MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

For the many (but especially for you): The personal, participatory narratives of videos supporting

the UK Labour Party's 2017 election campaign

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Abstract

There is a growing body of research on the interplay between increasingly digitally informed political campaigning and citizen engagement in the political sphere both on and offline. While much of the existing scholarship concerns how digital technology impacts engagement, participation and the spread of information, there is limited research into the ways in which specific digital content modes and social media platforms intersect in ways that can lead to increased involvement of individuals in high-effort political activities. This research paper focuses on the personal action framing of campaign videos created in support of the Labour Party's general election campaign in 2017. Videos created by both the central campaign and the grassroots political organization Momentum were designed to be shared widely over social media platforms to achieve visibility over a broad network of supporters and undecided voters over the course of the campaign. By analyzing the content of these videos, I will show how specific instances of digital media, such as videos, can invite instances of high-effort political participation through personalized political action framing. Drawing on connective action theory, and in particular, the discussion of personalized politics (Bennett, 2012; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013), this research uses thematic content analysis to identify which high-effort political activities are alluded to most often in the video content. By comparing the videos produced by Labour with those of Momentum, this contribution addresses a gap in the existing literature as it relates to how campaigns can benefit from loosely connected ties to organizations that use digital media to expend their networks of influence to develop their strategic capacity. The methods explored in this research can inform future study on the use of campaign videos in political movement building and election campaigns.

Acknowledgements

Dedication

For Kyle.

Who can always pull me through.

Thank you for everything.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Appendices

Introduction

If you lose an election, can you still "win" a campaign? Political analysis following the 2016 general election in the United States and 2017 general election in the United Kingdom have hinted at this question, pointing to the lasting political capital of losing candidates (Chakravarty, 2018), the complicated role of data analytics for targeting voters and predicting outcomes (Lohr and Singer, 2016), and the digital strategies of communicating messages and organizing support (Howell, 2018; Kentish, 2017; Sheffield, 2017; Wendling, 2017; and others). A common theme that appears throughout much of the media coverage is how the digital technologies we interact with are changing traditional modes of electioneering. While digital interventions like big data and social media create new pathways for political parties to organize and engage the electorate, competing social, political and economic complexities challenge the role of political organizations in society. Scholarship on political engagement has long grappled with questions of how individuals become activated in the political sphere. This includes the ways in which political parties adapt their methods to attract supporters and create activists (Karpf, 2016; Han, 2014; Margetts, 2017; and others); analysis on how social media of has changed the dynamics of political communication (Leyva, 2017; Spohr, 2017: Loader, Vromen, & Xenos 2014; and others); the nature of movement power and political participation (Olsen, 1956; Benson & Segerberg, 2013); and recent contributions on the role of social media in engaging publics in political activities (Vaccarri & Valeriani, 2016; Knoll, Matthes & Heiss, 2018).

In this major research paper (MRP), I will explore these ideas in relation to the 2017 UK general election, specifically the campaign of the opposition Labour party. The campaign has garnered significant interest from scholars, journalists and political strategists, not necessarily because of the electoral result, but because of what it revealed about how multi-dimensional

digital campaigns, informed by data analytics, impact the way political parties engage with publics. This MRP will focus specifically on the role of online video content designed for social media engagement and the role this content played in Labour's campaign. By analyzing the content of videos, I will contribute to the body of research on digital campaigning by focusing on a gap in the existing literature as it relates to how specific instances of digital media, such as videos, can invite instances of high-effort political participation through personalized political action framing.

Informed by engagement with existing theory and literature, I approach the analysis of Labour's campaign by addressing three key ideas. First, I argue that online content can be developed with the specific intention of activating publics to participate in high-effort[1] political activities. Unlike quantifiable data-driven methods of analyzing interaction with digital content (metrics such as views, likes and shares) the direct link between encouragement to participate in a high-effort activity and an individual actually doing so is much less measurable. If successful however, there is potential for these methods to contribute to the cultivation of "strategic capacity" – the readily engaged network required to translate desired states to actionable outcomes (Karpf, 2016). Second, I focus on the idea that the video content provides evidence of how online campaign videos activate personal action frames as a means of encouraging this higher level of engagement, reflecting a more individualized brand of participatory politics. Third, and finally, this analysis compares the videos created by the Labour Party (an established political party with a centralized campaign strategy) with those of Momentum (a non-party, grassroots organization supporting Labour). This comparison contributes to arguments that

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[1] I am using the explanation of low and high-effort political participation set forth by Knoll, Matthes and Heiss (2018) where effort is defined as "the amount of time and energy a person devotes to a specific [political] participatory activity". Low-effort activities, those requiring limited time and energy, may include activities like sharing online political information, where high-effort activities require more time and energy to accomplish, like for example, attending a protest (p.3).

individuals in the current political ecosystem want choices about how and with whom to engage (Bennett, 2012; Loader, Vromen & Xenos,2014; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2016). By examining these ideas, I will contribute to the discussion on the implications of the use of digital media in election campaigns and how political parties may need to adjust tried and tested ways of defining election strategy. In effect, I suggest that what is required is movement away from clearly defined and established partisanship where messages can be controlled and centralized through party *activists* towards a new way of thinking that seeks out multiple modes and methods to tap into a network of politically-engaged, individual political *actors and agents*.

Background

The 2017 UK general election provides an interesting case study on the use and impact of digital media in a modern election campaign. The political climate of the UK election was a product of specific and unique regional issues, both historical and contemporary, including the Brexit vote that saw a narrow victory for the UK to secede from the European Union. Political discourse around these issues is impacted by global trends in Western democracies, including the rise of left and right-wing populism[2] (Groshenk & Koc-Micalska, 2017). The UK election was marked by a particular framing of "the public" as passive, reactionary and emotional, with parties across the political spectrum seeking to tap into the anxieties of a populace concerned with real and perceived instability in domestic and international affairs (Forkert, 2017, p.24). The Brexit vote, occurring one year prior to the general election, was seen as evidence of an increasing ideological polarization of the British populace (Freeden, 2017; Spohr, 2017). Mounting fears on issues to both the left and right of the political spectrum gave rise to political

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[2] Numerous definitions of populism exist across scholarship. Cas Mudd (2004) provides one example defining populism as an "ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, "the 'pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (p.543).

discourse dominated by populist rhetoric (Groshenk & Koc-Micalska, 2017). Once understood to be an ideology of mainly fringe parties, many mainstream political parties have adopted elements of populist rhetoric as a part of a specific "us versus them" mentality (Rooduijin, 2014). The idea that the individual (as a representative) of "the people" supersedes the rights and freedoms of those "othered" is characteristic of right-wing populist ideology; but the cultural process where individuals prioritize individualized knowledge and experience over the knowledge originating from institutions, including political parties and mass media, is not unique to movements on the right. As van Zoonen (2012) argues, this personalization of individualized knowledge and experience – or I-Pistemology – has also served as a mobilizing function in both historical and contemporary progressive movements.

In the UK general election, the era of personalized politics played out between the two parties most likely to form a government – Theresa May's governing Conservatives, campaigning on a message of "Strong and Stable Leadership" against Jeremy Corbyn and the centre-left Labour party, campaigning on the slogan, "For the Many, Not the Few". When the surprise election was called on April 18, 2017, Labour was lagging considerably in a number of mainstream polls, a trend which continued throughout much of the campaign (Howell, 2018). In a discussion of the strategy going into the election, Labour strategist Howell (2018) wrote of the challenge of balancing the results of internal and external polling with what they observed to be an emerging sense of enthusiasm around leader Jeremy Corbyn. Taking lessons from the Bernie Sanders campaign in the US, Labour's strategy relied heavily on the framing of an anti-establishment politician and developing means to tap into the network of identified and potential supporters through the affordances of digital media.

Digital campaign strategy is fought largely in the shadows. Proprietary data collection and analysis software and the targeting of so-called "dark ads" (Waterson, 2017) through social networks, make it difficult to analyze the reach and impact of specific strategies. Labour's social media strategy spanned multiple platforms and methods, including a strong presence on Facebook and Twitter as well as mobile-first platforms like Snapchat (Margetts, 2017). One area where Labour dramatically outperformed the Conservatives was in the creation and distribution of campaign videos on public facing social media sites, specifically Facebook (Walsh, 2017). In addition to the material produced by the central campaign, the party benefited from a loose coordination of efforts with grassroots networks, most notably the digital output and mobilization efforts of Momentum. As a political organization supporting Labour, Momentum was not bound to the messaging or organizing strategy of the central campaign and created their own content and digital tools that they believed would be effective in garnering support. As an organization, Momentum posits itself as a coalition, made up of both traditional Labour supporters, including the party's left leaning members, and traditionally aligned groups such as trade unions, but also "extra-parliamentary social movement activists" and others who embrace a more "diffuse, horizontal and decentralized type of activism" (Klug, Reese & Schneider, 2016). Strategically, they embrace principals of "big organizing" (p.40), the idea that engagement in the political sphere is best achieved by empowering the organizational capacities of individual political actors. This is achieved both through traditional means, such orchestrating large scale political rallies, as well as new advances developed by political technologists, such as apps (Han, 2014; Klug, Reese & Schneider, 2016; Zagoria & Shulkind; 2017).

