

Measuring the Professionalization of Political Campaigning: a Six Country Study

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The Rise of Professionalized Campaigning

Increasing number of accounts of profound change in nature of campaigning – new ‘era’?:

Negrine & Papathanassopoulos (1996); Norris (2000); Farrell & Webb (2000); Denver & Hands (2000); Strachan (2003)

Labels: Americanized; Postmodern; phase 3; Postfordist; Hi-tech

Gibson and Römmele (2001) Professionalized Campaign

Distinctive features

- Tools
- Style/mode
- Orientation to voter
- Internal power distribution

Compared to earlier ‘Premodern’ and ‘Modern’ Campaigns

Table 1: Political Campaigns in Historical Perspective

	Premodern campaigns	Modern campaigns	Professional campaigns
Tools	Print media, Rallies, Meetings, Foot Soldiers	Broadcast TV News Adverts, Polls	Internet, direct mail
Mode/Style	Labour-intensive Inter-personal. 'Amateur'	Capital-intensive Mediated, Indirect	Capital-intensive Marketed, Personalised, Targeted, Continuous
Orientation to voter	Mobilising, voters = loyal partisans	Converting & Mobilising, voters = loyal partisan & floating	Interactive, voters = consumers
Internal power distribution	Local-centric	National-centric	Local/National-centric Bifurcation

State of empirical research

- Conceptualisation of professionalised campaigning quite well advanced.
- Empirical measurement of its development has lagged behind.
- Existing studies have either focused on documenting key changes in campaign practices over time within a single country and/or implicit comparison within cross-nationally edited volumes
 - (Negrine et al., 2007; Sussman, 2005; Esser and Pfetsch, 2004; Kaid, 2004;; Newman, 1999; Plasser, 2002, Swanson and Mancini, 1996)
- Yielded valuable indepth understanding of growth and nature of the phenomenon but not as conducive to type of systematic cross-national analysis that can examine causes and consequences.

Development of CAMPROF Index

- To meet this need we developed an index (CAMPROF) which is a 0 - 30 point scale designed to more explicitly measure the new style of campaigning.
- Aim was to see if we could capture meaningful degree of variance between parties on their levels or extent of professionalised campaigning.
- Applied it to an empirical case – the German Federal Election of 2005 and specifically efforts of 4 national parliamentary parties – SPD, CDU, FDP and Greens.
- We then sought to test the robustness of the index by comparing our findings on parties' CAMPROF scores to set of apriori expectations about which parties would be performing better/worse based on extant empirical literature from Germany and particularly 'party-centered' theory of professionalised campaigning (Gibson and Römmele (2001)).
- So as well as seeking to measure extent of professionalised campaigning in Germany wanted insight into causes/'drivers' of it.

Design of CAMPROF

- Focus was on observable elements or manifest elements.
- So while interesting to speculate on extent to which parties undergoing re-orientation in their relationship to the electorate, developing a new marketing ethos, internal shifting locus of power from national to local these are difficult to measure, particularly in large N cross-national study.
- Purpose of this exercise is to kickstart comparative work in the area and provide more easily implementable common measures that can be applied across various national contexts with minimal 'conversion' or translation.
- In particular we focused on tools of the professionalised campaign.

Professionalized Campaign Index

- Use of telemarketing
 - contacting own members
 - contacting outside target groups
- Use of direct mail
 - to own members
 - to outside target groups
- Presence of an internal internet communication system
- Email 'sign-up' or subscription list for regular news updates
- Outside campaign headquarters
- Use of outside public relations/media consultants
- Use of computerized databases
- Use of opinion polling
- Conducting opposition research
- Continuous campaigning

Measurement items and scale

General points

- The professionalized campaign is a multi-dimensional variable comprised of ten items:
 - (1) Use of telemarketing for contacting own members and outside target groups
 - (2) Use of direct mail to own members and outside target groups
 - (3) Presence of an internal Internet communication system
 - (4) E-mail sign up or subscription list for regular news updates
 - (5) Outside headquarters
 - (6) Use of outside public relations/media consultants
 - (7) Use of computerized databases
 - (8) Use of opinion polling
 - (9) Conducting opposition research
 - (10) Continuous campaigning
- Each item is measured on a scale of 0 - 3. Item scores are then summed to produce an overall total score of campaign professionalization for each party. The maximum possible score is 30.

