Political Campaigning in a developing country: A case study of the Cook Islands

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Abstract:

Previous studies of political campaigning have focused on developed and industrialised nations. This research analysed the three phases of campaigning in a case study of a developing nation, the Cook Islands. The specific features of campaigning examined were the permanent nature of campaigns, the role of the media, the technological development of television and information communication technologies; professionalisation, presidentialisation, centralisation, face-to-face campaigning, Americanisation and hybridisation.

The research found that premodern, face-to-face communications are the predominant form of political campaigning, although some elements of the modern campaign are evident also, notably the role of television. Unlike the situation in developed nations, there was very little evidence of the postmodern campaign, such as the use of the internet. There are several obstacles to the modernisation of political campaigning in the Cook Islands: the small population size and the dispersal of the islands across a huge geographic area mean that access to traditional media is fragmented and the cost of new media access is prohibitively high. Demographic trends suggest this situation is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.
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Contents

Abstract: .......................................................................................................................... II
Author’s declaration ...................................................................................................... III
Acknowledgements and appreciation ....................................................................... IV
Introduction ............................................................................................................... 1

Chapter one: Political campaigning ........................................................................ 4
  The importance of political campaigning ............................................................ 4
  The permanent campaign ...................................................................................... 5
  The role of the media in political campaigning .................................................. 6
  The professionalisation of election campaigning ................................................. 15
  Campaign centralisation and presidentialisation ................................................ 19
  The phases of campaigning ................................................................................... 22

Chapter two: The Cook Islands .................................................................................. 29
  Geography and population of the Cook Islands ................................................... 29
  The media .............................................................................................................. 31
  Political context .................................................................................................... 35

Chapter three: Methodology ..................................................................................... 42
  Qualitative approach ............................................................................................ 42
  In-depth interviews .............................................................................................. 44
  The use of a case study ........................................................................................ 47
  Recording and analysis of data ......................................................................... 50
  Problems and criticisms of interviews ................................................................. 52
  Problems, reliability and validity of the research ................................................ 53

Chapter four: Political campaigning in the Cook Islands; views of citizens and candidates .... 56
  Developments over time in campaigning ............................................................ 56
  Face-to-face communication .............................................................................. 61
  The mediated campaign ...................................................................................... 67
  Professionalisation of campaigns in the Cook Islands ........................................ 79
  Presidentialisation ............................................................................................... 86
  Americanisation .................................................................................................. 89

Chapter five: Discussion ............................................................................................. 93
  The phases of campaigning .................................................................................. 93
  Why the predominance of premodern campaigning? ..................................... 102
Conclusion.................................................................................................................................106

Appendices ........................................................................................................................................... 108
Appendix 1: List of Interviewees........................................................................................................... 108
Appendix 2: Interview questions .......................................................................................................... 110
Appendix 3: Cook Islands statistics ...................................................................................................... 112
Appendix 4: Maps and photographs of the Cook Islands ...................................................................... 114

References ............................................................................................................................................. 117
Journal articles and books..................................................................................................................... 117
Internet sources................................................................................................................................... 124
Introduction

Political campaigning is an important part of the democratic process in countries worldwide. The ways in which campaigns are shaped and formatted, alongside the substance they may contain, determine which political party, or parties, win the right to execute the role of government. Thus, political campaigns are crucial periods, whereby decision makers are selected, policy is shaped, power is distributed and venues are provided for debate. Benoit (2007) believes campaigns matter because they educate citizens and offer them the opportunity to make informed voting decisions.

The Cook Islands, a nation consisting of fifteen islands spread across the South-East Pacific, was chosen as a case study of political campaigning for several reasons. The country lies in close geographical proximity to New Zealand; I had visited the Cook Islands on numerous occasions before and was eager to learn more about politics in the country; and my parents have since relocated there, meaning the islands are now my home. With regard to political campaigning, the Cook Islands are also a good case study of a developing country. The size of the economy, population and land mass are such that it is yet to be recognised, or included as a member by the United Nations, World Bank, or International Monetary Fund. This research is important as it will help test the idea that political campaigning modernises over time and the research will also add to our understanding of the political processes in developing nations.

The specific questions addressed are: where is political campaigning in the Cook Islands situated within the three phase model of campaigning? Are premodern campaign techniques such as direct or face-to-face communication most commonly used? What role do the media, in particular television, newspaper and radio play? Are new media such as the internet prominent and well utilised? Is there evidence of Americanisation or hybridisation?

Political campaigning in some countries has changed significantly over time, and as such is said to have passed through three distinct phases: premodern, modern and postmodern. However, this is a phenomenon mainly identified by existing literature in developed or
advanced industrialised democracies, situated in North America, Europe, parts of Asia and Australasia. The focus of my research is a developing country: the Cook Islands, situated in the Pacific.

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter one reviews the literature on political campaigning. While undertaking this analysis of literature, it became apparent that the majority of advanced industrialised democracies had moved from the premodern phase of campaigning, into the modern and then postmodern. Certain campaign themes had been replicated worldwide. These included the permanent nature of modern campaigns; the increasing prominence of the media; the professionalisation of campaigns; centralisation and presidentialisation. These themes lay the basis for this thesis.

Chapter two describes the demographic, political and media features of the Cook Islands which may have an impact on how political campaigning is conducted in the country. For example, a small population size leads to a small number of voters in each electorate, which when combined with a first-past-the-post electoral system, places a great deal of weight on face-to-face campaigning. At the same time, a small and geographically dispersed population inhibits political communication via traditional and new media.

The methodology is discussed in chapter three. A single case study of the Cook Islands was used for this thesis, as a comparative study of a developed and developing country could not be accomplished without exceeding the word limit. Including other countries would also detract from the strength of the overall argument. By concentrating solely on the Cook Islands, I had the ability to conduct ethnographic-style field research in the country, making one seven week visit and another of shorter duration, to interview members of the public, political figures, business people and members of community and church groups. I endeavored to discover how political parties and their candidates campaigned in the Cook Islands, and in order to do so, I employed qualitative interview methods to collect data.

In chapter four I discuss at length my findings from conducting face-to-face interviews in the Cook Islands during my three visits in 2010. The opinions of interviewees are explored with regards to developments in campaigning, with the shift from a collective (village based and
cultural) to one-on-one campaigning; the decrease of traditional party ties; and the differences in campaigning between Rarotonga and the Outer Islands.

The fifth and final chapter offers my overall assessment of campaigning in the Cook Islands, within the framework of the three phases of campaigning. It concludes by asking and answering the question: where is political campaigning in the Cook Islands situated within the three phase model of campaigning?
Chapter one: Political campaigning

Modern day election campaigns are said to be permanent, mediatised, professional, centralised and presidentialised (Negrine 2001; Van Onselen & Errington 2005; Negrine, Mancini & Holtz-Bacha 2007; Stromback 2009). Thus, these components will be the key focus of this study. In a historical context, there have been three distinct phases of political campaigning: the premodern, modern and postmodern. The driving force of this evaluation of campaigning is Americanisation or hybridisation. The aim of this case study of campaigning in the Cook Islands is to situate the country in the above framework. What features of the modern campaign are found in the Cook Islands? Are the three phases of campaigning able to be located? To what extent has there been Americanisation or hybridisation of political campaigning in the Cook Islands?

The importance of political campaigning

Plasser and Plasser (2002) argue the essence of politics is talk or human interaction. Such interaction may be formal or informal, verbal or nonverbal, public or private, but it is always persuasive, forcing us consciously or subconsciously to interpret, evaluate and act. Thus, communication is the vehicle for human action. Nimmo (1967, 1970, 1974) believes that election campaigns reveal the full range of human ambitions and frailties in stark focus, and voters intuitively expect that since so much time, money, intelligence and emotional effort is expended on campaigning, it must have an effect on our lives that is worth exploring. Even more so, Swanson and Mancini (1996) argue election campaigns are critical periods in the lives of democracies. They select decision makers, shape policy, distribute power and provide venues for debate and socially approved expressions of conflict about factional grievances and issues.

In most democracies, politicians and political parties must persuade the electorate to support them and their policies, hence election campaigns. “Political campaigns consist largely of persuasive communications” (Nimmo 2001: 192). Furthermore, “a campaign consists of an individual (or group) in a particular context directed at manipulating the behaviour of a wider number of people to his/her advantage” (Nimmo 2001: 191).
One reason for the on-going need to study political campaigning is that it is frequently changing. An overwhelming majority of political consultants across many regions of the world agreed that the style of election campaigns in their countries had changed recently (Plasser and Plasser 2002).

**The permanent campaign**

Many commentators believe we live in the era of the permanent campaign. Ornstein and Mann believe that,

> the permanent campaign means that campaigns are nonstop and year-round, and governing/campaigning/governing/campaigning takes place in a continuous loop. Campaign consultants move without pause from the campaign trail to work for the victorious elected officials and help to shape their policy issues and frame issues for advantage in the next campaign (2000: 220).

Even if campaigning and governing are inextricably interlinked in democracy, the process is distinctly different now to what it was some decades ago.

In the United States, campaigns were historically confined to the latter half of election years, and when the campaign ended, the governing began, after a lengthy transition interval (Ornstein and Mann 2000). The permanent campaign concept involves more than a recognition that political parties and politicians begin “gearing up for re-election well before the official campaign begins, it is a claim that campaigning is nonstop” (Heclo 2000: 17). Most permanent campaign authors agree with Heclo’s assumption that it is a process seeking to manipulate sources of public approval to engage in the act of governing itself (Heclo 2000: 17; Johnson 2001; Tenpas 2000; Greenberg 2002; O’Shaughnessy 1990: 193; Jacobs and Shapiro 1995: 192; Scammell 1996: 127; Bowman 2000; Corrado 2000; Hess 2000: 43; Kernell 1997). For Heclo, the common features of the permanent campaign,

> include a prominent role for campaign consultants in government, the use of polling as a strategic device to steer policy-making and presentation, a preoccupation with fundraising for the next election, a media fascination with the ‘horse race’ aspects of political life, and high-stakes posturing over every issue, with public support becoming a bargaining chip between politicians, parties and interest groups.

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and United States President Bill Clinton have been the subject of much debate surrounding the permanent campaign. Nimmo (1999), Newman (1994), Jones (2000) and Butler and Kavanagh (2001) have all argued both premierships were more about campaigning than governing. Clinton’s eight years have been described as
“a presidency based on a perpetual campaign to obtain the public’s support and fed by public opinion polls, focus groups and public relations memos” (Edwards 2000: 27).

The role of the media in political campaigning

Across western democracies we have witnessed a gradual shift from mostly direct forms of political campaigning to increasingly indirect and mediated forms. Direct forms of campaigning are typically party-oriented, utilising such means as party press, newspaper advertisements, billboards, targeted advertisements and direct mail. Indirect forms of campaigning on the other hand include newspaper coverage, public relations and media training, press conferences and the internet (Farrell and Webb 2000: 104). It is now commonplace for election campaigns to be “carried out more and more through the ‘entertainment’ genres of television and radio, especially talk shows, talk radio, popular television channels and forms of ‘drop-in’ television” (O’Shaughnessy and Henneberg 2002: 195). Historically, direct forms of campaigning tended to be more grassroots-based, with volunteers of political parties often taking part in mail drops and being organised utilising bottom-up methods (Butler and Ranney 1994). Nowadays, indirect forms of campaigning tend to be highly centred on the party leadership, with most major political marketing decisions being made in a top-down process. Today, few parties have a mass membership, and therefore the ability to have numerous volunteers ‘on the ground’ (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999; Brown 2003).

Plasser and Plasser (2002) believe campaigns have changed, in response to the media revolution, which first took place in the United States, followed later by Europe, Asia and Australia. Even more so, they believe “pre-packaged sound bites of candidates, relentlessly aired political television commercials, repeated narrow campaign messages and scripted camera-ready events seem to have replaced mass rallies and personal contacts with supporters and voters” (2002: 19). Such an impressionistic summary stresses one major central feature of modern election campaigns: their media and television centeredness (Cain, Dalton and Scarrow 2003; Chaffee 1996, 1997; Cross and Henderson 2004; Keeter 1987; Scammell 1996).
Technological developments: television

Television’s potential for affecting the criteria choice in elections was noted from the start. Looking ahead to the first ‘TV election,’ Jack Gould, television critic for the *New York Times*, wrote that

...a TV-aware electorate is not going to be voting for a man merely on the basis of his reputation, or his thoughts as recorded in the printed word, or his disembodied voice as it comes out of a loudspeaker. Television makes the candidate of today a human being at one’s elbow, who is going to be judged on the same terms as a man greets any new acquaintance (Gould 1972: 21 cited in Keeter 1987: 345).

Chaffee and Frank state that “as technologies expand the channels of communication we need to update our understanding of how people acquire the knowledge on which they base their political behaviour” (1996: 49). Technological development throughout the twenty-first century has had a considerable effect on political campaigning; the advent of television has drastically changed the way political information is relayed to the citizenry (Keeter 1987; Gunther and Mughan 2000; Chaffee 1996; Baum and Kernell 1999).

Historically, radio and newspapers were considered the dominant sources of political information for many citizens; however it was the introduction of television that made the reliance on the media more prominent. Television is now the most important source of news in nearly all countries where election campaigning has been studied. Campaigns are won and lost on the air during an intense struggle by candidates and parties to frame the issues in a favourable way and reach swing voters with carefully crafted messages and well-scripted camera-ready events (Thurber and Dulio 2000b; Kaid 1999d; Priess and Soldevilla 1999).

In the United States, candidates for national office depend upon television to transform candidacy into incumbency. In 1968, the Democrats spent sixty-one percent of their presidential campaign funds on broadcasting; the Republicans spent half (Trent 2007: 8). But surprisingly, the public relies more heavily on political television than do the candidates. In 1972, two-thirds of Americans said that television was the best way to follow candidates for national office and more than half got their “clearest understanding of the candidates and the issues in elections from TV” (Robinson 1976: 1). By 2008, political campaigns were even more television centric, with both US presidential candidates spending a combined $28 million on television advertising over a one week period. The Obama campaign spent an
estimated $17.5 million on television advertising alone (University of Wisconsin Advertising Project 2008).

Meanwhile in European nations, the leading right and left wing parties have relied on television strategies since the 1970s (Plasser and Plasser 2002:23). Maier and Tenscher argue

there can be little doubt that the nature of political campaigning in national and European elections has changed considerably over the last three or four decades: new techniques are being used, new principles and strategies are being adopted, and new types of personnel are being employed. Sometimes that change in election practices has been interpreted as a professionalisation of election campaigning; at other times it has been seen as confirmation of the application of political marketing techniques to election campaigning (2006: 31).

Germany is typical of many European countries in respect to political campaigning. In Germany, political parties still use a large range of channels for communicating with the electorate, including town meetings, canvassing and billboards. However, these classical election strategies have lost some of their significance. Paralleling this decline has been the increase in the use of television for political marketing campaigns; thus, the news media have become increasingly important. Swanson and Mancini argue “among the news media, television is deemed particularly significant” (1996: 92). Television in Germany is often claimed to have superiority over other media during elections because of the suggestive power of pictures, the credibility of television as a consequence of its seeming authenticity, and the plausible idea that a medium such as television, with a comprehensive reach into the audience (compared with newspapers for instance), must also have widespread political effects (Swanson and Mancini 1996). During election campaigns in Germany, television is said to not only reach many voters, but particularly those not very interested in politics. These are the German voters said to be most susceptible to media effects (Blumler 1970; 1983 cited in Swanson and Mancini 1996). Television in German politics seems to be best suited to convey personal images, for instance, those of the candidates that are so important for the voting decision nowadays (Noelle-Neumann 1970; Blumler 1983 cited in Swanson and Mancini 1996).

In Asia, countries such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan have also experienced significant developments in political campaigning in recent years (Schafferer 2005). In Japan there has been an increase in the public prominence of the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition. Television media have begun increasingly reporting news stories about these
politicians. The most frequently noted change in the Japanese political system is the 1993 reform of the electoral system (Krauss and Nyblade 2005). One of the most important changes was the increasing importance of television in politics. Furthermore,

the relationship between the Prime Minister, voters and non-print news media has also been undergoing profound changes since the mid 1980s, when the media environment was transformed with the appearance of a new programme: Kume Hiroshi’s ‘News Station.’ Focusing more attention on government mistakes and corruption and on politicians as individual personalities, it eventually rivalled NHK news in popularity and spawned other commercial station imitators (Krauss and Nyblade 2005: 5).

Simultaneously, television public affairs interviews and debates featuring politicians became a staple of weekend and late night viewing. Voters were exposed more directly to national politicians and the Prime Minister, and the coverage of these politicians became much more critical and opinionated:

the importance of television news in politics has increased vastly in the years following the arrival of the News Station. In post-election voter polls that began in 1972, there has been a clear upward trend in the number of voters who report that television news reports and commentary were useful in deciding which candidate or party to vote for. The percentage in House of Representatives elections more than doubled to roughly twenty percent...the most significant increase occurs in the late 1980s and early 1990s, after the advent of more opinionated, personalistic coverage of politics (Krauss and Nyblade 2005: 7).

Both Australia and New Zealand have witnessed the increasing prominence of television in political campaigning. Denemark argues, in Australia, television’s overall visual orientation and emphasis is on image and on the electoral contest itself, while largely ignoring policy detail, may prompt evaluative effects in individuals with low levels of prior political information and awareness. “However, those with higher levels of political interest will watch television’s images without effect, because these more facile messages do not sufficiently challenge their more sophisticated evaluative predispositions” (2002: 6).

Australian television has become the “central link between the parties and voters,” second only to candidates and parties themselves in terms of their importance for election results (Denemark 2002: 6). Since 1972, arguably Australia’s first ‘television election,’ campaigns have increasingly sought to dominate television news, thereby tapping into the overwhelming portion of the electorate reliant on television as their main source of election political information (2002: 6). “Voter’s increasing reliance on television has perhaps been fuelled by parties’ media-based efforts to win the support of the strategic minority of swinging, late deciding voters who have become vital to Australian electoral outcomes.
Denemark argues “television has long been seen as vital component of electioneering, and a critical factor in election outcomes” in Australia (2007: 2). Further, this is the case as a broad cross-section of Australian voters have continued to rely upon free-to-air television as their main source of political news and information (Ward and Stewart 2006: 194; Denemark 2005a: 222).

Vowles argues that in New Zealand elections, television coverage can be a quest to make politics more entertaining (2004). Cross and Henderson believe in a small country the media have the potential to exercise a disproportionate influence. “This is particularly the case in New Zealand...under Mixed Member Proportional (MMP), every vote counts as representation in parliament reflects parties’ overall share of the vote; this increases the importance of the national media, particularly television” (2004: 143):

of all the wide range of media open to politicians, there is no doubt that television is the most sought after means of communication. The goal for the leaders of the major political parties, especially during election time, is to be portrayed in a favourable light on the six o’clock evening television news, the main news bulletin. It is a goal beyond the reach of most politicians who have to make do with more accessible radio and newspaper coverage. The most important television outlet is the state-owned Television New Zealand (TVNZ). It’s One News gains a regular audience of 850,000, about fifty-six percent of the available market, compared with twenty-four percent by its privately owned rival, Three News (Cross and Henderson 2004: 143).

Furthermore, Vowles argues during the 2008 New Zealand election campaign, forty-one percent of survey respondents (from a total of 2700) viewed television news seven nights of the week, while only three percent watched no television news whatsoever.

Technological developments: information communication technologies

Information communication technologies have come about with the explosion of the internet, which started in advanced industrialised democracies in the 1990s (Brown 2003; Chen and Smith 2010; Coleman 2005; Gibson 2001; Gibson, Nixon and Ward 2003; Gibson, Lusoli and Ward 2003). It has spread globally, and provides new and unexplored paths for communication. Many of these paths are now being utilised by political parties and candidates during election campaigns worldwide. Information communication technologies include online media such as Facebook, Twitter, Bebo, MySpace, YouTube, Skype, online chat, blogs and email (Macnamara 2008). They lay claim to several distinct characteristics, including the ability to be able to communicate efficiently with large numbers of people. A
politician, or staff member, can upload policies or electioneering photos onto his or her Facebook page (Gibson 2008). Political parties can also run online polls as to how popular (or unpopular) a policy or issue is to their supporters (Gibson, Rommele and Ward 2004). If constituents cannot attend a town hall meeting or do not have time to watch a televised leaders’ debate, all of these can easily be accessed on the internet, and are more often than not immediately posted to Facebook pages, via YouTube (Macnamara 2008; Oates, Owen and Gibson 2006).

The arrival of the internet meant it is the latest technological revolution since the advent of television. The inclusion of the internet in the media mix raises new questions and challenges for citizens, journalists, politicians and governments alike (Oates and Gibson 2006: 1). Information communication technologies (ICTs) are relatively new, and like television, are often regarded as impacting significantly on election campaigning, although this is largely a potential at the moment. The increasing interest in ICTs stems from their difference from old media; “the internet cedes information control to the individual consumer, who can actively search out the desired information and can edit and collate the relevant news sources” (Oates and Gibson 2006: 2). Further, and what is perhaps even more of a revolutionary development, the internet allows consumers themselves to become producers of news. Anyone with a little technical know-how and a little money can publish their own material on the internet (Johnson 2002).

The internet has impacted on political campaigning substantially. Such internet features have introduced interactivity to media technologies, “allowing citizens to converse with politicians or to other groups of citizens from considerable distances, or to engage in written dialogue via computers” (Gibson, Nixon and Ward 2003: 4). ICTs are said to be stimulating a move towards a more direct form of campaigning, with politicians being in direct contact with constituents via social media such as email, chat, video blogs and Facebook. “E-polling, e-voting and e-referenda all make it significantly more possible for citizens to have a direct say in governing themselves, bypassing traditional mediating institutions and organisations such as parties, pressure groups and parliaments” (Ward and Vedel 2006: 12).

President Bill Clinton’s former adviser Dick Morris believes the internet offers a “potential for direct democracy so profound that it may well transform not only our system of politics,
but our very form of government, bypassing national representatives and speaking directly to one another” (Coleman 2005: 8). Politicians may be frustrated by the traditional media as they feel they are represented unfairly on television and in newspapers, and hence the prospect of unmediated (or self-mediated) communication with citizens is quite appealing. In New Zealand for example, most MPs have email addresses displayed on their websites where constituents can contact them directly. Whether it is them personally (or a staff member) who actually reads and replies to the emails, is another story. Nevertheless, in the case of the British parliament, even though evidence suggests that internet-based access to MPs is the preferred medium for web users, only one in twenty UK internet users report visiting political websites of any kind (see Table 1 in Gibson, Lusoli and Ward 2005: 570; Coleman 2001; Gibson et al 2002). Furthermore, only eight percent of internet users “looked for political information,” five percent “visited the site of a political organisation” and four percent “sent an email to a politician” (Gibson, Lusoli and Ward 2005: 570). In Coleman’s view, it is questionable how ‘new’ or useful the new technology is.

Notwithstanding, the internet and other web-based technologies are still relatively new, and while much has been written on the role of these new types of technology, we lack the ability (because of this newness) to assess what the long-term consequence will be. Thus, the impact of ICTs might not be truly felt, or even obvious, for many years to come. It has been argued that “analysing the role of television in the 1950s, some thirty years after it first emerged, would have underestimated its eventual impact. In many ways the internet has already become more ubiquitous and arguably more influential” (Ward and Vedel 2006: 15).

With the escalating cost of campaigning, the internet has been increasingly utilised because it is cost effective and has high visibility, creating public awareness and support for candidates and their platforms (Trent and Friedenberg 2004). Yet, increasing internet exposure may also lead to a decrease in politicians’ public appearances.

Westling (2007) has studied the impact of the online social networking site Facebook on political communication. He argues that as Barack Obama and John McCain launched their 2008 presidential campaigns, “both candidates are trying to define their campaigns as conversations with the American people” (Westling 2007: 2). Traditionally, the only
effective means of obtaining feedback from the public during campaigns was to use opinion polling. Beginning with the Howard Dean campaign for the American presidency in 2004, political strategists realised the potential of the internet as a means of gauging interest and public opinion, while also engaging citizens in the political process. Westling (2007) argues that Facebook provides campaigns with the ability to organize and communicate with supporters in a very efficient way.

Facebook is not the ideal means for political communication however; it too has weaknesses. “Facebook only works to supplement existing real-world communities, real-world political issues, and real-world news stories. The vast majority of information on Facebook comes from some other location. What Facebook does is bring members of a community together and provide a means to share information through a single network” (Westling 2007: 4). Another weakness of Facebook is that it cannot directly be a means of fundraising for political campaigns. Although millions of people worldwide are identifying with political groups and taking their political debate online, none of it matters if they do not take the next step and participate in the real world. Real world political participation can include making financial contributions, participating in political rallies, and most importantly, voting (Westling 2007). In the US, Hillary Clinton announced her candidacy for president by placing a YouTube video on her website (Deighton and Kornfield 2008: 3).

ICTs are now used extensively worldwide by political parties and individual candidates in their campaigning. It is too early to decide though, whether ICTs have ushered in a ‘digital democracy’ and whether they have led to a more interactive citizenry (in the campaign), than traditional media. During the 2008 New Zealand election campaign, only nine percent of survey respondents admitted to using the internet for political news seven days a week. More interesting perhaps is the result of those who used no internet for news at all: forty-six percent, meanwhile a further eighty-seven percent said they did not access a political party website at all during the campaign (Jack Vowles website 2010).In Australia however, the 2007 federal election campaign was described throughout as being similar to the 2007-2008 US presidential primaries, as the “YouTube election” and “internet election” (Macnamara 2008: 1). However, a study by the Australian Centre for Public Communication (2008) found that these descriptions were greatly exaggerated. This study found that most
internet communication used by politicians and political parties did not utilise the interactivity and ‘conversation’ features that distinguish ICTs, such as blogs, MySpace, Facebook and YouTube. Furthermore, the Australian Centre for Public Communication found that the lack of significant citizen engagement by politicians online is also evident in the finding that only twenty percent allowed direct e-mail contact, with eighty percent directing ‘contact me’ to their parliamentary or electorate staff (2008: 19).