Labour's central campaign created a substantial volume of content for their social media channels during the election period, but it was the content created by Momentum that achieved

the greatest reach. Many of the videos went viral, and it is estimated that nearly one in four UK Facebook users[3] watched a Momentum video by the end of the campaign (Kentish, 2017; Sheffield, 2107). This advantage was significant as it provided a means of attracting the attention of would-be voters who were less likely to interact directly with a political party's content, but who still were otherwise receptive to political messages (Booth, 2017). Regardless of the means by which individuals came to view or interact with the videos, the campaign benefited from the established base of followers and networks, building an efficient advertising strategy and outreach campaign, targeted in particular to young people (Margetts, 2017, p.387).

The election saw Labour make considerable gains in vote share and seats, reducing the incumbent Conservatives to a minority parliament. As much as Labour's performance was at odds with the polls, recent elections in Western democracies have demonstrated that increasingly data-driven campaigns with more complex polling metrics can still give way to shifts in public mood and participation patterns. In writing about the failure of big data to accurately predict the election of Donald Trump, for example, Lohr and Singer (2016) examine how the reliability of big data has been overstated. Just as big data can provide far reaching and efficient analysis, it is also "a blunt instrument, missing context and nuance" (2016). This "context and nuance" may include everything from shifts in public mood that are not captured by traditional polling metrics as well as dramatic shifts in political participation, including large demographic shifts in voter turnout.

Post-election analysis focusing on the social media impact on the change in public perception and voter intention from the start of the campaign through to election day, suggests that the 2017 UK general election was perhaps the first of the modern age where social media

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[3] This estimate of approximately 12.7 million unique viewers was provided to journalists by Momentum representative, Adam Peggs.

made a substantial difference to the electoral outcome (Hern, 2017; Margetts, 2017; Theirren, 2017; Turner, 2017). The impact of social media directly on voter turnout is difficult, if not impossible to measure conclusively; however, the increase in youth participation in the 2017 election was significant. There was a 15% increase in youth turnout from the 2015 general election (Theirren, 2017) as well as high levels of new voter registration in both the under 25 and 25-34-year-old demographics (Turner, 2017). In the last 24 hours of the registration period alone, a record 622,000 people registered to vote (Kentish, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

The analysis of how digital media may be used to spread awareness and encourage engagement put forth in this paper is grounded in theoretical understanding of personalized politics and collective vs. connective action. Collective action theory (Olsen, 1965), has been studied in depth over the years as a way to understand the motivations and constraints of public action. Olsen's theory emphasizes that while it may be in an individual's self-interest to mobilize in pursuit of a shared goal, it is undermined by the challenges faced in group structures, namely that some individuals will free-ride off the labour of others. To combat this, he argued organizations required strong resource mobilization, collective action issue framing and well developed social networks to establish movement strength (Wright, 2015). Building off of the decades-long scholarship on collective action theory, Bennett and Segerberg (2013) present their model of connective action. Connective action theory posits that digital and social media produce an environment that is significantly different than what was established by collective action theory. Economic, social and technological changes over the past several decades in post-industrial Western democracies has altered the means by which individuals participate in the political sphere (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013).

Connective action theory considers the concept of movement power in a time when the traditional structures (social, political) of collective action are no longer synonymous with organizational capacity. Younger generations, in particular, have weaker affiliations with groups and institutions that defined the political participation of previous generations, including churches, labour unions, party membership and the press (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p.2). Connective action is shaped by personalized politics, developed and informed by the use of digital media, an underlying belief in the importance of individuality, inclusivity and a distrust of hierarchically-dependent systems and structures. This "digitally mediated" (2013, p.5) engagement allows individuals to interact within political spaces in ways that are not necessarily tied to a shared collective identity, adapting their participation with a political movement in a way that fits with their individual set of beliefs and ideologies (Bennett, 2012; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013). Through the use of new communication technology, digital communication networks aid movements by becoming centers for resource allocation and provision and both short and long-term responses to events and actions, thus enabling a different sort of self-organizing mobilization built around individual content and action frames (Wright, 2015).

In their discussion of the theory, Bennett and Segerberg (2013) establish three specific modes of action along a spectrum: 1) organizationally brokered collective action; 2) organizationally-enabled connective action, and 3) crowd enabled connective action. Traditionally organizationally brokered collective action describes networks that depend on brokering organizations to coordinate action, manage participatory involvement and establish collective action frames. Political organizations which generally fall into this category, use social technology and digital media as "a means of mobilizing and managing participation and coordinating goals rather than inviting personal interpretations of problems or actions" (2013,

p.46). By contrast, the connective action networks facilitated by communication technology, present a different set of characteristics. Crowd-enabled connective action networks are those loosely or not at all linked to established organizations, but rather develop their capacity through large-scale and multi-layered access to social technology. A hybrid of the organizationally brokered and crowd enabled action networks are what Bennett and Segerberg refer to as the *organizationally enabled connective action*. In this model, organizations may embrace looser ties around multiple issues, creating a space for personalized engagement where "digital media and personal action frames become integral network-building mechanisms that enable individuals to contribute … changing the locus of agency and individual leverage in the organization process" (2013, p13). Bennett and Segerberg acknowledge that these models are not mutually exclusive, and that many modern movements will share characteristics of both traditional collective action and digitally-enabled connective action, however; their analysis provides a compelling framework for considering the re-shaping of political organizations and organizing in deeply fragmented democratic societies.

In the following sections, I will build on Bennett and Segerberg's theories to explore how online videos created by both Labour and Momentum in support of the 2017 election campaign demonstrate how organizationally enabled connective action can strengthen political movements by helping them to achieve instances of high-effort political participation. I begin with a review of the existing literature on campaign strategy, social media, and political participation. Then, I establish the method by which these videos were viewed and categorized. Finally, I provide an analysis of the videos and provide a discussion of the emergent themes, establishing areas for further consideration and study.

Literature Review

A review of the literature highlights a growing body of research on how political communication and digital strategy is evolving with the rise of social media. Much of this research is focused on the efficacy of social media as a platform for engagement and participation, as well as the ways in which digital content provides insight that can inform data-driven campaign strategy; however, there is little research that looks at ways in which digital content may be designed to communicate desired messages and outcomes related to political participation. This literature review focuses on three topics: political campaign strategy; social media users' interactions with political content; and, factors that contribute to motivating political participation. Combined, the existing literature provides context on the impact of social media use in the last decade, specifically as it relates to political participation during recent election campaign cycles in Europe and North America.

Political campaign strategy

The literature on political campaign strategy provides insight into the ways in which political campaigns are adapting and evolving their traditional and digital strategies, utilizing multiple channels and methods to invite social media users to interact with content. In an analysis of both the Conservative and Labour party's digital strategies in the 2017 general election, Margetts (2017) argues that the Conservative's strategy was to funnel key messages through their centralized social media channels, targeting existing supporters in key demographics through the use of data analytics. Labour, conversely, had a more far-reaching strategy with both the central campaign and Momentum creating content could be persuasive in activating offline support (Margetts, 2017). The increase in youth voter registration is seen as

evidence of the increased engagement of young people in the election, suggesting they were mobilized in a way that they were not in previous elections (Margetts, 2017).

Digital campaign strategy is continuously evolving with each election cycle. Evidence of this is explored in Gibson's (2015) study on "citizen-initiated campaigning" (CIC), defined as a devolved approach to campaigning that challenges the traditional top-down political structures by creating online spaces of citizen engagement. Her study on how campaigns approached CIC in the 2010 UK general election looked at four elements: "community building; getting out the vote; generating resources; and, message production" (Gibson, 2015, p.187). Using these four areas as the basis for analysis, the study created a CIC index which coded specific elements of each party's web presence. The results indicated that parties approach elements of CIC differently, with a stronger adoption of CIC initiatives by the Labour and Liberal Democratic parties (Gibson, 2015, p. 190). While the study pre-dates the results of the 2017 election, the introduction of criteria for CIC provide insight into the speed at which political parties are adapting their digital strategies in response to the rise of social media.

Chadwick and Stromer-Galley's (2016) research suggests that digital media presents an opportunity for campaigns to embrace and foster a "culture of organizational experimentation and a party-as-movement mentality that enable many to reject norms of hierarchical discipline and habitual partisan loyalty" (p. 283). This is essential to the evolution of political parties in the digital era, as it enables supporters to create and participate in citizen-led movements that are both removed from and part of the formal party interest (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016). When campaigns embrace a decentralized communication strategy in favour of an ideological-organizational model, elections become avenues for individuals to exercise their personal means of political expression (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016). As evidence of this, Chadwick and

Stromer-Galley (2016) point to the example of the membership qualifying changes made to the Labour party in 2015 that led to the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader. Rather than adhering to the standard party membership model, individuals could instead sign-up as a "registered supporter" by providing only an email address and a small donation (p. 288)[4]. This seemingly small shift in how individuals can participate within the established party framework is positioned as evidence of a larger shift towards a "cyber party" model that allows for looser forms of party identification and affiliation (p. 289).

With the evolution of political communication and digital strategy, there is an opportunity not just for individuals and communities to influence political movements, but for political movements to adapt their methods and campaign decisions to adjust to changes as public mood shifts. This idea is explored in Karpf's (2018) discussion of social movement activity and digital listening, defined as "the collection and analysis of online behavioral data" (p.1). This process includes direct and indirect means of collection and analysis, including both analytics and real-world interactions. Karpf (2016) also explores whether or not social media analytics provide insight into activated public opinion. In social media activity, opinions are either intentionally or unintentionally active engagements, rather than private sentiments. This data is different than the standard political data (for example, the results of a poll) which require specific intervention. Social media public opinion includes articulated statements and behaviors that occur without deliberate intervention (Karpf, 2016, p.41). While this can reveal important information about public opinion, Karpf (2016) cautions that there are limitations to the data that can be obtained through analytics alone.