Two basic approaches are taken with regard to assigning scores:

- OBJECTIVE – use of quantifiable publicly verifiable external activities.
- SUBJECTIVE – reliant on coder judgment due to inherent difficulty of quantifying the extent to which the activity is taking place within a party, or the difficulty of obtaining the specific data from parties.
 - 0 = no evidence of the activity taking place at all.
 - 1 = activity was seen as partially engaged in;
 - 2 = extensively engaged in;
 - 3 = the activity that was fully developed in the party.

Data Collection

- Semi-structured interviews of campaign managers of 4 parliamentary parties over two month period (Oct-Nov 2005) Transcribed then coders' assigned scores.
- Party documents – campaign manuals as well official election-related reports by parties/federal elections ministry.

Items 1- 5 (Objective)

(1) Use of telemarketing and (2) direct mail

Scored on proportion of the population that were contacted:

3 = over 50% of constituencies or 1% or more of the voting age population;

2 = between one quarter and one half of constituencies or 0.5% - 1% of the voting age population;

1 = less than one quarter or 0.5% of the voting age population

0 = non-engagement in this activity = 0.

(3) Presence of an internal intranet communication system.

Scored on how widely available within the party

3 = if users included members, local and national staff;

2 = local and national staff only

1 = national staff only

0 = not available

(4) E-mail subscription newsletter.

Scored on the frequency and range of options offered

3 = generic weekly newsletters and more targeted/individualized newsletters;

2 = generic weekly newsletters only;

1 = generic newsletters less frequent than weekly

0 = no service offered

(5) Outside Headquarters.

Scored on the extent to which the campaign team were physically located outside of the main party HQ:

3 = a fully outsourced model where personnel were in a separate location;

2 = a dedicated unit or team working within the party HQ with regular meetings and a clearly defined personnel boundary

1 = a definable campaign team but less clear boundaries to the rest of the party HQ;

0 = no obvious separate campaign team = 0.

Items 6 – 9 (Subjective)

(6) Use of outside PR/media consultants.

This activity was considered to be fully developed where parties employed and made frequent/daily use of a range of media consultant(s) during the election. We were particularly interested here in the extent to which consultants were in a decision-making role on par with, or even above party officials. Where the PR agencies appeared to have, or at least share the balance of power with the party, this was given a score of three.

- 3 = Frequent / daily use of outside PR / media consultants, who have or at least share power within the party.*
- 2 = Frequent / daily use of outside PR / media consultants, who have less power than the politicians of the party.*
- 1 = Occasional use of PR /media consultants, who have less power than the politicians of the party.*
- 0 = No use of outside PR / media consultants.*

(7) Use of computerized databases.

This activity was considered fully developed if the parties were operating and made frequent/daily use at both national and local level of a national database to identify and target swing voters or those who might be most vulnerable to switching party.

- 3 = The party operates and makes very frequent / daily use at national and local levels of a national database to identify and target swing voters and uses voter information gained via other campaign techniques to refresh and expand the database during the campaign.*
- 2 = The party operates and makes frequent use of a national database at national or local level.*
- 1 = The party operates and makes occasional use of a national database at national or local level.*
- 0 = The party does not make use of a national / local database or does not have one.*

Items 6 – 9 (Subjective)

(8) Use of opinion polling.

This activity was considered to be fully developed if the party had a dedicated and professional survey research unit within it that conducted regular and frequent opinion polls both before and during the election campaign. Those results would then be used to help direct and shape the party's overall campaign strategy.

3 = The party has a dedicated and professional survey research unit within it, that conducts very frequent / daily opinion polls during the campaign. The results are used to help direct and shape the party's overall campaign strategy.

2 = The party frequently commissions polls from external polling institutes.

1 = The party occasionally commissions polls from external polling institutes.

0 = The party does not use opinion polling.

(9) Conducting opposition research.

This activity was considered to be fully developed if the party had a dedicated unit within party that conducted regular and frequent research into the opposition parties both before and during the election campaign. As with opinion polling the results of this research would then be integrated into the rest of the campaign, directly and/or indirectly guiding the strategy.

3 = The party has a dedicated and professional survey research unit within it, that conducts regular and frequent opposition research before and during the election campaign.

