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Political Marketing in the 2019 Canadian Federal Election

Edited by
Jamie Gillies · Vincent Raynauld
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The 2019 Canadian Federal Election

Vincent Raynauld, André Turcotte, and Jamie Gillies

Abstract This initial chapter provides an overview of the 2019 campaign, the result of the election and how it contributed to our understanding of political marketing theories and practices. The chapter also positions the Trudeau minority government outcome in a broader historical context, and it will introduce the chapters to follow and develop a unifying theme. It also places this edited collection in an academic and professional context and lays the groundwork for additional theoretical and methodological research on the roles and effects of political marketing in and out of elections in the Canadian context and, to some degree, internationally.

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Keywords Justin Trudeau • Political marketing • Political branding • Canadian elections • Minority government

When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau walked into Rideau Hall and asked Governor General Julie Payette to dissolve the Parliament on September 11, 2019 (Tunney 2019), he launched a 40-day electoral campaign filled with unique political marketing challenges – and opportunities – for all federal political parties and their leaders in Canada. Unlike the 2015 federal election when they were challenging Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) (LeDuc 2015), Trudeau and the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) were now the incumbents advocating for political continuity, defending their track record, and soliciting voters for a second term. Trudeau was faced with a particularly difficult situation. His celebrity-infused approach to politics, which was rooted in a personal brand emphasizing transparency, respect of the environment, "youth, athleticism, open-mindedness, interpersonal skills, and support of feminist causes" (Lalancette and Raynauld 2019: 900; see also Clarke et al. 2017; Lalancette and Cormack 2018; Marland 2018) was not adapted to political conditions on the ground. On top of no longer being the youngest candidate for prime minister in 2019, several controversies – including the SNC-Lavalin scandal – and policy decisions – such as the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline project – tarnished his public image, perceptions of his leadership and commitment to specific policy causes, and his appeal among many segments of the electorate (e.g. Grenier 2019; Crabtree 2019; Kassam 2019). Developments on the campaign trail also hurt the credibility and effectiveness of his brand. Among them include the release of images and videos of him in blackface and brownface by national and international news media outlets as well as the positioning of the LPC's electoral platform on different political and policy matters (e.g. CBC News 2019). Working to his advantage was the reality facing his adversaries.

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Much like the LPC, other political parties and candidates had to address significant challenges requiring adjustments to their political marketing operations. The CPC and its leader Andrew Scheer were competing in their first electoral campaign in the post-Stephen Harper era which had lasted more than a decade. In order to distinguish themselves from Harper's iteration of the CPC, Scheer's Conservatives needed to break from the past and renew their political and policy offerings to the Canadian public. More importantly, they had to strategically position their electoral platform so it would compete efficiently with the positions of Trudeau's LPC. In other words, they needed to provide voters with an alternative of interest in many spheres of governance, including the environment, healthcare, the energy sector, and the economy. Much like Trudeau, developments throughout the campaign damaged some facets of the CPC's electioneering efforts. Among them include the reaction of a large swath of the Quebec electorate to Scheer's personal views on abortion, which were discussed during the first French-language debate broadcasted on the television network TVA (Tasker 2019).

The 2019 electoral contest also presented Jagmeet Singh's New Democratic Party (NDP) with a unique set of hurdles. First elected as NDP leader on October 1, 2019, Singh was the second youngest leader of a federal political party (behind CPC's Andrew Scheer) and had uneven levels of name recognition across Canada (Bergeron-Olivier 2019). Furthermore, he was the first person who was part of a visible ethnic and religious minority to be the permanent leader of a major federal political party in Canada during an election. This demanded the development of innovative ways in which his candidacy would be presented to as well as perceived, and understood by different segments of the Canadian society, as evidenced by an NDP ad[1] released in the province of Quebec as well as the interactions between Singh and some voters on the campaign trail (Connolly 2019). The NDP could also use this election to sharpen its appeal across Canada by tailoring its political messaging and outreach efforts to the interests, wants, and needs of specific slices of the Canadian society. In sum, it can be argued that they needed to renew the electoral successes of the era of its former leader, Jack Layton (McGrane 2019).