Former Australian Prime Minister John Howard was the first Australian Prime Minister to have a personal website, following on from this during the 2007 federal election by posting a video discussing climate change policy on YouTube which attracted widespread comment, both online and in traditional media. The Australian Labor Party launched a website before the 2007 campaign got underway. The Australian Centre for Public Communication noted the Kevin07 website (and related MySpace sites and blogs), during the 2007 federal election campaign represented an unprecedented use of new media, reportedly involving a dedicated team of twenty full-time staff (2008).

The media as a source of news for voters

Klarevas (2003) discusses the results of a survey which investigated how Americans receive their news. The survey found that television is the main source of news for Americans; “seventy-five percent of those surveyed indicated they watch television news programs regularly. By comparison, sixty-three percent read daily newspapers regularly and forty-six percent listen to the news on the radio” (Klarevas, 2003: 266). Plasser and Plasser argue nowadays that over seventy-two percent of Americans cite television as their primary source of campaign news, as do seventy-five percent of Russians and eighty-two percent of Brazilians (Plasser and Plasser 2002: 241). Similar results have been found in surveys completed in New Zealand, showing New Zealanders too are heavily dependent on the mass media; with television the main source of news, followed closely by newspapers. According to the New Zealand Election Study survey in 2005 (when a total of 2,806 citizens were surveyed), an overwhelming majority of seventy percent said they watched the news on television at least five nights a week outside of the election campaign. Additionally, a further forty-eight percent claimed they read a newspaper five to seven days of the week.
During the election campaign period, these rates increased. Newspaper readership increased substantially, with 1,813 of those surveyed gaining their information from newspapers during an election campaign. Thus, studies show that a majority of the public derive their political information from either the television or newspaper (and in some cases, both).

Impact of the mediated campaign on voting

“More than any time since democratization, modern election campaigns bring uncertain outcomes. This change is most visible in the growing proportion of voters who now delay their voting decision until the election campaign is under way” (McAllister in Farrell and Schmitt-Beck 2002: 22). In other words, more votes than ever before are potentially available for conversion during a campaign. The overwhelming impression conveyed by modern election campaigns is that the parties assume voters are capricious, easily converted and generally ill-informed about issues (Butler and Ranney 1992; Kavanagh 1995; Swanson and Mancini 1996). The phenomenon of voters deciding later which party or candidate they cast their vote for, is often traced to partisan dealignment. “With fewer voters possessing affective loyalties to the major parties, they enter the election campaign undecided about their vote, and are therefore more susceptible to the issues, appeals and themes which emerge during the course of the campaign” (Crewe 1983; Bowen 1994; Dalton 1996 in Farrell and Schmitt-Beck 2002: 22). Television is particularly powerful during election campaigns. “It is assumed to not only reach many voters, but particularly those not very interested in politics; these are the voters most susceptible to media effects” (Blumler 1970; 1983 in Swanson and Mancini 2006: 92). How much campaign information citizens can recollect about parties, candidates and issues at the time a decision is called for, is the keystone of virtually all contemporary models of individual political behaviour.

The professionalisation of election campaigning

What is campaign professionalization and why is it happening?

The media’s transformation of election campaigning has been accompanied by the professionalisation of the techniques adopted by political parties. ‘Professionalisation’ and related words have become the normal way of describing developments in communication and political communication in recent years. Lilleker and Negrine argue professionalisation
is “the process whereby many tasks, formerly ascribed to party members, are given to outside agencies” (2002: 99). Blumler and Gurevitch believe that

arguably the most formative development in the political communication process of present day democracies, the professionalisation of political communication is the near universal response of political parties to the dissolution of previously more firm anchorages of political attitudes, the increasing centrality of television and the proliferating demands of multiple news outlets for constant comments and appearances (1995: 207).

According to Farrell (2001), the basic trends of professionalisation can be summarised as having involved a gradual shift from electioneering as essentially a localist, largely amateur, part-time affair directed at party loyalists to the permanent campaign of today, personified by a focus on slick presentation, the prominent role of campaign consultants, and an emphasis on the marketing of image. Developments in telecommunications and other technologies, combined with the accelerating pace of social change, have fundamentally altered the character of political parties and government (Mancini 1999).

The single common theme that campaign studies share is that election campaigns are becoming more professionalised (Farrell 1996). Plasser and Plasser (2002) argue campaign styles and practices have changed dramatically worldwide. The on-going process of modernisation has led to a surprising degree of professionalisation of campaign practices throughout countries with democratic and competitive elections (Swanson and Mancini 1996). There are types of activities typically associated with the concept of campaign professionalisation, including polling (whether it be by telephone, email, posted questionnaire or on the street), focus group research, and surveys, which are more often than not conducted by specialists in those fields, hired by political parties. Cornfield (cited in Negrine 1996), believes since the 1960s, campaigning has been increasingly dominated by a blend of marketing and military techniques known as the ‘professional’ style. A professionalisation of political communication is taking place, as indicated by the increasing use of political consultants and campaign centralisation (Negrine 1996: 150-151).

The role of political consultants

Political consultants are an essential part of modern election campaigns (Thurber, Nelson and Dulio 2000; Plasser and Plasser 2002; Medvic 2003; Friedenberg 1997). There has been an ascendancy of a new form of political professional, the technical expert who sells his or
her services on the open market, at the heart of decision making within political parties and even government itself (Mancini 1999; Sabato 1981; Mitchell 1958). “The first political consultants were most likely volunteers in the elections of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, who gave their candidates advice about debates, circulating printed materials, making speeches and getting out the vote” (Thurber and Nelson 2000: 1). This is in direct contrast to Barack Obama’s campaign for the American presidency in 2008; twenty-four hours after formally being nominated as the Democratic Party candidate, he began putting in place six teams of campaign consultants which handled advertising, polling, and direct email efforts for the general election campaign (The Washington Post, June 4 2008). The firm of Obama’s top media strategist, David Axelrod, received US $175,000 for the month of January alone. Party organizations are a major training ground for political consultants. In fact, the most common training or practice cited by professional consultants was working for a national, state or local party committee (Thurber and Nelson 2000). Although consulting is a partisan business, and consultants usually work for candidates on one side of the political spectrum, most consultants describe their political beliefs as towards the centre (Thurber and Nelson 2000). While candidates are ultimately responsible for their campaigns, they rarely run their campaigns without professional help. “Professional consultants bring direction and discipline to the campaign. Campaign professionals are needed to bring order out of chaos, maintain message and strategy discipline, and keep the campaign focused” (Johnson 2001: 11).

Paul Herrnson, Director of the Centre for American Politics and Citizenship, a Professor in the Department of Government and Politics, and distinguished scholar at the University of Maryland, is a leading expert on the role of political consultants. He argues campaign professionalisation has an important impact on candidates’ fundraising success. Herrnson argues the more consultants a campaign hires, the more money the campaign is able to raise. Furthermore, “political parties and individuals who make large contributions want to invest their money in campaigns that have the highest chance of success, and they look to campaign professionalisation as one indicator of that” (Herrnson; Thurber and Nelson 2000: 5). According to Medvic, Thurber and Nelson (2000), when it is the case of both challenger and incumbent, a more professionally run campaign equals a higher percentage of the vote. The best consultants are able to define the race on their own terms, not the terms set by
the opposition, media or outside third parties. In the end, the campaign boils down to letting voters know the answers to some very simple questions: who the candidate is, what the issues are and why the race is important” (Thurber, Nelson and Dulio 2000: 11). Above all, political consultants bring experience from other campaigns. Every campaign has its unique circumstances and dynamics, but campaigns are also excellent for recycling. Thurber, Nelson and Dulio believe that

when a consultant has worked on fifteen or twenty-five races, campaigns begin to fall into predictable patterns: messages and themes, issues, and tactics reappear, taking on slight variations, new twists to old challenges. Veteran consultants can save a candidate from making mistakes, spot opportunities quickly and take advantage of changing circumstances (2000: 12).

**Why political consultants?**

One major factor behind the rise of political consultants in the US has been the inherent organizational weakness of American political parties (Agranof 1972; Dulio 2004; Sabato 1981). Thus, the role of the campaign professional and political consultant has become increasingly important in the US, and also in Europe. In Europe, unlike in the US, parties have been robust organisations in the past. In the US there was always the potential for political consultants to play a role; in Europe this became so as parties weakened. The collapse of traditional party affiliations and the resulting increase in competition for political parties are standard findings of Western party research (Plasser and Plasser 2002). In Austria and Germany for example, the percentage of persons with a strong party identification fell by one half between 1974 and 1997. Similar statistics are apparent in Ireland, the United Kingdom, France and Italy (Mair, Muller and Plasser 2002). This is also the case in Australia and Canada, but particularly in Japan, where voter affiliation with a particular political party sat at just over forty percent in 1996 (Japanese Election Study 1996). Nonetheless, “with fewer identifiers and dues-paying members, parties may lack the resources for grass-roots campaigning such as canvassing and mail drops” (Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg 2000: 54).

Karlsen (2009) argues technological advances have increased the need for campaign professionals. However, he believes the level of professionalisation in a system is also likely to vary according to the economic resources available. Further, Webb and Kolodny argue campaign professionals can be divided into two main categories: staff and consultants
According to Katz (1995), *staff* are those on the formal payroll of political parties, but it is not uncommon for the state to frequently employ individuals as consultants, to perform important work for political parties.

**Market intelligence: polling and segmentation**

Another aspect of the professionalisation of election campaigns is that political parties have increasingly adopted marketing techniques to gauge information from voters. Opinion polling, focus groups and surveys are used as a means of information gathering, whether it be about a certain policy initiative, or stance on a contentious issue. They then adopt targeting and segmentation techniques to ensure their desired political messages are received by the correct audience, and usually the more the better. Cook, Barabas, Page and Manza argue “a fundamental goal in most democratic societies is a close connection between citizen’s preferences and public policies” (2002: 142). As the means of collecting feedback have become more sophisticated, and the desire to test public opinion is now stronger than before, we have witnessed a perceptible shift in the way politicians treat politics. It used to be like an art, now it is more of a science (Farrell 2000). Historically, political parties would develop policies based on ideology and seek to steer public opinion towards those policies. Nowadays however, political strategy increasingly appears to centre on finding out what the public wants to hear and marketing policies accordingly. Such policy movements may enhance the responsiveness of parties to popular demands.

Since 1990 the development of segmentation has seen a shift in emphasis from the traditional (geographic and demographic) methods of segmentation towards an increase in psychographic/attitudinal bases to segment political markets (Smith and Hirst 2001). At the heart of a political marketing campaign is the candidate’s realisation that they will not be able to appeal to all voters of every persuasion (Noelle-Neumann 1977; Jacobs 1995). Consequently, candidates need to identify who their constituency is as they proceed through each stage of the political campaign (Newman 1994).

**Campaign centralisation and presidentialisation**

Political parties are increasingly operating out of national party headquarters, taking on an increasing role in managing and planning the campaign (Denver, Hands, Fisher and
Campaigning on the ground has also changed; technological developments and other changes have led to a decline in the use of traditional campaign techniques and increased use of new methods. During the past ten years a new emphasis on the relationship between national and local election campaigns has emerged. National party professionals now seek to exercise much greater control over local campaigning by managing crucial aspects of key constituency campaigns and integrating them much more closely into the national effort (Denver, Hands, Fisher and MacAllister 2003). In addition to this, campaign centralisation has led to an increase in the focus of leaders.

Thematic developments in election campaigns have seen an increase in *presidentialisation* and campaign communication. Worldwide, there has been a distinct shift in campaign focus, with much more attention now focused on the party leader (Bowler and Farrell 1992; Farrell 1996; Swanson and Mancini 1996a). To a considerable extent, this increase has been fuelled by the advent of television and its requirements. Parties nowadays are concentrating resources at the centre, surrounding the party leader. Farrell (2000) argues this trend reflects a power shift in political parties, but is also suggestive of a change in the nature of campaign discourse, with image and style increasingly pushing policies and substance aside. “Today it is very hard to find any examples among the main parties of a national election campaign where the party leader is consigned a minor role. In short, “there is little disputing the fact that campaigns have become presidentialised” (Mughan 1993; 1995). Campaigns are now, more than ever before, leader-focused. This may be a response on the part of political parties, to increasing mediatisation (Stromback 2008; Poguntke 2005; Maddens and Fiers 2004; Krauss 2005). By consistently, and almost relentlessly pushing the party leader to the forefront during elections, parties are trying in earnest to maintain control of the campaign and keep the party ‘on message.’ Helms (2005) argues presidentialisation has become a catchword in the recent study of political leadership in Britain and several other parliamentary democracies. Helms elaborates and offers his depiction of what presidentialisation entails:

- a significant increase in the impact of individual leaders on the outcome of parliamentary elections;
- the increasing involvement of Prime Ministers in international ‘summitry;’
- a decreasing involvement of Prime Ministers in the management of parliamentary business and in the basic parliamentary activities;
- the growing importance of extra parliamentary media strategies of governments and Prime Ministers in particular;
- the concentration of resources of control and advice at the ‘centre’ within the Prime Minister’s office and the Cabinet office,
giving rise to a Prime Ministers department in all but name; and a transfer of political and policy initiatives from individual departments to the office of the Prime Minister or even external advisers (2005: 431).

Webb and Poguntke (2001), alongside Maddens and Fiers (2002, 2004) share similar views on presidentialisation. Accompanying the focus of the campaign around party leaders has been the concentration of campaign control at the centre. Denver, Hands, Fisher and MacAllister argue that over the past decade in Britain, a new relationship has developed between local and national campaigns. They believe “national party professionals now seek to exercise much greater control over local campaigning by managing key constituency campaigns in crucial respects and integrating them much more closely into the national effort” (2003: 547). As part of a planned and managed scheme, after the 1997 general election in Britain, newly elected Labour MPs were encouraged by the party to absent themselves from the House of Commons, where their votes were not needed because of a large majority, on a planned and regular basis in order to devote themselves to campaign activities in their constituencies. Furthermore,

the increased effort to manage constituency campaigns is aimed both at concentrating resources in key or target seats and encouraging local parties to take advantage of new and more effective campaigning techniques...prior to the 1990s, parties operated on a de facto division of labour with respect to campaigning. Central headquarters largely concentrated on the persuasive elements of campaigning and communicated with the electorate via the national campaign and the mass media. Party headquarters have now come to play a much larger part in the mobilization process and in doing so have introduced new strategies and techniques to constituency campaigning (Denver, Hands, Fisher and MacAllister 2003).

Holtz-Bacha argues that during the 1998 German election campaign, centralisation was demonstrated at its best by the SPD’s headquarters, Kampa (Negrine, Mancini, Holtz-Bacha and Papathanassopoulos 2007). The Kampa was set up as a central unit along the lines of Clinton’s War Room in the 1992 US Presidential campaign and Blair’s campaign headquarters during the 1997 British general election. The party’s executive manager, Franz Munterfering, together with his chief of staff worked there alongside seventy other staff. About two-thirds were from inside the party, with the remainder being external professional marketers (Bergmann and Wickert 1999: 476). The entire campaign was centrally organised from campaign headquarters, while also utilising outside expertise by hiring a total of eight agencies to handle specialised campaign tasks. Holtz-Bacha believes that in addition to being the campaign headquarters, and thus securing the central planning and appearance, the Kampa fulfilled a symbolic function by creating an image of a
professional party to its members and the public (Negrine, Mancini, Holtz-Bacha and Papathanassopoulos 2007: 68).

Miller believes that in New Zealand television is better suited to presentational politics as opposed to substantive policy detail and debate, and as a result, “elections have become highly personal, even presidential, although hardly to the extent found in genuinely presidential systems” (2004: 2). Furthermore, the advent of new technology has been accompanied by the centralisation of the campaign organisation, in order to effectively manage the more professional and technically complex modern campaigns, parties have adopted an organisational structure based on highly centralised planning and control (Farrell and Webb 2000). In New Zealand, Miller argues “the trend towards the personalisation of politics has been further strengthened by the rise of several personality-based minor parties” (2004: 16). In the past, national campaigns were organised by the wider party, with head offices playing a large role in the day-to-day coordination. Voluntary staff and grassroots supporters were vital. With these eroded, the power has now shifted to the party’s political wing, specifically the party leader’s office (Farrell and Webb 2000).

Miller argues the importance of recent changes must not be diminished, and that the centralisation of campaign planning in the office of the party leader, the extensive use of paid parliamentary staff and advisers, together with professional agencies and consultants, and the burgeoning use of new technology, especially e-mail and the World Wide Web (2004: 17).

**The phases of campaigning**

Some authors view the distinct elements of political campaigning discussed above as part of a linear development; that is, over time, election campaigns have become non-stop, indirect, leader-focused and nationalised. Dealing with changing campaign practices and the reasons surrounding them, Blumler and Kavanagh (1999), Wring (1996, 2001, 2003), Farrell and Webb (2000) and Norris (1997a, b, 2000b, 2002a) worked out models of change in order to categorize developments of electioneering, and all believe election campaigning has advanced through three stages. However, each adopted a different means to describe the developments.
Blumler and Kavanagh (1999: 211) describe the first two decades after the Second World War as the ‘golden age,’ in which party loyalties were deeply entrenched. Parties dominated political communication and were able to pitch the same message to all voters. A ‘new era’ prospered in the 1960s with the advent of television. Parties began hiring professionals to help shape the news agenda. Pollsters and advisers became apparent. A third ‘still emerging’ phase is characterised by Blumler and Kavanagh as a multiplication of channels of communication via cable television and the internet. They believe this has “enhanced politicians’ dependence on professional assistance” (1999: 211).

Farrell and Webb point out their three-part typology is not intended to suggest campaigning has passed through a mechanical progression of three fixed stages, as “real life does not work like this” (2002: 106). The premodern stage is characterised as being heavily reliant on traditional party bureaucracies and volunteer activists; a second stage is distinguished by the arrival of television and increased professionalism, centralisation of control and a particular focus on the party leader, whereas the third stage, the advanced modern stage, is shaped by a further professionalisation and reliance on consultants, continuous campaigning, the use of more direct modes of campaigning offered by cable television and the internet and targeted campaign messages through telephone canvassing (2002: 105-106).

Norris (2000) outlines a similar position on the phases of campaigning to Farrell and Webb; however she places more emphasis upon changing communication technology as the major driver behind changes. Norris argues premodern campaigning began in the nineteenth century and was based on local mobilization; “local parties selected the candidates, rang the doorbells, posted the pamphlets, targeted the wards, and generally provided all the machinery linking voters and candidates” (2000: 137). In most post-industrial societies the modern phase of campaigning coincided with the rise of television and opinion polling. Modern campaigns were closely coordinated at a central level by political leaders and party elites who relied on consultants and pollsters, in the “battle to dominate the nightly television news” (2000: 137-138). The third and postmodern phase of campaigning is characterised by its continuity and the fact “professional consultants on advertising, public opinion, marketing and strategic news management assume coequal importance with politicians” (2000: 140). New technologies allow for an interactive and highly targeted form
of political communication with voters, and Norris believes these provide something of a return to the “more localised and interactive forms of communication that were present in the premodern era” (2000: 150). Importantly, Norris (2000b) noted essential features of such models can be expected to vary from one context to another, depending on media infrastructures, electoral law and party system features as well as regulatory frameworks and modes of access to political television. Norris believes

the evolution of the modern campaign was marked by several related developments in electioneering: the shift from radio and newspapers toward network television news; the move from dispersed state and local party organizations to a nationally coordinated strategic campaign; and from party officials and volunteers contributing time and labour to paid professional consultants specializing in communications, polling, marketing and campaign management. The move from amateur to professional campaigns was marked by more frequent use of experts, PR consultants, and professional fundraisers making decisions that were formerly made by candidates or party officials (1997: 6).

The postmodern campaign on the other hand has been marked by different, but related developments. According to Norris (1997), elections since the mid-1980s are said to exemplify postmodern developments:

- the fragmentation of audiences and news outlets, the shift from network television to more diverse news sources including talkback radio, local television news, and newer media like the internet;
- the tabloidization of news due to fierce commercial pressures, and the move towards the permanent campaign with the continuous feedback provided by polls, focus groups and electronic town meetings to inform routine decision making, not just campaigns (Norris 1997: 7).

Plasser and Plasser similarly believe “campaign styles can be placed on a continuum reaching from pre-modern (party and organization-centred), over modern (candidate driven and television-centred), to the advanced postmodern style of message and marketing driven hi-tech campaigning” (2002: 4; Norris 1997a, b, 2000b, 2002a).

Wring believes greater sophistication has evolved in the organization of party campaigning through three stages, namely the so-called ‘production,’ ‘selling’ and ‘marketing’ orientations. In electoral terms, these are the equivalent of what has been termed the “propaganda, media and political marketing approaches to electioneering” (Wring 1996: 109). Wring concentrates on the way parties, at different points in time, have communicated quite different kinds of messages to voters. Figure 1.0 below summarises the various phases of campaigning, describing those involved, the processes and key features.
Figure 1.0: Phases of campaigning

1\textsuperscript{st} phase: premodern

- Predominance of newspapers/radio, loose network of grassroots volunteers with coordination from party, short campaign length, amateur (non-paid) advisors, informal polling (word of mouth)

2\textsuperscript{nd} phase: modern

- Predominance of TV, widespread adoption of marketing techniques in strategic campaigns, professionalisation of political communication, paid advisors, introduction of polling (scientific)

3\textsuperscript{rd} phase: postmodern

- ICTs, fragmentation of media outlets and audiences, commercial pressures leading to tabloidisation of news, evolution of the permanent campaign, greater professionalisation, online polling as well as other methods

Americanisation

Americanisation is a term used to characterise the shift across the three phases of campaigning. Americanisation is a concept that appears quite regularly in contemporary academic literature about changes in political communication systems (Negrine 1996; Norris 2000; Plasser and Plasser 2002). Farrell (1996) attests that Americanisation is the transition from labour intensive to capital intensive forms of political communication, such as television advertising and professional image and media consulting. Norris establishes Americanisation refers to a general transition of political communication practices in media-centred democracies. Mancini (1999) argues Americanisation is seen as a synonym for modernisation and professionalisation. Accordingly, what is happening between the United States and other nations is a process of nondirectional convergence, which results in an increased similarity between the political communication process, in media-centred

Cornfield argues the professional campaign is by now distinctive and pervasive enough to be disparaged abroad as the “American” campaign. The American style of campaigning can be characterized as the most advanced and professionalised style worldwide and the “proliferation of campaigning as a craft, then industry, has revolutionised electoral politics in the US and abroad” (Nimmo 1996b: 10). Furthermore, Blumler, Kavanagh and Nossiter (1996: 59) regard political communication in the United States as the “cutting edge of electioneering innovation.” Scammell suggests therefore it is no exaggeration to say that American campaign expertise is an international role model of campaigning (1998: 18).

Plasser and Plasser assert Americanisation has two core concepts: modernisation and diffusion. They argue Americanisation is a consequence of the modernisation of media systems and voter-party relationships. Secondly, they argue Americanisation is a consequence of the transnational diffusion and implementation of US concepts and strategies of electoral campaigning. Bowler and Farrell concluded that “while there may be doubts as to the extent to which American campaign tactics have been exported to Europe and Australasian countries, there can be little question that the techniques employed are very similar” (1992: 223). Blumler, Kavanagh and Nossiter (1996: 59) regard political communication in the United States as the “cutting edge of electioneering innovation.”

However, all changes or trends associated with campaigning cannot simply be equated with Americanisation. The basis of the changes could as well be found in technological advances making it easier to administer modern election campaigns or analyse voter segments and candidates’ positions (Blumler and Gurevitch 2001: 400). Nord tends to agree with this notion, arguing it seems reasonable to describe Sweden as a country where a degree of modernisation of political communication has taken place, but in a rather ‘lighter’ manner than in other comparable countries. All parties are becoming more market oriented and more professionalised (2006: 74).
**Hybridisation**

Some argue that the Americanisation thesis is too simplistic, and offer hybridisation as an alternative (Swanson and Mancini 2000). Hybridisation is when new campaign practices are shaped in interaction with already existing practices (Plasser and Plasser; Schmitt-Beck 2007; De La Torre 2009), and when the importance of the campaign environment is emphasized; whether and how systems adopt new campaign practices depend on a range of contextual factors (Plasser and Plasser; Schmitt-Beck 2007). The hybridisation process differs from a standardisation process where country-specific campaigning is gradually phased out. On the contrary, hybridisation is based on a ‘shopping model’ where country specific elements coexist with select features of global campaigning. Thus, both exogenous and indigenous conditions are considered (De La Torre 2009; Kaid and Holtz-Bacha 1995; Plasser and Plasser 2002: 19; Esser and Pfetsch 2004). There are signs of an on-going hybridisation of political communication practices mediated by cultural factors and accentuated by specific institutional arrangements (Waisbord 1997: 180).

