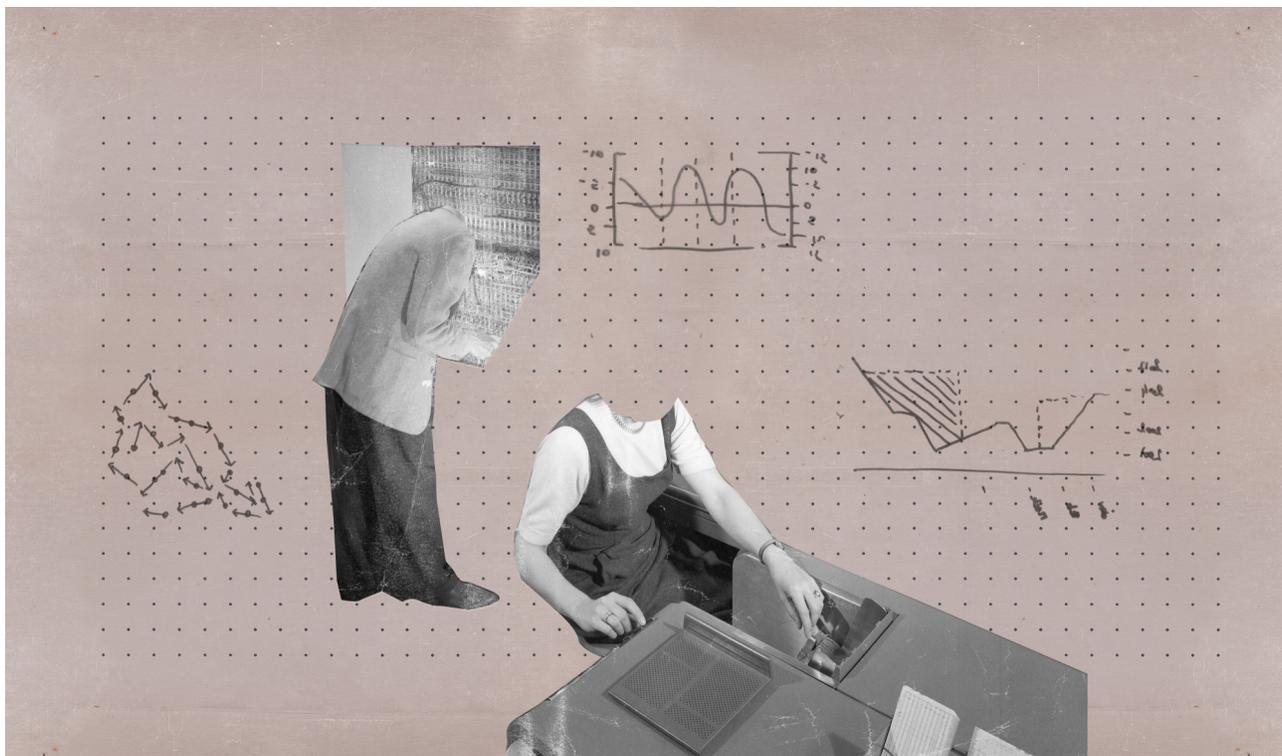


The Influence Industry Data Analytics in Canadian Elections

researched and written by
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DATA ANALYTICS IN CANADIAN ELECTIONS:

Country Study - Canada

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I. The Political Context in Canada

A Federal and Parliamentary political system

Canada's political system is a federal parliamentary democracy, with the Queen of the United Kingdom as the head of state. The Governor General is the Queen's representative in Ottawa, and each province has a Lieutenant Governor. The party commanding the confidence of the House is invited to form the government by the Governor General, with its party leader serving as the Prime Minister, typically after an election. Occasionally, the Governor General can play a key role in determining who forms a government, in circumstances when no party has an overall majority in Parliament, or when a minority government fails on a non-confidence vote (Dodek 2016; Malcolmson et al. 2016).

The federal legislature is comprised of a 338 seat elected House of Commons (the House) and an appointed Senate. Governments tend to be relatively stable in Canada, and hold safe majorities. Parties also often hold onto power through more than one election. In 42 elections since 1867, the incumbent party has been rejected fifteen times, with power alternating only between Liberals and Conservatives.¹ There have been 14 minority governments, meaning the party in power has more seats than any other party, but less than the total seats held by opposition parties. When the lead party wins a solid majority (over 50% of the seats in the House), it can typically push through its legislative agenda, beholden only to public opinion, and to judicial review. Coalition governments are very rare at the federal level, with only one formal coalition since federation in 1876.

Canada is also a federal system, divided into constitutionally autonomous levels of government: a national government, ten provinces and three territorial governments in the North. Federalism is a reflection of Canada's unique geography and history, which tries to reconcile a desire for national unity with respect for regional and ethnic diversity, especially in the predominantly French-speaking Quebec. The provinces and national (federal) government have distinct powers to regulate different policy spheres under the Constitution. They also control elections to their own provincial legislatures (Smith, 2010).

The Canadian Electoral System

Despite recent pressures to institute systems of proportional representation in some provinces, Canada uses a "single-member plurality" ("first-past-the-post") voting system (Pilon 2007). Thus, to win a riding (the Canadian term for a constituency or electoral district), and therefore a seat in the House, a candidate need only receive one more vote

¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Canadian_federal_general_elections

than any other candidate. Any number of candidates may run in a riding, either as the official representative of a registered party or as an independent. In practice, the vast majority of candidates are party candidates, and their party affiliations are indicated beside their names on the ballots.

Members of local party organizations, called riding associations, select candidates under various party voting rules. Candidates may run in only one riding, and a party may endorse only one candidate in a riding. The Elections Act, overseen by Elections Canada and administered by the Chief Electoral Officer, regulates all aspects of the electoral process at the federal level. There are parallel statutes and regulatory bodies in each province.

Canadian citizens who are over 18 years old on voting day have a constitutional right to vote in national elections.² Elections Canada maintains a permanent Register of Electors (commonly referred to as the Voter's List) to which citizens voluntarily register. Registration can occur on voting day, but the vast majority of voters register in advance. Voters register at their permanent address and may vote when away. However, only those who are registered may vote, a process that involves establishing identity with acceptable documentation. The process and form of identification at Canadian federal elections, and particularly the practice of "vouching" for another elector have been controversial issues and matters of recent changes under the 2014 Fair Elections Act (Wyld 2016).

The permanent voter register was established by law in 1996. Individuals may register, de-register or change their address at any time. Periodic updating is also conducted through opt-in data-sharing agreements with public agencies such as Revenue Canada (through personal income tax returns). Personal data also flows to and from provincial electoral and vital statistics bodies under information sharing agreements and with statutory authorization. The list is also updated during several times during the election campaign and distributed to political parties and candidates who may use it for electoral purposes.

Canada has a relatively low voter turnout among western democracies, but the rate can fluctuate in key elections and influence results. Since 1993, around 60% to 70% of eligible voters have cast a ballot. In the 2015 federal election, in which the Liberals with a young, new leader ousted the long-serving Conservative government, voter turnout increased over the prior election by 7.2 percent.³ As elsewhere, therefore, parties not only seek to convince committed voters for their support, they also seek to motivate non-voters and first-time and occasional voters.

