addresses interactivity broadly (including discussions of gaming and reality television), a number of chapters do touch on political communication, particularly those examining e-Government in the U.S., the UK, and Eastern Europe; the phenomenon of public knowledge through shared online resources; and the "entertainment democracy" that invites viewers to vote for performers or participants.

A. Information and communication technologies (ICTs)

Noting the rising importance of "the executive" (whether prime minister, president, party leader, or some other central figure), De Blasio, Hibberd, and Sorice (2011) offer an edited set of papers that examine leadership as a communication function. Tellingly, they begin with those who examine ICTs or web-based political communication before turning to explorations of the more traditional topics of television, the press, campaigns, and theoretical explanations of political influence through communication. The contributors

highlight the reality that the media allow leaders to directly address the governed, often undermining traditional democratic structures. Garrett, Bimber, De Zúñiga, Heinderyckx, Kelly, and Smith (2012) offer a more theoretical look at key places where ICTs intersect with political communication. After outlining those key points, the authors suggest opportunities for research. Summarizing a research conference, Plottka (2012) presents an overview of political social media in Europe, noting the challenges these new media practices present to both politicians and citizens. Hoffman (2012) compares online political participation and online political communication in the U.S. She notes that "online communication and participation do appear to be different constructs, and while online participation predicts voting, online communication does not" (p. 217). Campbell and Kwak (2011) offer a similar study, but look at mobile communication in general rather than just online activity. By focusing on networks of individuals, they find that "mobile-based discourse is positively associated with political participation, but that this relationship is moderated by the size and heterogeneity of one's network" (p. 1005). Himelboim, Lariscy, Tinkham, and Sweetser (2012) also focus on the interpersonal, but more specifically on constructs like trust and openness in online political activities. Starting with a conceptual framework suggesting different kinds of interactions, they find that "interpersonal informational trust . . . [is] positively associated with perception of online activities as political participation . . . [and] with use of all types of online media for purposes of political communication, but mostly with online spaces that require interaction with others" (p. 92). New media can also encourage political discussion. Liu and Zhang (2013) study "daily talk" as a kind of political activity and see it occurring in online venues. Paying attention to two forms—"direct government-citizen interactions and perceptions of the importance of new media for online political discussion"—they use survey data on civic engagement in the U.S. to find that "citizens' interactions with both members of their political group and government officials have positive influences on the frequency of online political discussion. Meanwhile, the association between online political discussion and online group communication becomes stronger when one perceives that new media are less important as source of political information" (p. 444).

Hsieh and Li (2014) look at the implications of ICTs for political participation in Taiwan. They attend

particularly to how such media might “facilitat[e] political talk in interpersonal spaces and subsequently, political participation in public domains.” Their examination of survey data suggests a positive relationship between the two. “Individuals who discuss politics with their friends via the Internet and those who use more types of online media for social interaction are more likely to contact legislators and elected officials directly via the Web and articulate their political thoughts in online public spaces such as forums, blogs, and websites of news media” (p. 26). Lei (2011) asks about the emergence of online citizen participation in China. Noting a lack of systematic study of the question, Lei uses national survey data and finds that “Chinese netizens, as opposed to traditional media users and non-media users, are more politically opinionated . . . , more likely to be simultaneously supportive of the norms of democracy and critical about the party-state and the political conditions in China, while also being potential and active participants in collective action” (p. 291). Using interviews and focus groups, Ullah (2013) p. 271 studies political participation among educated young people in Bangladesh, asking whether ICTs play any role. He found that these youth “favor forward-looking agendas by rejecting traditional ideology-based party politics . . . [and want to] shap[e] their opinions through social networking instead of processions, party meetings, and political violence” (p. 271).

In Europe, Tasente and Ciacu (2013) ask, on the one hand, how Romanian parliamentary parties take advantage of social media and, on the other, how much social network participants engage in political activity. Karlsen (2011) examines a potential negative consequence of ICTs in Norwegian elections: fragmentation. The ability to tailor campaigns to specific voters and the division of audience share among more media outlets leads, Karlsen proposes, to multiple voter agendas. However, the research shows that at this time “Norwegian parties hardly use . . . ICTs to multi-tailor campaign messages to different voter categories [and] the voters who considered online sources important for electoral information also identified traditional sources as important” (p. 146). For now, Karlsen concludes, countervailing forces, traditional practices, and legal constraints keep any fragmentation in check.

B. Blogs

Blogging has become both a popular means of political expression and an increasingly important source of political communication data. Hyun (2012) uses political blogs to test the influence of American

online practices on other countries. Looking at hypertext links to blogs in the U.S., the UK, and Germany, the study showed greater connectedness among U.S. sites but also higher fragmentation. Hyun notes a strong influence of local conditions on political blogs. Acknowledging these local conditions and constraints on an international level, Åström and Karlsson (2013) explore intra-national differences. Looking only at Sweden, their “central argument is that different parties utilize blogging in different ways,” varying by ideological position such as individualism or collectivism. A content analysis of “over 600 blogging politicians confirms that ideological positions towards individualism and collectivism have a great impact on the uptake and usage of political blogs, portraying political blogging as a strongly ideologically situated practice of political communication” (p. 434). López García, Campos Domínguez, and Valera Ordaz (2013) examine the role of political blogs in the 2011 Spanish elections, looking at how they shaped political opinions and how the traditional media representatives (particularly political reporters) employed blogs. Rubira and Gil-Egui (2013) examined one Cuban blog in an attempt to understand how new media have opened up spaces for political discussion where “Cuban communities, inside and outside the island, are characterized by substantial ideological differences and economic gaps that highlight the challenges for consensus building and collective action in the country’s politics.” They found that “while this blog opens an unprecedented opportunity for Cubans to engage in relatively unrestricted political dialogue, its users tend to favor expressive participation and antagonistic exchanges over the rational deliberations associated with traditional conceptualizations of the notion of the public sphere” (p. 153). Bigi (2013) conducted a similar study of the Beppogrillo.it blog in Italy, but focused on its readability. Noting that in the seven years of study, the blog changed from the expression of an individual to that of a party, Bigi found “that levels of readability of communications, particularly among broad-based audiences, may be deteriorating significantly when the blog becomes a political one and the communication becomes more institutional” (p. 209).