Plasser and Plasser analysed role definitions and professional orientations of campaign managers and political consultants from forty-three countries. They found evidence of an “operational consensus” regarding the importance of available campaign resources, as well as a “general orientation” towards media and television centred campaigns (2002: 341). Furthermore, “besides the agreement found among campaign managers on the functional prerequisites of successful campaigning, we observed a variety of distinct professional styles determined by country specific operational contexts such as regulatory frameworks, party system features and rules of access to political television” (Plasser and Plasser 2002: 343). It would be expected that differences in political communication practices between two countries (with common cultural traditions and driven by identical technological dynamics), the US and UK, would have narrowed, even diminished over time. Blumler and Gurevitch (2001) came to a contrasting conclusion after a comparative in-depth analysis, rejecting the argument of a uniform adaptation of UK campaign styles to the US standard model of political communication. Campaigns vary across different political systems. A number of system factors might influence the nature of campaigning (Schmitt-Beck 2007). The level of professionalisation in a system is likely to vary according to the economic resources available.
Conclusion

This chapter has shown that modern day election campaigns in developed nations are: 1) increasingly permanent in nature; 2) highly mediatised, with television and newspapers still popular, although making way for the highly technological advancement of information communication technologies; 3) highly professionalised with the norm for political parties to hire outside specialists to conduct polling, focus groups and surveys, to determine policies, and positions on contentious issues; 4) centralised, with most major decisions being made by a select few at the top end of political parties; 5) more frequently than not, presidentialised affairs, giving impetus and most attention to party leaders, as opposed to policy. Some authors have characterised these changes in campaigning as representative of the third phase of a modernisation process, stimulated by an Americanisation or hybridisation of political campaigning.

Later on we ask is there evidence of permanent campaigning, mediatisation, professionalisation, centralisation, or presidentialisation in the Cook Islands? The next chapter establishes the geography and population, media and political background of the Cook Islands. The academic research reviewed in this chapter focused on political campaigning in advanced industrialised and developed countries. There has been little research on political campaigning in lesser developed countries such as the Cook Islands (however, see De La Torre 2009; Schafferer 2005; Gerard 1998; Verba, Nie & Kim 1978; Fagen 1969; Hardgrave & Kochanek 2008).

The Cook Islands thesis presents an interesting and important case study, as economically and socially the country is arguably premodern. Yet, the impact of globalisation means the importation of overseas campaigning techniques and technology has been much easier than, for example, when such techniques and technologies became available to New Zealand in its premodern phase.
Chapter two: The Cook Islands

Geography and population of the Cook Islands

In order to understand the way in which political campaigning in the Cook Islands occurs, it is first necessary to contextualise the setting in which it takes place. The country is made up of fifteen small islands in the South Pacific, with a total land mass of two hundred and forty square kilometres. The total population, spread amongst the islands, was 22,970 in June 2010 (Cook Islands Statistics Office 2010). The Cook Islands Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) covers 1.8 million square kilometres of ocean. There are fifteen major islands, divided into two distinct groups: the Southern Cook Islands and the Northern Cook Islands. The Southern group consists of Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Mangaia, Palmerston, Atiu, Mauke, Mitiaro, Manuae, Takutea and Winslow Reef (submerged); meanwhile the Northern group lays claim to Manihiki, Nassau, Penrhyn, Pukapuka, Rakahanga, Suwarrow and Tema Reef (submerged). The main island is Rarotonga, home to the nation’s capital of Avarua. Rarotonga, the most populous of the Cook Islands, has a population of approximately fifteen thousand people, the majority of employment opportunities and the country’s only international airport is located there. At the last census in 2006, 72% of the total population lived on Rarotonga (Cook Islands Statistics Office 2010). Rarotonga is approximately 3,010 kilometres northeast of Auckland, New Zealand (Cook Islands Government 2010).

The Cook Islands were in last place at 230th on the United Nations World Population Prospects Report findings. The report findings are based on population growth rate estimates for the period 2005-2010 (United Nations 2010). The Cook Islands scored -2.23%. As campaigning involves communications between political candidates and voters, it is important to note the Cook Islands have a very small population. On some islands, this has implications for campaigning, and face-to-face communications are the only feasible option. For this reason also, traditional and new media penetration is low, as higher populations are a prerequisite for their success.
Fig. 1.1: The Cook Islands place in the Pacific

Fig. 1.2: The Cook Islands
The Cook Islands as a developing nation

On 11th July 1972 the Cook Islands became an associate member of the United Nations, and today are recognised by the UN as a developing nation. The Cook Islands fall into the category of “small island states,” (United Nations 2010). These are islands with land areas smaller than 10,000 square kilometres, and with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants. The Cook Islands (alongside Pacific neighbours Nauru, Tuvalu and Niue) are not members of the World Bank, and thus cannot be categorised in this sense as developing, although they meet other criteria (Economic Survey of Developing Countries in the Pacific Region 2010). There is no single agreed definition of the term developing country, however for the purposes of this thesis I use the phrase to mean: a nation which is not rich in resources or wealth. According to the UN Statistics Division “there is no established convention for the designation of ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries or areas in the UN system” (Kosmix Finance 2010). As stipulated by the World Bank, economies are divided according to 2009 GNI per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas Method (World Bank 2010). The groups are:

- low income, $995 or less;
- lower middle income, $996 - $3,945;
- upper middle income, $3,946 - $12,195 and
- high income, $12,196 or more.

The Cook Islands thus fits into the first category, a low income country which has GNI per capita of US$995 or less.

The WTO also has a least developed category, but because the Cook Islands is not a full member of any of the aforementioned organisations, it is not included in these categories. The Freedom House Index does not include the Cook Islands, although the Freedom House Index agreed, when emailed, it was a free and fair country. The Cook Islands maintain a mass media and high levels of literacy amongst its residents.

The media

The nature of the media system in the Cook Islands is indicative of its small population. Although most major forms of media are available, there is very little in the way of competition or alternative opinion. Numerous authors recognize professionalisation,
centralisation and presidentialisation as a factor in shaping campaign practices (Banducci 2003; Benoit 2007; Bennett and Entman 2001; Negrine 2002, 2003; Swanson and Mancini 1996).

Radio

According to the 2006 census, a total of 91% of private occupied dwellings in the Cook Islands have a radio/cassette: 62% are on Rarotonga, 11.5% on Aitutaki, 3.5% on Mangaia and 7% in the Northern group. There are six radio stations in the country. These comprise Radio Cook Islands (which is the dominant broadcaster according to the majority of interviewees), 93FM (an extension of Radio Cook Islands), Radio Ikurangi (Seventh Day Adventist), Adventist radio TKANA 3 (Seventh Day Adventist also), 88FM (Tumutevarovaro Digital Factory Limited owned by Nick Henry, a local), and Matariki FM (owned by William Franheim, a local born broadcaster). Radios number approximately fourteen thousand. Radio Cook Islands (owned by Elijah Communications) operates eighteen hours on Fridays and Saturdays, and seventeen hours every other day. Its AM signals reach all fifteen islands of the Cook Islands, whereas Radio Ikurangi broadcasts an FM signal with limited reach (Cook Islands Government, 2010).

Radio is the main form of communication for those living on the Outer Islands. Technical difficulties in administering television or internet coverage mean both types of technology are non-existent on the Outer Islands.

Newspapers

There are three operational newspapers in the Cook Islands, all of which are printed in English. Some sections of each are also printed in Cook Island Maori. The Cook Islands News is the only daily newspaper in the country, while the Cook Islands Herald and Independent are both published weekly. A reporter for the Cook Islands News explained the newspaper began in 1944 as a one-page piece. Later, in the 1960s, it was developed even further. It is now the Cook Islands’ largest independent newspaper, and its website informs that it publishes Monday through Saturday, and incorporates both local and international features (Cook Islands News 2010). It has an estimated print run of two thousand; its online edition, which is updated every Wednesday, contains selected stories from the print edition.
(although not all news items). The *Cook Islands Herald* changed its format in 1997 from television programming and in 2000 began printing and operating as a newspaper. Its estimated print run is 1300, and it maintains an online edition. It is printed every week on a Wednesday. The *Independent* and the *Cook Islands Herald* are owned by Elijah Communications. With the total population estimated to be 22,970, newspapers reach approximately 8% of the population, and many of these could include tourists. In New Zealand on the other hand, with a population of 4.39 million (Statistics New Zealand 2010), and an estimated daily newspaper circulation of 770,000 (Press Reference New Zealand 2010), total circulation per every one thousand people is 223.

**Television**

The 2006 census statistics show that 5,195 private occupied dwellings in the Cook Islands have a television set. Rarotonga, being the most populous, lays claim to 73% of those, whereas Aitutaki has 11%. The entire Northern Group of islands has only 5% due to the low number of residents on the Outer Islands, the high cost of purchasing a television, and the lack of quality reception. There are three television broadcasting channels in the Cook Islands; two are local television stations (Press Reference 2010). The major television broadcaster is Cook Islands Television, which is privately owned by Elijah Communications. It broadcasts on Rarotonga on a twenty-four hour basis, presenting a mix of local news, the New Zealand Television One news service (same day, delayed coverage), ABC Asia Pacific, SKY news Australia occasionally, National Geographic, and overseas-sourced programmes, several lately deriving from Fiji, South Korea and China. SKY Pacific also has a prominence in the Cook Islands, although no statistics were available at the time of publishing. Advertising appears on television, and is broadcast seven days a week, though not necessarily always twenty-four hours a day.

Elijah Communications is an inter-denominational body serving all who name Jesus as Lord (TBN 2010). In May 1994 Elijah Communications Trust registered as a charitable trust in New Zealand, and in June 1996 Elijah TV began sending tapes to Cook Islands Broadcasting Corporation. Elijah Communications are owned by TBN, the world’s largest religious network and America’s most watched faith channel (TBN 2010).
Internet

Although there are three Internet service providers, internet access in the Cook Islands is limited and the main island of Rarotonga is the only island in which internet can be reliably accessed (albeit not easily, or at a high speed). The major internet service provider is Oyster, an offshoot of Telecom Cook Islands. Few Cook Islanders readily access the internet as a source of news. In Aitutaki, there are also a few places where the internet can be connected to, but very few household owners have the internet in their homes. The 2006 census shows that on Rarotonga, 23% (or 3019) of all private occupied dwellings had access to the internet at home, while 2.7% would use that of a family or friends, and 11.5% said they had internet access at work, or at an internet cafe. Nearly 7% of households said they had no access. On Aitutaki, the second most populous island with 535 private occupied dwellings, 8.4% had internet access at home, 1.1% used a family or friends, and 4% either at work or an internet cafe. Fifteen percent of census respondents on Aitutaki had no access to the internet. In total, 47% of private occupied dwellings on Rarotonga have a computer at home, 28% in Aitutaki, and only 12% in the Northern Group. In New Zealand, 75% had access to internet in their homes and this included one in two households in rural areas (Statistics New Zealand 2010).

As population decreases, internet access declines rapidly. There is very little public access on the remaining islands, unless someone who is known to you has a private internet account. Broadband is relatively new and thus viewed as a luxury by many Cook Islanders. Aitutaki, Atiu, Mauke, Mitiaro, Mangaia, Pukapuka, Manihiki, Rakahanga and Penrhyn all have a service, but those are slow; no more than 1024 kbps and typically less (Cook Islands Fact File 2010). Of the remaining islands, a total of sixty private occupied dwellings had access to the internet at home, whereas a total of 171 census respondents had no access whatsoever.

The Cook Islands media and political campaigning

The Cook Islands is a country in which the Outer Islands are substantially less developed than the main island of Rarotonga. These fourteen other islands are far less populated, meaning they are far behind when it comes to technological advancement, and thus access different types of media. This means the options for political campaigning are far fewer,
and candidates must find alternative ways of delivering their messages than solely through the media. On the Outer Islands, newspaper, television and internet are not reliable, thus face-to-face campaigning is paramount. There is a strong reliance on radio. Low newspaper readership on Rarotonga and the lack of internet in the campaign means television and face-to-face communications are the most prevalent and utilised means of campaigning on Rarotonga. Essentially, if a candidate is hoping to communicate with voters, the media is not an effective or comprehensive channel for doing so.

Although internet access is limited, and few own personal computers or have internet access at their private dwellings, those on Rarotonga still have the opportunity to access the web. However those on the Outer Islands have only a very small chance of accessing the internet, if any at all.

**Political context**

The Cook Islands, which originally had a plurality-based system, developed a two-party system shortly after self-government in 1965 (Fraenkel 2006: 54). The politics of the Cook Islands takes place in a framework of a parliamentary representative democratic associated state, whereby the Queen of New Zealand (represented in the Cook Islands by the Queen’s Representative) is Head of State, and the Prime Minister is the Head of government (Crocombe 2001). The Cook Islands are self-governing in free association with New Zealand, and are fully responsible for internal and external affairs (Jonassen 2009). Under the terms of the free association, Cook Islanders hold New Zealand citizenship and enjoy the right of free access to New Zealand (Murray 2003). New Zealand however, retains some responsibility for external affairs, in consultation with the Cook Islands government. As of 2005, it has diplomatic relations in its own name with eighteen other countries (Cook Islands Government 2010).

**Political parties**

There are currently three active political parties in the Cook Islands: the Cook Islands Party (CIP), the Democratic Party (Demos) and more recently, Party Tumu, a breakaway faction of the Cook Islands Party. There is also Te Kura O Te ‘Au People's Movement and several
Independent MPs (Cook Islands News 2010). The CIP, Demos and Independents have current representation in parliament.

The CIP was the first political party founded in the Cook Islands in 1964, by Albert Henry (Sissons 1999). He became the first Premier of the Cook Islands after two events occurred: winning a majority of seats in the Legislative Assembly, and the formal declaration of self-government in free association with New Zealand on August 4th 1965 (Sissons 1999: 16). Stone (1965) argues the CIP was founded on a platform of economic development. The CIP commanded control of politics for the next decade, eventually losing power at the 1978 elections. Henry and his party were accused of rampant electoral extortion (Stone 1965). Albert Henry was replaced by Geoffrey Henry as CIP leader.

For the next ten years the CIP was in opposition, before regaining the government benches between 1989 and 1999. In 1999 it won ten seats. From that point until 2005 there were several occasions when the CIP was in formal coalition with its main opponent, the Democratic Party. At the 2004 general election, the CIP won nine seats (Cook Islands Government 2010). Henry Puna, the current CIP leader and Prime Minister, replaced Geoffrey Henry in 2006. Puna was, however, defeated in the parliamentary elections later that year, as was his deputy. In 2006 the CIP won 45.3 % of the popular vote and seven out of twenty-four seats (Cook Islands Statistics Office 2010). In July 2010 Avatiu/Ruatonga MP Albert Nicholas departed the CIP following selection disagreements, and began the Party Tumu. The breakaway party has attracted the support of influential CIP backer Tupu Ariki Henry, son of CIP founder and former Prime Minister Albert Henry (Cook Islands News 2010).

The roots of the Democratic Party derive from a group of Cook Islanders who banded together in 1965 due to their unhappiness with the one party dominance of the CIP. They approached well regarded Cook Islander Tom Davis, who was residing in the US as a medical scientist and a pioneer of the NASA space programme. Davis returned home and organized a credible opposition party (Democratic Party website 2010). In 1972 the Democratic Party won eight seats in the general election, breaking the two-thirds majority of the CIP. Six years later the Democratic Party won a majority and became government, with Davis as Prime Minister; he remained so for a decade (Democratic Party Website 2010). Despite a
factional split and formation of two separate parties in the late 1990s (the New Alliance Party and the Democratic Party), the two worked together again and formed a coalition government in 1999, which assumed the traditional Democratic Party name. Former leader Terepai Maoate became Prime Minister (Cook Islands Statistics Office 2010). The Democratic Party is comparable to the New Zealand Labour Party in terms of its policy positions.

At the 2004 general election, the Democratic Alliance won 47.2 % of popular votes and 12 out of 24 seats (Cook Islands General Election 2004). Then Prime Minister Robert Woonton lost his seat in a revote after an initial draw, and the new party leader, Jim Marurai became Prime Minister. Despite the fact that in 2005 Marurai left the party leadership, he remained Prime Minister with the support of the CIP. He eventually was reinstated as a Democratic Party member and Prime Minister, until being ousted by Henry Puna and the CIP at the 2010 general election (Cook Islands News 2010).

Both major parties tend to be organised in a similar manner, with a national campaign manager, backed up by a campaign committee in areas such as media, although none appeared to be professionals in their fields, but grassroots volunteers. The parties do not have branches, but rather members of the public can join the national organisation. Each has a secretary, a written party constitution and treasurer.

Table 1.1: Cook Islands election results since independence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>Percentage of vote</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Cook Islands Party (CIP) &amp; Independents</td>
<td>52.25% 47.75%</td>
<td>14  8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>CIP, United Cook Islands and Independents</td>
<td>64.45% 35.55%</td>
<td>18  6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>CIP &amp; Demo</td>
<td>68.2% 31.8%</td>
<td>15  7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>CIP &amp; Demo</td>
<td>63.6% 36.4%</td>
<td>14  8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>CIP &amp; Demo</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Result void: CIP win; guilty of fraudulent voting;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Parties</td>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>Votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983 (March)</td>
<td>CIP &amp; Demo</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CIP win; result overturned &amp; parl. dissolved.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983 (November)</td>
<td>CIP &amp; Demo</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Coalition govt between Demo &amp; CIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>CIP, Demo &amp; Tumu Enua</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>12 (CIP govt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>CIP &amp; Demo Alliance Party</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>CIP &amp; Demo Alliance Party</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Demo, CIP &amp; Tumu Enua</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Demo, CIP &amp; Independents</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>CIP, Demo, Party Tumu, Te Kura O Te ‘Au People’s Movement, Independents</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*It should be noted that not all results are available from all elections.

**Current government**

Executive power is exercised by the government, and legislative power is vested in both the government and the parliament of the Cook Islands. The parliament is bicameral, consisting of the House of Ariki (traditional leaders who offer their opinion on issues to the government) or upper house and a legislative assembly, or lower house. This lower house comprises twenty-four seats, and members are elected by popular vote to serve a four year term. At the time of writing, CIP leader Henry Puna was Prime Minister, after defeating Jim Marurai and the Democratic Party at the 2010 general election, held on 17th November. It is worth noting the total number of votes separating the CIP and Demos (and thus who formed government), was 451. This would be an incredibly close result in most elections where the population is much larger. Over 10,500 people were eligible to vote, however 8418 cast a vote, a total turnout of 78% (Cook Islands News 2010).
Parliament

The Cook Islands parliament consists of twenty-four members who are elected by plurality vote in single-member constituencies, to serve four year terms. The parliament itself is located in the village of Nikao on the main island of Rarotonga. The leader of the majority party or the leader of the majority coalition usually becomes Prime Minister. Ten MPs are from the main island of Rarotonga, and the remaining fourteen MPs represent the Outer Islands.

Elections and voting

The legal voting age is eighteen, and although it is not compulsory to vote, there tends to be a trend of high voter turnout: in 2006 there (IFES Election Guide 2010). Recent efforts have seen the electoral commission educating youth, prior to turning eighteen, about how to vote and how to enrol. The largest electorate is Tupapa-Maraerenga with 1055 registered voters at the 2006 election (see table 1.2). Voter turnout was at 87.6 percent. In ex-Prime Minister Jim Marurai’s seat of Ivirua, on the island of Mangaia, voter turnout was 98 percent.

All ‘ordinary votes’ are cast in the Cook Islands at specified booths in each constituency, including the outer islands, on the specified election day. The exception is “sick” votes or “special” care electors unable to attend booths to vote, in which case a “mobile” booth is provided by the Returning Officer in charge of that constituency to go around and take their votes. Booths open at 9am and close at 6pm. “Special” votes are cast in advance. These include postal votes and advance votes, provided application for such votes is made and approved. Results from the outer islands are relayed by telephone to the Chief Electoral Office in Rarotonga after the votes have been counted. This is done by special pre-arranged code. The actual voting papers are then parcelled up, sealed and sent to Rarotonga either by boat or plane where they are “scrutinised”, after which the final results are then announced and confirmed. This process takes approximately a week depending on the mode of transportation from the outer islands to Rarotonga (Interview with Henry Puna, Friday 3rd September 2010). As Table 1.2 shows below, it is important to note the relatively small size of the electorates. The smallest has 47 registered voters, and this obviously has implications for political campaigning. Not only is it feasible for the candidate to meet all or
most of the constituents face-to-face, it is something voters would expect to happen. As can be seen from the interviews, this expectation was clearly acknowledged by voters and candidates alike. It should also be noted that given the Cook Islands is experiencing net migration, unless the number of electorates is reduced, the small size of electorates and the implications of this for political campaigning, are likely to be a long-term feature of Cook Islands politics. This is irrespective of whether the Cook Islands eventually becomes a developed nation or not.

**Table 1.2: Total number of eligible voters by constituency as at June 2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Eligible Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tupapa – Mararerenga</td>
<td>1055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikao – Panama</td>
<td>861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avatiu – Ruatonga – Palmerston</td>
<td>761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruaau</td>
<td>752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titikaveka</td>
<td>747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takuvaine – Tutakimoa</td>
<td>707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matavera</td>
<td>583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngatangiia</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murienua</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akaoa</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAROTONGA</strong></td>
<td><strong>6939</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaipae - Tautu</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amuri-Ureia</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arutanga – Reureu - Nikaupara</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pukapuka – Nassau</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oneroa</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manihiki</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauke</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tengatangi – Areora – Ngatiarua</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenui – Mapumai</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penrhyn</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitiaro</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivirua</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamarua</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rakahanga</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OUTER ISLANDS</strong></td>
<td><strong>3068</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ELIGIBLE VOTERS</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,007</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Taggy Tangimetua, Government Statistician*

This chapter has outlined the importance of the relatively small population size of the Cook Islands in totality. Although the country consists of fifteen islands, all of which are vastly dispersed over a wide geographical area, the localised nature of the population base means that electorates tend to be very small numerically. In other words, there are small numbers of voters in each constituency. This has wide ranging implications with regards to political
campaigning, none more so than in the way political parties and candidates seek to relay policy information and ideas to the public. In electorates that have fewer than one hundred people, it is more convenient and financially more attractive for candidates to meet constituents face-to-face; it is expected by the Cook Islands public that they receive such visits. It must also be remembered that many people do not have access to television, the newspaper or internet, and talkback radio is the lifeline by which Outer Islands communities maintain their knowledge of the news. Thus, face-to-face communications are vital in the Cook Islands, and form the basis of election campaigning. With a first-past-the-post electoral system, candidates are competing for the personal vote rather than a party vote as under MMP in New Zealand. Candidate selection is an important part of the political process, and candidates in the Cook Islands derive from all backgrounds. Some are educated businesspeople, while others are community activists. Essentially, candidates rely on donations and fundraising to finance their campaigns, and are not reliant on the party label, party finances or party volunteers. Each has their own group of volunteers and supporters. Thus, individual candidates are likely to campaign on their personal abilities and attributes: namely what they can do for the constituency, rather than what the party can do.
Chapter three: Methodology

Qualitative approach

Throughout the course of this thesis research, I endeavoured to ascertain how political parties and their candidates’ campaign in the Cook Islands (a developing nation), in the lead up to elections. To do so, I employed qualitative interview methods to collect data. I adopted a qualitative approach to my research as I was interested in people’s perceptions and views of political campaigning in the Cook Islands, information which a survey would not provide, and which would be very difficult to implement. To gain this information, it proved necessary to engage the community through conversation and observation, and thus the adopted method of interviewing proved fruitful for data collection. I believe other methods such as surveys would have been difficult to implement and would not have provided the same in-depth level of information, nor could they have provided me with the background and historical knowledge which I gained from speaking directly with interviewees. Surveys with closed ended questions would not provide the type of data I wanted with regard to perceptions and feelings. Administering surveys would have technical difficulties, considering residential letter boxes are non-existent in the Cook Islands. Budget and time constraints meant distributing surveys to households was not feasible. I also aimed to interview political candidates, and face-to-face interviews provided a logical and most appropriate means for interviewing the political elite.

Case study is a study of the singular, the particular, the unique (Simons 2009). The historical background of case study research lies in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, law and medicine. Furthermore, Simons argues “the affinities with these disciplines are many in terms of methods, such as open-ended interviewing, participant observation and document analysis; and the focus on studying a single case in depth interpreted in a specific socio/cultural/political setting” (2009: 3).

I interviewed and observed in a semi-structured manner, meaning I prepared questions and topics which I intended to explore, but did not always ‘stick to the script.’ Unlike the more structured interviewing that may be used in survey research, which would not provide the
same quality information in this circumstance, intensive or in-depth interviewing relies on open ended questions to develop a comprehensive picture of the interviewee’s backgrounds, attitudes and actions (Chambliss and Schutt 2010). My major interest is what members of political parties do, and how they do these things. I spoke with Cook Islands citizens, interest group members, and sitting MPs and candidates from both ends of the political spectrum. I did not observe what they did, rather I asked for their perceptions of what people say they do, or do not do.

Focus groups were not considered seriously, as the level of organisation necessary in establishing them meant that those who took part would have to be reached firstly from my base in Dunedin, New Zealand, and the only real way of doing so would be through email. The internet is not widely used or accessible in the Cook Islands. Focus groups would also have meant identifying specific times in which a series of people from differing backgrounds could all meet and discuss political campaigning. In my experiences in the Cook Islands, there tends to be a strong notion of ‘island time,’ in which agreed meeting times outside of the workplace are not always administered.