Canada's low population density is also a factor in its elections. As of 2016, Population density was under 4 people per square kilometer, on a population base of 35 million⁴. In contrast, advanced countries around the world are in the triple digits per square kilometer. Voting by mail and advance polls help remote individuals vote. This low population density has implications for campaigning practices.

²Constitution Act, 1982, Part I, Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s. 3, Democratic rights of citizens, "Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein."

³Elections Canada, Voter Turnout at Federal Elections and Referendums, <http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=ele&dir=turn&document=index&lang=e>

⁴Statistics Canada, Population and Dwelling Count Highlight Tables, 2016 Census, Population and dwelling counts, for Canada, provinces and territories, 2016 and 2011 censuses – 100% data <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hltfst/pd-pl/Table.cfm?Lang=Eng&T=101&S=50&O=A>

Canada's Party System

Canada's party system tends to defy easy classification. It has more political parties than would commonly be produced by a first-past-the post electoral system, and there are often staggering swings of electoral fortune from one election to another.

There are three major nation-wide political parties represented at the federal level: the Liberal Party of Canada (Liberals), the Conservative Party of Canada (Conservatives), whose name has occasionally changed as it has absorbed regional parties, and the New Democratic Party (NDP). Only the Liberals and Conservatives have held power (apart from a coalition during the first world war), and the NDP has only been the official opposition once (from 2011 to 2015). From time to time, regional parties such as the Quebec-based Bloc Quebecois have also gained seats. The environmentally conscious Green Party's leader has held one seat since 2011 and has garnered almost 7% of the popular vote nation-wide. Some members of both houses sit as independents from time to time, usually after leaving a mainstream party, but they are few in number and not typically influential. There are 14 parties registered with Elections Canada, from Marxist-Leninist through to Libertarian, and representing special interests such as Christian Heritage, Marijuana, and Animal Protection, but few Canadians would be aware of their existence.⁵

The Liberals and Conservatives are broad centrist parties embracing a shifting mosaic of regional, ethnic and economic interests. The Conservatives are viewed as the party of business and tend to be more socially and fiscally conservative. The Liberals are a centrist party, combining a free-market economic philosophy with a socially progressive agenda. The social democratic NDP has historical ties to the labour movement. The ideological distance is not so great between the parties as to discourage voters from shifting allegiances due to scandals, specific policies or disillusionment with a party or leader that has been in power "too long". The middle ground is highly contested, but it is also susceptible to shifting and volatile allegiances (Gagnon & Tanguay, 2016).

Some parties have both national and provincial organizations, but the federal party system is not mirrored in the ten provinces, each of which has a distinct party system that has emerged as a result of local economic conditions and social cleavages. It is common, therefore, for voters to support one party provincially and another nationally. Federalism militates against the development of strong and enduring commitments to party identification (Johnston, 2017).

An estimated 2% or fewer Canadians belong to parties but this is difficult to confirm, as membership lists are closely guarded (Cross and Young, 2006). This is lower than many advanced democracies. The benefits of party membership are in being able to participate in choosing the local party candidate, and voting for or running as a party officer or convention delegate, thus influencing party policies and internal affairs. Canada is not a country wherein individuals expect to realize stable employment or patronage benefits from membership in a political party.

⁵Elections Canada, Registered Political Parties and Parties Eligible for Registration, <http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?dir=par&document=index&lang=e§ion=pol>

Party membership is open to residents of Canada (not just citizens) over a certain age determined by the party and is generally open to youth. Individuals need to supply a certain amount of personal information to become a member of a party, and they generally must agree to the principles of the party. This application form differs by party and is subject to payment of a low membership fee from CA\$25 and lower (except for the Liberals whose membership is free). Members form the base from which volunteer election workers and donors are solicited. Parties collect personal information on members' and volunteers' participation in party activities.

Election campaigns and financing

National election campaigns typically last 36 days and have recently been set by law at a fixed date in late October, every 4 years. This is not to say the campaigning begins and ends when election writs are dropped. The phenomenon of the permanent campaign is a feature of the Canadian political landscape, as it is in the United States and other democratic countries (Marland et al. 2017). Despite the introduction of fixed election dates, opposition parties under minority governments have to be ready for campaigns at any time if the party in power is in a vulnerable minority, and might lose a parliamentary vote of no-confidence.

During a political campaign, all residents will be exposed to campaign signs and newspaper, radio and television advertisements, and registered voters can expect to receive personal contact from parties, by phone and at the door. Depending on their online activities, they may see ads on their social media pages, suggested posts or articles in their newsfeeds, and links to party websites posted by those in their social circles. Most households will receive unaddressed campaign literature in the post or hand delivered. In addition, registered voters can expect volunteer party canvassers to show up at their doors and make phone calls. These calls may be conducted in person, carried out by party workers or volunteers, or through Automated Dialing and Announcing Devices (ADADs), sometimes called "Robocalls." The primary purpose of personal contact is to identify supporters or non-supporters and voters' intentions to vote, which is noted on a party database and used to inform parties' election day get-out-the-vote (GOTV) operations (see below).

There are three major sources of campaign financing for parties: government reimbursement of election expenses to candidates and parties, individual contributions and third party advertising. They are all subject to legal limits and transparency rules. There has been no direct public funding to political parties since April 2014, and foreign contributions are banned. This limitation has placed more pressure on the solicitation of individual donations, on extensive outreach, and also on the need for more personal data on existing and potential donors (Bennett and Bayley, 2012).

The more a party spends, the more it is subsidized in the form of reimbursements so long as it meets a threshold of electoral success to qualify.⁶ The value of contributions to major

⁶National election campaign expenses are reimbursed by 50% for any party that receives a minimum of 2 per cent voter support, or at least 5 per cent in the [ridings](#) in which their candidates ran. Party riding organizations are also reimbursed from 60% to 100% of expenses (depending on the expense type) when they obtained at least 10% of the votes.

parties in 2014, in millions of dollars was: Conservative Party - \$26.2, Liberal Party - \$22.6, NDP - \$11.3, Bloc Québécois - \$0.5, Green Party - \$3.2⁷. The vast majority of donors and value of contributions are small amounts up to \$200.⁸ Further, parties and candidates face spending limits of under a dollar per voter where they run, during the campaign period.

Political contributions may only be made by individuals (not corporations or associations such as unions), accepted by the chief or authorized party agents, and must be reported to Elections Canada in the prescribed form. They must be repaid if a contribution limit is exceeded. Canadian citizens or permanent residents can make a contribution to a registered party, candidates and party nomination contestant. Contributions may consist of donations, loans, a loan guarantees and value of services. The maximum annual personal contribution to a party, in any form, is \$1,550 (in 2015 but indexed for small annual increases), but an individual may contribute to more than one party. Party memberships and volunteer labour are not considered contributions. Individual contributions are in part publicly subsidized in the form of personal income tax credits, in which portions of the contribution are not taxed, on a sliding scale.

Contributions over \$200 must be recorded by full name and address, a receipt issued and reported by contributor name. They are searchable online on the Elections Canada website, identifying each contributor by name and the organization (party, contestant's campaign, etc.) it was made to. Contributors should be informed of this statutory obligation to publish personal information when making contributions.