C. Twitter

The micro-blogging site has also become a popular venue for political communication. Dang-Xuan, Stieglitz, Wladarsch, and Neuberger (2013) looked at the influence of Twitter in a state parliamentary election in Germany and measured emotional tone, topics, appraisal of politicians in the top retweeted users. They

conclude that a study like theirs “helps both researchers and politicians to better understand the nature of influencers in political communication and the role of sentiment in information diffusion on Twitter” (p. 795). Vaccari, Valeriani, Barberá, Bonneau, Jost, Nagler, and Tucker (2013) surveyed Italians who used Twitter in the 2013 general election in order to learn more about this segment of the voters. They found “that Twitter political users in Italy are disproportionately male, younger, better educated, more interested in politics, and ideologically more left-wing than the population as a whole. Moreover, there is a strong correlation between online and offline political communication, and Twitter users often relay the political contents they encounter on the web in their face-to-face conversations” (p. 381). They suggest that the activity on Twitter will carry over to their interpersonal networks.

Bayraktutan, Binark, Çomu, and their colleagues (2014) examined the political use of Twitter in the 2011 Turkish general election. Sancar (2013) also focused on the use of Twitter for political communication in Turkey, but in the context of political public relations. After examining one month of Twitter activity (media agenda, trending topics, replies to constituents, etc.) among party leaders, she concludes that

the effective use of Twitter is provided only by two leaders, Kemal Kılıçdaroglu and Selahattin Demirtas. Recep Tayyip Erdogan often uses Twitter effectively but he also has to follow people for dialogical communication. Abdullah Gül is a less effective Twitter user but with his number of followers, he’s the most fancied leader. And finally, Devlet Bahçeli is the most unused of Twitter. (p. 181)

Aragón, Kappler, Kaltenbrunner, Laniado, and Volkovich (2013) propose using Twitter for data mining. Looking at the 2011 Spanish general election through the lens of Twitter, they examined emotional tone, party expression, and other activity to measure the level of adaptation of political parties to new media. They concluded “that political parties, and especially the major traditional parties, still tend to use Twitter just as a one-way flow communication tool. Moreover, we find evidence of a balkanization trend in the Spanish online political sphere, as observed in previous research for other countries” (p. 183).

D. Social networks

Social networks of all kinds, but particularly Facebook, have quickly entered the realm of political

communication practice. Macková, Fialová, and Štětka (2013) note the rise of social networking sites during election campaigns in the Czech Republic. Seeking to compare the use of these media among candidates, they examined Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter during the 2012 election cycle. They conclude that “younger candidates in regional elections engage in online campaigning more intensely than older candidates, . . . that Senate candidates use new media more extensively than candidates for the Regional Council, [and that] the most commonly used new media in both types of elections were traditional websites and the online social networking site Facebook” (p. 507). Ionescu (2013) traces the transition to social networking in Romanian politics, looking at how political discourse has changed. She notes a growing importance of the visual and of a marketing approach as well as an increase of user-generated content and a change in the cost of production and distribution of political materials. Finally, she notes the integration of Facebook pages into campaigns. Wen (2014) also examines Facebook, but in the context of the 2012 Taiwanese presidential election. Comparing static web pages (Web 1.0) with interactive ones (Web 2.0), Wen finds that “while the 1.0 messages emphasized policy more than character, the 2.0 messages emphasized character over policy. This study also suggests that politicians have shifted the main functions of their Facebook posts based on their roles in campaigning and governing” (p. 19). Pătruț (2012) offers a look at the use of websites by Romanian political groups. Examining 10 years of material, she describes the websites as focused on providing information to rather than mobilizing voters. She notes that the party website has remained closer to the Web 1.0 information model than to the engagement or interactive models. Morin and Flynn (2014) examined Facebook use by new political groups, focusing on the Tea Party in the U.S., and how the group’s supporters made use of social media to create an identity. They found that “Tea Party supporters engaged in two types of polarization language strategies to construct and preserve their online identity” (p. 115), strategies they classified as creating an “echo chamber” effect.

As the political use of new media increases, so too does the study of it. However, as appears in this small sample of studies, researchers have only begun to describe and understand the impact of these new approaches. Few have begun to propose theories to more deeply understand them.

9. Political Communication outside the U.S.

Much of the early study of political communication took place in the context of U.S. politics and U.S. media, though with several important theoretical contributions coming from Europe. The 21st century has seen a growing body of work examining political communication outside the United States, paying attention to parliamentary democracy and other forms of political participation. While many of the variables carry over from one country to another, the studies themselves add to a deeper understanding of the role of communication in politics. Increased global connections have also offered greater scope for political communication research around the world. One big change in political communication study in the last 10 years appears in the volume of publication. Typically, the handbooks and overviews of political communication published up to the early 21st century devoted a chapter to international study or to political communication (both practices and studies) in countries outside of the U.S. Some of this, of course, reflects the country of publication of the handbooks and some, the location of the graduate programs in political communication. However, the last few years have seen more and publication of studies addressing political communication outside the U.S. This section will briefly introduce some of those studies, grouped generally by region.