In an interview conversation, the researcher “listens to what people themselves tell about their lived world, hears them express their views and opinions in their own words” (Kvale 1996: 1). In other words, the qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subject’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences, to uncover their lived worlds prior to scientific explanation. “An interview literally is an interview, an interchange of views between two persons, conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (Kvale 1996: 2). Interviews provide examples of metacommunication, statements that report, describe, interpret and evaluate communicative acts and processes (Briggs 1986). Czarniawska-Joerges thinks otherwise; she believes interviews are an ‘inquisition’ or ‘interrogation.’ The interview is a common enterprise in knowledge production (Czarniawska-Joerges 2004: 47). Furthermore, the sense of the ‘real’ is at the heart of the interview and is the focus for political communication. “The interview is much more than just a tool, like a drill to screw deeper into the discursive structures that frame the worlds of ‘subjects’. It is as much a way of seeing, or rather a condition, for seeing anything at all” (Barbour and Schostak, in Somekh and Lewin 2005: 43).
In-depth interviews

There are numerous reasons why I chose interviews as my method of data collection. Firstly, approaching the research, I already knew from previous visits to the Cook Islands that political campaigning was a relatively informal affair, and thus I had been told several times, the most beneficial way for me to canvass opinions of campaigning was to talk directly with the people.

For all of the reasons above and below, interviews presented themselves as the most appropriate means of data collection. From an organisational point of view, they could be organised in advance from New Zealand through email, while also easily and quickly once on Rarotonga. This was possible because I was on the island for a considerable period, and people gladly exchanged contact telephone details of others they suggested might be interested. Interviews also meant the majority of people who agreed to take part did so during their work hours, at their offices. Cook Islanders cherish their spare time, and it would have been difficult to organise interviews outside of work hours, at a neutral venue. From a substantive point of view, I found that the interviews provided a rich source of information. Cook Islanders love to talk! Through face-to-face contact with them, I was able to develop a rapport, and in doing so learned much about the country, politics, and life in general there; I doubt I could have learned any of this through a survey or a focus group.

Interviewing is both simple and self-evident. It draws on the everyday practices of asking and answering questions and the everyday identities of questioner/answerer and interviewer/interviewee (Gubrium and Holstein 2002: 3). Interviewing has become a powerful force in modern society; “research in social sciences is the great bastion of the interview” (Briggs 1986: 1). Interviews are used in a wide variety of social contexts, interviews are a central component of anthropological research, and have produced much of the information we possess about contemporary non-Western societies. Interviews are also a mainstay of research within modern industrial societies; they can be used to explore people’s beliefs about the future as well as recollections of the past (Arksey and Knight 1999). Patton argues “there is a very practical side to qualitative research methods that simply involve asking open-ended questions of people and observing matters of interest in real-world settings in order to solve problems” (1990: 89). According to Silverman, we are
currently part of an “interview society in which interviewees seem central to making sense of our lives. The interview, seen in various forms of news interviews, talk shows and documentaries, alongside research interviews, “pervades and produces our contemporary cultural experiences and knowledge of authentic personal, private selves” (Rapley in Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman 2005: 15).

Lilleker (2003) argues “sitting MPs, or those still active in politics, will happily go on record to an extent.” Furthermore, he believes:

they may be willing to give off-tape comments that are unattributable, but largely it is possible to record their participation and quote them where you feel it appropriate or necessary. Often you will find that you will have a reasonably open, taped interview, which is followed by a number of off-tape remarks that are more important than anything previously said.

He also explains how interviewing the political elite cannot always necessarily be entirely straightforward:

there are those who show extreme caution when under interview. They may also ask for a full transcription of the interview for them to approve. It is only courteous to fulfil such requests even though that does mean having to transcribe the interview verbatim. However if things are said off the record do remember them. These are the gems that often give an argument kudos and credibility; they may not be the ultimate foundation for a grand theory but they make a work entertaining.

Structure of interviews

While surveys tend to be highly structured, with a precise interview schedule that the researchers must follow closely, qualitative interviews are less structured. Structured interviews produce simple descriptive information very quickly (Arksey and Knight 1999). For this research I conducted semi-structured interviews which were designed to have a number of interview questions prepared in advance (see Appendix A), but such prepared questions are designed to be sufficiently open that the subsequent questions of the interviewer cannot be planned in advance but must be improvised in a careful and theorized way (Wengraf 2002). It was beneficial that I planned my main questions around the outline of the interview topic: face-to-face communication, presidentialisation, professionalisation, the role of the traditional media and ICT’s, centralisation, and the permanent campaign.
Recruitment of interviewees

The process of finding appropriate and relevant interviewees and setting up interviews presented some difficulties. Four key areas around recruitment existed: initially finding a knowledgeable informant, getting a range of views, testing emerging themes with new interviewees, and choosing interviewees to extend results (Rubin and Rubin 1995). It was beneficial to this research for me to encompass a range of views and opinions, thus recruiting interviewees from a wide section of Cook Islands society. Wengraf (2002) argues if there is a choice of informants/interviewees, then there is a question of selection. He believes the central research question and theoretical questions together, will determine the character of the “relevant material to be gathered from the appropriate people” (Wengraf 2002: 95). Further, there is an obvious interaction between the selection of the type of informant and the development of a sequence of interview questions appropriate for them. I employed a type of randomised sampling, whereby I conducted interviews with a range of public figures and private Cook Islands citizens. Before my arrival, I established interviews with ex Prime Minister Hon. Jim Marurai, several of his cabinet ministers and the CIP and Opposition leader at the time, Henry Puna (who was elected Prime Minister in November 2010).

Other political figures also expressed their interest in being interviewed. I was fortunate enough to have the on-going interest and support of Parliamentary Secretary Tupuna Rakanui, who kindly provided the contact details of political figures and community members, and informed me of any relevant meetings it would be beneficial to attend. Anne McMahon, my Mum (who is well established on Rarotonga), was instrumental in setting me up with numerous political figures, statisticians, and vocal members of the community. I contacted the Cook Islands News, and they were kind to help me by running a few articles when I arrived, which informed the public of my research and what kinds of questions would be asked of them. It was suggested that I speak with people at the local Saturday morning market, Punanga Nui, a good meeting point for a wide range of Cook Islands residents. I did not set up I visited the University of South Pacific campus on Rarotonga, and spoke with individuals interested in political campaigning, as well as professionals such as teachers, policemen and women, lawyers and the like. Given the comparatively small
population on Rarotonga, I envisaged I would be able to speak with numerous people. This type of randomisation meant I had access to a cross section of Cook Islands society.

All interviews with political figures took place at their request at their offices. I was able to interview twelve sitting members of parliament (at the time), and three prospective MPs (candidates for the November election). The interviewees came from both major parties, the Cook Islands Party and the Democratic Party. Of those, eight agreed to go ‘on record,’ while the other four preferred to remain unidentified. The eight MPs were: Mark Brown (CIP vice president and newly elected cabinet minister), ex Prime Minister Jim Marurai (Demo), William Heather (Demo, former Minister of Infrastructure), Wilkie Rasmussen (Demo, former Minister of Finance), Mona Ioane (CIP candidate at November election and now MP), Cassey Eggelton (Demo, former Minister of Culture and Heritage), Prime Minister Henry Puna (CIP leader) and Robert Wigmore (Demo, former Deputy Prime Minister and former Minister of Tourism). Members of the community were far less likely to agree to be identified in my thesis, with most citing job security as their primary reason. It was evident that on such a small island, with a small population, the majority of people wished to retain their anonymity. Because of this, I have assigned pseudonyms to all those members of the public I interviewed. Some chose to meet at a neutral venue for the interview such as a cafe or bar, while others invited me into their homes or workplace.

**The use of a case study**

Cassell and Symon (2004) argue that case studies are widely used in organisational studies across numerous social science disciplines, including politics. Pfau, Parrott and Lindquist (1992) utilise the case study in their examination of the growing use of television attack advertising in modern election campaigns. Endres and Warnick (2004) undertook a case study dealing with text-based interactivity in candidate campaign websites of the 2002 congressional elections in the United States. Rusler (1996) adopted a case study of the Iranian revolution, and the political protest, concessions and repression which were part of this period. Wilson (1987) looked at the “truly disadvantaged” in his case study of the inner city, the underclass and public policy. Case studies of elections are numerous and wide ranging (Petrocik 1996; Dion 1998; Brady and Mo 1992; Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch,
Weaver, Barkin & Wilhoit 1991; Shaw 2009). Simons argues there are numerous strengths to case study research:

case study using qualitative methods in particular enables the experience and complexity of programmes and policies to be studied in depth and interpreted in the precise socio-political contexts in which these are enacted. (2009: 23).

There are criticisms of case study research. It has been suggested that the mass of data often accumulated is difficult to process, reports are too lengthy and detailed for stakeholders to read, and narratives tend to over-persuade (Simons 2009). Walker (1986) detailed three key issues which he felt were weaknesses of the case study; firstly “the uncontrolled intervention that case study research is in the lives of others, the distorted picture it can give of the way things are, and its essential conservatism, the case study is locked in time while the people in it move on” (Walker, in Simons 2009: 24). Further to this, there are concerns prevalent surrounding the direct and personal involvement and/or subjectivity of the researcher, the way in which inferences are drawn from the single case and the validity and usefulness of the findings (Simons 2009). Simons argues however that, “the subjectivity of the researcher is an inevitable part of the frame. It is not seen as a problem but rather, appropriately monitored and disciplined, as essential in understanding and interpreting the case” (Simons 2009: 24).

Although historically case studies have often been criticised for their lack of credibility, I agree with Flyvberg (2006), who suggests case studies are in fact quite the opposite. Mostly, I agree with Flyvberg in dismissing one major criticism of the case study: “theoretical knowledge is more valuable than practical knowledge” (2006: 219). Without travelling to the Cook Islands, there is no way I could have derived the information I did. His writing suggests there are five common misunderstandings about case study research, the other four being:

cannot generalise from a single case, therefore the single case study cannot contribute to scientific development; the case study is most useful for generating hypothesis testing and theory building; the case study contains a bias toward verification; and it is often difficult to summarise specific case studies (Flyvberg 2006: 219).

Flyvberg makes clear that when he first became interested in case study research, he was trying to understand how power and rationality shape each other and form the urban environments in which we live. He argues the case study is a necessary and sufficient
method for certain important research tasks in the social sciences, and it is a method that holds up well when compared to other methods in the gamut of social science research methodology. So for each of the above five points, I will explain why a case study was beneficial to my research. Typical theoretical knowledge cannot be applied to the Cook Islands; it is a unique country with very different parameters to those covered in the literature. It could be possible to generalise from my case study of the Cook Islands to other, similar Pacific Island nations. Hypothesis may be able to be generated to test similar scenarios in other developing nations; verification of interviews would not be biased, as all were recorded using a dictaphone and note taking has also been utilised. Summarising the research findings from interviews in the Cook Islands has proved to be effective and not too difficult.

As mentioned earlier, the primary purpose for choosing a case study as a methodological means when looking at political campaigning in the Cook Islands, was to explore the particularity, the uniqueness, of the single case. References are made to other cases, otherwise, how else would we know what is unique? Simon argues “essentially, the task is to understand the distinctiveness of the single case” (2009: 3). The closeness of case study research to real-life situations and its multiple wealth of details are important in two aspects:

first, it is important for the development of a nuanced view of reality, including the view that human behaviour cannot be meaningfully understood as simply the rule governed acts found at the lowest levels of the learning process and in much theory. Second, cases are important for researchers’ own learning processes in developing the skills needed to do good research. (Flyvberg 2006: 223).

Further to this, Flyvberg (2006) argues the case study is useful for both generating and testing of hypotheses, but is not limited to these research activities alone. Even more so, the case study contains no greater bias towards verification of the researcher’s preconceived notions than other methods of inquiry. On the contrary, experience indicates that the case study contains a greater bias towards falsification of preconceived notions than towards verification. Furthermore,

it is correct that summarising case studies is often difficult, especially as concerns case process. It is less correct as regards to case outcomes. The problems in summarising case studies, however, are due more often to the properties of the reality studied than to the case study as a research method. Often it is not desirable to summarise and generalise case studies. Good studies should be read as narratives in their entirety (2006: 241).
For the most part, the major interest in case studies is the human element. Researchers are interested in them for both their uniqueness and commonality; researchers seek to understand them. Again, we like to hear their stories. We may have reservations about some things they tell us, just as they will question some of the things we will tell about them. But we enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn (Stake 1995: 1).

A case study of political campaigning therefore is beneficial for numerous reasons. I was immersed in the way of life and culture of the people of Rarotonga, much like ethnography, where I believe they viewed me and my work as intriguing and interesting to them. I made three trips to Rarotonga throughout the course of the research period, one a lengthy stay of seven weeks, and a further two shorter stints of ten days each. This meant I developed amiable working relations which provided me with excellent interview material. It has been the first time political campaigning research has been carried out on Rarotonga to my knowledge (as it has not been possible to find any prior literature), thus giving the research impetus for its uniqueness.

I believe my field research in the Cook Islands was able to address some of the Simons’ concerns. Firstly, I have been a frequent visitor to the Cook Islands (visiting at least twice a year for the past decade), along with family and friends, and in doing so have established numerous contacts. Secondly, my parents, having visited so many times, relocated to Rarotonga four years ago, and in doing so, have strengthened ties there and made a name for our family in the local community. Thirdly, I am part Cook Island in ethnicity, and because of the small population (word of mouth is very strong in the Cook Islands), once I arrived and made contact about my research, I found residents willing and eager to take part, supporting a fellow Cook Islander in his educational pursuits.

**Recording and analysis of data**

Chambliss and Schutt argue “periodic analysis of the notes guide refinement of methods used in the field and of the concepts, indicators, and models developed to explain what has been observed” (2010: 245).
Recording and analysing notes was a crucial step in my field research. I recorded the interviews using two means: dictaphone and note taking. Jottings were used as brief reminders about events in the field, whereas daily logs were useful to chronicle my daily activities and conversations. Detailed field notes were recorded daily, as well as weekly summaries of information derived from interviewees. I saw it as beneficial to maintain a log of problems and issues which arose during my research, as this could play an important part in analysing my every move later on. After every interview, I noted down any interesting side-notes, while also at the end of every day, I jotted down the problem and issues I faced. A small sample of these notes is below. I transcribed all the interviews which proved to be a lengthy process, and then read and re-read the transcripts to identify patterns, trends and anomalies.

Sample of notes:

**Sunday 11th July:** “Realised not to undertake any work on a Sunday, even emailing! Had a few email replies with a ‘head up,’ telling me not to offend anyone by emailing them on Sundays.

**Monday 12th July:** “Letter and email arrives from the Prime Minister’s Office, informing me I must obtain a permit to begin research in the Cook Islands. Must appear before National Research Committee to gain approval. Could take four weeks. Fee of US$50!”

“Subsequent email from the Prime Minister’s Office informing me I must get to them a curriculum vitae, photograph of myself, approval from University of Otago to research, and not partake in any interviewing until I gain permit approval.”

**Tuesday 13th July:** “Told I was overdressed for interviewing! I wore a short sleeved shirt, dress pants and black dress shoes. Then had a productive interview with Enua Pakitoa of Statistics Office.”

**Wednesday 14th July:** “Although permit yet to be approved, invited by Prime Minister to interview him. Told to use back entrance. Made some interesting points, although quiet spoke for a national leader. I was nervous, the PM being the first political figure I met.”

**Thursday 15th July:** “Paid NZ$70 fee for permit application. Told not to conduct any interviews until permission granted to do so. Word had it on the island I had already begun my interviewing.”

**Friday 16th July:** “Job security cited for reason of not wishing to remain anonymous, by four members of the public I spoke with. Also told, because my mother works for the Cook Islands Audit Office who investigate misspending by government and government departments, I could not be trusted.”

**Monday 19th July:** “Emailed entire cabinet to arrange interviews individually.”
Tuesday 20\textsuperscript{th} July: “Informed only government ministers all had email, otherwise emailing was a poor way of getting in touch with politicians or members of the community. Not many have access to a computer or the internet.”

“Told 90\% of political campaigning is done face-to-face.”

Wednesday 21\textsuperscript{st} July: “Parliament called to sit later in the week (29\textsuperscript{th}) to table the budget. First time in eleven months. Leader of the Opposition Henry Puna unable to make scheduled interview, as his flight from the Outer Islands was delayed until August 3\textsuperscript{rd}.”

Thursday 22\textsuperscript{nd} July: “Two interviewees cancel scheduled interviews, arguing I hadn’t yet gained approval from national research committee.”

Friday 23\textsuperscript{rd} July: “Hon. Wilkie Rasmussen extends invitation to me to return to Rarotonga and observe the election campaign alongside him later in the year.”

Saturday 24\textsuperscript{th} July: “Interviewed approximately twelve members of the public at Punanga Nui Cultural Market. Found that keeping on topic was no easy feat, and that they had much to say about politics in the Cook Islands.”

Sunday 25\textsuperscript{th} July: “Warned again not to make correspondence on a Sunday.”

Monday 26\textsuperscript{th} July: “Public holiday. Three scheduled interviews moved to Tuesday.”

Wednesday 27\textsuperscript{th} July: “Email from Prime Minister’s Office: research approval granted. Received immigration permit to stay in the Cook Islands for more than the normal thirty days.”

Wednesday 29\textsuperscript{th} July: “Depart Rarotonga, Cook Islands, for Dunedin, New Zealand, two days after approval granted!”

Problems and criticisms of interviews

Wengraf argues there have been strong inequalities of power and vulnerability between the interviewer and the person who has either ‘requested and obtained’ an interview, or has been ‘requested and required to come to an interview’ (2002: 18). The politics at play during interviews is another commonly criticised aspect of interviews. Qualitative research is often criticised for lacking scientific rigour; “to label an approach unscientific is peculiarly damning in an era when scientific knowledge is generally regarded as the highest form of knowing” (Mays and Pope 1995: 1). According to Mays and Pope, the most commonly heard criticisms of interviews are:

that firstly, qualitative research is merely an assembly of an anecdote and personal impressions, strongly subject to researcher bias; secondly it is argued that qualitative research lacks reproductability, the research is so personal to the researcher that there is no guarantee that a different researcher would not come to radically different conclusions; and, finally, qualitative research is criticised for lacking generalisability. It is said that qualitative methods
tend to generate large amounts of detailed information about a small number of settings (Mays and Pope 1995: 12).

Kitzinger and Rapley, although supporters of qualitative interviewing, believe there are a few problems with the method of data collection too. They argue interviews “do not appear to give us direct access to the ‘facts’ or to events. Interviews do not tell us directly about peoples ‘experiences’, but instead offer indirect ‘representations’ of those experiences” (Kitzinger and Rapley in Silverman 2006: 117). Furthermore, Byrne believes “few researchers believe that in the course of the interview, you are able to ‘get inside someone’s head.’ What an interview produces is a particular representation or account of an individual’s views or opinions” (2004: 182). Moreover, Kvale argues there are ten common criticisms of the qualitative interview:

- it is not scientific, but only common sense; it is not objective, but subjective; it is not trustworthy, but biased; it is not reliable, but rests upon leading questions; it is not intersubjective, as different interpreters find different meanings; is not a formalised method or is too person-dependent; it is not scientific hypothesis-testing, it is only explorative; it is not quantitative, only qualitative; is not yielding generalisable results as there are too few subjects; and is not valid, but rests on subjective impressions (Kvale 1994: 147).

Such criticisms appear relevant to my research on Rarotonga, but not to the extent that they make interviewing fundamentally flawed. I acknowledge that I obtained people’s perceptions, and that the majority of members of the public I interviewed undoubtedly felt vulnerable, which was reflected in their desire to remain anonymous. Despite this, engaging in face-to-face, informal, semi-structured interviews was the most suitable method of data collection given my research goals. Interviews were an excellent way for me to get to speak with the public, hear their views, be more accepted into the community, thus earning myself more credibility and respect. With word of mouth being so important and widely used in the Cook Islands, I built and earned the trust of people, which could only be beneficial to my research; these people passed on my name and contact details (along with my topic of research), to their family and friends, which led to me gauge more views and opinions of others.

Problems, reliability and validity of the research

Conducting research in the Cook Islands was no easy feat. To do so, I first gained ethical approval through the Department of Politics at the University of Otago. Once this approval
was issued and travel insurance purchased, as per University of Otago policy, I began emailing contacts whose email addresses I had access to, in the Cook Islands. Word spread quickly, and soon after, I received a confirmed date on which to interview the ex Prime Minister. I was reassured by various Cook Islanders that first, I would need to pay a fee of US$50 and apply to the National Research Council for a permit to begin my research. I could not just arrive in the country and begin undertaking interviews. I assumed this process had been finalised when I sent the application form back to the Prime Minister’s office, and arranged the fee to be paid upon my arrival. When I interviewed the Prime Minister and no fee was sought, I then again assumed all was well. This was until a separate branch of the Prime Minister’s office began emailing me informing me I could not go ahead with any subsequent interviews until I had paid, and my application was approved, which could take up to four weeks. ‘Island time’ was obviously at play, and my application, made months earlier, had “not been received.” Along with the application form and fee, the office requested a photo, curriculum vitae and supporting letter. I provided a copy of my supervisor Dr. Chris Rudd’s endorsement letter on official University of Otago letterhead. This was overlooked, and the Prime Minister’s office contacted Dr. Rudd by email seeking further proof. Eventually, I was given ‘approval’ from the National Research Council only a matter of days before I departed the Cook Islands. At the same time, I had to apply for an extension on my stay in the country, as my 30 day limit was due to expire. I struggled to comprehend this standard, as other postgraduate students I met in Rarotonga at the time, conducting their research in science and humanities, were not required to go through the same processes and strict formalities I found myself facing. Anonymity was also a problem, initially it seemed few politicians were willing to go on-record because it was an election year and it seemed the political figures were very much ‘on guard.’ To speak out could compromise job security in a small population base, and even the idea of recording interviews with a dictaphone was frowned upon by many; as a result numerous interviews took place only utilising note taking. Also, because of the small population base, most people seemed to know of my parents. Thus, I was told by several individuals, messages might be skewed because of this. I was also informed that despite my research being politically neutral, sending out group emails to members of opposing political parties was not a respected move on my part. On several occasions I was told I was “overdressed” for the occasion (long sleeved shirt, dress pants and dress shoes) or “underdressed” (short
sleeved shirt, dress pants and dress shoes). One vital error on my behalf was contacting people for interviews on Sundays. The Cook Islands is deeply religious, and I knew it was frowned upon to engage in strenuous activity on a Sunday, viewed as a day of rest, but I did not realise it was rude to engage in any kind of work whatsoever!

Despite these problems and the difficulties I encountered, I was still able to interview thirty-two people. The majority of these were members of the public, while twelve were political figures. Some interviews lasted for longer than an hour, whereas the majority lasted approximately thirty-forty minutes. Approximately 1000 minutes of recording was undertaken, creating approximately 210 pages of transcripts. This was in addition to thirty pages of notes. The analysis of this material is set out in the following chapter.

The research I undertook and the manner in which it was conducted could quite easily be replicated again in the future. I believe the research is highly reliable, as there are certain boundaries within which I conducted my research. The questions from the semi-structured questionnaire which I followed and used in each interview could be re-used in any similar future study, and the transcripts of the interviews would be available for reanalysis. It is possible to generalise somewhat from the findings and apply them to the theory of campaigning, but not to particular countries. It is the case that similar findings would be prevalent in countries which share low internet penetration and a low population density like the Cook Islands. In other words, it is likely researchers would find, as Hansen (1979) established, the same phenomena or the same constructs generated in the same or similar settings. Thus, face-to-face campaigning would be prevalent in similar settings. Because the subjective experience of both myself and the interviewees transpires throughout this thesis, I believe a deep level of understanding, which other approaches lack, is evident.
Chapter four: Political campaigning in the Cook Islands; views of citizens and candidates

Central to this research has been asking: how do politicians and political parties communicate with voters in the Cook Islands? Interviews were conducted with Cook Island politicians and the general public. Questions concentrated on various aspects of election campaigning: developments over time, face-to-face communication, the mediated campaign, professionalisation, presidentialisation and Americanisation. Each of these aspects of campaigning is examined in turn in this chapter.

Developments over time in campaigning

With regards to developments in political campaigning in the Cook Islands, the Hon. Wilkie Rasmussen, deputy leader of the Democratic Party (and ex Minister of Finance) argued “there have been big changes, some really noticeable, others not so much. Politics in the Cook Islands since the early 80s has been forever changing.” When interviewing Rasmussen, it became apparent there were numerous sub-themes with regard to changes in political campaigning.

Shift from collective (village based and cultural) to one-on-one campaigning

Hon. Wilkie Rasmussen argued in the past there was a real grassroots politics: “everyone in the community was part of a political party and played a role, be it direct or indirect, in campaigning. Mostly it was through word of mouth, fundraising or taking part in some other way.” He went on to say that family ties were of course really important, and still are to an extent today. These vary from island to island though; in Rarotonga the youth vote independent now of their families. Core supporters are often dividing into bloc voting. There has been a resurgence of meeting people in their homes, not that it really ever went away, but it is once again keenly welcomed by members of the constituency.

As we saw in chapter two, the Cook Islands is made up of fifteen islands, all of which are divided into distinct villages. The voters in these villages expected visits during the
campaign by the major parties, thus village rallies were a central part of any election
campaign. Henry Puna, CIP leader and Prime Minister, argued
there has been a purposeful move away from the traditional village-type public meetings,
mixed with entertainment such as dancing and singing, to a more personal approach such as
house to house or one-on-one canvassing. We have seen a steep change in the way politics is
delivered to the people. As constituents turn away from politics, we are facing the need to
find ways of getting our messages across, and the most effective and positive method for
doing so is through one on one conversation (Interview, September 03rd 2010).