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[4] A similar model was adapted for membership in Momentum, whereby membership to the organization requires identifying as a member of the Labour Party.

Although Karpf draws a distinction between electoral campaigns and social movements – his claim being that the former is analytically simplistic – there is certainly an argument to suggest that political movements do not begin with a writ drop and end with an electoral victory. The 2017 UK general election demonstrates that affiliated movements and networks, like Momentum, create an alternative means for engaging supporters. Unlike traditional means of partisanship organizing through the establishment of party members, structures that allow for more fluid models of messaging, participation and party affiliation may in fact create greater avenues for political participation (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016). Indeed, while electoral data may be of limited utility in sustaining movement power, the mechanisms that proved successful in driving interest in the campaign can continue to be developed and tested in non-election periods. The continued relevancy of the material that political parties and their affiliated networks continue to employ is essential for sustaining interest and developing a networked base of individuals who can be called upon to participate in both low and high-effort activities.

In his discussion of the analytics frontier, Karpf (2016) speaks to the inability of analytics to measure the strength of an organization's "strategic capacity" – the ability to convert what they need to what they want (p. 133). The sort of sustained capacity required to motivate political participation outside of electoral campaigns is often thought of in relation to grassroots organization – activities like door-to-door canvassing, petitioning, and participating in organization building. Grassroots activities, whether they take place on or offline, are inherently higher-effort, and require a significant level of engagement to execute. Evidence suggests that these types of activities are still relevant to campaigns, with studies showing canvassing for example, as having the potential to create positive interactions that have a mitigating effect on individuals deeply engrained biases and beliefs (Brookman and Kalla, 2016; Han, 2014). By

allowing decentralized modes of engagement, parties can tap into a broader network to achieve "maximum returns on investment [by surrendering] some control over core campaign tasks to non-members" (Gibson, 2015).

Social media users' interactions with political content

While social media is often thought of as a tool for increasing engagement in the democratic process, available research on social media use provides limited conclusive data. Leyva's (2017) research into social media use and political participation of UK millennials used a web survey to gain data on the participant's social media use in relation to their online and offline political participation, as well as factors related to their political socialization, ideology, and general knowledge. The results found only a moderate to weak link between engaging with political content on social media and increased political participation (Leyva, 2017). Further, where there was a correlation, it was more likely to be an act of "slacktivism" (Leyva, 2017, p.462). Slacktivism – a term used in the discussion of online political participation – is defined by Leyva as "low-risk, low-cost activities via social media whose purpose is to raise awareness, produce change, or grant satisfaction to the person engaged in the activity" (Leyva, 2017, p. 465). Finally, the results indicated that only those with existing experience and tools to critically engage with the political sphere on social media were likely to participate, while those who lacked previous exposure were more likely to ignore political content altogether or to engage with familiar content only (Leyva, 2017).

Supporting Leyva's conclusions, Spohr (2017) argues that social media creates a space for "ideological polarization" – the idea that homogenous communities and groups of people can be convinced that the echo surrounding them is representative of the truth, and that opposing viewpoints and arguments are inherently wrong (p.150). He points to the main bodies of research

on sources of ideological polarization: algorithmic and behavioral. In the algorithmic model, algorithms curate online experiences that personalize the user's experience in a way where they only see a certain set of content. In selective exposure behavior, the individual seeks out and consumes media that aligns with their existing belief system, leading to a psychological effect known as confirmation bias (Spohr, 2017). He concludes that these conditions limit access to political information and, ultimately, decrease an individual's capacity to make informed decisions (Spohr, 2017).

Considering the implications of social media as a communication tool, Jensen (2017) argues that social media has altered the means by which political campaigns control their central messages, providing platforms where users "relate symmetrically and reciprocally with equal capacities as senders and receivers of communication" (p. 24). Collecting data on Twitter from the UK general election of 2015, Jensen looked at official party communication (from either the party leader or the official party Twitter account) to track the instances of replies, retweets and invitations to participate. The latter concept is defined as instances of "invitational rhetoric", such as tweets that include calls to "tell us…" or "provide your own…" (Jensen, 2017, p.32). His findings indicate that despite the opportunity for increased engagement, central communication strategies through social media do little to empower campaign supporters (Jensen, 2017).

By contrast, other scholars have a more positive outlook on the interplay between social media use and political engagement, suggesting that it is an active process with engaged participants. Loader, Vromen and Xenos (2014) argue that young citizens in particular are increasingly shaped by their interaction with (and construction of their identity within) social media networks. They present the construct of the "networked young citizen" who engages with politics in a more nuanced, reflexive manner enacted through social media networks rather than

becoming a declared member of a political party (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos 2014, p.143). In addition to the means in which they engage in politics, this group is also more likely to relate their political experiences through the particular economic experiences of their generation, which in Europe (as well as many other geographic locations) includes an uncertain future in the labour market and an increased sense of economic insecurity (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014, p.146). This disenfranchisement can lead to increased political engagement, however, as digital networks may increase the speed and intensity with which young people organize around political ideas (Sloam, 2014).

Motivation for political participation

How social media is used to participate in politics must be understood in relation to what motivates individuals and communities towards political participation. Knoll, Matthes and Heiss (2018) propose a theoretical framework with which to consider the psychological processes that underlie social media political participation. Their formulation of the social media political participation model (SMPPM) creates a framework for predicting the conditions under which social media impacts political participation. The theory suggests that a number of contingencies need to be in place for social media interactions to successfully motivate political participation, including processes related to exposure, reception and appraisal of the content, as well as the individual's behavioural situation.

In the SMPPM, individuals must first be exposed to the content either intentionally, by seeking it out, or incidentally through exposure by shared content of friends, family and acquaintances. This exposure depends on the network characteristics of the platform and the relative heterogeneity of the social network. Although social networks are often considered to be largely homogenous, creating filter bubbles and echo chambers of information, there is evidence

to suggest that this is not actually the case (Bakshy, et al., 2012). Facebook in particular is an area where individuals may end up with incidental exposure to diverse political content, as individuals have more friends with whom they have substantively weak ties, creating a space where exposure to a spectrum of political content can occur (Stephens-Davidowitz, 2017). The SMPPM follows that if an individual is exposed to political content, they then go through stages of processing to determine its relevancy, influenced by factors including the source of the content (for example, the friend who shared it), as well as the message characteristics of the content. Should the content be deemed relevant, individuals must then determine if there is a discrepancy between the current state (as gleaned from the message content) and a desired future state. If so, and if this discrepancy is evaluated as attainable, the individual may begin to activate a goal – whether or not they follow through on the goal is dependent on the individuals behavioural situation and the competing goals they may be experiencing at the time.

Vaccari and Valeriani's (2016) study on party-related engagement examines the potential for social media to revitalize interest in partisan politics by creating platforms for both party members and outside citizens to engage in political discourse. Their research sought to gain information on the ways in which individuals are motivated to participate in political activities. Data was collected from online surveys conducted in Germany, Italy, and the UK, following each country's respective election. Vaccari and Valeriani's (2016) findings indicated "statistically significant correlations between party membership and party engagement" (p. 302), but also significant participation of what they call "citizen campaigners" (p.297) – individuals "who are not party members but who engage in party-related activities" (p. 300). Engagement of citizen campaigners was especially pronounced on social media, indicating that political participation on social media narrows the engagement gap between members of the political

party and non-members who are engaging with the content (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2016). This

particular finding suggests the opportunity for further research on the strategies employed by

campaigns to activate and engage citizen campaigners towards specific goals.

Methods

As the literature review reveals, it is difficult to draw conclusions on how political campaigning, specifically as it relates to digital strategy and social media use, impacts political participation. While a quantitative analysis of electoral video content released on social media may provide data on the types of content created and the messages which generated the most interaction with content, it is challenging to draw a direct link between the content produced and whether or not it was successful in activating political participation. It is with this limitation in mind that this analysis does not aim to create quantifiable results; rather, my intention is to explore more generally how digital video content may be used to motivate individuals to participate in political acts. Using a qualitative, thematic visual and textual content analysis, I will build on existing scholarship on political participation to highlight the ways in which digitally-shared video can be used to establish personal action frames.

This case study focuses on the video content released on Facebook as part of the Labour Party campaign during the 2017 UK general election. Content analysis was performed on two separate Facebook pages: the Labour Party's official Facebook page, which includes materials created by the central campaign, as well as the Facebook page for Momentum. The reason for this selection criteria is twofold. First, post-election analysis identified Facebook as a key platform identified by Labour strategists for distribution of content due to the platform's ability to create pathways to established, identified and non-supporters (Margetts, 2017; Howell, 2018). Secondly, analysis of content from both Labour and Momentum provides an opportunity to examine differences in material developed by a central campaign as opposed to that of an affiliated, but citizen-led grassroots initiative.