Some of the more general work looks to communication or communication study in a transnational setting. Wojcieszak (2012) introduces papers from a symposium that aimed to promote such research looking beyond the Western hemisphere. Noting that “we know relatively little about how contextual factors such as electoral structures, political culture, media systems, and information flows affect citizen participation in the democratic and especially, in the nondemocratic political process,” (p. 255), she calls for more research, particularly on under-represented areas. She identifies three questions:

- What can be learned from thinking about media and political communication as transnational phenomena?
- What are the similarities and the differences in academic and professional approaches to political communication in various contexts?

- What are the challenges and the opportunities for transnational cooperation and international research in the field? (p. 256).

Individual papers introduced in her summary begin to develop theoretical models for studying these questions.

In another theoretical piece, Vural (2010) discusses how political parties themselves should function within a democratic society and argues that the parties must be democratic, with internal structures fostering the democracy that the parties propose to the larger civic society. Vural criticizes, for example, a “straight ticket” voting policy as one that builds too much upon the person of the party leader and ultimately deprives members of a voice.

A. European Union and Western Europe

The greatest number of recent works on political communication outside of the U.S. addresses practices in or studies about countries in the European Union and Western Europe. Some, like O’Connor (2014) provide historical studies, in this case of the European suffrage movement between 1948 and 1990. The political communication about European elections reflected a deeper discussion about democracy and the form of democracy that a union might follow. Bruch and Pfister (2014) look back at how Europeans saw themselves in 1950’s newsreels, which they suggest functioned as a kind of propaganda for the proposed union. Other studies focus on contemporary practices: In a pair of studies Auel and Raunio (2014a, 2014b) examine the communication functions of national parliaments in forming or maintaining links with the EU, gathering empirical data of parliamentary debates on EU issues in the UK, Finland, Germany and France. Pollak and Slominski (2014) offer a similar study focused on the Austrian parliament’s information function in the face of EU politics. They look at “the communication strategies of three different sets of actors: the parliament as an institution; parliamentary party groups; and individual MPs, and shows how these strategies have changed over time, notably in the context of the EU Treaty ratification debates” (p. 109). Lilleker and Koc-Michalska (2013) use the communication of the members of the

European Parliament as a case study “of how legislators prioritize styles of communication, with a comparative perspective across 27 nations.” They applied content analysis to Internet usage, attending to three strategies: “homestyle, impression management, and participatory” and found “that a homestyle strategy predominates, followed by impression management” (p 190). Participatory communication may help the legislators gain an online following.

Where these researchers studied politicians or parties faced with issues at the EU level, Moeller and de Vreese (2013) look at the media across Europe and their influence within countries. Using the European Social Survey, they analyze data on the political socialization of young people and their levels of political engagement. They found “a higher level of engagement in countries with a well-functioning democracy. At the individual level, news media exposure is positively related to engagement in consumer politics, whereas exposure to entertainment is negatively related to mobilization” (p. 309).

Plotka (2012) summarizes conference findings that explored the use of social media in European politics. The topics included discussions on the compatibility of these new media with existing forms of democracy in Europe, the impact of these media on interpersonal political discussion, and the challenges that new media pose for politicians and citizens. Among other researchers, the influence of social media forms an important topic of investigation. Hyun (2012) uses the practices of political blogging to compare political communication in the U.S., Germany, and the UK. Macková, Fialová, and Štětka (2013) monitored social networking sites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube communication by politicians and parties in the Czech Republic’s 2012 election. Emmer, Wolling, and Vowe (2012) use survey data to estimate the influence on online communication in German elections. They conclude that new media have created a complementary role and that people’s media habits remain fairly stable over time. Herkman (2012) tests the role of digital media in Finish political campaigning and finds, not so much a complementary role, but one of intermediality. That is, “political communication takes place by increasing the number of media channels and communication technologies, which are inherently linked to each other, but which also have histories and traditions of their own” (p. 369). Such a development tends to divide voters by generation. Finally, Aragón, Kappler, Kaltenbrunner, Laniado, and Volkovich

(2013) suggest a methodological approach, in which they study the large data sets generated by Twitter posts in order to better understand the Spanish national election of 2011.

Other studies of political communication in Western Europe focus on single countries or perhaps comparisons of two countries. Bertolotti, Catellani, Douglas, and Sutton (2013) conducted experimental studies in Britain and Italy to see how voters might react to different kinds of rhetorical statements made by political leaders. Atkins and Finlayson (2013) looked only at the rhetoric of British party leaders and how the shifting use of anecdote mirrors the political ideas and ideologies and how they in turn function as a kind of proof based in everyday experience rather than in technical knowledge. Cammaerts (2012) also uses rhetorical analysis to examine the 2007–2011 Belgian constitutional crisis.

A number of Italian researchers have published several books on political communication in Italy. Giansante (2011) offers a general overview while De Blasio and Sorice (2010) focus on Italian politics and interactive media. Bigi (2013) reports a more focused study of one Italian political blog.

Spanish political communication has also attracted multiple researchers. Pineda, Garrido, and Ramos (2013) conducted a comparative content analysis of American and Spanish political advertising, using both broadcast and YouTube videos. They conclude a continuing dependence on traditional models of advertising even as the distribution medium changes. Garrido-Lora (2013) focused on traditional political communication: the use of slogans in political advertising. A content analysis indicates that key characteristics include brevity and semantic density. Karlsen (2011) uses the case of Norway to examine audience fragmentation in a competition between broadcasting and online media. Like Pineda, Garrido, and Ramos (2013), he found little evidence to support a split between the concerns of voters who receive news online and those who use traditional media. Kaal (2012) developed a discourse analysis protocol to identify rhetorical structures and world views in Dutch election manifestos. These, Kaal, hypothesized would appear in the use of time and space and reflect the affective dimensions of party positions. Albæk and de Vreese (2010) provide an introduction of political communication research in Denmark and offer an overview of studies.