Third parties like corporations, trade unions, associations and groups may not make direct contributions to parties or candidates, but may incur election advertising expenses during campaigns of up to \$150,000, only \$3,000 of which be spent in any given electoral district. "Election advertising is the transmission to the public by any means during an election period of an advertising message that promotes or opposes a registered party or the election of a candidate, including one that takes a position on an issue with which a registered party or candidate is associated."⁹ To make such contributions, third parties must first register with Elections Canada, identify themselves as sponsors of any advertising, report their own contributions and those of their contributors of \$200 or more, and account for their spending and in-kind services.

In order to avoid "dirty tricks" whereby unscrupulous party operatives misinform supporters of other parties about where and when to vote, Elections Canada seeks to establish itself as the primary source of information on how and where to vote. It produces public information about how to register to vote, and conducts mass advertising as well as targeting communications to marginalized populations, such as Canada's indigenous

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_political_financing_in_Canada

⁷Elections Canada, Analysis of Financial Trends of Regulated Federal Political Entities, 2000–2014, Figure 6 – Contributions by Each Registered Party and Their Affiliated Entities, 2000-2014, http://www.elections.ca/res/rep/oth/aft/longdesc/fig6_e.html

⁸In 2014, contributions up to \$200 accounted for \$19.5 million from 275,131 contributors of, contrasted with less than 500 contributors of over \$1,200, amounting to only \$2.0 million. Elections Canada, Analysis of Financial Trends of Regulated Federal Political Entities, 2000–2014, Figure 4 – Number of Contributors and Contribution Dollars by Range for All Regulated Federal Political Entities, 2000-2014, http://www.elections.ca/res/rep/oth/aft/longdesc/fig4_e.html

⁹Elections Canada, Election Advertising Handbook for Third Parties, Financial Agents and Auditors (EC 20227) – April 2017, <http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=pol&dir=thi/ec20227&document=p2&lang=e#2.3>

communities, and students, who may be away from their permanent address on voting day.¹⁰

Incidents of electoral fraud—clandestine and illegal efforts to shape election results – are rare in Canada but not unheard of. A well-publicized prosecution of a Conservative Party operative resulted from misuse of voter data to place calls purportedly from Elections Canada misdirecting voters to the wrong polling places during the 2011 campaign. Among other things, this case exposed some of the risks associated with the building of massive databases on the electorate, which can identify likely supporters, but also target, non-supporters (Elections Canada, 2013). In the 2015 election, Elections Canada also warned staff to be on the lookout for subtle tactics designed to discourage voting, including sophisticated forms of micro-targeting (Bronskill 2015).

II. Data Driven Elections in Canada

There are several aspects of Canada’s contemporary political system that have encouraged the spread of voter analytics, especially at the federal level. The art and science of data segmentation, and the micro-targeting or “narrow-casting” of more precise messages is now an enduring feature of the “permanent” electoral campaigns in Canada (Patten 2017).

First, the major parties compete for votes in the middle of the political spectrum, and the electoral system encourages them to do that. In this context, elections are not fought over broad ideological visions of the future of Canada, but over a host of more complicated, and cross-cutting policy issues, that require a detailed understanding of voters’ attitudes. Increasingly, elections in Canada are fought over the votes of important swing voter groups in key districts or constituencies. Increasingly, the electorate is “sliced and diced” and messages tailored and targeted accordingly, and communicated through the individual’s preferred communication medium (Bennett, 2013b; Delacourt, 2016).

Second, the fragmented party system at federal and provincial levels militates against strong feelings of party identification. As in many advanced industrial states, parties have learned to compete for votes without large numbers of strict party adherents. There has been a “de-alignment” of the electorate in Canada, as elsewhere (Cross and Young, 2006). Arguably, more members of the electorate are persuadable, with the correct pitch, at the right time, using the right medium.

Third, campaign finance laws impose very strict rules on campaigning, meaning that parties and candidates have to use their limited resources sparingly and efficiently. The more they can find out about the values and preferences of the voters in their ridings, the more they can prioritize their messaging, and not waste valuable resources. Thus, the value of personal information as a resource available to parties increases in importance, in relation to finances, organization and human capital (Munroe & Munroe, 2018). For cash-strapped parties campaigning over vast distances, personalised contact through volunteers and using social media can be more cost-effective than mass media, and may be tailored to the interests of the individual voter.

¹⁰Elections Canada, The Electoral Reminder Program and information to specific groups of electors, <http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=ele&dir=erp&document=index&lang=e>

Fourthly, and unlike in Europe, political parties are not regulated under Canada’s privacy protection laws. Unlike in many other countries that have passed comprehensive information privacy, or data protection, legislation in one package, Canada’s experience was incremental, thus leaving some categories of organization unregulated (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2016). Political parties stand as the principal example of those agencies that “fell between the cracks” of a privacy regime that regulates either public bodies, or organizations involved in commercial activity. Political parties and other political entities are also not expected to match their systems against the national “Do not Call List” implemented through the Canadian Radio-Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), as well as from the recent Canadian Anti-Spam legislation (CASL) governing the distribution of electronic messages.¹¹ To the extent that Canadian political parties have legislative responsibilities for the protection personal information, these are mandated by the Elections Act (or the provincial equivalents). Canadian parties are highly competitive, but they are also entrenched and prone to collectively defend their interests against regulators. Some have even suggested that they operate as a form of “cartel” (MacIvor, 1999).

The campaign ecosystem

These factors have meant that Canadian political parties, advised by sympathetic consultants from south of the border, have been all too ready to embrace the supposed benefits of the “data-driven election.” As the emergence of big data analytics has enabled organizations to target consumers in an increasingly granular manner, so the same techniques can be used to influence voters, and thus “shop for votes” (Delacourt, 2016). Although there has been much hype about the importance of the “data-driven” election, and recent empirical work on the extent to which data analytics does indeed influence election outcomes (Hersh, 2015; Enres and Kelly, 2018), the competitiveness of current elections continues to place enormous pressure on major political parties in most democracies to continue to use data analytics to gain any edge over their rivals (Bennett, 2013). However, as Munroe and Munroe argue, data might inform campaigns in numerous ways, have variable impacts on the operations of local campaigns, and affect the relationship between those campaigns and the central party operations (Munroe & Munroe, 2018).

There are a number of trends at work (Bennett, 2015a). Parties are gradually moving from stand-alone voter management databases to more integrated voter management platforms. They are increasingly using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to analyze issue trends and to reach out to precise segments of the electorate through “micro-targeting.” Mobile applications increasingly place personal data applications in the hands of a multitude of volunteers and campaign workers. And the full panoply of online behavioral marketing techniques employed in the consumer world and also available to candidates and their campaigns (Chester & Montgomery, 2018). Thus, more data on voters are being captured, and those data are increasingly shared through a complicated network of organizations within the contemporary campaign ecosystem, involving some quite obscure companies that are beginning to play important roles as intermediaries within the democratic process (Kreiss 2016). Rather than convey their messages to broad geographic or demographic communities, the availability of these data have facilitated the “micro-targeting” of more precise segments of the electorate. Micro-

¹¹Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, *Frequently Asked Questions about Canada’s Anti-Spam Legislation*, online: Government of Canada <<https://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/com500/faq500.htm>>.

targeting uses whatever individual-level information is available and combines it with demographic, geographic and marketing data about those individuals to build statistical models better to understand the attitudes and behaviors of voters (Serazio, 2014).