To establish a sample-set of data for detailed thematic analysis, a number of inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. For the initial data set, I examined all video content posted to both Facebook pages during the election campaign period of April 18, 2017 through to June 8, 2017 (House of Commons, 2017). After accounting for repeated content (material that was re-posted on different dates), a total of 226 videos were viewed in detail, 122 videos created or shared on the Labour Party page and 104 on the Momentum page. For each video, I recorded identification information such as where the content was hosted (the Labour Party's official page or the Momentum page), the date the content was uploaded, as well as shares and views. From this large data set, each video was categorized according to the type of video using categories defined in Table 1. To focus the video content included in the final analysis, I excluded content that was primarily documentary in nature, such as a celebrity endorsement or campaign footage; as well as any third-party developed content (for example, videos created by news organizations), leaving only videos with a communicative element included in the sample, defined here as being either narrative or didactic in nature. These exclusions resulted in a reduction of 171 videos from the data set, 90 videos from Labour and 81 videos from Momentum[5].

Table 1: Video types

Category	Definition
Third party content	Content created by a third party (e.g. news media).
Endorsement	Public figure or celebrity endorsement of party, leader or issue.
Campaign Footage	Footage of campaign events including speeches and rallies.
Communication	Narrative (Entertainment-education, testimonials or exemplars)[6] or Didactic (informational).

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[5] A summary of the videos excluded, by category and organization, is included in Appendix A.

[6] For a discussion and treatment of videos as narrative content see Hinyard and Kreuter (2007).

To further focus my study, I reviewed each video to record invitations or allusions to high-effort participatory activities. For the purposes of this analysis, I followed the logic established by Knoll, Matthes and Heiss (2018) of low and high-effort political activities, adapting their categorizations slightly to those outlined in Table 2. Using a count method, an instance was recorded if the video included text or narrative elements that made specific reference to the categories established in the "high-effort" category.

Table 2: Low vs. high-effort political participation

	Low Effort	**High-effort**
Offline	Remind someone to vote	Attend a political meeting/rally Contact the campaign Working for the campaign Engage in a political discussion Vote
Either online or offline	Sign a petition	Register to vote Donate funds Become a party member
Online	Like a political actor or cause Share political information Post short comments	

The final data set provides an overview of the instances in which an act of high-effort political participation appears in the content of videos produced by both Labour and Momentum. A total of 55 videos (32 Labour and 23 Momentum) were identified for a thematic content analysis. A summary of this content is included in Table 3[7].

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[7] A detailed analysis of the final data set, including counts for all established high-effort categories is included in Appendix B.

Table 3: Final data set for analysis

High-effort	Labour Party	Momentum	Total	
Total Videos	**32**	**23**	**55**	
1. Attend meeting/rally	0	0	0	
2. Contact campaign	2	2	4	
3. Work for campaign	10	12	22	
4. Engage in political discussion	2	6	8	
5. Vote	19	12	31	
6. Register to vote	6	1	7	
7. Become a party member	0	1	1	
8. Donate	3	3	6	
Total instances[8]	*42*	*37*	*79*	

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[8] Videos may include more than one invitation or allusion to a high-effort activity (for example, vote and have a political conversation).

Analysis

A close viewing of the videos included in the final sample revealed three prominent themes [9]. These themes were identified through an inductive analysis of the video content, using the categorizations established in the data set. The themes identified were: i) the duty to vote; ii) getting involved with the ground game, and iii) interpersonal and intergenerational political conversations. In the following sections, I provide a detailed analysis of how the content produced by both Labour and Momentum provide insight into how videos can be used as communication tools to encourage high-effort political participation. The analysis is broken down by theme to allow for a structured discussion of these findings. For each theme, I will reference applicable theory and use specific examples from the videos to support my findings.

Theme 1: The duty to vote

Of the videos included in this analysis, 72% of the Labour videos and 57% of the Momentum videos included at least one invitation for the viewer to register to vote or exercise their vote on election day (Table 4). While this indicates that both the central party and Momentum were invested in driving supporters to register to vote and to vote on election day, the content of the videos reveals potentially different strategic incentives.

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[9] The final sample included videos posted by Labour and Momentum to their respective Facebook pages during the election writ period of April 18, 2017 to June 8, 2017 which (1) were grouped into the "Communication" category (as defined in Table 1), and (2) included at least one invitation or allusion to participate in a high-effort political activity (as defined in Table 2).

Table 4: Instances by theme, "Duty to vote"

	Labour Party		Momentum		Total	
	Count	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
Yes	23	72%	13	57%	36	65%
No	9	28 %	10	43%	19	35%
Total	32	100%	23	100%	55	100%

Registering to vote and voting are both higher effort political activities, particularly for those for whom the act of voting has not already been normalized and habitualized through personal networks (Klass, 2016). While the potential of newly enfranchised voters can theoretically lead to significant shifts in voter turnout, studies have shown that if new voters do not personally relate to electoral issues, they may not exercise their right to vote, ultimately having a negative impact on voter turnout (Franklin, 2004). Increasing youth voter turnout was an important element of Labour's social media strategy, in part due to the (admittedly somewhat unforeseen) popularity of Jeremy Corbyn who had already amassed a significant number of followers on multiple social media platforms (Howell, 2018). To realize the potential of increased voter turnout, the substance of the election campaign had to be relevant to young voters but the methods of ensuring their participation by registering to vote and showing up on election day were equally important.

The video content released by Labour was dominated by pragmatic, didactic videos, which established voting as an important and easily actionable way to participate. Many of the videos focused on informational, time-sensitive reminders to register such as "5 days left to register to vote" (Figure 2) or "Don't let the rain stop you from voting". Although most videos in

the vote categories were short, both the frequency[10] in which the advertisements appeared and

the personal action framing used in the messaging are significant. As established by Knoll,

Matthes and Heiss (2018), individuals exposed to political content on social media will go

through a process of relevancy appraisal – determining how much the content relates to

themselves and their well-being. If content is deemed relevant, the individual must then

determine the actionability of the goal, and whether or not other goals compete with the

realization of that goal. By creating short videos emphasizing the specifics of how, when and

how much time remained to register to vote or vote, the videos served as digital attainability

reminders, presenting multiple instances by which an individual would ultimately prioritize its

activation of the goal.

The instructional nature of the videos allowed for an easy path towards "establishing a

personal reason" for registering to vote or vote, while the volume of the content released

provided significant opportunities for individuals to choose to share the content in their networks

(Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). In "The future of the country is in your hands" (Figure 1), the

video emphasizes the power of voting as an instrument of change alongside a call to action to

register to vote. Similarly, "5 days left to register to vote" (Figure 2) asks viewers to consider the

things they could do in two minutes – make a cup of coffee or check their inbox – as a means to

highlight the ease of accessing and completing the form on the voter registration site. While

simplistic, these videos succeed in establishing a clear path to actualization of the goal

(presumably, a more representative government) by proactively addressing the potential

concerns regarding the time and effort involved in voter registration. Other videos, including

"Vote Labour today" (Figure 3) use a similar structure to encourage individual motivation for

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[10] As established in the Methods section, videos with near identical content (for example, a video titled "10 days to vote" is released five days later with the change to "five days to vote" were not included in the final data set; however, it bears mentioning here as it relates to overall strategy.

voting, while creating a sense of urgency to "stop the Tories". The decision to create a high volume of simple content related to the pragmatic aspects of voting rather than invest significant resources into developing sophisticated content may have proved valuable for meeting the campaign's strategic objective to mobilize young people in advance of election day.

Figure 1: "The future of the country is in your hands" (The Labour Party, 2017)

Figure 2: "5 days left to register to vote!" (The Labour Party, 2017)

Figure 3: "Vote Labour today" (The Labour Party, 2017)

As a non-party organization, Momentum developed their materials in support of driving votes to Labour, but did not need to do so in accordance with the strategy derived by the central campaign. To achieve their own objectives as a movement, the goal was not simply winning the most votes on election day but also "enhancing participatory democracy" through grassroots organizing efforts – creating not just breadth, but depth of engagement (Han, 2014; Karpf, 2016; Klug, Reese & Schneider, 2016, p.36). In contrast to the action-oriented content released by Labour, Momentum's content was more narrative, using testimonials and personal, first-hand accounts to establish individualized personal action frames around the decision to vote.

In "Vote dedication" (Figure 4) a series of individuals give their reason for voting in the form of a dedication, notably always to people in their inner circle:

> I'm dedicating my vote to my mum, because I'm scared that the NHS is being privatized by the Conservatives.

> I dedicate my vote for Labour to my daughter, and to the children in my school up the road who are facing huge cuts to their education and their futures.

> I dedicate my vote to my Grandparents who moved here from Jamaica in the 1950's…worked two to three jobs over certain points over the last 40-50 years and now in their 80s are heavily dependent on things like the NHS. (Momentum, 2017)

The video ends with a text screen asking viewers "who will you dedicate your Labour vote to?" a prompt to reflect, but also more importantly for mobilization purposes, to share the video with their own commentary. The idea of dedicating a vote, instead of simply voting because it is a necessary civic duty, is an example of the kind of personalized framing that appeared throughout the campaign. This is especially evident in Momentum's content, which reflects the organization's interest in establishing "citizen campaigners" rather than party loyalists (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley; Gibson, 2015; Vaccari &Valeriani, 2016).