Lastly, Cranmer (2011) applies the political communication model to Switzerland and populist issues or

parties. The study shows “that a) different public settings influence populist communication differently; b) a non-populist party, the Christian-Democrats, employs more populist communication on average than any other party and its populism is employed more consistently across contexts than that of the Swiss People’s Party; c) but when speaking in media forms, the Swiss People’s Party employs substantially more populist communication than any other party” (p. 286). Cranmer concludes that an interaction of forum and party best predicts populist discourse.

B. Eastern and Southern Europe

Eastern Europe has had to adjust to both a changing political environment and a changing media environment after the end of communist rule. A number of studies examine the impact of these changes. Pfetsch and Voltmer (2012) focus on Bulgaria and Poland, asking politicians and journalists about their relationships and interactions. They conclude that “in Bulgaria closed-knitted networks between the two sets of actors continue to shape political communication breeding ‘deals’ and even corruption that seriously undermine the independence of political journalism. In contrast, political communication roles in Poland appear more differentiated making it more difficult for political actors to exercise control over the public agenda” (p. 388). In Hungary, Szabó and Kiss (2012) identify four trends in the post-communist era political communication: “fragmentation, the multiplication of [political communication] channels and means, endless amount of [political communication] arenas, Internet, Web 2.0, fragmentation of content, amateurism in [political communication]; post-objectivity, the end of the requirement of unbiased and balanced coverage, more emphasis on the rise of opinion, on media as community focal point rather than window to the objective reality; the performative turn, the representation of self, a strong focus on act, dramaturgy, and aesthetics in [political communication]; and popularization, the convergence of popular culture and politics, fan democracy, entertaining politics, involvement of citizens, etc.” (p. 480).

Four studies examine the political communication landscape in Romania. Ștefănescu (2010) presents a theoretical analysis of political communication as a strategy for politicians to maintain power. Negrescu (2013) analyzes the political framework of Romania’s regions as the structure for communication competition and the development of new power bases. Tasente and Ciacu (2013) ask about the impact of

social media on parliamentary parties in Romania. They investigate both the messages and the level of participation among party supporters, finding a rough equivalence in support for the parties online and in the offline world. Finally, Pătruț (2012) p. 145 studied the websites of the political parties in Romania. “The findings show that the political website is used more to inform and less to involve or mobilize visitors and that the SDP website is far from the web 2.0 taking account the virtual practices performed” (p. 145).

Looking farther south, Veneti and Poulakidakos (2010) offer a rhetorical investigation of Greek political advertising. Rooted primarily in television, these ads mark a shift to “aestheticization” and offer a new role for the media, influencing elections and serving as a mediator between parties and voters.

C. Turkey and the Middle East

Political communication scholars have paid increasing attention to Turkey, particularly as its elections have taken on more independence. Avşar and Durman (2011) examine Turkish politics historically by looking back to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s opening speech of Erzurum Congress. They argue that importance of this speech rests on several factors: its being the first lengthy political statement by Atatürk; the Congress as the place where the modern Turkish state took its form; and the role of the speech in shaping the outcome of the Congress. Turning to the contemporary era, Koc and Ilgun (2010) examine political party slogans. Their rhetorical analysis indicates a limited use of rhetorical figures in the slogans, with irony and metaphor the most common. They conclude that the dominant “Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or AKP), which came to power in November 2002, . . . tended to avoid rhetorical figures in its political campaigns in line with its positioning [as] a party of action without demagoguery and gossiping” (p. 207). Sancar (2013) examines how techniques such as interactive public relations—Twitter’s open access—has worked in Turkish politics.

Interested in the different channels of information conveyed by interpersonal communication (the verbal and the nonverbal) Grebelsky-Lichtman (2010) studied 20 years of television appearances by the former Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon. Looking particularly at moments of “discrepancy when there is a contradiction and inconsistency between the channels, and non-discrepancy when they are consistent and do not contradict each other,” Grebelsky-Lichtman concludes “that patterns of discrepancy and non-discrepancy between

the verbal and the nonverbal messages are indicative of the political stature of the political person being interviewed” with Sharon’s behavior correlating with his power at the time of the interviews (p. 229).

Given the upheavals in Middle Eastern governments, it is not surprising to find studies of the Arab Spring. Peron Vieira (2013) looks specifically at the role of digital communication during that time. As a tool of both international relations and popular political activity, Peron Vieira concludes that digital communication fostered the Arab Spring as a transnational event.

D. Russia

Zhanteeva (2012) offers a theoretical analysis of political communication in the Russian context, beginning with various definitions of communication, often seeking clarity of concepts glossed over in traditional communication studies. Turning to political communication, Zhanteeva reminds the reader that “the attention of researchers in Russia has concentrated on the significance of the socio-cultural foundations of political communication.” She offers the following conclusion:

Therefore, we consider the following definition to be applicable: ethno-political communication is a culturally conditioned exchange of information between political actors, intertwined with the specific features of ethno-political cultures and ethno-political psychology. In other words, ethno-political communication, which is an element in social and political communication, emerges as a form of expression for ethno-political culture, while creating new ethno-cultural standards for relationships within the realm of political power that are determined by the qualitative changes taking place in the communication and information system of the country. (p. 62)

Social structures matter to political communication and researchers must, therefore, also consider the relationship between the authorities and society. These also include the goals and resources of political actors, both overt and the “shadowy or semishadowy elements of society” (p. 63).