Canadian parties are also becoming increasingly adept at using social media to target messages, recruit volunteers and donors, deliver campaign messages and track issue engagement (Giasson & Small, 2017). Facebook is by far the dominant platform. With its 23 million users in Canada, the capacity to find a highly segmented and representative audience across the entirety of the Canadian population is a real advantage. Facebook also embodies the capacity to reach young people, including those who have never been politically engaged.

The process for political advertising on Facebook is essentially no different from that of other commercial advertising. The party can upload a “hashed” list of phone numbers and e-mails to create audiences, based on location, demographics, interests, behaviors and connections, through the “Look Alike” function. The advertiser will receive real-time feedback, through relevance scores, on the effectiveness of their advertising campaign. Facebook’s terms of service expressly forbids personally identifiable information from being transmitted to the advertiser.¹² It is commonly agreed that the Liberals used Facebook more skillfully than other parties in 2015 to test and refine how campaign messaging was being received by key voter demographics (Delacourt 2016, 306).

There is also early evidence of political campaigns using automated “bots” designed to mimic human communications on social media platforms, such as Twitter (Fenwick and Dubois 2017). In response to publicity about cyber-attacks and foreign influence on domestic elections, Facebook released a “Cyber Hygiene Guide” under its Canadian Election Integrity Initiative (Facebook, 2017). It has also pioneered an ad transparency program in Canada which requires all ads to reveal the source and financing of the message. They are also developing an archive of ads related to federal elections (Goldman, 2017).

The entire campaign “ecosystem” in a complex and decentralized democracy like Canada’s is fluctuating, and difficult to outline with any precision. In general, however, companies appear to perform the following roles within the political arena. There are, first, more traditional polling companies making discoveries from telephone polling, online polling, focus group interviews, and door-to-door outreach. Canadian Industry statistics suggest that there are around 2000 different companies registered as engaging in market research and public opinion polling in Canada in 2016, with by far the heaviest concentration in Ontario. Many of these companies are very small. What is also striking is the considerable overlap between market and political research.¹³ One prevailing assumption of the industry seems to be the lack of any meaningful distinction between discovering the fluctuating demand for consumer products, and uncovering the political preferences of voters and potential voters (Delacourt 2016).

Data brokerage companies have also been a feature of the Canadian economy for many years. Examples include Info Canada, in business for over 40 years, whose essential products are quality mailing lists on businesses and consumers. Consumer information is

¹²<https://politics.fb.com/ad-campaigns/activate/>

¹³Government of Canada, *Canadian Industry Statistics*, Marketing Research and Public Opinion Polling, <https://www.ic.gc.ca/app/scr/app/cis/businesses-entreprises/54191;jsessionid=0001LUrvrZtTURXmrJYwcvgtIip:-A02D7M>

updated based on 100 different sources including “real estate records, tax assessments, voter registration files, utility connects, bill processors, behavioral data, and more.”¹⁴ Another established company, Environics, has been linked to political campaigns. Among other data services, Environics markets the PRIZM5 segmentation system that includes 68 lifestyle classifications based on demographics, marketplace preferences and psychographic social values. It has been reported that Environics data have been used by the Conservatives (Friesen 2011) and the NDP (Delacourt 2016, 274). These precise demographic profiles of neighborhoods, even if they do not contain personally identifiable data, can nevertheless be overlaid onto existing party datasets to refine the precise picture of electoral ridings.

On the Conservative side, the main example of a data brokerage company is Politrain consulting, whose website Pollmaps.ca provides election results analysis, paired with demographic data, provided by Spectrum electoral demographics. “Available demographics include Census variables such as ethnicity, language, education, income level, and more; consumer spending; lifestyle; and other factors. Spectrum has access to an extensive and detailed database allowing you to examine the demographics that you choose.”¹⁵

A party might have access to data on voters and potential voters, and it might have a clear picture of the profile of individual neighborhoods, but those resources do not, in themselves, tell the party how, to whom and when to deliver messages. Data analytics firms try to maximize the value of the available data and provide the key advice for strategic communication. The expertise of finding the patterns in the data, the shifts in opinion, or the key groups that might be persuadable, is the critical value of the data scientist within a modern election campaign. Whom to target, when, how and with what message entail complex and dynamic variables that require the statistical expertise of the data scientist, such as Sean Wiltshire, from McGill University, of Data Sciences Inc. who developed the algorithms and data analytics services for the Liberal Party (Delacourt 2016, 308).

And finally, there is the family of advertising companies, which can shape the correct pitch both online, and offline. Micro-targeting also embraces the shaping of the correct message, and gaining feedback from a variety of methodologies, including focus groups, interviews, online discussion groups, or the “Perception Analyzer” dial-response system offered by one of the main Liberal consultancies, the Gandalf Group.¹⁶ The other main example is the Responsive Marketing Group (RMG) that was instrumental in building the initial version of the Conservatives’ Constituent Information Management System, and populating it with polling data (Curry 2012). It now offers an integrated suite of services for political marketing.¹⁷

The messaging also, of course, has to be coordinated offline, and online, the latter involving a variety of digital consultants for email outreach and social media

¹⁴*InfoCanada*, <http://lp.infocanada.ca/canada-gen?>

[bas_phone=866.872.1075&bas_offer=15963622195&campaign=GOOG2&keyword=infocanada&device=c&gclid=EAiaIQobChMIzIHD9enk2QIVBZV-Ch16mAylEAAYASAAEgL4fPD_BwE&gclidsrc=aw.ds](http://lp.infocanada.ca/canada-gen?bas_phone=866.872.1075&bas_offer=15963622195&campaign=GOOG2&keyword=infocanada&device=c&gclid=EAiaIQobChMIzIHD9enk2QIVBZV-Ch16mAylEAAYASAAEgL4fPD_BwE&gclidsrc=aw.ds)

¹⁵<http://pollmaps.ca/Demographics.aspx>

¹⁶<http://www.gandalfgroup.ca/expertise.html>

¹⁷<http://rmgsite.com>

engagement. Online behavioral advertising involving sophisticated techniques of “cooking matching,” authenticated IP matching and social media matching are also a feature of the modern Canadian campaign (Rubinstein, 2014; Chester & Montgomery, 2018).

The political campaign ecosystem in Canada is, of course, nowhere near as extensive or developed as that in the United States (Lieberman 2017). It is striking, however, that the main types of company involved in polling, data brokerage, analytics and modeling, data science, online behavioral advertising, social media outreach, consulting, and so on, and also present in the Canadian landscape. The companies are increasingly difficult to distinguish from those operating in the non-political consumer landscape, and they are also increasingly difficult to distinguish from one another.