In another example, titled "We are many" (Figure 5) individuals provide accounts of how their personal histories and value systems influenced their decision to vote. As the video begins, the words "you are many" appear on the screen, inviting viewers to see themselves in the narratives of those represented. Each contributor adds their voice and story to the overall narrative, representing members "of the many". Delivered in a series of clips, the individuals present their personal action statement, as well as call to action for viewers:

> We didn't have much money growing up. Benefits for me meant food on the table… I'll be voting Labour on the 8th of June. I hope you will too.

> I'm extremely concerned about the future for my children and their children…I'll be voting Labour because I believe in Jeremy Corbyn.

> If you feel angry, then this is the time to actually make a stance and make a change…send a signal, throughout this country, throughout the world, that we've had enough...I'm voting Labour because I want to think about the future for my children. (Momentum, 2017)

The video concludes with a clip of Jeremy Corbyn giving a speech:

> There are cynics who calculate these things in politics that say we don't understand it… we absolutely do understand…we understand…we understand what this popular movement is about and the kind of world we want to create. (Momentum, 2017)

The choice of clip should not be dismissed as insignificant, as much like the majority of the content produced by Momentum, the speech clip does not make specific reference to party platform or electoral promises, but rather focuses specifically on Corbyn and the idea of a movement. Framing political participation in the election as a part of a participatory, citizen-led movement creates a different dynamic by which viewers can align their personal beliefs – be they emotional, ideological or issue-based – rather than committing to a blind adherence to a party or its doctrines.

Figure 4: "Vote dedication" (Momentum, 2017)

Figure 5: "We are many" (Momentum, 2017)

The "duty to vote" theme established through this content analysis revealed that Labour

and Momentum approached their content creation in support of this activity in very different

ways. Labour focused on pushing a high volume of content with simple, action-oriented

reminders to safeguard supporter's votes, while Momentum created more dynamic content

focused on the kind-of long-term personal motivation and enthusiasm required for sustaining a

movement. Both organizations used videos to establish individual engagement in the process of

voting and relied on the direct and indirect reach of social networks to activate and spread that

message to established and potential supporters. Although the increase in youth voter registration

and overall youth turnout may point to the strategic success of a multi-organization digital strategy, this looser form of connective action between a central campaign and a supporter organization may also lead to complications. As political parties continue to rely on internal analytics to help predict electoral outcomes, there may certainly be hesitation to endorse the creation and distribution of content for which they have no control.

Theme 2: Getting involved with the ground game

Of the videos included in this analysis, 31% of the Labour videos and 52% of the Momentum videos included at least one invitation to contact or work for a campaign. These activities, often referred to as the ground game, are efforts organized by or for a political campaign to establish a line of contact between the party/organization and potential voters. Typical ground game activities include door-knocking[11], phone-banking, leafletting, and petitioning. Unlike voting, which is finite and can be completed independently, getting involved with ground game activities requires a substantially higher level of engagement with the campaign. Individuals agreeing to volunteer time with the party to engage in voter contact efforts become de facto representatives of the party to the public, and as such, may be required to engage in related high-effort activities, like attend training, or familiarize themselves with party processes or information. Given the higher level of engagement required, it follows that videos encouraging these acts of political participation tended to appeal to a supporter base rather than a more generalized message designed to be shared widely across broader networks.

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[11] Although most commonly referred to as canvassing in Canada and the United States, door-knocking seems to be the term used most frequently in the United Kingdom.

Table 5: Instances by theme, "Get involved with the ground game"

	Labour Party		Momentum		Total	
	Count	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
Yes	10	31%	12	52%	22	40%
No	22	69 %	11	48%	33	60%
Total	32	100%	23	100%	55	100%

As with the content centered around the importance of voting, Labour again focused heavily on time-based, practical reminders about how and when to sign up for ground game activities (e.g. "2 days left to sign up to volunteer"), particularly get out the vote (GOTV) activities on election day. Several of the videos also serve a training function, providing an overview of both why door-knocking is essential to the campaign and how the process of volunteering to go door-knocking plays out. The content is heavily branded, with canvassers wearing red jackets, and materials from clipboards to coffee cups emblazoned with Labour insignia. In "Find out about door-knocking" (Figure 6), the narrator and primary character is a woman in the role of canvass leader, explaining in detail the specifics involved in door-knocking.

> If you plan on volunteering in this final week, the most important thing you can do is go door-knocking. Door-knocking helps us understand what people care about and crucially helps us find out who is planning to vote Labour on the 8th of June...You'll be out with a group of canvassers, just like us. There'll be a central meeting point and a short brief beforehand. There's about two or three questions to remember. And don't worry if you've never done it before, there'll be experienced canvassers on hand to help you out. After that we'll put you into smaller groups because we've got a lot of doors to knock before the election on the 8th of June. (The Labour Party, 2017)

From a strategic perspective, this level of detail ensures that anyone considering participating in ground game activities will be prepared for what it entails. Similar to the videos

explaining that it takes "only two minutes to vote", the central campaign appears focused on mitigating the element of the unknown to certain political actions – in a sense creating a path to better prepare individuals to formulate and activate a participatory goal (Knoll, Matthes & Heiss, 2018). Perhaps problematically however, explaining the process of door-knocking in this manner reinforces hierarchical, institutional language with which many individuals new to politics may not identify. In particular, new members perhaps coming from a background of social-movement activism or new to political activism altogether could be put off by the in-your-face orthodoxy of a heavily branded, formulaic approach to party politics. Despite making some effort to appeal to individual interest, including "Help out on polling day" (Figure 7), which emphasizes "you alone could secure ten, fifteen, twenty votes for Labour…that's a serious difference we can make together" (The Labour Party, 2017), the content fails to invite the level of personalized framing that could broaden the level of interest in the campaign.

Figure 6: "Find out about door-knocking" (The Labour Party, 2017)

Figure 7: "Help out on polling day" (The Labour Party, 2017)
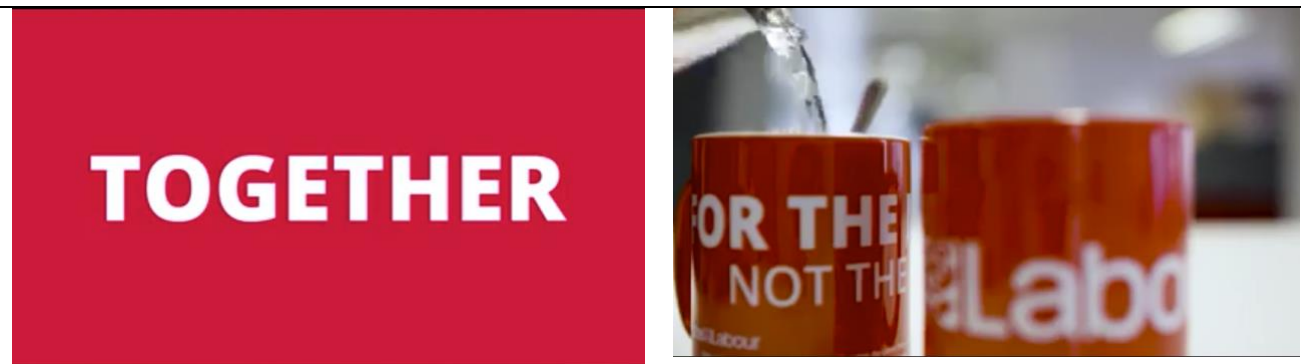
In general, Momentum's videos placed a greater emphasis on content focused on engaging viewers to get involved with the campaign, with over half of the videos including an instance of inviting this act of participation. The videos focused on personal reasons why individuals may be inspired to work for the campaign and the ways in which they can engage with others as part of ground game outreach activities. Unlike the heavily branded Labour content, which perhaps over emphasized the technical aspects of canvassing to the detriment of creating a tone of excitement, Momentum's content was by contrast, gritty and authentic, tapping into emotional rather than pragmatic motivations for participating in ground game activities. In the simplistic "Jeremy to new campaigners" (Figure 8) for example, a grainy video shows Jeremy Corby speaking directly to the camera about door-knocking. Rather than explaining what door-knocking is and the ways it benefits the party, Corbyn frames the act as a personal choice.

> Listen, if you've never been campaigning before, never been door-knocking before, you know why you want to do it. You want to do it because you want a different world. You want a different country. You've got a set of priorities that are about people, about inclusion, about equality, about justice. You know all of that. So, when you knock on the doors, don't be shy. Just say 'I'm here, because this is the kind of world I want to live in. Do you agree with me?' And do you know what? Lots of people will. (Momentum, 2017)

The video is in support of door-knocking, but the focus of the content is not. Rather, Corbyn speaks to a very individualistic sense of knowing what is right. This sense of knowing is not tied

directly to the party, or even specific policy issues, rather just general – and thus easily adaptable to individual meaning – themes of "people," "inclusion," "equality" and "justice".

In another example, "You've slashed the Tory lead" (Figure 9), door-knocking is positioned as an activity you would feel inspired to participate in rather than a directive from a campaign that needs bodies to gather data. Using populist language, the content presents an "us vs. them" mentality, where "the people" are driving the movement.

> The press and the richest 1% don't want Corbyn to win. But the people are making it happen on the doors. We've only got thirteen days left to beat the odds. So join thousands of people canvassing this weekend. Share to build the movement we need to win. (Momentum, 2017)

The language of movement building is common in Momentum's content, and especially in the examples that include invitations to participate in ground game activities. Unlike the Labour content, which focuses on preparing potential volunteers to door-knock – Momentum's focus was on the mass mobilization of volunteers to agree to volunteer in the first place, asking viewers to share content in their networks and to use an application called My Nearest Marginal to locate the nearest area where they could join a door-knocking event.