Krainova (2013) moves between theory and practice in her examination of “the problems of management of politic-communicative processes in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation” (p. 78). She considers the ideas of a public space, the growth of local communities, the importance of regional and municipal politics, and the role of public authorities.

E. China, Taiwan, South Asia, and Australia

With its mix of political systems and practices, Asia has received some attention from political communication scholars. Several recent studies examine China, either from an historical perspective or from a new media perspective. Just as some in the West trace political communication theory to Aristotle, some scholars in China call attention to the long history of political ritual as communication in China. Bai (2014) examines how new dynasties gained legitimacy in ancient China. Such “ordered rituals,” “composed by exhortation, abdication, sacrifices and symbol reconstruction” worked together with political symbols within the established belief system to publicize and establish the new dynasty (p. 20). Shi-xu (2012) offers both the historical perspective as well as a more intercultural one, questioning the dominant “West-centric” views, and proposing “a view of contemporary Chinese political discourse as dynamic, critical-creative, and cultural-hegemony-resistant” (p. 93). To illustrate the case study Shi-xi focuses on the Chinese discourse of human rights.

Lu (2013) provides a different look at Chinese political communication, drawing on survey data to “present a comprehensive picture of the media channels that Chinese citizens use for political information, as well as their relative importance as assessed by the Chinese people” (p. 828). In addition Lu analyzes the data to show which Chinese groups favor which media.

Given its faster move to democratic elections, Taiwan has attracted a fair amount of study in terms of political communication. Rawnsley and Gong (2011) examine the relationship between journalists and politicians from a theoretical stance of power. “Based on the assumption that in cultures of democratic political communication the interaction between media and political actors involves both conflict and cooperation, [they] consider how journalists and politicians negotiate the balance of power between them” (p. 323). Their interviews showed a great deal of mistrust and hostility between the political and media participants, which in their view may place the quality of Taiwanese political communication at risk. Chenxu (2012) looks at how politicians try to shape the political discourse in Taiwan through the use of public relations companies. More optimistic about the political communication situation, Chenxu’s informants suggest that “good public relations campaign will increase the transparency of government activities and encourage people’s participation in public space:” (p. 29). Turning to new media,

Wen (2014) analyzed Facebook pages of candidates in the 2012 Taiwanese presidential election in terms of preferences for policy or candidate character.

Two studies presented comparative data. Zhang (2012) looked at Taiwan and Singapore in terms of political communication (news and interpersonal communication) and “authoritarian orientation” and the levels of voter participation. Sullivan and Cheon (2011) contrasted Taiwanese and South Korean uses of blogging. Characterizing the two nations as “two of the most switched-on democracies in the world,” the researchers tested how and how much legislators in each county employed blogs. They also noted differences from the western cases “that dominate the literature” (p. 21).

As already noted in the section on new media, Ullah (2012) describes how ICTs have changed political activism among the young in Bangladesh. And much farther south, Wilson (2014) examines the rise of Kevin Rudd in Australian politics as a media celebrity. “Rudd’s engagement with celebrity culture, and his instantiation of ‘audience democracy’ can be understood in the context of Australia’s ‘post-broadcast democracy,’ the competitive, co-adaptive dynamic between political actors and journalists, and the increasing celebratization of contemporary culture” (p. 202).

F. Africa

In addition to the sheer complexity and variety of African governments and the temptation (fallen into here) to group all of Africa together, students of political communication in Africa all too often view it through a Western lens. In a report combining theoretical work with empirical data Ngomba (2012) directly challenges the Westernization of communication study and “outlines culturally-nested theoretical considerations to comprehensively study the practices and changes in political campaign communication in Africa. The article argues that although drawing on supposedly ‘Western’ theories, overall the proposed theoretical considerations constitute an example of a more viable approach to de-Westernize communications theory” (p. 164). Labuschagne (2011) also proposes a theoretical model that attends to cultural environments in Africa. Examining in particular the reception of meaning, he analyzes an important political cartoon in South Africa as a way to open up those environments. In the study he shows “how different cultural environments in South Africa react differently to the same political communication and its meaning” (p.

367). Chibwe (2013) offers a look at the recent contested politics of Zimbabwe, with the struggles between an entrenched government and a strong challenger. The “battle has been fought on many fronts including the media and international forums with ZANU PF accusing the MDC of being ‘puppets’ of the British and Americans. On the other hand, the MDC accuses ZANU PF of ‘dictatorship.’” Chibwe notes past studies of media coverage, particularly of political speeches; he focuses on political advertising. He includes a review of “existing Zimbabwean literature on media coverage of elections, music nationalism, political journalism, cultural journalism among other political communication related studies, [and] proposes a new theory of post-colonial African political communication and/or political advertising” (p. 116). Like Ngomba, he suggests that studies of African political communication rely too much on Western models.

Kuhlmann’s (2012) look at Zimbabwean political communication calls attention to the use of humor by both journalists and activists in the diaspora to raise awareness about the government. The study “explores how diasporic Zimbabweans have made use of the freedoms in their current locations and of new media and other means to express their dissatisfaction with the Zimbabwean government and the state of affairs in their home country through satire and related forms of political humor” (p. 295).

Ngomba’s more theoretical study (2012) builds on data from an earlier one. Ngomba (2011) examines campaign strategies in Cameroon. In the last 20 years, Cameroon developed a more varied media industry; in addition, government regulations have changed to allow media-based campaigns. Ngomba describes the situation and the imbalance between weak media campaigns and the party-backed proximity-based campaigns.