Charlie, a male educational professional, argued that when he thinks of developments in
campaigning in the Cook Islands, it would be to do with the loss of the culture in
campaigning. He stated that in the past, the major parties would “go around in large
groups, on a truck, with music, singing, dancing and a lot of colourful interest, from village
to village, selling us in person their election pledges and manifesto priorities.” He then went
on to acknowledge that has been lost, and it would be desirable from his point of view as a
voter, to regain that traditionalism.

Rasmussen stated “I have been around for a long time, and when I was twenty-seven I first
ran for parliament; I didn’t get in. But in my time I’ve noticed the changes around me.” He
described the most obvious change: “we used to have big election time parades almost,
with trucks going from village to village with music and were really loud and proud about
politics.” He spoke of the inclusiveness of this type of campaign, and how it differentiates
nowadays:

everybody took part, and it was all really fun. People seem to have turned off politics now,
and have little interest compared to then. This means that we’ve had to change how we
campaign too – no point using big trucks and making a lot of noise when nobody cares, when
nobody’s interested. So in terms of changes and developing, yeah sure we’ve experienced
our fair share. Cook Islanders are now more informed people. We include a combination of
local and national issues when meeting the community, so to ensure they know we know our
stuff. Meeting people in their homes or at least in their communities is part and parcel of
campaigning here.

Sarah, a young female professional, argued that “there are changes in the manner of the
actual campaign itself. For example, the frequency of the media has increased a lot, and
there is much less emphasis on major village based feasting and dancing to mobilise political
party campaigns.” She went on to say that

we used to rely a lot on these village events, they attracted many people to politics without
them necessarily having a huge interest. This is gone now, and the media are much more
prevalent.
Cam, a middle aged professional, believed that in the past there would normally be large festivities surrounding an election campaign, but not so much anymore. He believes this is because “people lost interest in politics, so now nobody goes. It’d be a bit embarrassing to still have the rallies and events with nobody showing up to them!”

Hon. William Heather recalled that “we used to have quite big events come election time, with trucks decked out with drums, dancers, really colourful displays of Cook Islands culture, going from village to village delivering party messages.” These are not so much evident anymore, and instead, smaller scale events are held such as community meetings and face-to-face visits.

Meanwhile, Kylie, a banking employee, passionately argued there had been a dramatic decrease in Cook Islands culture, song and dance during campaigns. She said “there have been quite big changes from the campaigns of the old days. I remember in the 1960s and 70s, for example, the campaigns were really large social events. Everyone would attend, it was the thing to do, everyone was interested and into it.” Kylie described how the events looked and sounded, with them normally being held in the largest community hall in each constituency, whereby intending candidates from around the island of Rarotonga would attend, supporting the candidate from their party in the constituency. It was quite the norm for political speeches to be followed by singing, dancing and feasting. All in all the events were large and very much based around Cook Islands culture. For Kylie, it was one way that political parties raised substantial awareness as to what was in their manifesto. This is an important part to any election campaign in the Cook Islands. Also at the same time, people were paying money to attend these functions, so it was like killing two birds with one stone, this is how they sponsored the campaigns in those days. These events were all well attended by the community as it was not only a political campaign but also a social event enjoyed by all. So things have developed, because today it is much smaller, and meetings are held in smaller-sized houses or private homes, with the selling of food to fundraise for the party or running raffles the major way. Therefore, the use of multi-media to reach the masses in their homes go hand in hand with these changes. People do not readily attend political campaign events anymore, so the media are used a lot more by people for politics.
Traditional party ties decreasing

Central to the decreasing of party ties has been the weakening of family socialisation. Cook Islanders no longer only affiliate themselves with a political party because of historical family ties, but because of the policies the parties promise. Hon. William Heather argued “instead of our campaigns being specifically about the party anymore, which was the case back then, they are now about policies. Once upon a time it was Demo or CIP, now it’s about important things like water, waste, sanitation, tourist demand and infrastructure.” Furthermore, he believes “in the past, many people voted along family lines. So it was almost a cultural norm to follow your family.” He then distinguished how this is different today:

not now, now it is the needs of the day which dictate how people vote. Also, the youth are now more educated, and this means that they too have a say, and speak up about politics, especially during the campaign, and present their own views on what’s at hand.

Furthermore, Enua Pakitoa (statistician/member of the public,) thinks that traditionally, two major parties dominated the political landscape in the Cook Islands, but “recently there has been an increase of individuals or independents being established. There is also definitely an increase in television coverage of politics here, mostly during election campaigns.”

The developments in political campaigning were an area where Mark Brown, CIP vice president and MP, spoke in depth. He argued

traditionally people have been aligned with voting for one of the two major parties in the Cook Islands, this is now changing. This might come down to a generational thing, a move by the more youthful members of the voting public because they are now more educated and politically aware than any of us were at that age. So, there is always the core support, comparable to New Zealand and Australian major political parties, however, there is now an increasing amount of ‘swing voters’ being identified. In saying that though, they are not easily identified in the electorate!

Even more so, Brown went on to say that “campaigning has moved a long way in that more attention is now placed directly upon the candidates themselves, as in their capabilities and qualities. Policy is very important too. I guess you could call it a more personally driven approach to campaigning.”

Members of the public I interviewed agreed there had indeed been notable developments in political campaigning in the Cook Islands. Tara, a female public sector employee, believed
“the political parties now use the television and newspapers to their utmost advantage here on Rarotonga.” Sarah was not sure if this was because the Cook Islands are moving forward coincidentally with the rate of technology, but noted there is now far more political news in the media than there had been in the past.

_Campaigning differences between Rarotonga and the Outer Islands_

Charlie, a male educational professional, believes there are large differences between the style and ways of campaigning on Rarotonga and the Outer Islands. He mentioned that population size and the availability of technology were the major reasons for the differences. Charlie argued the Outer Islands “would be mostly dependant on radio and word-of-mouth-type campaigns.” Cam, a middle-aged professional, believes “there is now a shift towards more awareness raising, getting women into politics whereas in the past, the campaigns have concentrated on male candidates mainly. I think this is the major development I have witnessed.”

Ex Prime Minister Hon. Jim Marurai believes that there needs to be a clarification between Rarotonga and the Outer Islands, when campaigning is described in the Cook Islands. He argued the two campaigns are quite different, but also share several similarities. Marurai stated “on Rarotonga, we utilise quite significantly the media which is at our disposal, it would be silly not to. So TV, newspaper and radio are all quite popular.” He said it is probably fair to say the people here rely on these three means to access campaign information. Furthermore, Marurai argued

we have moved from being more face-to-face type campaigning, meeting every person in your constituency, to spelling out policies, addressing issues and concerns, and those kinds of things, through the media.

Mona Ioane, CIP MP and former member of the Crown Law Office, stated that “there has been a decrease in the numbers of people willing to be part of political campaigns. So in other words, more people are turning off politics I think. So they are losing interest, and are reluctant to vote because they are not interested in old politicians.” Ioane elaborated and talked of her own experiences in her constituency on the island of Aitutaki. There, sometimes voters will use the TV and newspaper to hear about the policies of the major parties. That, she believes, is definitely increasing, and nowadays fewer people turn out or
are interested in campaigns because they are both less interested and can hear the messages at home on TV. However, she went on to say that

this doesn’t mean as a candidate I will not visit people in their homes; this is very much so what will be happening, as always, because speaking with people directly is the best way to let them know your plans, your passions, your values. They can judge you face-to-face and make up their mind. Other than that, I am relatively new to the political scene as such, but I do think that the media maybe has picked up where people used to be out in force in the community showing their support for a party. So, people are losing interest in getting out attending campaign events, but are still in the know through the media and word of mouth, and by visits from us!

**Face-to-face communication**

With regards to face-to-face communication, there was a common view amongst my interviewees that face-to-face was the most effective and appreciated means of campaign communication.

*Perspective of Cook Islands political candidates*

For the Hon. Wilkie Rasmussen, face-to-face communications during election campaigns “are vital, as our people do expect to meet with us easily, and it would be the most useful way for campaigning. So all candidates, from all parties, will try meet with constituents in their homes at every election, and even before.” He elaborated and said politics in the Cook Islands is about the people in the community being able to judge for themselves, in person, a candidates’ humbleness, humility, ability and past record, and face-to-face meetings are the best way to achieve that. Rasmussen believes

during campaigns these meetings become even more popular, well they become hugely popular and every single candidate would be out and about in their constituency meeting face-to-face with the community of voters. If you’re asking in terms of influential merit, I would think that face-to-face encounters are the most effective way to campaign.

Rasmussen went further on this point, asserting the most influential way of campaigning is “most definitely getting out into the community and making the most of the conversations you can have with those from the constituency.” Meeting and visiting people in their homes, in local meetings, at sports games, and before or after church are prime opportunities in Hon. Rasmussen’s eyes of campaigning face-to-face. He described a general unspoken rule:
if it is too hard or too difficult for a candidate to be out and about, being seen, doing something in his community, then he won’t win the trust and backing of the people. In other words, he won’t win. During your interviews and research, you might come across different ways of campaigning and that being used in different parts of the country, but the one constant you will find is the undoubted popularity and use of face-to-face conversing as a means of campaigning.

Henry Puna, Prime Minister and CIP leader contended “it depends on the context or audience, but the personal, one-on-one approach is best. Always. They are by far now the most important as people become more ‘educated’ or better informed about issues.” He went even further, establishing that these meetings are held in very high regard by constituents, and provide a real opportunity in which they can judge the prior performance, persona, capability and values of a candidate. Puna believes face-to-face meetings between political figures and citizens will remain an integral part of political campaigning for a long time to come. He asked:

- can you imagine an election campaign in your New Zealand electorate without first having heard from the local candidates? Well it’s the same here, I’m guessing you wouldn’t offer those candidates much notice or time if they didn’t bother dropping by to talk to you upfront. In the Cooks, our population is small enough that every constituency candidate could, and should find the time to visit each and every one of their constituents to discuss manifesto policies and their plans for the people in that constituency. Some constituencies have less than one hundred people, so it’s not exactly a hard task.

In other words, Puna believes “those who are not well educated, and are desperately seeking guidance and relief from politicians, are most likely to be swayed by them when they meet them face-to-face.” It is not only those struggling though, those who are comfortable also prefer face-to-face conversations, thus “I would say to you this is by far the most effective means of influencing people, and also that it inexpensive in terms of finances too, so it is a bonus for the campaign, although it may take up a little time.”

Mona Ioane argued face-to-face communications “are very important because it is the only opportunity to get the message across first hand...and gives the people the opportunity to challenge politicians face-to-face.” As a prospective party candidate, Ioane felt that face-to-face would be the most important mode for her campaign. She reiterated that despite saying people were turning off politics, and not attending mass rallies and events as they did previously, face-to-face communication with people in their homes is still the most effective and most frequently used way to campaign. Ioane elaborated that “it is real and genuine, and people in the Cook Islands like that. I think it will be popular for a long time.” She
provided other examples of why and how face-to-face communication is the most popular method:

it’s not even always just for elections though, say if a policy is happening and people want to know about it, or the MP thinks they ought to know about it, the easiest way and cheapest way, is to go and tell them about it. Simple.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, campaigning on Rarotonga and the Outer Islands is quite different. Mark Brown, CIP vice president asserted “on the Outer Islands more traditional methods of political campaigning are more popular. Even still, as unique as Rarotonga is to say New Zealand or Australia, the Outer Islands are unique again.” I enquired as to how this was:

the population is far smaller, meaning with less people and little money, different tactics are used. The voting behaviour and way of life, the culture, is very family oriented, so door to door meetings and introductions of candidates, new or old, are the norm.

Brown said people welcome into their homes the potential candidates for elections. Those candidates will work their hardest to meet every single constituent. It would be entirely normal on the Outer Islands to host a BBQ or umu-kai (feast) so constituents can speak with candidates. He argued “although this won’t change much in terms of voting, it is a way of being seen to be part of that community, and easily accessible to answer whatever questions people may have.” He also emphasised that although swing voter numbers may be small, they do exist, and therefore they make quite a difference when it comes to a candidate, or party in a national sense, winning or losing.

Brown made clear the differences between the Outer Islands and Rarotonga. He said that on Rarotonga, “because of the much larger population, the media is used heavily when it comes to campaigning. Traditionally, there would be big village rallies, with entire villages out in force following drums, dancing and then charismatic speakers delivering moving speeches. Now, there is much less of this.” Furthermore,

in the Seventies, constituencies changed, and thus changed the nature of campaigning. There used to be three vaka, and constituents would vote for several MPs from each of the three vaka.

Brown suggested today on Rarotonga, many people have an increasing cynicism regarding politics, and thus largely ignore the campaign. He agreed the CIP “use thirty second TV ads, and a few billboards here and there, but nothing major, to try get attention.” However, he said door-to-door campaigning was still the most effective and most expected too; in other
words, the candidate must visit constituents to be successful. Brown provided an example of how the CIP were using door-to-door canvassing, as a positive way of ‘reconnecting,’ after being in opposition for so long. He said the party listen to what constituents want done, and try do it through introducing it in the manifesto. This is a grassroots, or bottom-up type of policy development.

Ex Prime Minister Hon. Jim Marurai answered my question stating “face-to-face is the major way of campaigning here. My constituency is Mangaia, and here most times people will have BBQs or umu’s (a traditional meal cooked by hot coals above the ground), and the candidate or MP attend these.” Marurai stated that the candidates even host these meals, and added they provide a good forum for local people to talk about issues with candidates. On the Outer Islands, “we don’t get TV or newspapers on every island, but talkback radio is also really important. Most people tune in to the weekly shows, whether they listen or ring in is up to them.”

Hon. Cassey Eggelton said face-to-face “is the best way to meet with citizens.” She continued by saying that political figures do not necessarily debate the issues: “we are in a small community and we prefer to be non-confrontational. Face-to-face meetings are the most ideal way of getting information through from the party to the people.” Come election time, face-to-face is used all the time. Eggelton said she would typically be out and about knocking at constituents’ doors, while also being available to anyone in the community setting; “they would also be able to ring me if they wanted, it’s a very personal type thing. Our constituencies are small, so everyone usually knows everyone else.” Eggelton went even further by acknowledging that “face-to-face campaigning is the most influential. Making contact with constituents and showing them your understanding of their needs is the best way in our society to campaign.” Moreover, she believes radio and television are good for the overall party campaign to build the public’s knowledge of what is important to the party and how it will act if it comes to power. But ultimately, “the MP has a direct link to, in my case, 523 constituents who each individually make a decision to vote you in or otherwise.” It should be noted that Eggeltons’ electorate is one of the largest in the Cook Islands.
**Perspective of Cook Island citizens**

Kylie, a middle aged banking employee, explained:

> let’s put it this way - if a political figure does not come out with a face-to-face meeting leading up and during the campaign, you might as well say goodbye to their campaign. It is the most crucial, vital, and integral; whatever word is the most important, part of the campaign.

Even more so, Charlie, an educationalist, asserted that “face-to-face meetings are the most important aspect of campaigning. Citizens of the Cook Islands prefer hearing what candidates have to offer. It also gives them a chance to speak to their candidate to see whether the candidates are hearing their voice and taking their concerns seriously.”

A young professional, Sarah, explained how she perceived the importance of face-to-face communications in the Cook Islands, by ranking it against other methods of campaigning: 1) house-to-house visits with candidates 2) TV, newspaper then radio 3) posters on trees, posts, meeting houses, notice boards, sports clubs and 4) youth clubs.

Tara, who is a public sector employee, described the importance of face-to-face communications as follows: “face-to-face electioneering is regarded as vital in the Cook Islands context, the close family ties makes the face-to-face approach a very useful and effective method. It is the most important part/time of the campaign.”

Cam, a middle aged male professional, explained that door to door visits are the most influential part of the campaign “because people want to hear the candidates’ views and what they have to offer.”

Meanwhile, Clare, an older female with a strong interest in politics, said “house-to-house visits by candidates are still very much valuable in a village-based type politics in the Cook Islands.” She went on to say that

> face-to-face visits are a very important strategy for political figures. They are now done in a softer way (secretive) because of fear of rival candidates arriving at similar or the same times. Most families are affiliated to the two major parties - CIP and Demo, so candidates are careful not to stir trouble amongst families. But even saying so, this is the most trusted and respected way of campaigning. Face-to-face campaigning is something which has survived the generations, and is still prevalent today. If you’re not visited by your candidate, it’s really unlikely they’ll win your vote.

Kylie, a female banking employee, was adamant face-to-face communications are the strongest method in campaigning:

> at the constituency level, face-to-face is going to be very important in the forthcoming election. It always is. Face-to-face is the most important means of campaigning. Party
platforms don’t have much credibility. We are seeing the rise of independents and they are going to have to touch base face-to-face with voters. I suspect electoral decisions will be made increasingly on personal qualities.

Charlie, a male educational professional, believed that as in all countries, face-to-face campaigning is very important. But in the Cook Islands he thought the opportunity to meet with political figures face-to-face, is really cherished. He said “it provides several different benefits, both to the public and the politician. For us as Cook Islanders, it means we can ask any questions or queries we may have.” These questions could be sourced from manifesto policies, previous failings, and future plans or directions, and provide a real opportunity for ‘grilling.’ “For the politician, they are only really eager to be out and meeting face-to-face when it is during an election campaign: this does a few things for them as well.” Charlie elaborated and said that politicians are then able to sell themselves as in touch with the community, and thus as being seen as accessible. It also creates the notion that the community matters to them, and that they are all eyes and ears. Once the election is over, this all finishes of course. My family and friends are all very much keen on face-to-face meetings with political candidates.

Charlie believes this is when he and his fellow citizens make their value judgements and decisions as to whether they felt comfortable about a candidate or not; so first-hand meetings between the public and politicians are vital. He said “I am sure the MPs are well aware of this potential, hence why they engage in door knocking and meetings as much as possible during the campaign itself, and not normally.”

Sarah, a young female professional, said she thinks “face-to-face contact with people is definitely the most important means of campaigning. It would be pretty unusual to not be visited in your home by the constituent MP or candidate during a campaign.” Sarah asserted that in the Cook Islands there are also plenty of public meetings and rallies, which ultimately give the opportunity for even more face-to-face contact; it was also established that Ministers and MPs have an open door policy. “It is very important here to be accessible it’s the people after all you are supposedly serving. We do not see our politicians as high and mighty, they are not held in that high esteem.” Furthermore, Sarah stipulated that she was part of several community groups, including women’s groups and NGOs, and as in other industrialised Western democracies, those groups would meet with relevant Ministers or MPs to lobby. She believes that “you could say we have good access, because they want to
keep us happy; we have a lot of members they wouldn’t want to make angry! We always approach from a certain angle when lobbying for one thing or another.” Population size was the major reason given for this. Sarah made apparent that in the Cook Islands everybody knows everybody else, so therefore if one wanted or needed to meet a politician, for whatever reason, it could be easily arranged through networking. Passionately, she explained why access to politicians is important to Cook Islanders:

we expect our MPs to front up to us, it is us who gave them their jobs, and pay them. If we can’t meet face-to-face with a politician to ask questions or something, why should we vote for them? They need to always be accessible, community people, taking part in things such as sports, the church, and just generally being involved. Talking, or conversation, is the Cook Islands way. Politicians must be able to do this with the people too. It’s always been like this.

In western industrialised and developed countries, new technology has become so popular it is often replaces face-to-face communication. This can be evident in the development of campaigning modes including electronic newsletters from MPs to constituents, and the use of Facebook. Such technology is not easily accessible or utilised in the Cook Islands. Sarah described the case of the Cook Islands:

no matter how many technologies we get from overseas and things like texting and emails, I think face-to-face will remain the most important part of campaigning here. As far back as I can think there were always opportunities to speak with the constituent candidate in some kind of gathering, be it a meeting, rally or speech kind-of thing. It is important to us, and it won’t change. The new technologies are too expensive and many years away for us to be able to access.

Charlie, a male educational professional, believes it is very important for politicians today to talk to people face-to-face, as this is regarded as “important since the politician took time out to talk to them personally.” He thinks this could almost be enough persuasion to give the candidate their vote, because Cook Islands society is becoming busier and people are struggling to find time to attend political campaign meetings. Charlie reaffirmed that “those who take time out to visit voters tend to do well at the polls. It is the most respected way of campaigning, it is real, grassroots and genuine, and people appreciate it.”

The mediated campaign

Due to the geography, population size and differing stages of technological development across the Cook Islands, the effects of the media on political campaigning in the country
vary significantly. Political figures and the general public agree that on Rarotonga, the role of the media is prominent during the campaign, whereas on the Outer Islands this is far from the case. Radio is often the only means of media communications on most Outer Islands.

**Perspectives of political figures**

Henry Puna, Prime Minister and CIP leader thinks the media have always played an important role in political campaigning, but are increasingly important nowadays. Their role is “a vital one, either to get messages across or to reinforce particular perceptions about a political party or an individual.” However, Puna made clear certain media are not particularly critical in certain contexts because of the geographical spread of the islands, as was discussed in chapter three. He too reiterated the importance of radio to the Outer Islands, and established that newspapers and TV are critical on Rarotonga. Puna, whose constituency is on the Outer Island of Manihiki said “we are far away from the days when TV and newspapers would reach the Outer Islands. I don’t think they will any time soon, and the internet certainly not.”

He added “talkback radio is always important, but none more so than during an election campaign, especially on the Outer Islands and in smaller constituencies like my own.” On a national scale, he said the media are now more prominent than ever, including the recent popularity of press releases by political parties, and also mentioned that politicians are now inclined to using text messaging to reach the people. Puna believes newspapers remain a reliable mode of relaying information, particularly the letters to the editor section which is always prominent.

With regards to television, Puna said that although expensive, it is definitely used throughout the campaign for political purposes, although the cost has meant advertisements are only aired in the final week before Election Day. Of course, as in advanced western democracies, numerous political issues are canvassed during the daily evening news, and thus politicians and parties have the opportunity to gain valuable airtime. Puna believes campaigns in the Cook Islands have progressed in that they used to rely heavily on village rallies, with a heavy involvement of Cook Islands culture, in addition to-
face-to-face communication. Although “face-to-face is still really important, particularly in the Outer Islands, the media now play more of a role on Rarotonga and Aitutaki.”

Hon. Wilkie Rasmussen believes “TV is now used widely for campaigning; it is perhaps the most used, whereas in the past it would have been only radio. Once new technologies become popular they tend to get used.” He too recognised the importance of radio to the Outer Islands, acknowledging that radio traditionally had an impact nationally, but nowadays it is most popular and cherished by those on the Outer Islands. Rasmussen described the newspaper on Rarotonga as being more prominent now as it “runs more stories on politics and the parties use it to advertise policies during the campaign. You’d either read the paper or watch TV on Raro, or both.” He went further to say the traditional media are really important too, and “work in harmony with face-to-face meetings which are so prevalent.” He thinks it is not only himself, but “almost everyone would agree that there is now more politics than ever covered by both TV and newspaper media. Come campaign time, there is a large amount of political information available to the community.”

A recurring theme from the interviewees was that the mediatisation of campaigning is quite different on Rarotonga and Aitutaki compared to the Outer Islands, because of population size, access, and available technology. Rasmussen said his party significantly uses the media for campaigning, and utilises a range of “what’s available, so we use TV and newspaper to target voters in Raro and Aitutaki, and radio for the Outer Islands. Each different medium has its own effective market I guess, and we use them accordingly.” Rasmussen said that without solid statistics it would be difficult to assume which is the most popular medium for campaigning, but on Rarotonga he reiterated almost everybody would view the nightly television news, and most would read the daily newspaper too. With regards to campaign advertising, he asserted

we always use the TV and newspaper, although the cost has significantly increased so we only really use it not too far out from the actual day itself. So television is probably the strongest medium on Raro, and newspapers closely behind, while on the Outer Islands radio is important, but face-to-face meetings are the most popular way to campaign.

Rasmussen’s opinion of television is interesting, and he argued that
TV is great for when we (as candidates) cannot reach everybody, or answer every question. We are still visible to the community, and thus TV provides a sense of reality, probably more so than does a newspaper or a voice on the radio.

Mark Brown, CIP vice president and MP, asserted different media are used to target different constituencies or audiences - a practice quite similar to western industrialised nations and their political campaigning practices. He believes the way political parties use the media for campaigning is “very different here in the Cook Islands because of the population, lack of technology on the Outer Islands, the high costs involved and other factors.” Brown expressed that his party “utilise the different types of media available to us in each different constituency, or on each different island. As a general rule, we almost entirely use face-to-face on the Outer Islands, with the help of talkback radio.” He further elaborated how different media are used on differing islands in the Cook Islands, by asserting talkback radio is aimed mostly at Outer Islands constituencies, as they lack newspapers, TV and the internet. He mentioned that the CIP party use talkback radio for several reasons: news, issues of particular interest, whether it be in a constituency or a more national issue, topical information, or to push policies. Even more so, Brown admitted:

we also use it to introduce new candidates. Radio is in effect the only link to the Outer Islands, in other words, it is their news lifeline. On Rarotonga, it is TV and newspaper. On both Rarotonga and Aitutaki, the media opportunities give us as a party more opportunity to come out more clearly with our messages. News services are not the same as advertising, and it is a free and effective way for us to get our messages across. It is expensive for TV ads, at $100 for three thirty second ads, so we only use these a couple or so weeks out from the actual Election Day itself. And we do not use a lot of these.