The My Nearest Marginal app is an example of the kind of technological intervention to standard modes of campaigning that Momentum produced. The app aims to solve some of the same barriers to involvement that Labour anticipated with their informational videos, namely the anxiety that might be felt by a first-time volunteer cognizant of the time and effort involved in such a high-effort activity. Rather than take an information-based approach to alleviating concerns, the app created a link to political involvement through already familiar and convenient technological channels. The app used postal codes to connect individuals to a convenient marginal in need of volunteers, providing direct-to-device information on dates and times of door-knocking events, as well as social connections to carpooling options. Produced at low cost

by Momentum's political technologists, My Nearest Marginal mobilized an estimated 100,000 people to participate in door-knocking, a huge success for the campaign that did not include their direct involvement (Sheffield, 2017).

The success of these decentralized digital interventions in traditional ground game activities represents a shift in how campaigns can consider reaching supporters by embracing the advantages afforded by a devolved campaign strategy (Sheffield, 2017). Bypassing the party-down structure of door-knocking where volunteers are dictated small amounts of information, the app provided volunteers insight into electoral the strategy and a sense of autonomy over their involvement. As Claire Sandberg, a digital strategist for Bernie Sanders who consulted with Momentum stated, "What was different about these campaigns was really how they empowered volunteers to lead campaigning on their own…Establishment campaigns never would have permitted [that]" (Sheffield, 2017). Electoral campaigns are naturally invested in the scalability of a volunteer base in support of election activities like GOTV polling; however, this often leads to largely transactional relationship between party staff and volunteers, seen as interchangeable within the hierarchal structure of a top-down party structure. Embracing the affordances of decentralized digital strategies may, as Sandberg says, empower volunteers; creating the downstream effect of building, loyal, autonomous organizers that continue to act in ways that support long-term movement building (Han, 2014; Karpf, 2016)[12].

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[12] Han's (2014) work on identifying the ways in which organizations develop activists identifies digital mobilizing as perhaps less effective than face-to-face efforts in creating this "downstream effect," however; it should be noted that her research predates the observable impacts of many recent digital interventions in political campaigns.

Figure 8: "Jeremy to new campaigners" (Momentum, 2017)

Figure 9: "You've slashed the Tory lead" (The Labour Party, 2017)

Theme 3: Engaging in interpersonal and intergenerational political conversations

A less obvious, but interesting theme that emerged from the detailed viewing of videos were instances inviting viewers to engage in interpersonal, and often intergenerational political conversations with individuals in their immediate social circle, in particular parents and grandparents. I chose to categorize this separately from the instances related to ground game activities as the nature of interpersonal communication between family members or close friends represents a different dynamic then the more transient volunteer-constituent interactions. Of the videos included in this analysis, 6% of the Labour videos and 26% of the Momentum videos included at least one invitation for the viewer to engage in a political conversation with a person or persons in their immediate familial network (Table 6). While these numbers are certainly lower than instances discussed in the preceding sections, there are two important caveats to consider. First, the Momentum videos include almost three times as many instances as in the Labour content. Additionally, using online digital media to encourage supporters to have political conversations has not been covered significantly in media or scholarly analyses of election campaigns, making it an interesting theme for exploration and discussion.

Table 6: Instances by theme, "Engage in an interpersonal/intergenerational conversation"

	Labour Party		Momentum		Total	
	Count	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
Yes	2	6%	6	26%	8	40%
No	30	94 %	11	74%	47	60%
Total	32	100%	23	100%	55	100%

The well-known maxim "no politics or religion at the dinner table" may still be the norm in many households, but social media may make it more difficult to maintain these separations online, as the disparate close and loose ties of individuals on social networks may in fact create greater exposure to a diversity of information (Bakshy, et al., 2012; Stephens-Davidowitz, 2017). As Knolls, Mattes and Heiss (2018) suggest, once exposed to political content, an individual evaluates the characteristics of the message, determines relevancy, and activates a goal based on whether or not they determine a wanting between an existing and desired state. For online videos to be successful in encouraging acts of offline conversation, the viewer of the video content must see both opportunity and utility in having such conversations, regardless of whether or not they are ultimately successful in convincing another person to (in this case) consider changing their vote to Labour. Although these conversations may happen organically in any situation – people may naturally talk about politics to people in their immediate networks, especially during election cycles – using campaign videos to specifically encourage and frame the content of these conversations is a relatively new phenomenon.

This type of video presents an interesting opportunity for political campaigns to create content that assists people in having these high-effort, often difficult conversations in a manner that aligns with desired political outcomes. Having citizen campaigners create a personalized, emotional link to political issues may bridge a gap that even the most sophisticated analytics are unable to achieve. As van Zoonen writes, "when having to choose between mediated and personal knowledge, audiences by and large give more weight to their own experiences, or those of their close relatives" (2012, p.61). In effect, a political message that would otherwise be easily dismissed by someone with contrary political leanings, may become relevant if a close friend or

family member positions the message in relation to specific anxieties or frustration of a more personal nature.

Labour's "Vote for Me" (Figure 10) is one of the more polished, formal advertisements included in this analysis. Developed by Krow Communications and released in the final week of the campaign, the video was a direct response to the strategic target of women aged 18-40 (Watts, 2017). The video uses a storytelling narrative, showing vignettes of young women engaging in political conversations with off-screen, older relatives. The policy issues addressed – pay equity, gender and reproductive equality, housing, and post-secondary education – aligned to policy areas of Labour's Manifesto. Rather than outlining the issues didactically however, the video is narrative, showing personalized political accounts of individual women. In one, a young girl questions pay equity, telling her grandmother, "I don't think it's acceptable to pay people differently depending on whether or not they have a winkie, so vote for me". In tackling the issue of affordable housing, a young woman tells her father, that "a vote for me is a vote for homes that I'll actually be able to afford, without having to rob you and mom's bank account". In another, a woman interrupts a family meal to angrily remind them that women are "still being forced out of the job because they're pregnant". While the first part of the advertisement uses actors in scenarios meant to recreate plausible scenarios where these conversations could emerge, the second half of the video expands the scope, showing footage of real women in quick succession all looking at the camera, and all repeating the phrase "vote for me".

The plausible strategy of this video is two-fold. First, for the established primary audience, the presumed goal is for women to see themselves reflected in the narratives expressed in the video. As a result, the call to action is for them to have the challenging, high-effort conversations with people in their life who are otherwise unlikely to consider voting Labour. In

activating this personal action frame, women can take on the role of citizen-initiated campaigner (Gibson, 2015), making personal and emotional connections between their lived experiences and the implications of certain policy decisions. Should there be any ambiguity in the visual messaging, the onscreen text includes a direct call to action.

> This election is your parents and grandparents chance to look after your future. Ask them to vote for you, by voting for Labour. Because Labour will do more for your rights and welfare than any other party. Start the conversation. (The Labour Party, 2017)

The primary goal of the video is for women to take on the role of campaigners, initiating conversations with the goal of driving undecided, or even decided, voter support to Labour. This idea assumes that many individuals in older generations (the parents and grandparents of the target demographic) may not be inclined to consider policies that impact women's well-being in the abstract, but that they can and do consider the immediate needs of their children and grandchildren, albiet not usually in a politicized context. Given that the video was released in the last few days of the campaign, the strategy was likely informed by data indicating that key gains with older demographics could correlate to electoral success.

Figure 10: "A vote for Labour is a #VoteforMe" (The Labour Party, 2017)
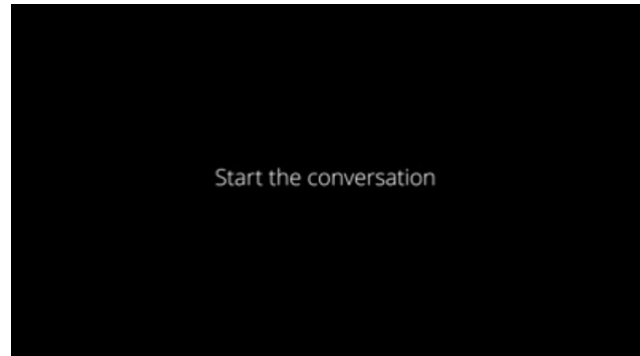
Supporting the idea that data may have driven the strategy to have interpersonal, intergenerational political conversations; analysis of the video content revealed that Momentum employed a similar strategy at exactly the same time. In the final days of the campaign, Momentum released several videos in support of a broader social media mobilization campaign (#callyourgrandfolks and callyourgrandfolks.com) related to the importance of having conversations. Videos directed young supporters to contact their grandparents and have conversations with them to close the generational gap in Labour support. Examples including "Time to call your grandfolks" (Figure 11) and "Grandfolks" (Figure 12) contain photos of grandchildren and grandparents appearing behind onscreen text. The text poses questions such as "when was the last time you spoke to your gran?" and invites viewers to participate in high-effort conversations, stating "we've narrowed the gap in the polls, but to get into the lead, we need to bridge the generational gap…so get talking to your grandparents, it could be Labour's secret weapon in the election" (Momentum, 2017).