2 = The party frequently commissions opposition research from outside.

1 = The party occasionally commissions opposition research from outside.

0 = The party does not use opposition research.

(10) Continuous campaign (hybrid)

This was identified by assessing the extent to which the professionalized campaigning items constituting the index were in place six months prior to the election.

3 = the party was extensively engaged in between seven to nine of the professionalized campaign activities six months prior to the election.

2 = the party was extensively engaged in four to six of the activities.

1 = the party was extensively engaged in one to three of the activities.

0 = none of the activities could be observed six months on then score of 0 was assigned.

Results: How the parties performed on CAMPROF

Campaign item	SPD	CDU	Greens	FDP
Telemarketing	3	2	1	2
Direct mail	3	2	1	3
PR/media consult.	3	2	1	1
Databases	3	3	1	2
Opinion polling	3	3	2	3
Opposition res.	3	3	2	2
Intra-net	3	3	0	3
E-newsletter	3	3	2	2
External HQ	2	2	1	1
Continuous camp.	1	1	2	2
Total score	27	24	13	21

Empirical Findings

SPD (27)

- Highest score of all parties on the Campaign Index, max score 8 out of 10 measured variables.

BUT:

- Campaign Organization Unit (Kampa) was not physically sourced out from the party headquarters
- Continuous or permanent campaigning was not prominent.

CDU (24)

- Score slightly lower overall on the Campaign Index compared to the SPD, max score in 5 out of 10 items

BUT:

- Campaign Organization Unit (ARENA 05) was not physically sourced out from the party headquarter
- Continuous or permanent campaigning was not observed

Empirical Findings

FDP (21)

- Minor Party but high-level score on the campaign index
- Internal communication system as advanced as CDU and SPD
- Strong continuous campaigning and use of direct mail and opposition research

But:

- Low decisive autonomy of the advertising agencies
- Analysis/Polling and computerized databsases were more loosely integrated into the overall campaign strategy
- Integrated campaign headquarters that occupied a minor role in terms of directing the campaign
- Stronger evidence of continuous campaigning

The Greens (13)

- Lowest Score of all parties on the index, on no item score was higher than 3
- Low decisive autonomy of the advertising agencies
- Opposition research and the use of computerized databases were more loosely integrated into the overall campaign strategy
- No internal internet communication system, only newsletter function.
- Integrated campaign headquarter occupying a minor role in terms of directing the campaign
- Clear aspects of continuous campaigning

Summary of key empirical findings

- CAMPROF captured variance between parties on level of professionalisation.
- SPD most professionalised, Greens least.
- Continuous campaigning variable proved most surprising.
- Objective indicators most straightforward to apply
- Subjective indicators – easy to establish whether activity occurring but degree to which taking place more of a challenge.
- Need to try avoid tendency to use relative rather than absolute measure across parties. But also conscious that ‘fully developed’ may mean different things in different national contexts.

Expansion to include new cases: EU Elections 2009 study: Leverhulme International Networks Bid

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Aims & Methodology

The network will develop a cross-national survey tool to measure parties' campaign professionalisation based on an expanded/updated version of the index of professionalised campaigning developed by project partners Gibson & Römmele (2001, 2009) and Strömbäck (2008).

The survey will be applied in six European countries – Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom – after the 2009 European Parliament elections. The parties included will be all those with parliamentary representation plus those minor parties achieving between 1-5% of the national vote. The questionnaires will be sent to parties' national communication/campaign managers and be followed-up via interviews which will be transcribed.

All results will be merged to create a cross-national dataset of party campaign activities and supporting documentation. The dataset will be made available to the scholarly community for secondary analysis via a project website and continue to be updated by network partners in successive national and European elections.

Key Research Questions

Role of Parties and Institutions?

- Party variables – (internal factors) ideology, size, resources, internal centralisation, leadership change; (external) electoral shock (particularly as a governing incumbent).
- In fielding the survey during the European Parliament elections it will be possible to capture data on party professionalisation at the same time point, allowing for systematic comparison across countries and the more effective isolation of any effects of varying national institutional arrangements. The countries selected differ considerably on a range of regime characteristics. Ireland and the UK for example use the single transferable vote and first-past-the-post electoral systems, while Sweden and Greece use proportional systems. Germany and Hungary both have mixed systems that combine PR with single member constituencies. The sample also contains a mix of developed and emerging democracies, allowing us to explore the role that socioeconomic and political development play in the spread of professionalised campaign techniques.
- What about role of Party system, Federalism, Campaign Finance laws, Access to paid TV, other factors?