Hon. Cassey Eggelton believes that the media is very important for national party politics and marginally for constituency campaigning, but says “my constituency has 523 registered voters, and the best way I can communicate with these people is to get out into my community and meet them face-to-face.” She does say however, it is really important that people hear and see party policy and messages at home on TV, in the newspaper and on the radio. Eggelton believes this leads to word of mouth discussions of what the public have digested, and therefore it is beneficial to keep politics in the public conversational arena. In her opinion, she thinks television is the most utilised medium across the country, and this is so because Rarotonga has the highest population, is the most developed and has the most
access to television. She believes TV consumption is both the easiest and cheapest option, and the newspaper would be second most popular, followed by radio. She explained that on Raro everyone would sit down and watch TV at nights, and most adults I would think would read the daily newspaper. Not too many, unless they are elderly, would take too much notice of the radio, and if they did, it would just be more background noise. On the Outer Islands though, the radio is really very important. It is the most important media type because many don’t have TV and newspapers. The planes just aren’t frequent enough to deliver the paper, and TV is expensive and the reception is not great.

Mona Ioane believes “personally, the media are very powerful tools in promoting politics, because that is the only way other than going to people’s homes and speaking with them, to get the messages across to the general public.” In her opinion, our media is not really one which reports stories in certain stances, so we get a pretty good go at getting policy out in its actual form etc. TV would be the most important and most used, because most people in the constituency have a TV and would watch the evening news and other shows too. On this issue I can’t tell you about the other Outer Islands though, I have not seen any stats.

Similar to the party politicians, Ioane pointed out the difference between Rarotonga and the Outer Islands, by saying she thinks that TV and newspaper consumption would be hard to come by for those residing on the Outer Islands, and if they did have access to television, the broadcast quality would not be good. Ioane thought that on Rarotonga though, every house would have a TV and would use it. Newspapers would come second to TV consumption, and almost everybody who can get one would read one, but again, it is a matter of access, Outer Islanders cannot enjoy reading the newspaper because the newspaper is not normally distributed outside of Rarotonga and Aitutaki. She argued that in her constituency on Aitutaki, residents are lucky because the island has the second biggest population behind Rarotonga, and is very popular for tourists, so newspaper circulation exists. Ioane explained that we have several flights a day from Rarotonga, making it actually possible to get the newspapers and things out to us, unlike other islands. So the Cook Islands News would be well read on Aitutaki. I know the elderly people tend to listen to radio more, and Mama’s are usually the ones who ring up and call in to debate, argue or ask questions! So yeah, it is another useful tool for campaigning, and the parties have their own opportunity each week to make use of it. People do listen, and it is probably most popular in the Outer Islands, if you compared it to Raro or Aitutaki. In the Cook Islands, people may not want to attend political meetings for job security reasons, so they would prefer to stay at home and listen or watch the campaign on TV or radio, and read about it in the newspaper.
Perspectives of the Cook Island public

The members of the public I interviewed, including young professionals, middle-aged people employed in the public sector, and educational professionals, all agreed the media play a prominent role in election campaigns in the Cook Islands. The role of the media, according to Charlie is very important: “it’s the best way for political parties to get their message across to the citizens of this country, second to face-to-face conversations or meetings.”

Tara argued “the media is a key part of the campaign, given the geography of the islands. Or in other words, the media keeps the population informed.” Tara elaborated saying that the media, with radio at the forefront, were most important to the Outer Islands, as it was their only knowledge link to outside news and events. Other than radio, “people hear through the grapevine, which tends to start off on Raro. The initial message can change drastically at times!”

Mike, a male government employee, argued campaigns have become quite mediatised on Rarotonga, with TV and newspapers taking a front step, but also pointed out that this might be because of a growing disinterest in politics, people would prefer consuming political information at home as opposed to at a rally. Furthermore, most would see and hear it on TV, others would read the newspaper, and there is always gossip about whose who and which party’s doing what, who can’t be trusted etc. So now that people are off it, the media has taken an even more important role in getting politics out to the people. Politicians aren’t seen anymore until the election when they come knocking, but the media are always around.

Meanwhile Cam, a middle aged professional, mentioned it is “very important to get the message out but in a softer way to what we see on TV in Australia or New Zealand, with placards and bill boards.” He asserted radio is very important to those in the Outer Islands, and to more traditional people on Rarotonga. He claimed television is viewed by most who own one on Rarotonga, which has 73% of the country’s total television sets. Importantly, Cam pointed out the Cook Islands News is only distributed on Rarotonga and Aitutaki on a daily basis. It is not the norm for other Outer Islands to receive newspapers on the same day they are printed. Sometimes Outer Islanders have the opportunity to read the
newspaper, but this “is always much later than the publication date, sometimes even a month or more later.”

**Traditional media as source of news for voters**

Of the members of the public I interviewed, most said they personally use TV, newspapers and radio for politics, as do their family members. Clare said that in her family it was normal to watch the television news nightly as a family, and have the newspaper in the home to read when one chooses. She enjoys listening to the radio in the mornings before work, but believes “television has an advantage because it is viewed last at night; it can report all the news and events of the day, whereas the radio and newspaper are like agenda setters.” She believes election campaigns are periods when the different types of media in the Cook Islands all report the same stories.

Clare said for a small country, and a small media, there are not too many stories which could otherwise be printed or televised, so the media tends to feed off each other. Interestingly, she argued “recently parties have tried utilising press releases, so they approach the media with a message which is reported directly to the public. This is new.” Clare thought the Outer Islands really lack the same kind of media resources which are prevalent on the two most populous islands, Rarotonga and Aitutaki. She said “I know on some of the islands they still don’t have TV or newspapers, and certainly not the internet.”

Enua Pakitoa, a government statistician, argued the media are “really really important during elections here. The three media are used with regard to the geographical location they are targeting.” Furthermore, Pakitoa believes there does not seem to be an obvious favourable medium over another in the Cook Islands, due to the geography of the country. He did state

> on Rarotonga, television is probably most popular, then radio, then newspaper. Committees organise party meetings, to speak with people. Apart from media, meetings keep people informed - but only before elections, during the actual period itself.

Mike, a male government employee, argued that “If one wants to win in the constituency then it’s more about personal contact achieved through things like regular church going, lots of community exposure, and most importantly, face-to-face interaction. They need to be
visible.” Even more so, he attested it is more the wider party which uses the media for campaigning, although talkback and letters to the editor are very popular methods used in constituent campaigning. Mike admitted he did not “find the party advertisements very convincing. I suspect that because our communities are so small, the media doesn’t have much effect on changing opinions.” In addition, he went on to mention that most political allegiances are based on family or social connections, however rising dissatisfaction with the current political system may be causing changes to this trend. Furthermore, Mike argued “all major party options have a tattered reputation. People are looking for answers from different sources, and perhaps the impact of the media will increase.”

Meanwhile, Sarah, a young female professional, said that “we use all kinds of methods of the media, from television (which is probably the most used, especially here on Rarotonga), to newspapers and radio.” Talkback is especially popular on the Outer Islands, and in particular those in the Northern Group, where the population is far smaller. At the end of the day, “it all comes down to population and size. So on the Outer Islands, where it is far less developed, radio is by far the most used media. There is no TV or newspapers on those islands.” Sarah thought of all the Cook Islands, there is little or no TV, newspapers or internet on any island other than Rarotonga, Mangaia and Aitutaki.

With regards to talkback radio, she went on to say that “it’s really their only way of knowing what’s going on in the world, well, in our country anyway! Politics is very important to people here, so I think those Outer Islanders really appreciate the talkback opportunities they get.” It means those far away geographically can still ask questions and debate issues in their constituencies, and nationally too. Sarah went on to say that each party has a weekly talkback slot which they always stick to. It is always a certain portion of the public who use these services though, so not everyone likes talkback, but those who don’t would use TV or probably read the newspaper anyway, because they’re most likely to be on Raro or Aitutaki anyway. Mostly it’s old Mamas calling in, because they always have plenty to say and are very opinionated! They like being able to talk with the MPs and candidates, and hear directly from them their replies. There is also the Matariki FM evening show now and again.

Charlie, a male educational professional, argued the media are absolutely vital, they are the main means of communication of political messages to the electorate. In the Cook Islands there has been a development in terms of strong support for local newspapers as a means
of communication. He thinks that all types of media are unique in their own right, and so they all attract different segments of the population, thus they act and behave differently. Charlie believes TV is very well received as one does not have to venture very far or make much effort to soak up what is being said. Furthermore, he stated:

to have visual images and sound is a major benefit in my opinion, and it makes it all the more realistic. Radio is a popular way for the older people, and those on the Outer Islands who don’t have access to TV or newspapers, and certainly not the internet.

On Rarotonga, it was observed that newspapers are part and parcel of everyday life. Charlie believes it is always amusing reading the to-and-fro-type debates that appear in the letters to the editor section between the public and the politicians. He said “Cook Islanders normally try avoid confrontation, so this is a good and healthy way of asking the hard questions without having to do so in person.” He too agreed that on a daily basis, he and his family and friends would combine both TV and newspaper as a means of digesting the news on Rarotonga.

Kylie, a banking employee, told me she believes the “use of the media depends who you want to reach. So radio captures the grassroots and the Outer Islands. TV and print media are far more relevant in Rarotonga.”

Charlie asserted that in all cases the media is very important in getting messages across and that election campaigns are a period where politicians are more media friendly than ever. Joe, a Cook Islander who has also resided abroad, said the media is very important for the parties and candidates to get their messages out, “because less people are attending rally-type events, media is the next best way after meeting people in person to increase awareness about policies.” Joe added that people will not fill village halls anymore to listen to the messages of political parties. Therefore, today’s political parties use the media to convince and persuade voters. This is not necessarily a negative, but “first-hand face-to-face is better” in Joe’s opinion.

The use of new technologies

Henry Puna, Prime Minister and CIP leader, said despite what some may think, the Cook Islands are part of the global community, and thus are exposed to technological advancements. Puna argued that the Cook Islands need to, and do, keep abreast of such
advances not just in business and other areas, but also in politics and campaigning. He says “using all mediums is necessary to reach the constituents, and I wouldn’t completely discount the possibility of ICTs becoming important in the future.”

Ex Prime Minister Hon. Jim Marurai said that ICTs are “not used much really. It is not a big thing, because not many have the internet or even a computer. So face-to-face is most important.” He was vague when it came to answering a question about the Democratic Party website, stating “I think we might have a website, but if we do, it is mostly to let Cook Islanders overseas know what’s going on.” This is in direct contrast to recent New Zealand Prime Ministers, Helen Clark and John Key, who both were very much involved in the content and establishment of personal and party websites. Marurai has not completely written off ICTs in the future though, but does admit they will probably not play a significant role in campaigning in the foreseeable future: “it is a more impersonal way to campaign, and probably does not have a future in campaigning in the Cooks anytime soon.”

Mona Ioane, CIP MP, argued ICTs “would contribute very little because the electors hardly have access to these modern technologies. It may be the case for Rarotonga perhaps.” She believes the majority of electors both on Rarotonga and the Outer Islands are grassroots people, and thus would not utilise ICTs heavily. She does not foresee a significant future for ICTs either: “not really to be honest. I mean maybe at a much later date, but when some islands still don’t have TV or cellphone coverage, you wouldn’t think they’d get the internet anytime soon.”

Mark Brown, CIP vice president and MP, argued the internet is not used a lot by Cook Islanders for campaign and political information, regardless of whether the parties have websites established. The CIP have a Facebook page which is aimed at the youth, and text messaging is also now being utilised as a means of being in touch with constituents. Brown says that most internet-based tools are aimed at keeping in contact with Cook Islanders abroad, keeping them up to date with the political activity, gaining advice and for fundraising. He believes the Cook Islands are “slowly, probably very slowly getting pulled into the internet medium. Telecom prices definitely hinder access, as it is very expensive for broadband.” Brown argued the price of broadband is four times higher in the Cook Islands than in New Zealand. Furthermore,
I guess Cook Islanders are waiting for it to be cheaper to use the net. Not many actually own computers, so access is little. Free internet access in the schools is a must; it is a huge potential for learning, but then again kids won’t use it for politics!

Hon. Cassey Eggelton said that the Democratic Party had a website, and her campaign team had been encouraging her to use Facebook to communicate with younger constituents. Although she readily admits she prefers to meet her constituents face-to-face, she was not averse to using technology. When asked about a future for ICTs in political campaigning in the Cook Islands, Eggelton replied:

not too many people are involved in it. My constituency has 523 registered voters, and not too many of them would even use the internet. So it’s a question of weighing up the usefulness, and personally I don’t think it will be hugely effective, and still would use meetings with people over the internet any day.

Hon. Wilkie Rasmussen was more optimistic about the future of ICTs in the Cook Islands, but still readily admitted it most likely would not be successful in terms of political campaigning. “It could very well be popular in a few more years if the cost of access is brought down, although this is something we can’t do too much about.” Rasmussen said he did not know how soon was soon, and even if internet access did become cheaper and thus more used, the likelihood of it being accessed for political campaign information was minimal. He believes there was sufficient TV and newspaper coverage of politics, and he was unsure of how many Cook Islanders would readily use the internet for politics. Again, Rarotonga and the Outer Islands were distinguished as being quite different from each other, with the internet and emails a long way from being feasibly accessible to Outer Islanders. Rasmussen made clear that on the Outer Islands they have their own broadcast TV for example, so when network TV finishes, they put on whatever they want on a tape. So it could be a game of rugby, a documentary. But it wouldn’t be politics!

Rasmussen had a website which he used to “reach out to other Cook Islanders abroad, mostly ex-Penrhyn residents where I represent and live.” The Democratic Party had a website too; one which he pointed out was “made up of slogans, mostly political slogans, and policies. Mostly it would be used by Cook Islanders overseas, not so much here.”

The public perspective

Numerous members of the public whom I interviewed were upfront in saying Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) did not have a prominent future in campaigning in the
Cook Islands, and certainly had not been used in the past, nor were they being used at the moment. Tara said “I do not think the internet or ICTs have much of an effect at all. The majority of Cook Islanders do not have access to the net at home. It would not be used much for politics, perhaps by a small minority, even if everyone had access!”

Kylie believed “the website is a new medium and works a lot more in Rarotonga than elsewhere. It is yet to be discovered and utilised, and may be some years off.” Meanwhile, Sarah argued ICTs were “probably used by zero people for political campaigning. I think we only have 12% of the population hooked up to cyberspace.” Charlie believed the use of ICTs in political campaigning in the Cook Islands was “minimal, still very limited usage of these technologies for delivering information.” He does not see a future for its use either:

in New Zealand, it is all over the internet and people may join someone’s Facebook page or whatever, read a political column online, but it doesn’t necessarily translate into votes. And in saying that, I didn’t know too many Kiwis who would actively go online to find this and that about a political party’s policy or things like that. It just didn’t happen. I think once people here finally have cheaper access, they’ll use it for all kinds of things, and politics would not be one of those.

Sarah argued “the internet is still young and new to the Cooks, though it would be a long while before it was used significantly by a majority, and although for example the Demos had their website, I question how beneficial and used this was.” She said the internet and other types of media such as texting were now being used as a means of communicating political messages to the electorate.

Joe said ICTs might play a role in the future of campaigning in the Cook Islands, but a small one at that. He believed at present, “there might be a few websites or something, but they are not effective I don’t think. I’ve never looked at one, because we get most of our information about politics from talking with others.” He pointed out that the Democratic Party has a website, but it has very few visitors to it. Joe agreed with other members of the public I interviewed in that text messaging is becoming a popular way of talking about politics with family and friends. He said he knew of some MPs who use text messaging to talk to people in their constituencies. With regards to the internet, Joe argued

not enough people have the internet or even a computer for this way to be used enough. It costs too much, and we can’t often use the internet at work for ourselves. If we get caught, we will be in big trouble!
Television and newspaper however, are “easily the biggest and most popular ways of finding out about campaigns on Raro, otherwise its radio on the Outer Islands.” He thought that because of Cook Islands culture and lifestyle, the important things in life are friends, family, work, church and sports; so there is less and less time for politics: “we don’t have the time to sit down and go on the internet to look at politics, even if we could. We just want the information given to us, TV is best for that.” He reiterated that word of mouth is the best way to learn political things though, and believes there is not much of a future for politics and the internet. The reasons he gave for this were “Telecom charges too much, and people just can’t afford to buy computers and get set up.”

Cam argued at this stage he is not certain the internet and websites play a significant role in campaigning, although he can “see this changing over time. Winning a seat is still about being seen to be proactive in your community being seen to be getting involved in community events.” When asked if there was a future for ICTs, Cam said “it could be anywhere from the next election in four years to far beyond that, depending on cost of internet subscription and computers. Would it be used for politics I really can’t say, perhaps not.”

**Professionalisation of campaigns in the Cook Islands**

*Political consultants*

Henry Puna, Prime Minister and CIP leader, said the party normally appointed a campaign manager “who is in overall charge of the national campaign and appoints his own committee. They are all responsible to the National Executive of the Party.” Furthermore, they are not professionals in any sense, although they do their jobs and undertake their roles very professionally. They are unpaid, and are mostly party loyalists, or volunteers.

With regards to campaign managers and committees, Brown went acknowledged that the CIP have always had a campaign manager. In the past, it was more of a serious role, nowadays it is more managing a steering committee. So for the national party, there are numerous offshoot committees, and each candidate has their own committee, typically made up of a campaign manager and financial expert, amongst others. These roles are created purely for the campaign period. In the past there were only three vaka (villages/constituencies), and all three worked as a unit. The party headquarters would deal
with only one person in each. Nowadays, “we have for example a policy and media team, and a professional marketing team.”

I went on to ask whether these people are paid professionals. “Their role is really to determine how to sell party policy to the constituents. All are volunteers, normally party members, and no, they are not professionals as such, but have come a long way from the past.” But in a sense, Brown said:

we are a lot more professional now than ever before. We’ve learnt to make the most of the media, make it work for us. So for example we can now call a press conference and have TV, radio and newspaper all follow what we have to say. Media releases are increasingly being used too. Anything that goes out through this way now has to pass through the policy and media team, or marketing team. Our messages are now centralised, and the party are in control of the overall message. Outside of these areas, we also have other groups such as the events group, who run fundraisers and meetings.

Ex Prime Minister Hon. Jim Marurai said “I think it would be fair to say campaigns here have become more professionalised, like they are not so culturally based anymore.” He spoke of the old days when drums, dancing, and singing were all part and parcel of campaigning.

Marurai said there are still aspects of this, “but campaigning here has become more policy and issue focused, so in a way it is more professional.” However he is adamant that nobody is paid to run the campaign. It is all done voluntarily, and it normally involves those with knowledge in terms of finance and other areas, but everyone who helps is a volunteer.

Marurai goes further and argued

nobody is paid. They do not run the campaign, we all work together and provide advice as to how things might want to go/look. We do not hire in consultants of any kind. Again, I guess we are not comparable to other countries when it comes to this type of thing. Probably for a few reasons: one, the population is so small it doesn’t really demand this kind of thing, two, financing campaigns is solely at the candidate, MP or party’s discretion, so we cannot afford all these extras, and three, we don’t need it.

He agreed that campaign managers and committees are utilised: “we sure do use them. Everybody has a campaign manager and committee of people.” Being Prime Minister, Marurai recognised that he also had a separate staff from other MPs, with numerous secretaries and advisors, but he stated this was in the national interest. He reiterated this was only because of his role, and this would not be the norm for a typical politician in the Cook Islands. In his own electorate of Ivirua on the Outer Island of Mangaia, he does not have a campaign manager, because the constituency is so small, but he acknowledges he
does receive advice from friends and family. He differentiated between Rarotonga and the Outer Islands by saying “there is a big need for this support and help on Raro, but not the Outer Islands. The political advisors our Demo Party has are, again, party supporters and members, and are not paid.”

Hon. Cassey Eggelton said she had noticed political parties, and particularly the large Democratic and CIP, have become “much more organised in the way that both the executives and the constituency committees manage the parties.” Even more so, the executives are “using technology much more nowadays than before, with more television advertising and use of the internet, either to transfer information by email or in the Democratic Party with the use of the website.” Eggelton said the Democratic Party’s main committee has much more involvement in the day to day running of the wider party: how things are presented, how policies and information are released through the media to the public, the way campaigning is done, and the implementation of fundraising. The campaign is now based more “around the core of the party, so everything that goes out into the public arena tends to pass through the central executive first.” With regards to professionalisation, Eggelton said

we try to be very professional, and take it all very seriously, but usually we need to be on the same level as the public, so when delivering policies and that, we are talking and presenting these ideas in ways which appeal to them. And nobody is paid, so the positions of the executive are not professional as such.

When asked about campaign managers and committees, Rasmussen stated it is very common, very normal to have a campaign manager and committee set up. So typically he has a “campaign chairman, manager, treasurer and committee. All information, no matter what, becomes much more authentic when signed by them.” Furthermore, he said that in a way this legitimises the whole process, and provides a whole heap of transparency when it comes to petitions and court rulings, which are commonplace after elections here. So personally I don’t really want to have to do things like handle fundraising money you know, so this way it keeps me out of the loop in potentially damaging areas. I know in New Zealand the public, led by the media are demanding more transparency around spending and that, and although it is not government funds, the funds we inherit are still from the public pocket. We must be seen to be spending it cleanly. As a government minister, one would have an advisor or secretary who would normally join you on overseas trips, and help with organising meetings and paperwork and that sort of thing. But we don’t travel with large contingents of specialists.
Again, Rasmussen said the party as a whole has a large, but almost identical support structure in place, which deals with all the same issues as in each constituency, on a localised level, and the puna (constituent) committees report back to them. He believed both major parties are almost identical in terms of structure and operation. Those who work as advisors or committee members are not paid, and are instead “passionate party supporters who want to contribute a lot more than say, just any old members, and to do so they offer their time and advice.” Rasmussen believes MPs in the Cook Islands are very lucky with the voluntary support they receive: “I should speak for myself, because my team is very loyal and hardworking, and their sole goal is to see their candidate elected to parliament.” He guessed this is because the volunteers believe the candidate they support would be efficient and effective at delivering good results for the constituency. In a way, their reward for volunteering their time and efforts is policy concessions.

Mona Ioane said that campaigns in the Cook Islands are run by managers and not by the politicians themselves. The candidates and politicians are merely “the front person who delivers the campaign.” Furthermore, she argued committee members go about their duties very professionally and take their roles very seriously, but are not paid by the party. Ioane ascertains that most would have employment outside of the campaign, but are passionate about a certain candidate representing their constituency, so devote their time to campaigning for them. Mostly, they are grassroots volunteers.

It was the perception of a number of citizens interviewed that the parties appear to be moving towards using campaign managers and advisors. However, because of the small population, the people personally running the campaigns for the various parties have been often known by those I interviewed, and it is said those people could not be called professional. Some of the citizens I talked to believe that the politicians think they know best, thus advice from those around them is often ignored, even more so once they are in power. Sarah, a young female professional, said that “over the years both major parties use campaign committees and this includes a campaign manager, the central executive committee of the party; but they are not necessarily media professionals.” She believes the campaign manager is usually someone of good standing in the community such as a previous politician, a well-known community achiever or a well-known national icon.
Charlie said the successful ones are those who have “good managers or effective committee members and recently politicians are surrounding themselves with people who have proven they can organise and get the community behind a candidate.” Therefore someone who is very influential in a community is an asset for a candidate or party. He pointed out none of the advisors or campaign members are paid:

it is all about party loyalty, and they endorse/support/work for the candidate of the party they think will deliver for the constituency. Their payday is seeing that person elected, and hoping they do what they promised!

Cam said managers and committees make all the decisions during the campaign, but the MPs or candidates themselves are always involved. Committee members “might tell them not to talk about a certain topic though, and give them advice. I wouldn’t call them professional, they are mostly volunteers.” He too agreed that none of these people are paid, except in the office of the Prime Minister, but these people in his opinion are there as government employees, undertaking their duties for the country, not party political reasons. Cam said “all the managers and committees are entirely voluntary; it’s a way for those passionate about politics to be involved somehow. They are the grassroots people of Cook Islands politics.”

**Market intelligence: polling and segmentation**

In chapter one, I discussed the increasing prevalence of polling and segmentation as a political campaigning technique in developed nations. I discussed how opinion polling, focus groups and surveys are used as a means of information gathering, whether it be in order to create a certain policy initiative, or to develop a stance on a contentious issue. In developed countries, the means of collecting feedback has become more sophisticated, and the desire to test public opinion was now ever-present. Upon interviewing members of political parties, committee members, the public and interest group representatives, it became apparent that in the case of the Cook Islands, the situation was quite different. Conversations were held with constituents to help shape policy and direction, but no scientific opinion polling was otherwise conducted, and segmenting was also done through conversation.
Hon. Wilkie Rasmussen said “we don’t exactly carry out polling if that’s what you mean. We do go out into the constituency though, as a way of early campaigning, and ask what the people are wanting.” He elaborated that sometimes they have very good ideas, and these ideas can even become actual party policy, should they make it to the party conference at a later stage. This enables us to remain very grassroots, and therefore in touch with the community. I think this is a special attribute of politics here – it really is very grassroots when it comes to policy development and implementation.

Rasmussen believed this was not segmenting the vote as such; it is more a way of garnering what people want to see, assessing these issues on a national scale and then implementing the proposed policies. He said this process creates several benefits, none more so than a happy constituency. If a particular policy is planned, Rasmussen argued I guess you could say we test the waters, suggest to people what might be in the pipeline, and then gauge their thoughts and reactions to these. It is our best way of being really in touch with the community at hand, and helps significantly with shaping the final structure and make-up of the manifesto. It is not just us who do this, it is also the opposition party, and has been an effective tool for campaigning since the old days. I doubt this will change very much.