As with the Labour video, this content has a clear call to action, identifying grandparents as the target demographic with whom to engage in political conversations. Unlike the Labour video, which established possible message framing for nuanced political conversations about policy, Momentum's content does not suggest specific conversation topics. Momentum's message is more tactical in nature, suggesting that convincing older generations to change their

vote could lead to a significant shift in Labour's support from this demographic. The difference in tone is apparent, as it is unlikely the central campaign would have embraced a social media campaign that so blatantly – and perhaps a bit smugly – tells youth to call their grandparents for no particular reason other than to badger them into voting Labour. It is precisely Momentum's disinterest in creating politically correct content that helps it achieve visibility; their content which uses parody and dark humour tends to be its most successful. "Tory Britain 2030" (Figure 13), for example – which parodies a future intergenerational conversation between a father and daughter as a means to highlight the effects of the Conservative's austerity measures – was viewed over eight million times, more than any other video included in this analysis. While the messaging would not have been endorsed by the central campaign, it is hard to argue that the increased visibility was not ultimately helpful to Labour.

Although these invitations to participate in high-effort political conversation may present an opportunity to close generational gaps by activating the relevancy appraisal of demographics less inclined to support Labour, there is evidence to suggest that engaging in potentially contentious political conversations may cause further political polarization. Studies point to the idea that family relationships already divided across partisan lines become further exacerbated by political advertisements and the possibility of resulting political discussions. (Chen & Rhola, 2018). Regardless of the outcome of political conversations, political advertisements that encourage these conversations to happen in the first place create an opportunity for campaigns trying to gain visibility in a saturated media environment. Creating interest and conversation around ideas may ultimately have a circular effect – online content creates offline conversations, which may then drive more people back online to investigate the content or ideas.

Figure 11: "Call your grandfolks" (The Labour Party, 2017)

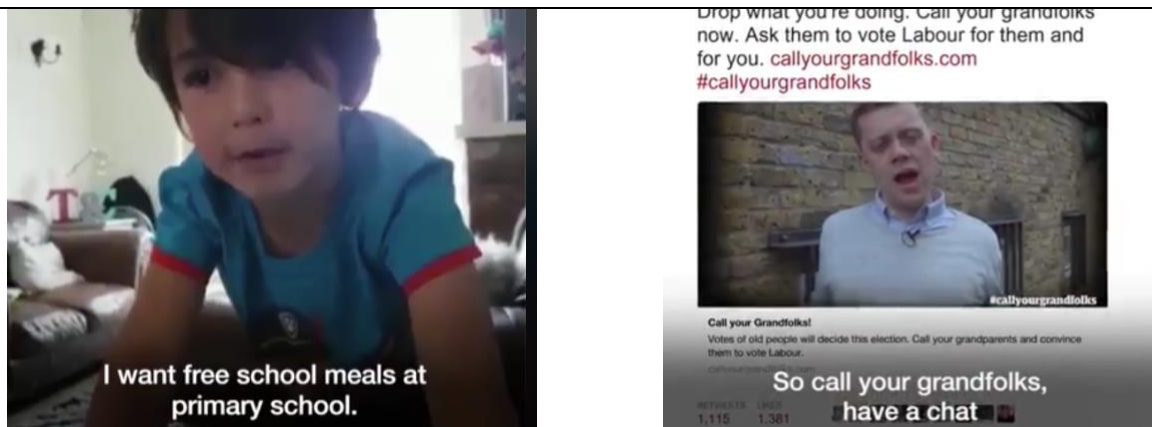**Figure 12: "Grandfolks" (Momentum, 2017)**

Figure 13: "Tory Britain 2030" (Momentum, 2017)
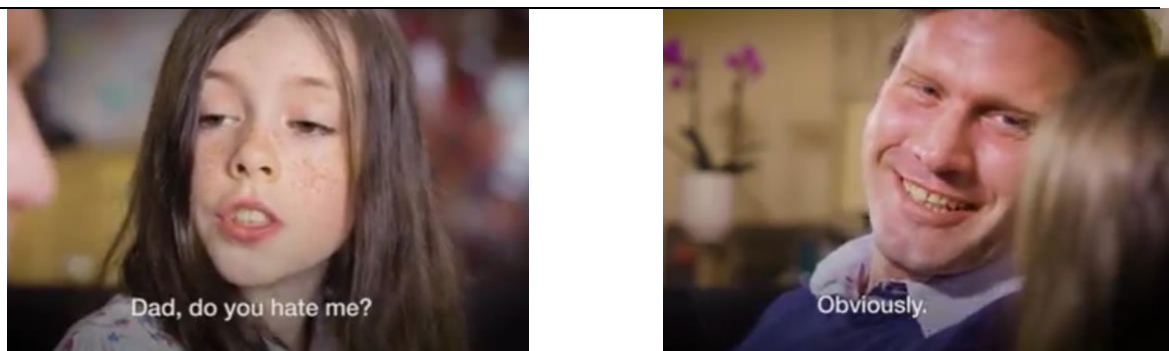
Conclusion

The analysis set forth in this paper was inspired by a question – if you lose an election, can you still "win" a campaign? In other words, what elements of a well-run election campaign are significant enough to become the focus of political, media and scholarly interest? This analysis of the videos created by the central Labour campaign and the decentralized political organization Momentum during the UK 2017 election campaign provides insight into how both groups sought to engage supporters in high-effort political activities. This election provided a unique opportunity to review online digital videos in this manner, in part because Labour was in the unique position of receiving support from Momentum. Although political parties have traditionally been vested in maintaining control of their organizational and communication channels, technological disruptions have and are continuing to create divergent political realities, where "devolved campaigning has become a core component of the Labour party's digital strategy" whether they like it or not (Sheffield, 2017). This relationship represents a new kind of political alliance born out of decentralized, technologically brokered activist networks; in essence creating an organizationally-enabled connective action network between the party and a broader group of supporters.

By examining the content produced by both organizations, I developed a method for identifying the dominant themes that related to instances of high-effort political participation. Including in the analysis only those videos which included narrative or informational content, I performed a content analysis of each video to capture instances where the video content included invitations for the viewer to engage in a political act. Three prominent themes emerged: i) the duty to vote; ii) getting involved in ground game; and iii) interpersonal and intergenerational political conversations. This thematic analysis revealed possible strategic decisions as well as

foreseeable and unforeseeable outcomes of using online digital videos to invite instances of political participation.

While it is difficult to draw conclusions about the efficacy of using video to motivate acts of political participation, the themes that emerged in the content reveal areas where both the party and the grassroots organization believe they need to focus in order to mobilize support and build on electoral gains. The development of this strategic capacity comes in large part by creating a means by which individual actors feel empowered and inspired to engage in political acts. This election provided insight into what strategic capacity building looks like when organizations support and enable individual actors to contribute to political strategy through technological interventions and the affordances of social media. The videos ask viewers to participate in specific actions related to the election, but those actions may create pathways for sustained interest and motivation for remaining politically engaged. An individual who is inspired to register to vote in one election is more likely to continue the habit into the next; using technology to break down barriers to political activities such as door-knocking demystifies political strategy and engagement; and asking people to talk to their families about an election may ultimately help normalize political discourse within family units.

This MRP explored only a small fraction of content created in support of a specific election campaign, leaving a significant opportunity for further research on digital campaign videos and the ways in which they are changing and being changed by new political realities. This research was limited in scope to one political party in a specific election campaign, in a specific geographical location. It focused on a single mode (videos) and a single network (Facebook), both of which have specific characteristics and conditions. It is impossible to predict if elements of Labour (and Momentum's) outreach strategies could be adopted by successive

campaigns, or if other political parties could realistically achieve the same level of increased

supporter engagement without the addition of a grassroots wing.

Even within this narrow scope, however; there is an opportunity for further research on

the use of videos by Labour and Momentum. Following the election, both continue to release

high volumes of video content on their respective Facebook pages, using this mode of

communication as an important tool for awareness building and outreach. Momentum in

particular seems to be establishing itself as capable content creators, creating parody videos to

draw attention to Conservative policies. Momentum's ability to create content that is shared

organically on social media has garnered significant attention from mainstream media. The

videos go viral, and ultimately become part of the mainstream news cycle, with critics, pundits

and journalists weighing in. As Maya Goodfellow wrote in the Guardian regarding one video,

called "The Dinner Party":

> The people featured in the video are emblematic of the small proportion of the population
> who have done well over the past 30 years, and who aren't overly concerned about
> pulling up the ladder behind them… Momentum's aim is to expose the hypocrisy of these
> arguments, remind people of the unfairness of our current economic model and mobilise
> [sic] the young…And while this video doesn't represent a surefire strategy, it might
> speak to older people who are worried that their children and grandchildren won't ever
> have a stable job or home. (Goodfellow, 2017)

Neither the party nor the press could have necessarily predicted the influence Momentum would

have as content creators, but as the body of work continues to expand there is an interesting

opportunity to continue research on exactly why this content has such appeal, and whether or not

there are significant patterns or trends that could be leveraged by other progressive campaigns.