Where Kuhlmann calls attention to cartoons and Internet-delivered satire, Ndlovu and Mbenga (2013) also consider the political possibilities of the Internet. Turning to Facebook, they analyze how South Africa’s African National Congress Youth League, Democratic Alliance Youth, and Congress of the People Youth Movement make use of Facebook. How much of a voice does this new media allow for non-traditional views? The argue “that Facebook pages and groups are an extension of the public sphere as they attempt to get youth involved in politics in a technologically and socially transforming society; that as much as political party communication is propaganda and people tend to gravitate towards ideologies that conform to their

world-view, party supporters on Facebook do challenge their political parties' views; and that some arguments on Facebook enrich the public sphere discourse" (p. 169).

Finally, Popoola (2012) examines more traditional mass media, critiquing political radio and television during an election period.

G. South America

Political communication researchers have begun to pay more attention to South America. Boas and Hidalgo (2011) examine the relationship between incumbency (with its attendant patronage possibilities) and the granting of radio licenses in Brazil. Their analysis indicates that political incumbents who received community radio licenses both had greater influence over the media and had a better chance of winning subsequent elections. Luengo and Coimbra-Mesquita (2013) ask whether media consumption has a negative effect on civic participation. In a comparative study of Brazil and Spain, they link media exposure, institutional trust, and participation. Their results differed by country, something they attribute to the different political systems.

In a study of Ecuadorian politics, Nieto (2012) looks at specific kinds of rhetoric, particularly myth, in that country. She argues that a deliberate appeal to myth serves a strategic function. "The myth of Eloy Alfaro, Ecuadorian leader of the late 19th century liberal revolution, constitutes an example of implementation of this model that has proved successful as a strategy of political communication in Rafael Correa's government in Ecuador" (p. 139). A similar appeal to an earlier era has also appeared in Venezuela. Cañizález (2013) studied government discourses under Hugo Chávez, who presented himself as leading a "Bolivarian Revolution." The model, Cañizález writes, "is heavily characterized by populism and personality politics" (p. 179) and contributed to Chávez's re-elections in 2000, 2004 and 2006.

With the restoration of democracy in Chile, Santander (2013) examines the relationship between political journalists and the communication advisers of the political elite there. In a different kind of transition, Cuba has experienced both the greater penetration of ICTs and a rising post-revolutionary generation. Rubira and Gil-Egui (2013) studied the blogosphere as an alternative venue of political discussion. In their content analysis, they addressed "the most renowned Cuban blog, 'Generación Y.'" In both cases, the characteristics

of the media (broadcasting and online) influence the political discourse available to citizens.

H. Canada and Mexico

As influenced as they are by their larger neighbor, Canada and Mexico have their own traditions of political activity and political communication. Lees-Marshment and Marland (2012) look at political marketing in Canada, exploring whether political consultants encourage "politics to become poll-driven, and whether they fit into previous international studies on consultants in other countries, especially the United States." Based on qualitative studies and interviews, they conclude "that Canadian political marketing does not fit into an idealistic, realistic, or cynical view of political marketing but is a more complex synthesis and thus the democratic impact is more varied and debatable" (p. 333). Richards, Belcher, and Noble (2013) examine environmental policy issues in Canada and the kinds of communication barriers faced by those who want greater public participation. They identify four common barriers: misreported information, a lack of information, information that is too dense, and obsolete information.

Espino-Sánchez (2011) looks at presidential campaigns in Mexico after the 70-year domination of the PRI. An analysis of three elections between 1994 and 2006 shows a shift in the relationship between public opinion, the mass media, and the political class.

I. International political communication

International political communication theory seeks to explain how governments use or depend upon information in deals with other governments. Potter and Baum (2010), for example, look at the challenges governments face in peace making. They note difficulties in

the apparent empirical observation of a democratic peace. One prominent strand of this research focuses on the notion of audience costs, or the idea that democracies can signal their intentions more credibly than autocracies because they face electoral sanctions for bluffing and failure. The argument is that with the ability to signal more credibly comes better information, which in turn reduces the likelihood of conflict. (p. 453)

To better understand the phenomenon, they bring together literature from theories of democratic peace studies with those on audience cost studies. The latter

imply a free press so that citizens obtain credible information and this in turn gives greater credibility in foreign relations. “The implication is that while leaders might gain flexibility at home by controlling the media, they do so at the cost of their capacity to persuade foreign leaders that their ‘hands are tied’” (p. 453).

Another way that governments engage in relations with other governments occurs through public diplomacy. Azpiroz (2013) proposes an application of framing theory to such practice. “States and other organizations resort [to public diplomacy] in order to achieve political objectives abroad and to establish positive relations with foreign publics.” If part of this diplomacy occurs through the media, then government actors have to become media actors. “One of the different variants of public diplomacy is mediatic diplomacy, whose end is to get the public diplomacy’s message transmitted by institutional media or to get a positive coverage by foreign media” (p. 176). Framing theory provides an approach to applying discourse analysis to this kind of institutional political communication.

10. Research Methods

A. Computer-assisted methods

Political communication study has refined its research methods over the years. Moving from public opinion polls to sophisticated tracking of voter attention in refinements of the agenda-setting hypothesis, to working with large data sets, researchers have attempted to explain voter behavior as well as the effectiveness of advertising, campaign debates, emotional appeals, and other factors that might account for citizen choices.

One of the most significant recent additions to the research tools for political communication comes from computer-assisted methods. Moe and Larsson (2012) recognize the benefits of such large-scale data collection and analysis, but also see practical and ethical challenges (p. 117). The practical include “the scale of the data available for collection and analysis challenge our methodological frames as we collect, sort, and study large-scale quantitative data sets—often with the use of computer software. Researchers not only need to learn the practices of new tools for data gathering and

Similarly, the structure of elections in non-U.S. settings may influence political advertising practices. Stępińska (2010) proposes a framework to understand political communication in “double elections,” that is simultaneous elections for, say, a president and a parliament. She examined party strategies in Polish elections and found that “once these two types of the elections are set within the frame of a few weeks, parliamentary elections seem to be of greater significance to political actors, while presidential campaigns are perceived as just an additional opportunity for political parties to promote themselves” (p. 202).