Voter Relationship Management Systems (VRMs)

Each of the main political parties has developed their own customized databases, using off-the-shelf voter list management software, either for download to a desktop personal computer or laptop, or for access through the Internet (Bennett & Bayley, 2012). The Conservative Party of Canada uses the Constituent Information Management System (CIMS), the first centralized Canadian system for voter management developed in 2004 (Flanagan 2007), in close collaboration with consultants from the U.S. The system uses the same Voter Vault software that has powered Republican Party systems. The Conservatives have then used this framework to populate the database with a range of other data on voter preferences (Curry, 2012). Walk lists, phone lists, e-mail lists, lawn sign allocations and other campaigning tools are then generated which then allow the party to more efficiently target and mobilize their supporters. It was reported that a new Conservative voter management system, entitled C-Vote, was scrapped in 2013, costing the party millions of dollars (Payton, 2013).

The left-of-center New Democratic Party uses a system called *Populus*, and the third iteration of a voter management system for the NDP since the 2011 election. While an improvement over the old an inefficient legacy system, called NDP Vote, it was reported that Populus was not fully tried and tested by 2015. The lack of a good integration between local campaigns and the NDP’s voter analytics was regarded as one factor explaining the NDP’s disappointing third-place finish in the election, and its loss of official opposition status (Hall, 2015). The NDP is also reported to have a close association with 270 Strategies, founded by Obama national field coordinator, Jeremy Bird (Giasson & Small, 2017, 119).

We also know that all parties adopt scoring systems, of one kind or another to indicate the level of an individual voter’s likely support. It is likely that the average voter will be completely unaware of these practices, and might very well object. CIMS rates voters on a scale of -15 to +15 (complete with smiley faces) (Conservative Party of Canada; Bennett 2015a, 375). The following screenshot is taken from an undated training presentation, that was leaked and placed on the Toronto Star’s website:

5. What are support levels?

- CIMS follows more than just members or non-members
- Tracks Supporters, Non-Supporters and Undecided

-15 to -5	-4 to -1	0	1 to 4	5 to 15
				
Non Supporter	Accessible Somewhat	Undecided	Accessible Likely	Supporter

The federal Liberal Party uses a ten-point score (Delacourt, 2016 308), with tier 1 denoting certain Liberal supporters to tier 10 who would likely be hostile. Munroe and Munroe report that a predictive ranking is then scored for every individual voter (2018: 146).

The natural competitiveness of the electoral process means that the operations of these systems are shrouded in considerable secrecy. Evidence on what is included in these databases, and how they operate, therefore, tends to be anecdotal and speculative. An access to personal information request to the BC NDP for “numerical rating and score” was refused on the grounds that the disclosure “would reveal confidential commercial information that if disclosed, could, in the opinion of a reasonable person, harm the competitive position of the organization.”¹⁸

The system about which we know the most is that of the Liberal Party of Canada; Liberalist is described as a “Voter identification and relationship management system.” The public availability of open training manuals allows us to explore the operation of this system in greater detail and depth (Liberal Party of Canada).

IV. A Case Study: LIBERALIST

¹⁸Political parties in BC are the only parties in Canada covered by a privacy protection statute: *The Personal Information Protection Act*, thus allowing access to personal information requests to be made. Personal correspondence with Chief Privacy Officer, NDP, May 31st 2017.

The Liberal Party of Canada is the oldest federal party, and throughout the 20th century, was far more often in power, than out of power. In many eyes, it became “Canada’s party” associated with the gradual process of nation-building and democratic development from the time of Confederation, to the period of the repatriation of the Constitution and the introduction of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms under Pierre Elliott Trudeau. At the end of the 20th century, it enjoyed over ten years of unbroken rule under Liberal Prime Ministers Jean Chretien and Paul Martin.

The Liberals lost power, however, in 2006 to the Progressive Conservative Party led by Stephen Harper, which let minority governments until 2011, when it finally gained a majority. Harper’s Conservatives were generally seen as the first party to pioneer the use of data analytics in Canadian elections, and to develop a state-of-the-art voter analytics in the Constituency Information Management System (CIMS), and begin the practice of micro-targeting key constituencies in key marginal ridings. Out of power for nine-years until 2015, the Liberals were continually at a disadvantage in electoral politics because of the relative weakness of their data-driven campaigning operations (Patten, 2017). The electoral disaster of the 2011 election for the Liberals (when it dropped to third place) stimulated much reflection on how it had been out-campaigned by the Conservative’s superior voter analytics operation. The party president lamented that “the CPC is able to calibrate its voter contact to each voter’s profile with laser-like focus...LPC is flying half-blind and well behind when it comes to election technology and digital know-how” (Delacourt 2016, 288).

The relationship between the data analysts, consultants, and pollsters closely associated with the Liberal Party are not easy to understand and distinguish. A company called Data Sciences Inc. run by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s close friend Tom Pitfield, and spouse of the current President of the Liberal Party, provides the party with support services for its digital engagement strategies. Pitfield also runs a successful political consulting company, Canada 2020, which shares offices in Ottawa with a lobbying and media relations company called Bluesky. The close ties between the Liberal Party and these companies have received some recent media attention (Kingston, 2017).

This wider campaign context is also a critical factor in the development and reform of the Liberalist platform. Out of the 2011 electoral loss, a modern version of the Liberalist system, a “voter identification and relationship management system” was born. Liberalist is a modified version of the Votebuilder software developed by NGP VAN, widely credited with helping Barack Obama win the 2008 presidential election. NGP VAN brands itself as the “leading technology provider to Democratic and progressive campaigns and organizations...offering clients an integrated platform of the best fundraising, compliance, field, organizing, digital and social networking products.”¹⁹ The company developed from a merger between the Voter Activation Network (VAN) and NGP software in 2010 (Patten 2017, 52).

Votebuilder has been the exclusive and standard software for all Democratic campaigns, municipal, local, state and national since 2007, allowing input on voters candidate and issue preferences. The business model relies on the assumption that if a campaign wants to use the software, it also has to contribute data (Hersh, 2015, 67-8). Over the years, therefore, Democratic campaigns are able to leverage a massive database of nearly every registered voter, and unregistered potential voters (Patten 2017, 52). Increasingly, the

¹⁹“About Us,”ngpvan.com

software has also evolved to facilitate volunteer management, event coordination, fundraising and integration with new social media.

Unlike its main competitor, Nationbuilder (also very prominent in Canadian election campaigns), NGP VAN has a more progressive ideological slant and purpose. So it was a natural choice for the Liberal Party of Canada. The Liberal Party licensed NGP VAN's software in 2011 and then repackaged a modified version as Liberalist (McGregor, 2011).²⁰ Although the software did need to be aligned to the Canadian electoral context, the inner workings of the Liberalist platform, including the security and access protocols, look very similar to the basic structure of NGP VAN widely used in the U.S. The similarities are striking from the various guides prepared for local campaign workers in both Canada and the U.S. (e.g. Fass 2015). It is from this guidance, that outsiders can gain an interesting perspective on how the system is designed to work.