What is clear based on Momentum's success is that political videos released by or for

campaigns are powerful tools for garnering widespread awareness and support. These videos are

not dependent on well-defined party narratives, or significant financial investment, but have the

potential to be a powerful tool in increasing a candidate's visibility and reach. A recent example

can be seen in democratic congressional candidate Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's campaign video

created in support of her candidacy for democratic nominee for New York's 14th congressional

district. The video released on social media featured Ocasio-Cortez walking through her Bronx

neighborhood, speaking to her neighbors and working in the community, while her narration

spoke to the power of people over money. The video – shot in a few days on a shoestring budget

– hit 30,000 views on the first day alone, and has since been viewed over 600,000 times on her

Facebook page as well as on multiple other channels (Haltiwanger, 2018). Her surprise victory in

the primary against a longtime democratic congressman was seen as a victory for grassroots-

driven underdog campaigns. Ocasio-Cortez (2018) herself recognized the importance of the

campaign video to her campaign's success, noting it was one of the key factors in how and why

the campaign was successful.

The video included many of the same themes that emerged in this MRP: a personal,

political narrative; an invitation to participate in a movement (rather than simply support a

party); and a normalization of high-effort political activities, such as voting and having political

conversations. It would be misleading to suggest that Ocasio-Cortez's political successes, like

those of Labour in the 2017 election, can be reduced to the fact that thousands of people watched

a campaign video with these elements. It would be equally reductive, however, to ignore the

potential insights that can be gleaned from the types of content that create pathways to visibility

and relevancy for political organizations and their messages.

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Appendix A: Video count by category and organization

Video count			
Video Type	# of videos included in initial sample (A)	# of videos excluded (B)	# of videos included in final sample (C=A-B)
Labour Party	122	90	32
Campaign footage	10	10	0
Communication	96	64	32
Endorsement	16	16	0
Third party content	0	0	0
Momentum	104	81	23
Campaign footage	36	36	0
Communication	42	19	23
Endorsement	20	20	0
Third party content	6	6	0
Grand Total	**226**	**171**	**55**

Appendix B: Final videos for analysis

	Video ID						High-Effort Activities								Themes		
#	Date	# of Views	# of Shares	Publisher	Title	Video Categorization	Attend meeting / rally	Contact campaign	Work for a campaign	Engage in political discussion	Vote	Register to vote	Become member of party	Donate	The Duty to Vote	Interpersonal and intergenerational political conversations	Getting involved with the ground game
1	Apr 18/17	31 K	249	Momentum	Up for the fight	Communication			X					X	No	No	Yes
13	Apr 24/17	34 K	634	Momentum	Help get Labour into government	Communication			X				X	X	No	No	Yes
14	Apr 24/17	154 K	3.3 K	Labour Party	Our campaign is off to a flying start	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
20	Apr 27/17	201 K	2.3 K	Labour Party	Our plan for housing	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
22	Apr 29/17	106 K	1.3 K	Labour Party	The future of the country is in your hands	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
23	Apr 30/17	149 K	2.4 K	Labour Party	Voting matters	Communication						X			Yes	No	No
24	Apr 30/17	164 K	1 K	Labour Party	Don't miss out on your chance	Communication						X			Yes	No	No
29	May 04/17	75 K	443	Labour Party	Proud to vote Labour today? Tell your friends, pass this on	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
31	May 04/17	75 K	819	Labour Party	For our NHS, education and safer communities	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
33	May 04/17	27 K	598	Labour Party	Finished work? Check. Voted Labour? Check.	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
34	May 04/17	56 K	279	Labour Party	Still time to vote Labour	Communication		X			X				Yes	No	Yes
47	May 11/17	205 K	1.8 K	Labour Party	Singer Jermain	Communication					X	X			Yes	No	No

FOR THE MANY (BUT ESPECIALLY FOR YOU)

		Video ID					High-Effort Activities								Themes		
#	Date	# of Views	# of Shares	Publisher	Title	Video Categorization	Attend meeting / rally	Contact campaign	Work for a campaign	Engage in political discussion	Vote	Register to vote	Become member of party	Donate	The Duty to Vote	Interpersonal and intergenerational political conversations	Getting involved with the ground game
					Jackman has a message for young people												
49	May 12/17	428 K	713	Labour Party	Only ten days left to register to vote	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
59	May 16/17	106 K	1 K	Labour Party	Register to vote by 22 May	Communication						X			Yes	No	No
61	May 17/17	114 K	1.6 K	Momentum	5 ways to help Labour win	Communication			X	X	X			X	Yes	Yes	Yes
62	May 17/17	428 K	1 K	Labour Party	5 days left to register to vote	Communication						X			Yes	No	No
67	May 17/17	67K	3.3K	Labour Party	The Tories are cutting our NHS to shreds	Communication					x				Yes	No	No
74	May 20/17	12 K	201	Momentum	Winning on the doorstep	Communication			X	X					No	Yes	Yes
81	May 21/17	253k	7.3K	Labour Party	Register to vote	Communication				X	X	X			Yes	Yes	No
87	May 22/17	6.1 K	107	Momentum	Voter Registration deadline	Communication						X			Yes	No	No
93	May 26/17	222 K	5.2 K	Momentum	You've slashed the Tory lead	Communication			X		X				Yes	No	Yes
100	May 27/17	231 K	232	Momentum	Jeremy to new campaigners	Communication			X						No	No	Yes
101	May 27/17	120 K	1 K	Momentum	The single most important thing	Communication			X	X	X				Yes	Yes	Yes
108	May 28/17	15 K	130	Momentum	Train to win	Communication			X						No	No	Yes
128	Jun 01/17	34K	782	Labour Party	7 days left to donate	Communication								X	No	No	No
131	Jun 01/17	219K	120	Labour Party	Find out about door-knocking	Communication		X	X		X				Yes	No	Yes

FOR THE MANY (BUT ESPECIALLY FOR YOU)

		Video ID					High-Effort Activities								Themes		
#	Date	# of Views	# of Shares	Publisher	Title	Video Categorization	Attend meeting / rally	Contact campaign	Work for a campaign	Engage in political discussion	Vote	Register to vote	Become member of party	Donate	The Duty to Vote	Interpersonal and intergenerational political conversations	Getting involved with the ground game
132	Jun 01/17	16K	273	Labour Party	7 days left to volunteer	Communication			X						No	No	Yes
135	Jun 02/17	8 M	104 K	Momentum	Tory Britain 2030	Communication		X	X		X				Yes	No	Yes
142	Jun 02/17	17K	289	Labour Party	6 days left to donate	Communication								X	No	No	No
145	Jun 02/17	26k	371	Labour Party	6 days left to volunteer	Communication			X						No	No	Yes
155	Jun 03/17	22 K	407	Labour Party	5 days left to donate	Communication								X	No	No	No
157	Jun 03/17	20 K	243	Labour Party	5 days left to volunteer	Communication			X						No	No	Yes
168	Jun 05/17	15 K	242	Momentum	Time to call your grandparents	Communication				X					No	Yes	No
170	Jun 05/17	1.5 M	17 K	Momentum	Austerity arms	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
174	Jun 05/17	186 K	248	Labour Party	Help out on polling day	Communication		X	X		X				Yes	No	Yes
175	Jun 05/17	42 K	393	Labour Party	3 days to volunteer	Communication			X						No	No	Yes
177	Jun 05/17	258 K	2.5 K	Labour Party	A vote for Labour is a #VoteForMe	Communication				X	X				Yes	Yes	No
184	Jun 05/17	16 K	245	Labour Party	2 days left to volunteer	Communication			X						No	No	Yes
189	Jun 06/17	9.3 K	78	Momentum	The Pledge	Communication		X							No	No	Yes
191	Jun 06/17	993 K	10 K	Momentum	UKIP Voter on Corbyn	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
193	Jun 06/17	8.8 K	102	Momentum	Owen Jones	Grandfolks	Communication				X					No	Yes	No
199	Jun 07/17	1.2 M	21 K	Momentum	Veterans	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
200	Jun 07/17	79 K	1.6 K	Momentum	Vote dedication	Communication				X	X				Yes	Yes	No
203	Jun 07/17	135 K	763	Momentum	Tory voter	Communication			X						No	No	Yes

		Video ID						High-Effort Activities									Themes		
#	Date	# of Views	# of Shares	Publisher	Title	Video Categorization	Attend meeting / rally	Contact campaign	Work for a campaign	Engage in political discussion	Vote	Register to vote	Become member of party	Donate	The Duty to Vote	Interpersonal and intergenerational political conversations	Getting involved with the ground game
207	Jun 07/17	189 K	2.5 K	Momentum	2022: Remembering the NHS	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
211	Jun 07/17	12 K	323	Labour Party	1 day left to volunteer	Communication			X						No	No	Yes
213	Jun 08/17	60 K	1.1 K	Momentum	Pledge	Communication		X	X						No	No	Yes
217	Jun 08/17	17 K	196	Momentum	We think otherwise	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
219	Jun 08/17	7.4 K	83	Momentum	Vote with your dog	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
221	Jun 08/17	17 K	218	Momentum	we are many	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
222	Jun 08/17	55K	1.5 K	Labour Party	Happy polling day	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
223	Jun 08/17	152 K	3.7 K	Labour Party	Don't let the rain stop you voting	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
224	Jun 08/17	49 K	231	Labour Party	Polling Day is the best day to volunteer with Labour	Communication			X		X				Yes	No	Yes
225	Jun 08/17	141 K	539	Labour Party	Vote labour today	Communication					X				Yes	No	No
226	Jun 08/17	124 K	1.9 K	Labour Party	You don't need a polling card, ID, or even a dog to head to the polls	Communication					X				Yes	No	No