Some political communication studies, particularly those from outside the United States, have expanded the traditional topics for political communication. Gray (2013) investigates the effect of government funding of non-governmental organizations on their ability to enter into the political communication process, since a number of governments places restrictions on political speech as a condition of funding. This study draws a contrast between Australian practices (and the lack of judicial guidance) and U.S. understandings (as noted in Supreme Court decisions.)

analysis, but they must also be able to critically assess the positive aspects as well as the drawbacks of these new approaches.” The ethical requires researchers “to renegotiate and reflect upon the borders between the private and the public” (p. 118).

Several research groups propose specific methodologies for use with digital information. Young and Soroka (2012) argue that computer power allows a greater focus on “the ‘sentiment’ or ‘tone’ of news content, political speeches, or advertisements.” They describe and validate a method which “uses a dictionary-based approach consisting of a simple word count of the frequency of keywords in a text from a predefined dictionary.” They describe the “Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary” (LSD) and test it “against a body of human-coded news content” in order to establish its validity. Results “suggest that the LSD produces results that are more systematically related to human coding than are results based on the other available dictionaries” (p. 205). Quinn, Monroe, Colaresi, Crespin, and Radev (2010) look to computer models

for analyzing political texts, such as speeches. They propose “a statistical learning model that uses word choices to infer topical categories covered in a set of speeches and to identify the topic of specific speeches.” By estimating topics in this way, they were able to review seven years of material in the U.S. Congressional Record (118,000 speeches) and to find “speech topic categories that are both distinctive and meaningfully interrelated” (p. 209). While not disagreeing with the use of data sets for texts related to U.S. presidential speeches, Hart (2011) questions the value of at least one because the data set itself omits “the ceremonial dimensions of the modern presidency; its partisan-political events; its dialogue with the nation’s press; and . . . the local and regional encounters between the president and the American people” (p. 766). Hart’s criticism raises the important points of the quality and completeness of what goes into a data set for statistical analysis and the transparency about the decisions made by the researchers or archivists in creating those data sets.

B. Experimental and survey methods

Lying perhaps at the far end of the spectrum from the analysis of large data sets are field experiments. Green, Calfano, and Aronow (2014) find these promising for investigating “the effects of media messages on political attitudes and behavior.” Typically, such research must obtain the collaboration of campaigns and must adapt to the real-world situations of the participants. Green, Calfano, and Aronow offer “an overview of some alternative field experimental designs that allow researchers to maintain the advantages of random assignment while addressing practical considerations” (p. 168). They illustrate their proposal with examples of studying the effects of campaign advertising.

Even carefully designed experiments cannot account for all variation or even control for all sources of error. Druckman and Leeper (2012) encourage political communication researchers to pay attention to one source of error: pre-treatment events, that is, things that occur before the experiment. Their study “explore[s] how and when the pretreatment environment affects experimental outcomes” and then show how it manifest itself in actual experiments. They “argue that, under certain conditions, attending to pretreatment dynamics leads to novel insights, including a more accurate portrait of the pliability of the mass public and the identification of potentially two groups of citizens—what we call malleability reactive and dogmatic” (p. 875).

Survey research also faces challenges in determining whether it measures what researchers intend and whether it inherently cannot limit some kinds of error. Dilliplane, Goldman, and Mutz (2013), Prior (2013), and Goldman, Mutz, and Dilliplane (2013) engage in a spirited debate about how to limit self-report error in survey studies of media exposure in politics. Prior’s criticism of the proposed methodology argues that it suffers from low construct validity in failing to account for all media exposure, that it suffers from poor convergent validity, and that it does not have sufficient predictive validity. The authors of the new methods reply to each criticism (Goldman, Mutz, & Dilliplane, 2013), often arguing that Prior (2013) has confused traditional operationalizations of key variables with the theoretical constructs they have devised. They note that they wish “to highlight why adhering to a rigid conception of what scholars really want from media exposure measures may ultimately hamper the progress of research in this area. At the end of the day, assessment of any measurement technique is a matter of whether it is the best that one can possibly do at any given time and place” (p. 635–636).

Liu (2012) proposes another corrective to traditional political communication measurements, one based on the larger communication context in which individuals receive messages. Location matters. Liu’s proposed “series of multilevel modeling analyses indicate that contextual-level political advertising and candidate appearances moderate the relationship between newspaper use and political knowledge, and the relationship between political discussion and political knowledge” (p. 46). Such geospatial variation appears in the data analysis and indicates the importance of factoring the interactions of place into voter information equations.

C. Biological methods

In addition to traditional methods for measuring attention or reactions to political communication, some researchers have looked to newer trends in communication studies, such as biological measures. Blanton, Strauts, and Perez (2012) studied the reasons for people’s selective exposure to political information, particularly partisan news. Hypothesizing that “exposure to disliked news coverage can generate psychological discomfort,” they examined “the physiological effects of this hypothesized discomfort” by “determining how political partisanship influences release of the stress hormone, cortisol, following exposure to news coverage of a presidential election” (p. 447). They found that

an individual's political affiliation did indeed lead to "more negative and less positive emotional responses [to partisan content with which subjects disagreed] and with a spike in salivary cortisol levels. Contrary to predictions, however, the cortisol spikes appeared to oper-

ate independent of self-reported emotional distress" (p. 447). Their method of examining physiological indicators provides, then, an insight into people's responses to political information that may lie below the level of full consciousness.