Liberalist: Access Controls

The Liberalist database is accessible from any Internet connection using the credential, available from NGP VAN called Action ID. But the credential only works when it is linked to an underlying account in one of NGP VAN's services. For Liberalist, different levels of access are provided to the system by administrators: Team Trudeau (TT) and Team Trudeau + (TT+). Only Level Three Liberalist Users can create accounts. As the User Guide explains "volunteers with Level TT accounts will be able to do data entry, make calls using the Virtual Phone Bank and use MiniVAN for smart phone canvassing. Level TT+ accounts can access the same tools as Level TT accounts but can also look up individuals and help to manage events." Accounts are typically created with an expiry date of one year.²¹

Campaign "Field Volunteers" might be added in one of three ways. Typically, they will already be in the Shared Contacts file of people who already have a relationship with the Liberal Party, such as members, volunteers or donors. If not, then they may be added directly from the My Voters tab, that includes all registered voters in the respective riding. Or names and identification may be added manually. Access may be assigned to Province, Municipality, Polling Division, or most typically by Riding.

Liberalist: The Data

Liberalist contains and displays two sections of data. The first is the "Voter File" which contains the complete Elections Canada list of registered voters in the respective riding. The List of Electors provided by the Chief Electoral Officer serves as the "scaffolding" on which Liberalist, and other voter managements systems, is built. The List contains registered voters' surname, given names, gender, date of birth, civic address, mailing address and identifier assigned to Officer by Chief Electoral Officer, and is arranged by riding and polling district (the smaller area within a riding). The List is updated and distributed a month before polling day and updated on several dates prior to the election, as voters update their information. Lists are sent to each party and candidate who requests it. The list is finalized 3 days prior to the election and distributed to every registered party running a candidate and the incumbent in that riding (Elections Canada, 2014). In addition to the Voter File, each volunteer will have a "Shared Contacts" list, which contains people who have had contact with the Liberal campaign in the riding and anyone the team may add to the database. Shared Contacts is used to house information about volunteers,

²⁰<https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/liberal-party-s-exclusive-deal-with-data-company-benefits-trudeau-friend-1.3346830>

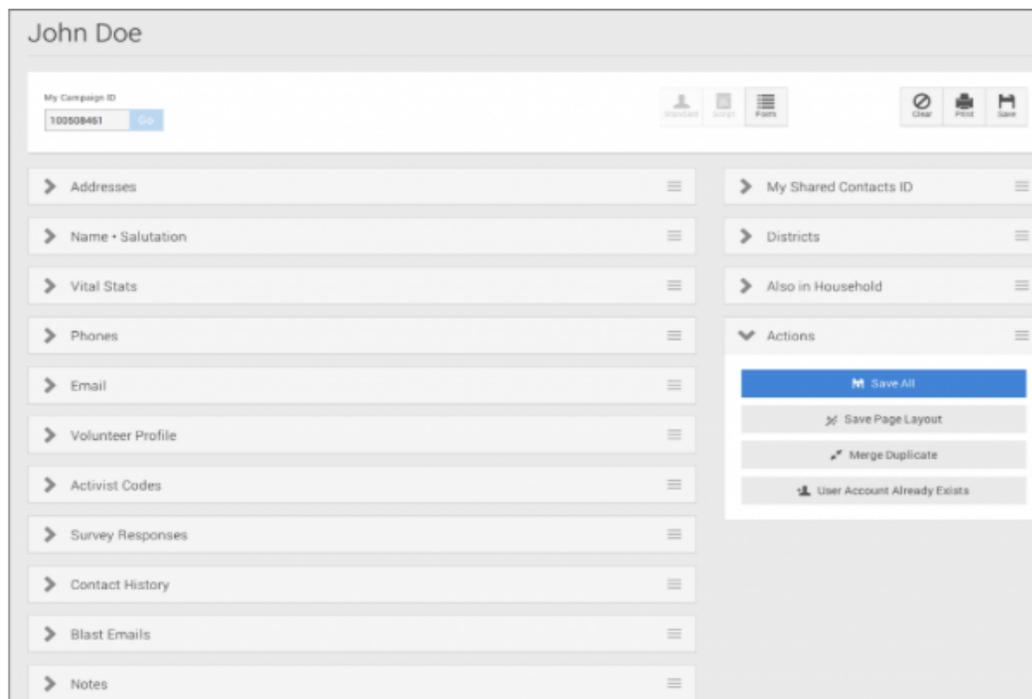
²¹Liberalist, "Creating Liberalist Accounts" <http://liberalist.liberal.ca/creating-liberalist-accounts/>

activists, supporters, and anyone who wants you to communicate with them. The individual record for each entry looks the same in each list to facilitate seamless linkage between the two files. The following screenshot from the User Guide displays the Individual Record Overview, and the variety of fields that might be attached to an individual voter.²²

Individual Record Overview

After searching in Quick Lookup or creating a list, you can click on a person's name to open their profile.

You will be able to view a range of information, varying from existing data entered in older systems to any new data collected during campaigns or intra-writ periods. In other words, the more you use Liberalist, the more information you will be able to access.



In addition to receiving the Register of Electors, candidates' representatives are also entitled to receive a copy of Election Canada's list of who voted in advance polling, and access to the "bingo sheets" or records of who has voted throughout the voting day. This helps party workers identify which of their supporters has, and have not voted, for follow-up action and to update their records. The major parties will assign scrutineers to most polling stations, who may request "bingo sheets" throughout the day. Bingo sheets were previously provided only in hard copy. As a result of changes to the Elections Act in 2014, they are now provided digitally, permitting parties with up-to-date information of voting activity by polling division number and by the Elector's Sequence ID.

These data also provides a more permanent record of voting history, looking like this in Liberalist:²³

²²Liberalist, "Individual Record Overview." <http://liberalist.liberal.ca/iri/>

²³<http://liberalist.liberal.ca/hist-cal/>

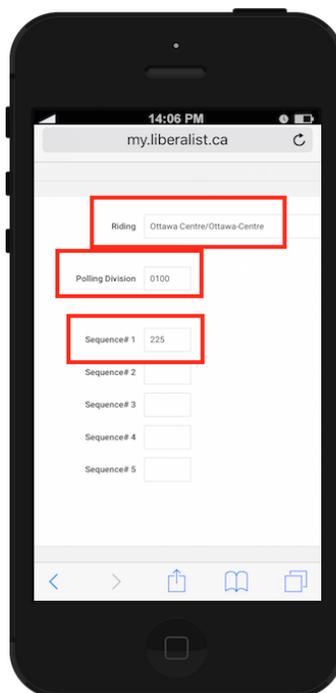
Voting History ★

Include anyone who did of the following

<input type="checkbox"/> 2011 General	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	<input type="radio"/> Advance
<input type="checkbox"/> 2008 General	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	<input type="radio"/> Advance
<input type="checkbox"/> 2006 General	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	<input type="radio"/> Advance
<input type="checkbox"/> 2004 General	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	<input type="radio"/> Advance
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000 General	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	<input type="radio"/> Advance
<input type="checkbox"/> 2010 By-Election	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	<input type="radio"/> Advance
<input type="checkbox"/> 2009 By-Election	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	<input type="radio"/> Advance
<input type="checkbox"/> 2008 By-Election	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	<input type="radio"/> Advance
<input type="checkbox"/> 2007 By-Election	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2002 By-Election	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	<input type="radio"/> Advance
<input type="checkbox"/> 1999 By-Election	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1997 By-Election	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2007 Ontario	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2003 Ontario	<input type="radio"/> Voted	<input type="radio"/> Didn't Vote	

These data may also be entered through Keypad Data Entry through the Smartphone Application, MiniVAN (see below). This tool is more suitable for advance polling.²⁴

6. Enter the **Electors Sequence ID** of each person who voted in that polling division.



7. Click **Save**. The voting data is immediately sent to Liberalist.

8. Continue entering data until you have recorded all voters on your election day bingo sheet.

It is unclear exactly what other sources of data are used for the creation of Liberalist. All the publicity materials suggest that these data are sourced entirely from data obtained under the authority of the Elections Act, or as a result of direct input by party workers during election campaigns, and as a result of polling exercises between campaigns. There are, of course, other potential sources of data on voters from census tract information available from Statistics Canada, to commercial sources of consumer-related data available for marketing.