With regards to opinion polling, Puna stated that door-to-door visits or meetings give political parties the raw data they need on both their standing in the community and voter feelings about policies or issues. He reiterates that no formal polling was conducted however. He did state that his party definitely proposed policies, to test “how popular or unpopular they may be, and also on national issues too. This helped put together our manifesto policies.”

Mark Brown believed polling was utilised “only really a little bit, and it’s not exactly polling. In the past we definitely did not.” But now for example, the CIP have several questions they ask of constituents: “one as in what do you want done here, and secondly what would you like the CIP to do if we win government.” Brown said the questionnaire is used as a tool to get into the homes of constituents and gain feedback, and remain in-touch with the electorate. It can be used for policy formation, but the party “don’t use any actual polling as such.”

Eggelton said “we analyse our voters in a number of ways including: age, denomination, occupation, education level, tribal and family grouping, political party, community group.” She did admit that it was hard to hide these things in the Cook Islands: most of this
information was out in the public domain, or in census data. “We do not phone call and canvass whatsoever.”

However, Rasmussen did admit that “In some constituencies, the candidate or MP can ring almost every individual in the community to gauge their standing on particular issues. Sometimes we find there is a misunderstanding of government and how it works by the grassroots.”

Ex Prime Minister Hon. Jim Marurai said “we don’t really do that kind of thing here, polling. I guess in a way, we go out into the communities and seek the constituent’s thoughts about our proposed manifesto, and what’s included.” He did admit his party take into consideration the significance of the thoughts and feelings of the constituency on the manifesto policies for example, but polling as such is not practised. Marurai went further and stated

“no we don’t have it at all, and we do not often use billboards. If there are billboards, they are made by the candidate or MP themselves, or their family. We don’t have the big ones like in New Zealand, nor the polling either.

Instead of polling, Tara believed that political parties “ask us about what we want in our constituencies before the manifesto is written, and I know they collate these to make a national manifesto.” She also said Cook Islands Television ran a series of ad hoc opinion polling of national issues, but would like to see more formal polling introduced: “statistical polling would be a good thing, it could show our opinion as a nation on issues. Family and party loyalty is subjective, so why not poll?” Tara said in the 1960s and 1970s, voting behaviour was based on family ties, but nowadays how could it be shown to be otherwise if no polling on the issue was conducted.

Sarah, a young female professional, told me she believed the CIP had recently canvassed public opinion on certain issues, mostly in terms of preparing the party manifesto, and with regard to certain constituency issues. Furthermore, she said the party was asking people what they wanted from a CIP government, and then offered those wants to them in policy terms, to win their vote. More importantly, Sarah said

the CIP are running a whole series of focus groups here on Raro this year. They got us interested in the economy altogether, as they are getting specific groups together based on specific topics, such as banking, interest rates, culture etc. This is the first time, they haven’t
held focus groups in the past, not even in 2006. Other issues covered in these focus groups include stability of the party, people’s views on the past and how to plan for the future stability, and party leadership. It was stressed how important it is to have the leader in parliament, so perhaps next time round, if the leader is not elected to parliament, there will be a re-election of the leader.

Sarah said it was the party executives who meet to canvass at focus groups. However there was no kind of telephone canvassing or anything similar.

Independently of political parties, the media do try to gauge public opinion every so often. *The Cook Islands News* ran an informal poll of its own, usually on a Saturday, asking people their views on political issues. The sample size of respondents is only around eight or ten, however, and asks the public their opinion on issues of national importance mostly, such as the nationalisation of petroleum or about a certain policy initiative. Typically, a roaming reporter will pose the question to several members of the public chosen at random, and their responses are displayed, alongside a photograph of each, in the *Cook Islands News* Saturday edition front page.

**Presidentialisation**

One of the thematic developments in election campaigning discussed in chapter one, was a presidentialisation and centralisation of political communication. This is not the case in the Cook Islands, where those I interviewed, including party leaders, agreed that presidentialisation had not and was not occurring. Traditionally party affiliations were important in the Cook Islands, but now more importance is placed on whichever candidate can be trusted to deliver positive results for each local constituency. In other words, it is essential that voters elect someone they believe can deliver for their immediate community, and the wider country comes second.

Mark Brown, CIP vice president and MP, argued that although party leaders are important to the stability of a party, campaigns in the Cook Islands are not based around them. The CIP ran a very candidate-based campaign, focusing on each candidate in their own constituency. The role of the party leader during a campaign was to “set the tone for the party, one of stability, which translates into providing the voters the party has a sense of stability about it. If not, the whole party is shaky.” In other words, Brown believed although
the leader was the party leader, each candidate was still by far more important in their constituency than the leader. The CIP had no tactic or desire to increase the promotion of their leader on a national scale, although at the moment Brown said the CIP was in a unique situation, as their party leader “did not make it to parliament last time round, and the governing party, the Demos, well their leader is the Deputy Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is not leader!” The new Prime Minister and CIP leader, Henry Puna, did not win his seat at the 2006 election, but remained leader, meanwhile the leader of the Democratic Party, Robert Wigmore, was Deputy Prime Minister. Both situations would be considered unusual in most developed or advanced industrialised nations.

Hon. Wilkie Rasmussen said no matter how important the leader of the party is, “at the end of the day they are a figurehead for the national party, and sure, in a national sense, are important, but most candidates will like the focus of the local campaign to be on themselves.” The Democratic Party did not base its campaigns around the leader; the party had not done this in the past and did not intend to in the future. Rasmussen said the only time I can see a similar thing happening here is come the election campaign, when the PM and DPM might travel about to the Outer Islands for example, to talk and discuss a more national policy. This does not happen all that often, so are treated as quite special occasions, and there would be an almost community wide involvement in preparing for their arrival and hosting. This would lead to an obviously increased coverage of both the PM and DPM in the media, whether it be TV or newspaper when they are back, giving them a chance to talk about the trip, or when they’re away, informing the public what they are delivering/doing. They fly in, meet people, hold meetings or whatever, then fly out again. It’s all over very quickly.

Ex Prime Minister Hon. Jim Marurai said there is no such thing as presidentialisation at play in the Cook Islands. “No. It is unlikely I would step into someone else’s constituency unless it was for an important national issue.” When it comes to campaigning, it’s mostly done in one’s electorate, with a focus on that constituent candidate. He said “I am the Prime Minister, but not leader of the party, but I must be seen to be working hard in my own electorate to be re-elected.” Party materials promoting the Democratic Party are based on the party as a whole; the principles in particular, and not the leader.

Clare believed the leadership issue was important enough, but each constituency was more inclined to support its own candidate rather than who is leading the party. So, in other words, she said it is more important to voters to elect the member for their immediate area,
as opposed to whoever will eventually become PM. She said “it’s not at all the big deal that it is in New Zealand and Australia.” Clare thinks voters in many of the electorates have little faith in the leadership but will vote for the right candidate, a candidate who lives in the electorate and contributes to its many obligations. “So no, there is not a concentration on the leadership. As we have seen, the leader isn’t necessarily the Prime Minister anyway.”

Charlie said “having come back from New Zealand, it is noticeable if you were to compare how much more leader focused the political campaigns are over there.” He said the campaign is literally everywhere you look in New Zealand; on billboards, pamphlets, town meetings, TV, newspaper, radio, in magazines, in emails, on the internet, everywhere. In the Cook Islands the campaign was far less prominent in his opinion. Furthermore, Charlie believes in New Zealand he made one noticeable observation: the role of the leader of whichever party, is “much more important and focused on that it is here in the Kuki Airani (Cook Islands). The last election I observed, the influence and importance of Helen Clark and John Key was immeasurable.” He went on to say that Clark and Key totally dominated the airwaves, and in the Cook Islands this just does not happen. He also pointed out the unique situation of the two major party leaders: “Our Prime Minister isn’t even the leader of the Democratic Party, and the opposition leader is outside parliament!”

Tara said leaders were not an important overall aspect of campaigning in the Cook Islands. Perhaps whoever might eventually become the Prime Minister should be able and willing to engage internationally, not be an embarrassment to our country, but the leader or Prime Minister is not the be all and end all. She said debates such as those in New Zealand “do not exist on TV, and in our newspaper we don’t have them up against each other, no polls or the preferred PM or anything like that.”

Mike thought leaders were not very important. “There is not an emphasis on them. I think it’s more a concern that they win their own seats first, to even get into parliament before they get ahead of themselves like that.” He argued the previous situation with the Prime Minister not being the leader of the Democratic Party and the former opposition leader being outside of parliament strengthened this claim. Mike does acknowledge the role of Prime Minister is an important one however, and Cook Islanders want the Prime Minister to be capable of doing the country proud internationally, and to do that they must possess the
right qualities and be diplomatic like other Prime Ministers. He supported more emphasis on leaders during the campaign:

I’m all for the leaders having more attention, I think it would be great to have leaders’ debates for example. We have nothing like that here, not like Obama and the other guy in the States. It doesn’t happen in the Cooks, but I think it would be beneficial. They are always moaning about one another in the newspaper, in the letters to the editor, so why not do it in person? They should do it live. Articles and letters to the editor do not show their capabilities off in front of people, or their weaknesses for that matter.

Mike reiterated election campaigns are about the local constituency first and foremost, and whoever is competing to win that seat. As voters, “we mostly worry about local issues, and choose the candidate we believe will best serve us in parliament.”

Americanisation

Americanisation is a term used to characterise the shift across the three phases of campaigning, which were discussed in detail in chapter one. Farrell (1996) argued Americanisation is the transition from labour intensive to capital intensive forms of political communication, such as television advertising and professional image and media consulting. Although the media is now increasingly being utilised in Cook Islands campaigning, it is not yet at a level comparable to that found in developed nations. This, as we have seen, is largely due to its population size and the varying access to different mediums. In particular, there is a stark contrast between Rarotonga and the Outer Islands in terms of which technologies are available, accessible and affordable.

Mark Brown, CIP vice president and MP, does not believe Americanisation has or is occurring in campaigns in the Cook Islands. He considered that it could possibly be the case in some aspects, but if so only slightly, such as through text messaging. However, the Cook Islands maintain a unique campaign style in Brown’s opinion, and are “pretty much doing it our own way here, and will continue to do so. We don’t have the big flashy expensive campaigns like other countries.” He gave several reasons for this, mostly because it is unnecessary, but also because it is too expensive and campaigns are not funded by the public purse but through fundraising, and the population base does not allow for it.
Henry Puna, Prime Minister and CIP leader, said that although he had no first-hand experience of campaigning in other countries, from his observations of TV and newspaper items, Cook Islands campaigning is very different from others. “Their is more media-driven whereas ours is a more personal mix, of course with a little media exposure, but mostly relying on face-to-face contact.” Henry stated that with a greater population, countries such as New Zealand, he imagined it would be very difficult for a candidate to meet every voter in their constituency, so this was unique to the Cook Islands.

Hon. Cassey Eggelton believes that the Cook Islands shared some campaign characteristics with developed nations, but said “we are a very non-confrontational community, but over the last ten years I have seen a shift by some to a more confrontational style, like abroad.” This move is far less powerful than the USA, but certain politicians and constituents use the media more to lobby. “We are not as affluent as Australia, New Zealand, the US and elsewhere, and especially when it comes to campaigning, it’s all donations and fundraising.”

Hon. Wilkie Rasmussen does not believe political campaigns in the Cook Islands are becoming like those of New Zealand, Australia, or especially the United Stated, by saying “no I wouldn’t agree with that; it seems that those countries are all moving ahead probably at a far faster rate than we are here.” But that did not mean the Cook Islands are not taking advantage of what is available entirely. Rasmussen went on to say that:

in those bigger countries, remember the population is so much larger, it seems that most emphasis is on who will eventually lead the nation, not which person will lead a particular community. Here it is most significant that it is the person who will be the representative, or serve you, in that immediate community, who gets the most attention. Sure, we use the media, and notably TV and newspaper, but we do not have enormous coverage like in the US or New Zealand. We have similarities in that we are very policy focused, very interested in previous achievements and failings which come into play in the campaign, but we are different in the way we go about it. So you all have highly expensive campaigns, with mass advertising done on TV, newspapers, the internet, everywhere. We can’t afford that, and frankly don’t need it. People must get tired of so much of it everywhere, and it could be damaging to the long-term interest in politics you know. We are small, so run small campaigns, with a small parliament and little media compared to the rest.

Ex Prime Minister Hon. Jim Marurai argued campaigns are not like those in many of the developed countries: “we are unique in how we campaign here, because of the cost, access and population. We are too small to need those ways they use.”
Some of the public whom I interviewed believe the Cook Islands are becoming more similar to other nations with regards to political campaigning. Cam said “MPs here are now offering their campaign managers and some committee member’s good paid jobs if they come into power. So in this respect yes, they are like New Zealand, Australia and the United States.” He did point out that they are all volunteers, and otherwise do not tend to hang around, not back until the lead up to the next election.

Clare stated “I’m not too sure about campaigning in other countries but in the Cooks, food and drinks seem to play a big part in gaining votes. We are not like those countries though, through what I’ve seen and heard.”

Joe, a Cook Islander who had resided abroad, said there is no one aspect of political campaigns in the Cook Islands like New Zealand, Australia or the United States; “we are different in that other factors are important, for example, the preliminary run-offs with the selection of the right candidate.” He said independent MPs typically fare badly in constituencies with larger numbers of enrolled voters, however on smaller islands such as Rakahanga and Mangaia’s Tamarua constituency they stood a better chance. Furthermore, Joe said

only large families in these smaller electorates tend to get their family member (candidate) into Parliament. We are not like those other countries, we do it in our own way and I think that’s a healthy way of keeping our realities in check. Look at Gillard, part way through her campaign she had to become ‘normal’ and ‘un-spun’ and ‘genuine’ again.

Sarah told me that she thought the only similarities between campaigning in the Cook Islands, and that of developed nations, is “the style of speeches and rhetoric perhaps.” Cam, a middle-aged professional summed it up succinctly, “not really at all. I think we have our own unique way of campaigning.”

Charlie, a male education professional, argued political campaigns in the Cook Islands are “definitely not like New Zealand, Australia or the United States” from his observations. “Obviously, Cook Islanders don’t have access to the financial resources of these countries.” Also, he pointed out the Cook Islands are small and perhaps do not need quite the intensity of political information as those other countries have, whether the people desire it or not.
Hybridisation

The style of political campaigning in the Cook Islands suggests Americanisation is not occurring. But then is there a possibility hybridisation is at play? The above comments and statements made by both political figures and members of the public in the Cook Islands indicate that in the Cook Islands specific elements coexist with features of campaigning found elsewhere. There is existing evidence for example of a reliance on Rarotonga of television and newspaper coverage, symbiotically alongside face-to-face communication. Although door knocking (and thus face-to-face communication) is utilised in many other nations worldwide during campaigning, it is not achievable on the same level as in the Cook Islands. The hybridisation of campaigning in a country depends on the willingness of candidates and political parties to use global practices. However, results from interviews conducted with political figures and the public in the Cook Islands show that for several reasons (population size, differential access and cost, amongst others), global campaign practices, including a major increase in political marketing, has not and is not occurring in the Cook Islands. Any hybridisation which has or is occurring would be minimal. None of the features of Americanisation or hybridisation are present in the Cook Islands or have been adapted into the Cook Islands context.

This chapter presented the views of the numerous political figures and members of the Cook Islands public whom I interviewed on Rarotonga, with regards to political campaigning. No views of any individual politician represent the view of the current, past or previous government, or of their respective political parties. Pseudonyms were assigned to all members of the public as a majority requested anonymity. In the following chapter, the findings in relation to the review of political campaigning literature, from chapter two, are discussed.
Chapter five: Discussion

The overarching aim of this thesis was to examine political campaigning in the Cook Islands, within the framework of the three-phase model of campaigning. It sought to establish whether premodern campaign techniques such as direct or face-to-face communication were (and are) most commonly used, while at the same time ascertaining what role the media (in particular television, newspaper and radio) play. This thesis endeavored to determine whether new media such as the internet were (and are) prominent and well utilised, and also undertook to determine evidence of Americanisation or hybridisation.

Interview research in the Cook Islands has unearthed interesting and strong results. Most notable is that direct face-to-face communication remained the most prevalent, most popular, and most utilised method of political campaigning in the Cook Islands. There is evidence of an indirect mediatisation of political campaigning, with the media playing an important role in the Cook Islands. New media are yet to make an impact. Campaign professionalisation is minimal and there is virtually no evidence of presidentialisation. The same can be said with regard to Americanisation. There is however evidence of campaign centralisation to a small extent, with political parties now taking charge of national election campaigns.

The phases of campaigning

Premodern phase

Almost every individual I interviewed, whether of a political or public background, agreed that campaigns in the Cook Islands had traditionally incorporated a high level of culture, with particular emphasis placed on singing, dancing and feasting. Colourful village rallies were the norm, encompassing loud drum beats and Polynesian dancing, which were at the forefront of parade-like visits by political parties to the villages around Rarotonga. Large trucks would move at a slow pace with dancers, singers, drummers and political candidates on-board the back, displaying both visual and loud audio political messages to voters. The trucks would stop and semi-permanent campaign rallies would be established, where candidates delivered rousing speeches, constituents had the opportunity to ask questions of
candidates in a public setting, and an ensuing feast would take place. At the time, up until approximately the beginning of the 1990s, interest and participation in politics was high.

This cultural campaigning is no more, and has given way to face-to-face campaigning. One certainty from conducting interview research with regards to campaigning in the Cook Islands is that face-to-face communications were the most important method of campaigning historically, and remain the most important method today. In other words, face-to-face communications are the most effective and appreciated form of campaigning, as described by both members of the public and political figures I interviewed. There had been a distinct shift from communal involvement in politics through cultural events, to a more individualised face-to-face campaign. This is not to say face-to-face campaigning was not popular when cultural campaigning was prevalent however, in a sense, the two types of campaigning went hand-in-hand. A clear majority of citizens whom I interviewed viewed face-to-face visits by candidates as absolutely vital, if such visits did not occur, it is highly likely a candidate would not be elected to parliament. Several reasons were provided for this. The population size is small, hence voters believe it is very possible for a candidate to visit each constituent, and do in fact expect this. It is a preconceived notion if a candidate does not visit, that candidate would not be seriously supported come election time. Party membership and active involvement in politics has decreased considerably, so voters expect political messages and information be relayed to them through face-to-face communication, word of mouth and through the media. In other words, Cook Islanders have grown tired of politics and no longer enjoy taking an active part in the campaign. The media have filled the void where cynicism has led to disinterest. Candidates and elected MPs who want the right to represent and serve the public in parliament should display certain qualities and cultural values of the country, be hardworking, churchgoing, respected in the community, honest and reliable. It was widely agreed during my interviewing, that someone with little or no experience living in an electorate in the Cook Islands would have no or little chance of being selected as candidate to contest an election. Essentially, the most popular mode of political campaigning across the entire Cook Islands today, face-to-face communications, are a product of the premodern campaign.
As Sarah mentioned, “no matter how many technologies we get from overseas and things like texting and emails, I think face-to-face will remain the most important part of campaigning here.” As far back as she could think, there were always opportunities to speak with the constituent candidate in some kind of gathering, be it a meeting, rally or after a speech. Sarah said “it is important to us, and it won’t change. The new technologies are too expensive and many years away for us to be able to access.” She believed with such a small population, if politicians tried to substitute technological opportunities such as text messaging for face-to-face communications, it would not rest easy with the Cook Islands public. However, text messaging could complement face-to-face campaigning.

Talkback slots on the radio are a common feature of political campaigns in the Cook Islands, another feature of the premodern campaign. These talkback slots are vital in order for Outer Islanders to hear messages from candidates in their constituencies, and to gauge a sense of proposed policies on a national scale too. Often, this is the only way for Outer Islanders to keep up-to-date with current affairs.

Modern phase

The Cook Islands, even though a developing nation, has an active and functioning media. The several newspapers, sole television channel and numerous radio broadcasts have substantially increased their reportage of politics since the decline of cultural campaigning began, and the uptake in media consumption of politics has increased at the same time. The loss of cultural campaigning has led to an upsurge in media consumption and advertising by political parties during the campaign.

Television is an indirect mode of communication during political campaigns, and as we were shown in figure 1.0 in chapter one, it is categorised as a significant feature of the modern phase of campaigning. As described in chapter one, Ward and Stewart (2006) and Denemark (2002), argued a broad cross-section of Australian voters relied on free-to-air television as their main source of political news and information. The same can be said of the Cook Islands, along with face-to-face campaigning. Although the candidates and sitting MPs I interviewed were reluctant to admit it, it became apparent that in the past, they, their family and friends would play an active role in political campaigns, most of whom avoided
doing so today. Whether this was by attending rallies, meetings, or campaigning for a candidate, nowadays most members of the public I interviewed had grown cynical of politics, thus relying on the media (mostly television and newspapers on Rarotonga and Aitutaki, and radio on the Outer Islands) and word-of-mouth for political information, instead of actively being involved. In chapter one I identified that Denemark (2002) had argued there had been an increasing prominence of television in political campaigning, and the same can be said of the Cook Islands. The letters to the editor section of the *Cook Islands News* proved a popular means of communication between the public and political figures, and was mentioned keenly by many interviewees, as an avenue for public dialogue. Members of the executives of the Democratic Party and CIP both agreed television advertisements were used, although the significant cost of airing these meant they were now used only in the final week or two of the campaign. The executives of both major parties agreed full-page newspaper advertisements were commonplace during the campaign, and there was a reliance on Rarotonga and Aitutaki for newspaper coverage of candidates throughout the campaign.

Earlier in chapter one we saw that, as suggested by Ornstein and Mann (2000), Heclo (2000), Thurber, Nelson and Dulio (2000), Karlsen (2009), Cook, Barabas and Page (2002) and others, that political consultants, polling and segmentation are fixed features of a permanent campaign. The permanent campaign is nonstop and year-round is highly applicable to many industrialised developed nations. However, in the Cook Islands, the amateur rather than professional, and the ad hoc rather than the permanent, would more accurately describe political campaigning. In the Outer Islands, campaigning has yet to move on fully from the premodern era, whereby there is a lasting predominance of radio, a loose network of grassroots volunteers (with coordination from political parties). Outer Islanders campaign voluntarily, the campaign runs for a short period of time, amateur (non-paid) advisors are the norm, and only informal (word of mouth) polling takes place. Face-to-face campaigning is the predominant mode of campaigning on the island, and due to the small electorate sizes, it would be difficult to argue face-to-face campaigning would be labour intensive.
There has been a centralisation of campaign planning by political parties; however it is one which has seen the CIP formulate campaign tactics which help shape manifesto policy. The Democratic Party and CIP have both moved to ensure their candidates are delivering the same messages to their constituencies, to enable an overall synchronized campaign. Both have tended to operate out of a campaign headquarters, holding regular meetings whereby policy and strategy are discussed. Each constituent candidate remains in charge of their own fundraising efforts and whatever each candidate spends on their campaign in their constituency is their own responsibility, and not that of the wider party. So although it is desirable to remain on message, this is not always achievable.

Postmodern phase

Farrell (1996), as well as Plasser and Plasser (2002) argued in chapter one, that the single common theme with campaign practices worldwide was that election campaigns are becoming professionalised. This is not exactly the case in the Cook Islands. While the Cook Islands have also experienced a mediatisation of their political campaigns, it is by no means on the same level as that in developed nations. In chapter one the professionalisation of campaigns was described by Farrell (2001) as involving a gradual shift from essentially localised, largely amateur, part-time affairs directed by party loyalists, to a permanent, slickly presented campaign with an emphasis on marketing, where political consultants reign prominent. In the Cook Islands, although each candidate is supported by a campaign committee, there is a distinct and absolute lack of involvement by any form of political consultants. It is commonplace for each constituent candidate to have a supporting committee of a few volunteers, who advise on speeches, policy issues, topics to avoid, and to help with administration, organisation and fundraising. Unlike the way in which Lilleker and Negrine (2002) described professionalization, in chapter one, political campaigns in the Cook Islands ascribe no outside agencies. Arguably, certain components of campaigning could be deemed professionalised, with the CIP encompassing separate policy, media and marketing teams, despite being made up of party members. Most importantly, all those I interviewed agreed that no campaign committee member in the Cook Islands was providing advice and support for a fee. In other words, participation by committee members were entirely voluntary and at no stage were committee members paid for their work with candidates. More often than not these volunteers believed the candidate they supported
would deliver results for their constituency. The type of professionalisation apparent in campaigning in the Cook Islands is different to that of developed nations, whereby political parties have responded to the decreasing interest of Cook Islanders in politics by dismantling the traditional mode of village-based campaigning. In other words, the campaigns are now more professional in nature and delivery, but are nowhere near on par with the professionalisation discussed in chapter two in developed nations. It is important to note that professionalisation is also a feature of the second (and modern) phase of campaigning, however in the Cook Islands situation, evidence from interviews has indicated it has been a feature prominent more recently.

Bowler and Farrell (1992) and Swanson and Mancini’s (1996a) claim in chapter one that worldwide developments in electioneering have seen a distinct shift in campaign focus, with more attention diverted away from the wider political party to the benefit of the party leader, does not apply in the Cook Islands. Considerable literature exists which argues that presidentialisation is a phenomenon worldwide, yet my research has led me to argue it is non-existent in the Cook Islands. Unlike the United Kingdom, which also utilises the first-past-the-post system, the major emphasis is placed on the election between candidates for each constituency in the Cook Islands. The majority of voters believe it is in their best interests to elect a quality candidate in their immediate village or constituency, a candidate who they believe will best deliver results for that area. Local priorities outweigh the bigger picture, and candidates for election are judged accordingly. Normally the leader of whichever major party wins power would thus be elected Prime Minister, however this is not always the case.