Effects on Voters?

- As well as being used to compare parties and countries on their extent of campaign professionalisation the data will be analysed in conjunction with voter surveys to assess how these activities may be affecting mass political behaviour. All countries have national election studies and field a common module of questions for Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) project. This module includes items on party contact and political engagement, which allow us to examine voters' experience of and response to parties' campaign efforts. In addition, the EU 7th Framework funded PIREDEU project that will examine the 2009 European Elections, to include questions on campaign contacting and the use of professionalised techniques in the voter and candidate studies. These data will enable us to link our data on parties' campaign practices to voters' and supporters' responses.

Timetable

Expansion to include new cases

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Testing the robustness of the index

How well do the results/rankings conform to theoretical expectations?

‘Party-centered’ theory of campaign professionalisation. (Gibson and Römmele, 2001).

- Identified drivers of change within parties rather than external environment.
- Six key independent variables – primers/triggers – that affected how readily parties took up the professionalised techniques.
 - **Priming Variables.**
 - Right-wing
 - Internally Centralized
 - Catch-all
 - Well Resource
 - **Triggers, Intervening Variables**
 - Electoral Shock
 - Internal Leadership Turnover

Operationalisation of primer/trigger variables

Vote-maximization as a primary goal: measured by status as a 'catch-all' party, defined as whether a party received over 35% of the vote (1 = catch-all, 0 = non-catch-all).

Right-wing Ideology: measured by a dichotomous variable with 0 = left and 1 = right.

Centralized Internal Structure: measured by the power (number of people employed) of the extra-parliamentary organization (EPO) vis a vis the parliamentary party organization (PPO).

High level of Resources: measured by overall party income or expenditure in a given year.

External shock: governing incumbent losing office (=2) otherwise (=1)
* % margin of loss at the previous election. If gained votes or remained at same level (= 0).

Internal event: no change in leader since the previous election (=0)
new leader since the previous election (=1)

Table 2: Priming and Intervening Variables

	CDU†	SPD	FDP	Grüne
Right-wing ideology	1	0	1	0
Catch-all Party	1	1	0	0
Election 2005	35,2 %	34,3 %	8,1 %	9,8 %
Election 2002	38,5 %	38,5 %	8,6 %	7,4 %
Election 1998	35,2 %	40,9 %	6,7 %	6,3 %
Overall party income €				
1998	125.933.043	152.224.835	24.677.934	28.488.083
1999	129.487.251	153.019.910	23.059.639	25.687.032
2000	127.986.529	146.003.980	22.429.971	22.950.318
2001	128.129.453	156.438.668	25.149.847	23.315.790
2002	141.591.077	158.772.598	31.540.943	26.333.732
2003	139.723.283	179.845.155	27.771.885	26.178.672
External Shock (Electoral loss in 2002)	0	2.4††	0	0
Internal Shock (Leadership change since 2002)	0	1§	0	1§§

Notes:

† Election results reported for CDU/CSU

†† Calculated as (1 (Incumbent) * 2.4 (Margin of loss in last election).

§ Franz Müntefering appointed/elected Party Leader in February 2004

§§ Reinhard Bütikofer/Claudia Roth appointed/elected Party Leader in October 2004

Sources: Election Data: <http://bundeswahlleiter.de/bundestagswahl2005/historie>

Party income: Statements of accounts of the parties (Rechenschaftsberichte der Parteien 1998-2003) Available on www.spd.de; www.cdu.de; www.fdp.de;

www.gruene.de.

Conclusions

- CAMPROF successful in capturing variance in parties use of professionalised campaign techniques in a national election.
- That variance corresponds to theoretical expectations set out in the extant literature on which parties be most likely to engage in campaign professionalisation.
- Preliminary finding - Electoral/incumbency loss may be key triggers to campaign professionalisation.
- Need further comparative study to test this – roll out the use of the measures in other studies. See Stromback (2008) application of index to Sweden. *Political Studies*