It is reported, however, that the Liberals deliberately shunned the purchase of commercially available data when Liberalist was updated. Delacourt reports a real skepticism in Liberal party circles about the value of such data to their operations, and whether or not knowing consumer purchase histories can really add much to the more valuable sources of data obtained from direct voter contact (Delacourt 2016, 286-7). The Liberals were also waging an avowedly national campaign in 2015; Justin Trudeau is reportedly strongly opposed to the segmentation of the Canadian political marketplace, and “divide and conquer” politics (Delacourt 2016, 303). A Liberal Party spokesman also conceded that “the limited types of information that are occasionally purchased by the party to help reach and connect with more supporters could include sources like widely-available phone book information and Canada Post address validation, for example”

²⁴<http://liberalist.liberal.ca/user-guide/data-entryvoting-information/>

(Boutilier, 2018). Parties do not get phone numbers from Elections Canada. So it is unsurprising that they would need to supplement their holdings with current contact information from commercial ‘look-up’ sources like Canada411.com.

What is unclear is how, if at all, data from social media might be incorporated into the Liberalist platform. Canadian parties, including the Liberals, have contracted with the major social media platforms to produce targeted ads, as discussed above. Parties and candidates can see, and understand the profile, of their Twitter followers and Facebook friends. The act of friending or following a candidate and/or party is generally interpreted as an act of consent to be marketed through other means. Therefore, companies like Nationbuilder will take supporter names and e-mail addresses and append social media information to that person’s profile through its NationBuilder Match program.²⁵ It is unclear how much of the data might then be integrated into VRM’s like Liberalist.

The use of data analytics by the Liberals also hit the front pages as a result of publicity concerning the whistle-blower, Christopher Wylie who has been at the centre of the global controversy concerning Cambridge Analytica’s alleged misuse of personal data from 50 million Facebook Users. Wylie had worked for the Liberal Party of Canada since 2008, and was an avid proponent of the benefits of voter analytics in elections. In 2016, he had a contract through the Liberal Research Bureau to work on a pilot project, to among other things “assist the Liberal Research Bureau in acquiring and setting up social monitoring tools.” He reportedly wanted to merge the Liberalist database with data scraped from social media, but the party rejected the idea (Curry and Freeze, 2018).

Liberalist: The Functionality

An earlier version of the Liberalist website claimed that the system will: “Easily keep track of your membership levels, donors, sign requests and supporters; manage your local campaign team, events and volunteers; strategically contact voters by telephone, e-mail, canvass or direct mail; map out support and opposition across your riding down to a household level; track key or emerging local and national issues; facilitate grassroots campaigns using Obama’s neighbour-to-neighbour model; develop micro-targeted and demographic-specific messaging” (quoted in Bennett and Bayley, 2012).

The main function of Liberalist, therefore, is to generate and refine lists for door-to-door campaigning, phone canvassing, “e-mail blasts” and event management. The system allows for the creation of lists by location, age, gender, language, vote history, and voter affiliation. Whereas the Conservatives profiled voters on a -15 to +15 scale, the Liberals use a ten variable categorization.²⁶

²⁵“Nationbuilder Match” at: https://nationbuilder.com/nationbuilder_social_match

²⁶Liberalist, Liberal IDs from Call Centers, <http://liberalist.liberal.ca/callcenter-ids/>

Question

Responses

- Liberal
- Possible Liberal
- Undecided
- Conservative
- NDP
- Green
- Bloc
- Not Liberal / Other
- Won't Say
- Not Voting

Input Type Contact Type

In addition to creating, refining, saving and sharing lists of voters, contacts also need to be suppressed if they have indicated an unwillingness to be contacted, either by phone, mail or e-mail. Political parties are not required to purge their systems against the national Do-Not-Call register administered by the Canadian Radio-Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). But they are required to administer internal do-not-contact procedures, as well to adhere to the basic CRTC guidelines which require callers to identify themselves, to provide a local or toll-free number on request, and to adhere to basic time restrictions of calling. The guidelines of the Liberal Party's Do-Not-Call list requires callers to flag people as "Do-Not-Call" if they request, and to do so within 31 days. Liberalist automatically removes people flagged as Do-Not-Call or Do-Not-Mail through the Suppressions tab. With regard to email, political parties are also exempt from Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL), but most, including the Liberals, include an Unsubscribe option at the end of each e-mail message.

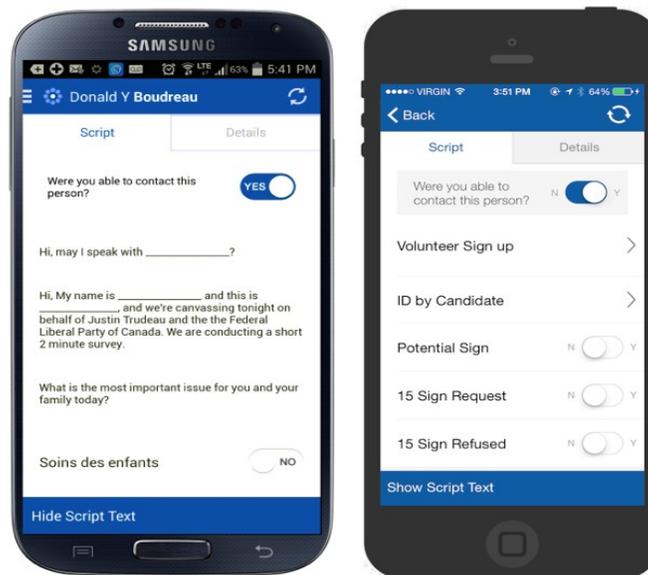
Once a list is created, it might be used for mapping a canvassing route. The Turfcutter function in VAN is available on Liberalist through the MyVoters Tab. The software allows the volunteer to select voters from the list, by drawing a line around them on the map. This function is designed to optimize the routing of canvassers, and to ensure that there are few overlaps. The process of selecting households on the map then integrates with the list function.

Liberalist and MiniVAN

Data entry from canvassing operations was often very time-consuming and inefficient. A simple manual entry of the voters' responses and preferences would be logged on a clipboard, and then entered into the Liberalist database at the campaign offices. The introduction of barcodes on the canvass sheets, then allowed for barcode scanners to scan the results into the database.