11. New Directions

The changing communication context affects political communication, just as it has an impact on everything else. Blumler and Coleman (2013) argue that two key historical changes provide the context for a re-evaluation of political communication study: the mode of communication and the object of civic communication (p. 174). The former refers to the means which linked politicians, citizens, and journalists and to the relative influence each had through those means. They explain:

And since the 1990s, much of the generative ground from which political communication emanates does seem to have changed appreciably. Whereas the "old" system pivoted on a relatively small number of outlets (particularly, in limited-channel television) at which the big political and journalistic battalions could regularly direct their fire, now the channels through which political communications can flow are far more numerous and multifarious. This means that the targets for communicators to aim at are less concentratedly massed and that their audiences are more fragmented. Similarly, "both sides of the traditional communicating equation are becoming problematic, fragmented into multiple and contending alternative forms and rapidly spawning innovations of structure and function" (to quote Swanson, 1999, once again). And with the arrival, diffusion, and elaborated expansion of the Internet, there has appeared a transformed role for what was once merely "the audience" for political communications. From constituting chiefly a body of receivers, it has become a communicating force—rather a set of forces in its own right—with numerous channels for fast, convenient, interactive, and geographically extensive expression to which those who used to rule the communications roost more or less unchallenged must now closely attend. (pp. 175–176).

The second change that affects political communication has to do with role and understanding of citizenship. Many experience disillusion and disengagement with politics or feel displaced by corporate power and the rise of inequality (p. 177). For some the very idea of democratic paradigm has disappeared, along with trust in governments dominated by political elites (p. 178). For others extreme political partisanship had led to "negative majoritarianism" and small mindedness. Others conclude "that 'rational choice' decision making all too often defies the will of the majority, giving them at best the 'least worst' rather than the most desired outcome" (p. 179).

In response to this new world of political communication realities, Blumler and Coleman urge a new set of research priorities. These include

- examining "the implications and consequences of communication abundance" (p. 180);
- understanding the effects of the rise of diversity of opinion (or, conversely) the fall of convergence of ideas typical of the mass media (p. 181);
- exploring the changing balance in political reporting or understanding between the "game" (campaigns or issues as competitions between winners and losers) and the "substance" (policies, values, issues), applied not only to campaigns but to governance (p. 181);
- looking at the boundaries or nature of the political, where culture and even private behaviors become political; to look "into how traditional political language is managing to explain these new dynamics of social power" (p. 182);
- reconsidering questions of government "regulatory policy and audience literacy (p. 182); and
- expanding the research disciplines of political communication to include not only communication or media studies and political science, but also "political theory, psychology, history, and cultural studies" (p. 182).

12. Conclusion

This look through the last several years of research in political communication gives an idea of the vibrancy of this kind of communication research; it also highlights a number of developments in the field. Perhaps the most obvious lies in the sheer number of publications in political communication: These address both the practices of political communication—that is, what politicians and voters and media resources actually do—and the study of political communication—that is, how scholars and researchers try to understand and theorize about the former. A second development, also obvious from the first, is the growing internationalization of both aspects of political communication. Not only do scholars pay attention to what occurs outside the U.S., but they also resist the “westernization” of the analysis and understanding of political activity.

Third, and less obviously, the study of political communication depends more and more on computer-assisted research. Researchers have access to digital archives of political materials, ranging from texts of speeches to collections of video materials. And researchers more and more need computing power to analyze large data sets of information, whether of those same archives or of voter polls or of experimental results. More sophisticated statistics reveal more subtle connections but also require more computing.

Fourth, though recognized in reviews of political communication 10 or more years ago, the impact of new communication technologies has still surprised most researchers. The rapidly developing ICTs, their ubiquity, their availability, and their relatively low-costs have transformed the political realm. The ICTs have spread out political voice but also launched a new battle among political elites, challengers, and those dispossessed in the political process.

Finally, and largely a result of the ICTS, political communication scholars have recognized the need for new theory. Much of how people understand political communication grew out of studies of persuasion, of interpersonal relationships, and of the effects of the mass media. In that relatively closed world, researchers could try to work out—and their models reflected an extraordinary complexity—how journalists or media industries or politicians influences voters, for example. But most of these theories presumed effects of “big”

media. The new relationships of social media, for example, work differently and few, if any, know how to explain or predict that.

Political communication study and practice opens now onto a challenging future.

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Other Resources

- American Political Science Association, <http://www.apsanet.org/~polcomm/>
- Iowa State University Archives of Women's Political Communication, <http://www.womenspeecharchive.org/>
- Julian P. Kanter Political Commercial Archive at University of Oklahoma Political Communication Center, <http://pcc.ou.edu/>
- Latin American Political Science Association, <http://alacip.org/?c=up&&cat=34>
- New Democracy and the Centre for Media and Communication Studies "Massimo Baldini," <http://www.politicalcommunication.co.uk/>
- Political Communication*, <http://www.politicalcommunication.org/journal.html>
- Stanford University Political Communication Lab, <http://pcl.stanford.edu/>
- The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Political Communication Interest Group, <http://aejmcpolcomm.blogspot.com/>
- The National Communication Association, political communication division, <http://www.ncapcd.org/>
- University of Delaware, Center for Political Communication, <http://www.udel.edu/cpc/>
- University of Missouri Political Communication Institute, <http://pci.missouri.edu/>
- University of Pennsylvania Annenberg Public Policy Center, <http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/political-communication/>
- Vanderbilt University Television New Archive, <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/>
- Yale University Institution for Social and Policy Studies, <http://isps.yale.edu/publication-names/political-communication#.U0sjPfldV8F>