The majority of Cook Island voters do not place importance on who might ultimately lead their country, although they do agree that person must possess admirable and diplomatic qualities, to ensure quality representation abroad. Most candidates and MPs view the party leader as a stabilising figurehead, thus it is ensuring a credible and trustworthy leader is selected by the party, regardless of the fact the campaign would definitely not be centred around any leader. Even the Prime Minister agreed presidentialisation was not at play in the Cook Islands, admitting the only time he would venture into another constituency was
when it involved an important national issue. This is in stark contrast to the role played by party leaders in developed nations such as New Zealand, Australia, the US and UK.

The Mana by-election in November 2010 in New Zealand is an excellent example of this, whereby Prime Minister John Key and Leader of the Opposition Phil Goff both appeared on numerous occasions alongside their party’s candidates, announcing policy, attending public meetings, door-knocking and gaining vital political capital through media exposure. In the Cook Islands, policy and initiative of a localised nature carry more impetus in an election campaign than whoever the leader of any party may be. The candidate for each constituency, who can be most trusted to deliver on their policy promises for that immediate area, derives much more time and attention than the leader of the party they represent. Presidentialisation has not occurred in the Cook Islands.

Even though there may be some debate as to the extent of the influence of campaigning in developed and industrialised countries (Gibson, Ward and Dixon 2003), such a debate would be irrelevant for the Cook Islands. Although political campaigns in the Cook Islands make good use of newspapers, television and radio, the use and consumption of ICTs is at best, minimal. Of the ICTs described earlier in chapter one, only one website and one Facebook page of Cook Islands political parties exists. There are no blogs, Twitter, Bebo, YouTube videos, MySpace, Skype, online chat or blogs available or established. Gibson, Nixon and Ward (2003), in chapter one, argued that the fundamental impact of the internet on political campaigning has been considerable, but this clearly was not the case in the Cook Islands.

Neither was their argument that internet features have introduced interactivity to media technologies, allowing citizens to debate with politicians or to other groups of citizens from considerable distances, or to engage in written dialogue via computers. The Democratic Party said it had a website established, whereas the CIP were unsure. Most notable is the fact that those I interviewed admitted these websites were set up to maintain links with Cook Islanders living abroad, for fundraising purposes. The Democratic Party website is basic and overall not very informative. There is a “Have Your Say” section, where visitors to the site can leave a message, although they are instructed not to style messages in a “letter to the editor” type format. No contact details for direct correspondence are available, and
the latest policy information is from 2006. The latest “news” update is from the beginning of February 2007, so the website severely lacks any sense of being up-to-date. I was unable to locate a website for the Cook Islands Party or Party Tumu.

The Cook Islands Government has a substantial website established, with information on acts, Hansard, members, the constitution and a contact email for the clerk of the house which proved fruitful for my research. The Cook Islands Party has a Facebook group, which seems to be active. It has an accessible wall, photos of campaign events, videos, and a discussion board asking Cook Islanders “what are the three things you want if the CIP were elected to govern?” Unfortunately, the CIP Facebook group has only fifty members (at time of print), many of whom are CIP candidates, meaning it is of little real value. Some of those interviewed believed ICTs may play a role in future campaigns in the Cook Islands, but not in the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, the majority of those I interviewed, even political figures, believed ICTs would not become a popular mode of communication in the Cook Islands. There were several reasons given for this, namely: the cost of purchasing a PC, the cost of setting up an internet connection, the on-going cost of usage, lack of access, lack of desire to use internet for politics, and the fact most Cook Islanders felt there was more than enough political and campaign information available on television, in the newspaper, on the radio, and in face-to-face communications.

Although there has not been a strong uptake of ICTs with regard to political campaigning in the Cook Islands, there have been several initiatives established which do show ICTs have been used in the Cook Islands. Overall however, they have not contributed effectively to the campaign. Text messaging has been used by numerous political figures in the Cook Islands to contact constituents, and several Facebook pages have been established. The CIP operates the most up-to-date Facebook page, although it has a very limited following. Political websites are few and far between, with the Democratic Party’s page out-dated and lacking any real campaign messages. These initiatives are in their early days, and although not yet popular or in demand, there is the potential for them to become so in the future. Cook Islanders avidly leapt at the opportunities television, newspapers and radio provided, so I argue if costs were to be reduced and access to the internet was to become much
easier, the internet too could one day become a powerful communicative tool in the Cook Islands.

_Americanisation and hybridisation_

Despite the arguments of Negrine (1996), Norris (2000), Mancini (1999), Plasser and Plasser (2000), and others that Americanisation and hybridisation are common features of the campaign in advanced industrialised democracies worldwide in chapter one, there is little evidence Americanisation has occurred in campaigning in the Cook Islands. The transition from labour intensive to capital intensive forms of political communication necessary under Americanisation has been weak. There has been an obvious increase of media reportage and consumption of political campaigns, however one must be careful not to overstate this trend, as essentially the size and scale of the Cook Islands’ media is significantly small. Only one television channel and one daily newspaper exist, and although highly utilised by most households on Rarotonga, those on the Outer Islands have little, if any access. So campaigning is still largely reliant on face-to-face campaigning, a method of campaigning cherished by Cook Island voters.

Politicians and candidates must sustain visits to each household in their constituency to sell their party messages. These visits, as stated by interviewees on numerous occasions earlier, are widely regarded and are crucial in the eyes of the voter. Thus, I argue campaigning in the Cook Islands is still heavily labour intensive. It became apparent that the capital needed to propel campaigns into the media age is significantly lacking, and if it did exist, it would be of little use. This is because there has yet to be a proliferation, or even an introduction of media consultancy and professional television advertising to the Cook Islands. No public funding for political parties during election campaigns and the high cost of television advertising ensure this mode of campaigning is underutilised. Although donations do occur, these are not easily offered or received due to the generally low wages of the public. The Cook Islands are again unique in this aspect of campaigning, due to cost, access and population.
Why the predominance of premodern campaigning?

Essentially, population, size and distance have meant the fifteen islands which make up the Cook Islands have developed at different rates. Rarotonga, the main island, has developed more quickly than its Outer Island counterparts, and as such, political campaigning across the country differs from island to island. The premodern technique of face-to-face campaigning is relied upon heavily in the Outer Islands, as essentially it is the only means of campaigning because of the vast lack of any significant media presence. The majority of residents on these islands own a radio and would tune in most days to news and current affairs bulletins, as well as weekly political slots and talkback. There are very few televisions, newspapers or ICTs on the Outer Islands, so campaigning takes on a different and unique shape when compared to Rarotonga or the developed world. The high price of purchasing a PC, combined with the high cost of living and low wages in the Cook Islands means it is impossible for many to own a television as well as a computer with internet access. Why is this so?

Lack of literacy

Existing literature on political campaigning has indicated that the predominance of premodern campaign techniques in a subject country may be associated with a low level or lack of literacy. This is not the case in the Cook Islands, where a majority of the public attend school, at least until the secondary level, and most can read and write. The Cook Islands Ministry of Education Statistics Report 2010 identified areas of both improvement and concern. Since 2002, there has been an emphasis on English and Cook Island Maori, with advisors first in reading and secondly in literacy. The country as whole has favourable results in English, with 77.7% of students performing above the standard, Cook Island Maori, particularly on Rarotonga, has decreased from 52.7% above standard in 2007 to 48.9% in 2009. So I would argue the majority of Cook Islanders are able to read, and should they wish to read the newspaper or other means of political information, they can do so. An argument suggesting a lack of literacy is not warranted in this case.
Lack of communications

Many I interviewed spoke of the varying importance of different types of media in geographically different parts of the country. There are definite geographic and cost barriers prevalent in communications in the Cook Islands. With the country spread over a large geographical distance, and access to these islands being quite difficult, the cost of access to television, newspaper and ICTs is almost non-existent in some outer island communities. The cost of purchasing equipment and the cost of shipping are high, as are service provider fees. Essentially, this makes communication through the media very difficult, and forces politicians to rely heavily on face-to-face campaigning in their constituencies. The only real means of mediated communications with these islands is through radio.

On Rarotonga, access to newspapers, television, and radio, in addition to face-to-face campaigning were described as the most utilised means of accessing political information. Television and newspaper were the most popular in ordinary circumstances, and during the campaign period itself face-to-face campaigning by candidates was utilised as well as television and newspaper. Radio was used by the elderly, but was not regarded as overly popular on Rarotonga. On the Outer Islands, television and newspapers were not accessible to most, excluding Aitutaki and sometimes Mangaia. This has led to a reliance on radio as a lifeline for not only political news and information, but general news and current affairs too. Newspapers may sometimes reach the Outer Islands, but this was only in rare cases when airplanes would visit, meaning that editions received by Outer Islanders, were normally relatively out-dated. Letters to the editor in the Cook Islands News seemed to be a highly popular means of gaining political information, and engaging in dialogue with candidates and MPs.

Rarotonga, although arguably still significantly lagging behind other countries deemed developed, has progressed much further than the Outer Islands in several aspects including: media access, educational opportunities, and the ability to utilise (and consume) different forms and types of political campaigning. Rarotonga, the seat of government in the Cook Islands, lays claim to a mixture of premodern, modern and postmodern campaign
techniques, whereas campaign techniques in the Outer Islands are still mostly premodern in nature. Overall, the Cook Islands is a relatively undeveloped country. Newspapers and television are not available to a significant number of the Outer Islands, and thus residents of those islands rely on radio as their lifeline for national and international news and current affairs. Even on Rarotonga, unlike developed countries, census statistics show that many private occupied dwellings do not own a television set, and very few private occupied dwellings in the Cook Islands as a whole, have a computer and access to the internet in their homes. Cook Islanders residing on Rarotonga however, although still very far behind the developed world, have far more access to computers and the internet than those who reside on one of the fourteen Outer Islands. The use of ICTs in the Cook Islands has been a recent development, and has yet to have any discernible impact on campaigning. There are several reasons for this. Again, the high cost of access and of purchasing a PC, and lack of readily available internet access to all parts of the country (and where it is, it is not necessarily reliable), are the reasons ICTs have yet to flourish.

Demographic factors

My research identified population as a very important factor in the way campaigning is conducted throughout the Cook Islands. The country has an overall declining population, whereby many Outer Islanders emigrate to the main island of Rarotonga, usually seeking employment. The same can be said about Rarotonga, however it is in the guise of immigration abroad to New Zealand. Table 1.2 in chapter two showed that electorate sizes throughout the country, predominantly on the Outer Islands, are extremely small. Television, newspapers and ICTs are non-existent on those remote islands, thus campaigning techniques remain premodern. Face-to-face communication is the one method of campaigning which remains dominant, with the Outer Island residents also relying solely on radio as their means of news contact with Rarotonga and the rest of the world. On Rarotonga, premodern techniques are still heavily utilised, as well as those deemed modern. Postmodern techniques, although introduced in the guise of Facebook and text messaging, are not influential, effective or highly utilised.
Although comparatively small, the population of the Cook Islands supports the media that are available. However, only a population so small makes economies of scale work against mass communications, and makes face-to-face campaigning both feasible and effective.

Upon conducting research of political campaigning in the Cook Islands, there are noted spatial and temporal variations which the results have brought forward. Numerous interviewees pointed out the distinct disparities within the country. Population, way-of-life, access to media, and modes of campaigning all differ between the main island of Rarotonga, home to the largest population, and the remaining fourteen Outer Islands. Hon. Wilkie Rasmussen admitted in some constituencies where telephone lines existed, “the candidate or MP can ring almost every individual in the community to gauge their standing on particular issues.” The small size of the electorates means politicians can directly communicate with most, if not all, constituents. This means there is no place for scientific polling. In larger populations, you cannot ask everyone!

Those I interviewed believed Cook Islanders, especially over the previous two decades, have grown cynical of politics and the political process. This has led to an ongoing decrease in political participation, resulting in a large-scale shift away from cultural campaigning. Because of this loss, and the fact politicians cannot always use the media to pass on their messages to Outer Island voters and the many on Rarotonga who do not actively consume mediated communications, face-to-face campaigning is relied on. The way political campaigns are planned, managed and carried out have thus been changed. This decrease in both political participation and involvement with political parties, as well as the overall declining interest in politics in the Cook Islands, goes hand-in-hand with the increase in technological advancement and thus the mediatisation of campaigning. The growing cynicism does not however, mean political figures can avoid face-to-face campaigning, rather moreover, it gives more impetus for this mode of campaigning as the only real means of reaching the public. This loss of traditional party ties and growing cynicism of politics has not necessarily meant voter turnout is low in the Cook Islands. It is not. The Cook Islands News reported that at the 2010 general election, voter turnout was 78%.
Conclusion

Although previous literature has concentrated on politics and political parties in the Cook Islands (see Davis, T, 1979; Stone, D, 1965; Levine, S, 2009) there is no previous work which focuses on campaigning. In this instance, literature on campaigning in developing nations is scant. However, previous literature on the three phases of campaigning, notably the work of Norris (1997a, 2000b, 2002a), Butler and Ranney (1992), Farrell (1996), Wring (2001), Plasser and Plasser (2002), Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) and Newman (1998) is highly applicable.

I have looked at the case of the Cook Islands, and as the literature on political campaigning suggests, premodern campaigning in a developing nation is predominant. But in the Cook Islands, its small population means there are further implications and difficulties with regard to the development of a mass or new media. There is little prospect this will change in the future if current population trends are maintained. This thesis has the potential to serve as a benchmark for studying political campaigning in other countries. Due to the compounding results unravelled while conducting case study research in the Cook Islands, it seems it would be useful and important to conduct further work in other developing Pacific nations. Amongst Oceania, the Cook Islands falls ethnologically into the sub region of Polynesia, so I would suggest it could prove beneficial to utilise case studies of other nations from the other sub regions of the Pacific, namely Melanesia and Micronesia to further enhance literature on political campaigning in developing nations. It would be useful to undertake studies of countries with steady population bases, including Samoa and Vanuatu.

All the above causes have contributed to determining where political campaigning in the Cook Islands is situated, within the three phase model of campaigning. Due to its small and declining population, the Cook Islands has only partially shifted from the premodern to modern phase of campaigning. It is unlikely this will change in the foreseeable feature, due to the continual decline in population (which leads to lesser need or desire to utilise new technologies in campaigning), the on-going high cost of access to use and purchase of ICT software, and the strength of face-to-face communication in the campaign (which has been strong since campaigning began in the Cook Islands, and which seems will continue to be
strong in the years to come), which have offset the traditional style of campaign which interviewees argued once existed.

I have learned that campaigning in the Cook Islands differs significantly between the main island of Rarotonga, the second most populous island of Aitutaki and the remaining Outer Islands. Campaigning in the Cook Islands is situated predominantly within the first and premodern phase of campaigning, while at the same time it employs techniques and features from the second and modern phase. The third and postmodern phase of campaigning is non-existent in the Cook Islands. Essentially, Rarotonga, being the most populous of the Cook Islands, has been exposed to more modern features of the campaign than the Outer Islands, which are still very much dependant on postmodern techniques. Rarotonga however also utilises several postmodern techniques today. Population, cost and differing access essentially determine where the Cook Islands are situated within the three phase model of campaigning: in between premodern and modern.
Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

Political figures

The politicians and electoral candidates listed below are those interviewed who agreed to go on record, and thus be named. There were four others who preferred to remain anonymous. Please note the 2010 general election was held after I interviewed politicians, and results are now confirmed. Ministerial titles and portfolios in this thesis were for the period up until the 2010 general election.

- **Hon. Cassey Eggelton**: member for Matavera, Rarotonga. Democratic Party. Portfolio responsibilities included cultural development and national environment services
- **Hon. Jim Marurai**: member for Ivirua, Mangaia. Democratic Party. Ex Prime Minister. Portfolio responsibilities included information and technology, education, human resources development, police, public service commission, broadcasting and the ombudsman
- **Hon. William (Smiley) Heather**: member for Ruau, Rarotonga. Democratic Party. Party whip. Portfolio responsibilities included infrastructure and planning, transport, parliamentary services, environment services, House of Ariki and Koutu Nui
- **Hon. Wilkie Rasmussen**: member for Tongareva, Penrhyn. Democratic Party. Portfolio responsibilities included attorney general, commerce commission, finance and economic management, financial intelligence, financial services development, financial supervisory commission, national superannuation and the pearl authority
- **Sean Willis**: President of the Democratic Party executive.
- **Henry Puna**: member for Manihiki. Prime Minister. Leader of the Cook Islands Party. Puna was first elected to parliament in 2004 following a by-election in Manihiki. Portfolio responsibilities include public service commission, head of state, attorney general, parliamentary services, police, justice, ombudsman national environment service, energy and renewable energy and emergency management Cook Islands.
• **Mark Brown**: member for Takuvaine, Rarotonga. Cook Islands Party vice president. Portfolio responsibilities include finance and economic management, business trade investment board, Cook Islands Investment Corporation, Internal Affairs, Commerce Commission, and telecommunications.

• **Mona Ioane**: MP for Vaipae, Vaipeka and Tautu, Aitutaki. Cook Islands Party. Formerly a Cook Islands Policewoman and Monitoring and Compliance Officer for the Business Trade Investment Board, before eventually being employed at the Crown Law Office. Ioane won the Cook Islands Party nomination to contest the constituency of Vaipae, Vaipeka and Tautu on the island of Aitutaki at the 2010 general election and was successful in obtaining that constituency.

• Contact was made to meet with numerous other Democratic Party members. However for several reasons, these interviews did not proceed. The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Leader of the Democratic Party, Hon. Robert Wigmore could not meet due to tight scheduling surrounding the tabling of the national budget, while others from Outer Island constituencies simply could not be reached. It was one thing to send emails to each member and leave voice messages, however I did not realise some lacked access to these technologies while in their constituencies on the Outer Islands.

*Members of the public*

Most of the public I interviewed requested anonymity, citing job security as their main reason for this. It seemed in a small country, speaking out had the potential to threaten employment situations. I decided not to name any member of the public I interviewed. Others were more than happy to converse on the topic (and politics in general), but preferred not to be included in any capacity.

The names listed below are of those to which I assigned pseudonyms throughout this thesis; those which I used several times due to their strong insights into political campaigning in the Cook Islands.

- Sarah: young female professional
- Tara: an older female public sector employee with an interest in politics
- Charlie: male educational professional
- Cam: male middle-aged professional
• Kylie: female middle aged banking employee
• Clare: female financial employee
• Mike: male government employee
• Joe: a Cook Islander who has resided abroad

Appendix 2: Interview questions

Questions for political figures

• What changes and/or developments have you noticed in campaigning here in the Cook Islands?
• How important are face-to-face meetings between citizens and political figures leading up to, and during, political campaigns in the Cook Islands?
• How important are the traditional media (newspapers, television news and talkback radio) to political campaigning in the Cook Islands?
• Does the church play a significant role in election campaigns? How important are face-to-face meetings between citizens, candidates and community church leaders leading up to, and during, political campaigns in the Cook Islands?
• Over time, do you believe political campaigns in the Cook Islands have moved towards utilising technological advancements, and if so, how?
• Do you personally use television, the internet and radio to relay political information to the constituents? How do you decide which methods to use?
• What aspect of political campaigning in the Cook Islands would you say influences the most people, and why?
• Do you have a designated campaign period, or has the campaign become permanent?
• Would you say Cook Islands political campaigns have become more like those in other countries such as New Zealand, Australia and the United States? If so, how?
• Is there a focus during the campaign on the leader of the major parties? In other words, are campaigns based around party leaders, and to what extent?
• How do individual candidates and political parties finance their campaigns?
Is there a difference between campaigns on Rarotonga and the Outer Islands? If so, what are they, and why?

In what ways do you or your party segment the vote? What kinds of polling do you conduct to gauge understanding of constituents feelings towards policies/issues?

In NZ and other countries, political parties use telephone polling and focus group research. Do you think that could become popular in the Cook Islands?

Do you or your party use a campaign manager/committee during election campaigns, and if so, what is their role? Are they paid?

Do you feel campaigns in the Cook Islands have moved towards becoming more centralised, and if so, how?

Would you agree that political campaigns here have become hybrid in nature?

Questions for the members of the public

What changes and/or developments have you noticed in campaigning here in the Cook Islands?

How important are face-to-face meetings between citizens and political figures leading up to, and during, political campaigns in the Cook Islands?

How important are the traditional media (newspapers, television news and talkback radio) to political campaigning in the Cook Islands?

Does the church play a significant role in election campaigns? How important are face-to-face meetings between citizens, candidates and community church leaders leading up to, and during, political campaigns in the Cook Islands?

Of the following options, television, newspaper, talkback radio and the internet, which do you tend to use during a campaign? Can you rank them in terms of popularity?

What role does the internet, websites, Facebook or any other online medium play in political campaigns in the Cook Islands?

What aspect of political campaigning by the political parties and their candidates would you say influences the most voters and why?
Would you say Cook Islands political campaigns have become more like those in other countries such as New Zealand, Australia and the United States? If so, how?

Is there a designated campaign period, or has the campaign become permanent?

How do you think the parties prefer to advertise/market during election campaigns?

Is there a difference between campaigns on Rarotonga and the Outer Islands? If so, what are they, and why?

What are the major influences in campaigning here in the Cook Islands?

How important are party leaders during the campaign? Are campaigns based around them and their qualities?

How do the parties finance their campaigns?

Do you know of any polling or focus groups the political parties conduct here?

Do the parties use a campaign manager/committee during election campaigns, and if so, what is their role? Are campaign managers or committee member’s media or paid professionals?

Do you feel campaigns in the Cook Islands have moved towards becoming more centralised, and if so, how?

Would you agree that political campaigns here have become hybrid in nature?

On a scale of 1-10, where would you rate your interest and awareness in political campaigns in the Cook Islands? (1 being very uninterested/very unaware and 10 being extremely interested/extremely aware)

Appendix 3: Cook Islands statistics

Economic

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at Current Market Prices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar Year</th>
<th>GDP (NZ$'000)</th>
<th>Growth Rate (%)</th>
<th>Mid Year Population</th>
<th>GDP per Capita ($)</th>
<th>Growth Rate per capita (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>137,002</td>
<td>-3.7</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>6,850</td>
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<td>18,300</td>
<td>7,155</td>
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<td>17,400</td>
<td>8,107</td>
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<td>16,500</td>
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<td>9,880</td>
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<td>2001</td>
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<td>15.7</td>
<td>18,200</td>
<td>11,301</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Total Population Estimate</td>
<td>Total Resident Estimate</td>
<td>Crude Birth Rate</td>
<td>Crude Death Rate</td>
<td>Natural Increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>220,550</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>18,400</td>
<td>11,986</td>
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<td>2003</td>
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<td>11.6</td>
<td>18,400</td>
<td>13,372</td>
<td>11.6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5.0</td>
<td>20,300</td>
<td>12,730</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>20,200</td>
<td>12,938</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>277,649</td>
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<td>13,349</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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<td>2007</td>
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<td>-1.1</td>
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<td>13,073</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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<td>4.4</td>
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Source: Cook Islands Statistics Office

Social

Population Estimates and Vital Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Total Population Estimate</th>
<th>Total Resident Estimate</th>
<th>Crude Birth Rate</th>
<th>Crude Death Rate</th>
<th>Natural Increase</th>
<th>Infant Mortality Rate</th>
<th>Marriages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>21,500</td>
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<td>14,700</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>785</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>22,100</td>
<td>14,200</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>702</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>22,600</td>
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<td>19.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>22,970</td>
<td>11,700</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>147</td>
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</table>

Source: Cook Islands Statistics Office

Notes:

1) Mid year population estimated at June Quarter
2) Crude birth rate and crude death rate are calculated per thousand resident population as of 1992
3) Infant mortality rate is calculated per thousand births
4) Resident population comprises only those normally resident in the Cook Islands

Tourism

Total Arrivals and Departures - Visitors and Residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Visitor</th>
<th>Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arrivals</td>
<td>Departures</td>
<td>Excess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>100,360</td>
<td>99,667</td>
<td>693</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>109,431</td>
<td>108,160</td>
<td>1,271</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>111,461</td>
<td>111,716</td>
<td>-255</td>
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</table>

For all other statistics including population, utilities, environment and migration, see the Cook Islands Statistics Office website: [http://www.stats.gov.ck/index.htm](http://www.stats.gov.ck/index.htm)
Appendix 4: Maps and photographs of the Cook Islands

Rarotonga

Rarotonga is the main island of the Cook Islands. It is 38 kilometres in circumference and lies approximately 3010 kilometres northeast of Auckland, New Zealand. Avarua is the capital of the Cook Islands, at the northern point of the island. The major villages and towns are labelled in black. Electoral boundaries are based mostly around these villages, with some overlapping however due to lower population. Rarotonga has the largest population of the fifteen Cook Islands, accounting for 72% of the total population.
Aitutaki is the secondary island of the Cook Islands. It has long been a tourist destination, historically being part of the famous Coral Route which Air New Zealand boat planes would fly. The main village is Arutanga, and there is an airstrip which Air Rarotonga services from Rarotonga several times daily. It is the second most populous island of the Cook Islands, and is very popular amongst tourists.
The island below is the northern-most island of Manihiki. Despite its small size and population, it is vitally important to the economy of the Cook Islands. This is due to Manihikis’ black pearl industry. It is extremely isolated and cut off from the world. This is the constituency of Cook Islands Party leader Henry Puna, the newly elected Prime Minister in November 2010.
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