The "MiniVAN" Touch app is a mobile canvassing application that integrates with Liberalist, and allows users to export canvassing lists to their mobile device, and to enter the data while they are in the field. The app supposedly allows canvassers to spend more time communicating with voters, and less time inputting data. The canvasser will know the identity and profile of the voter before he/she knocks on the door. As a best practice, the Party advises the volunteers to enter the responses as he/she is walking to the next address rather than during the conversation on the doorstep, presumably at least in part because they realize that voters would find this disconcerting, and the party wants to hide the fact that its workers are recording personal data from the interaction.

MiniVAN also permits the easier entry of responses to a wider set of issue-related questions. The following glimpse of the interface reveals the standard script, as well as an example of an issue-related question, the responses to which could trigger provision of policy-related campaign materials. The responses may be synced with Liberalist immediately, permitting a nimbler and more responsive campaigning process. The app also allows a more efficient monitoring of the work of campaign volunteers during a campaign, and records data on the number of doors knocked on by canvasser within a particular polling district (Munroe & Munroe, 2018: 147).



Liberalist and “The Console”

A final dimension of the Liberals’ campaign in 2015 was the integration of Liberalist with other sources of data through a program called “The Console.” As far as can be gathered, this was a sort of dashboard, that divided Canada’s 338 ridings into categories of winnability: platinum, gold, silver, bronze, steel and wood. Reportedly, Justin Trudeau was so enamored with the graphical interface of the Console that he wanted access to it himself (Delacourt 2016, 300).

The Console was also designed to keep closer track of voter outreach efforts by volunteers. It monitored the number of houses visited, but also the range of issues addressed by voters. The party could then get more immediate feedback on the effects of its messaging, and could redeploy resources more effectively (Delacourt 2016, 300). According to party workers, the campaign was far nimbler than in previous elections, and then those of their opponents. The Console provided more responsive information about how to target ads by identifying those households who would be affected by specific policy proposals (Delacourt 2016, 305). The Console program is an example of the shift from stand-alone databases to a more integrated and cooperative platform. It allowed for immediate feedback on the effects of micro-targeted campaigning through user-generated tracking (Ryan 2016).

V. Conclusions: Voter Analytics and the “Permanent Campaign”

The recent intense publicity over the activities of Cambridge Analytica, Facebook and the Canadian company Aggregate IQ has elevated the debate about data-driven elections to far higher levels of media and public attention than ever before. The main whistleblower, Christopher Wylie, is Canadian and was revealed to have worked briefly for the Liberal Party in 2016 (Curry and Freeze, 2018). Aggregate IQ, based in British Columbia, has been under intense investigation by the media, privacy commissioners in BC and Ottawa, and by the House of Commons Ethics, Access to Information and Privacy committee. The ‘local’ connections then attract a media and public interest and enable scholars and public commentators to use the window of opportunity to bring attention to the wider issues regarding privacy and other democratic values.

Three implications of this case study are worthy of brief comment in conclusion. First, the scale and complexity of these party databases will continue to put pressure on the government to bring them within the legislated privacy protection regime. For the most part, individuals have no legal rights to learn what information is contained in party databases, to access and correct those data, to remove themselves from the systems, or to restrict the collection, use and disclosure of their personal data. For the most part, parties have no legal obligations to keep that information secure and accurate, to only retain it for as long as necessary, and to control who has access to it (Bennett & Bayley, 2012; Judge and Pal, 2017). Governments and corporations could not legally build vast and secret databases on individuals without granting them some legal rights over the processing of that information. A survey commissioned by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner in

2009 found that 92 per cent of respondents agreed political parties should be under privacy legislation that spells out how they can collect and use personal information (Cheadle, 2012).

This gap in our law has increasingly come to the attention of parliamentary committees, the federal and provincial privacy commissioners, electoral regulatory bodies and the media. In British Columbia, the only province where privacy protection law, the *Personal Information Protection Act*, governs political parties, the regulatory authority, the Information and Privacy Commissioner for BC is currently conducting an investigation into parties' uses of personal information, and will make recommendations, that may have a spill-over effect across the country. Yet, there is an obvious difficulty in persuading politicians to pass laws that would restrict the capacity of their own parties to campaign using the most effective modern techniques. The current government has committed itself to strengthen the voluntary privacy policies according to a common approach, but it has stopped short of recommending legislation (Boutilier, 2018).

More broadly, the advent of data-driven elections, and the encouragement of micro-targeted messages raise a large number of important empirical questions about their effects on: voter engagement and turnout; the nature of the party system; the campaign financing rules; the relationship between local and national party organizations; and the effect on the entire democratic process and social fabric. Baracos (2012) contends that microtargeting, at least in the US, contributes to: an increased willingness to deliver messages on divisive wedge issues; voter discrimination and de facto disenfranchisement; a chilling of political participation; and general trend toward single issue politics leading to increased partisanship and ambiguous political mandates for elected representatives.

We should be wary of inferring that these effects would be similar in parliamentary systems. Indeed, we might hypothesize that the data-driven election and "micro-targeting" might have a very different impact on parliamentary systems, where subtle shifts in voter behavior of specific slivers of the electorate in key electoral districts can affect the distribution of legislative seats and even the composition of the government (Bennett, 2013). The likelihood of creating overall shifts in regime are higher in systems like those of Canada, where governments can be elected with as little as 40% of the vote, than in most European systems where coalition governments are the norm. The winner-takes-all stakes in the Canadian parliamentary democracy also create incentives that may operate in a different manner from the U.S. with its constitutional system of separation of powers (Bennett, 2013).

Liberalist, and the other Voter Relationship Management systems in Canada, are a reflection of what can happen when campaigning techniques pioneered in the U.S. are introduced into a parliamentary regime, with a multi-party system, far tighter campaign finance laws, and a quite different political culture. We know that similar systems have been used in the UK and Australia (Bennett, 2015), but Canada seems to be the place, outside the U.S., where the data-driven campaign is perhaps the most developed. In that respect, the experience may serve as an example of what might happen in other advanced democratic countries.

The value of "Big Data" analytics in elections is also dependent upon wider explanations of voting behavior. Those who vote according to tradition, family party attachment, and geographical location may be less likely to be swayed by the micro-targeted pitch that might be facilitated by consumer profiling, and which allegedly assisted the

Conservatives in prior elections to 2015. But that type of voter is typically older, and younger voters have lower party allegiance. We need far more empirical research on the effects and efficacy of micro-targeting in the context of the broader de-alignment of the electorate and the reduced attachment to traditional political parties in Canada and elsewhere (Dalton & Wattenberg 2012; Hersh 2015).

Finally, the data-driven campaign is also contributing to the permanent campaign (Patten, 2017). The perceived need for data on voters' interests and beliefs means that parties have the capacity to make voter contact a more enduring enterprise, before, during and after official election campaigns (Delacourt 2016, 258). In this respect, there are deeper explanations for, and concerns about, electioneering between elections (Marland et al. 2017), where the driving force behind political decisions and communications is to win approval, measured through constant polling and instant social media "likes." The permanent campaign is not just a Canadian phenomenon, but it is one of the causes and consequences of data-driven elections (Small, 2012).

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