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-N9y8NmNds

Finally, the 2019 federal election provided more regional, issue-based, and newer political parties opportunities to develop and roll out political marketing outreach and engagement operations adapted to their status as well as to the structure and priorities of the Canadian political electorate. For example, this electoral contest gave the People's Party of Canada (PPC) – which was formed in September 2018 – and their leader Maxime Bernier to take several important actions. Among them include: (1) despite its leader being well known nationally due to his high profile ministerial roles in the Harper government, a large number of PPC candidates had low levels of name recognition and needed to be introduced to voters; (2) as the party was relatively new in the political landscape, it needed to build awareness for its priorities as well as its political and policy positions among the electorate; (3) the party had to strategically position itself and its offerings to its contenders (Gilmore 2019). After receiving only 19.3% of the Quebec popular vote during the 2015 Canadian federal elections, the Bloc Quebecois (BQ) needed to make important changes to its appeal in the province of Quebec (Massicotte 2015). The selection of a new leader – Yves-François Blanchet – on January 17, 2019 coupled with the evolution of the sentiments of the voting public on different issues provided the BQ with a unique opportunity to relaunch itself as well as regain momentum. Finally, single-issue political parties, including Elizabeth May's Green Party of Canada (GPC) and Blair Longley's Marijuana Party of Canada, had to adjust their political appeal to recent decisions of Trudeau's government on matters related to their policy priorities (e.g. environment, drugs) as well as the shifts in the public's opinions on different policy matters.

This edited collection comprises chapters taking a timely look at specific facets of the 2019 Canadian federal election from a political marketing communication perspective. As political marketing is a highly interdisciplinary field of research and practice, this book features in-depth analyses from an international group of scholars and practitioners with wide-ranging disciplinary and methodological specialties. Among them include political science, communication, research methods, and marketing. More importantly, this edited volume builds and expands on a growing body of academic works documenting and unpacking dynamics of political marketing and communication at the local, provincial and national levels in Canada. Alex Marland, Thierry Giasson and Jennifer Lees-Marshment's edited volume (2012: xiii) published in 2012 explores subcomponents of political marketing in and out of elections, including "political advertising,

opinion research, and electioneering." More recently, Marland and Giasson's (2020) edited collection on the 2019 Canadian federal election features contributions zeroing in on how certain categories of practitioners contribute to the electioneering efforts deployed by political parties and candidates during an electoral campaign. Many of the practitioners studied in this book work in fields directly or indirectly related to political marketing (e.g. advertisers, pollsters). Other authors have contributed to the study of political marketing in Canada over the last decade, including McGrane (2019), Montigny, Dubois and Giasson (2019), as well as Marland, Lewis and Flanagan (2017). From a broader perspective, several scholars have taken interest in how marketing is affecting electoral and governance processes internationally, including in the United States (e.g. Gillies 2017; Muñoz and Towner 2017), France (Baygert 2013; Jeandemange 2018), Pakistan (Ahmed et al. 2017; Yousaf 2016), and New Zealand (Cameron et al. 2016; Lees-Marshment et al. 2015).

In order to document and analyze dynamics of political marketing during the 2019 Canadian federal elections, contributors to this volume take two specific approaches. On the one hand, many chapters provide an analysis of particular aspects of the political marketing performance of specific leaders of political parties. Jennifer Lees-Marshment's contribution echoes the challenges faced by Justin Trudeau and the LPC that were outlined in this introduction. Specifically, Lees-Marshment provides an assessment of the brand of a prime minister in the Canadian context. She then examines the challenges faced by Trudeau as he maintained his 2015 brand when in government and engaged in rebranding efforts ahead and during the 2019 Canadian federal election. On top of expanding on existing knowledge on political branding practices, she offers a detailed analytical framework to understand the challenges and opportunities linked to the branding of a prime minister when in government. Kenneth Cosgrove also discusses aspects of political branding in his chapter. He does so by taking interest at the evolution of the CPC brand between the 2015 electoral contest when the party was led by Stephen Harper and the 2019 campaign when the CPC was under the leadership of Andrew Scheer. In doing so, he also takes interest in how materialism and post-materialism can shape the development and rolling out of the conservative political brand in Canada. In his chapter titled "Gliding In On a Wing and a Prayer: Jagmeet Singh and the NDP," James McLean first takes a deep dive into the NDP's political marketing approach during past elections. Building on this analysis, he offers insights into the strategy deployed by Singh's NDP during the 2019

Canadian federal elections. He takes particular interest in the strategic positioning of the NDP platform – which has an impact on its appeal among specific slides of the Canadian public – as well as Singh's public image that developed in order to be relatable as well as to be promoted through mass media platforms.

As noted previously in this chapter, the BQ saw a sharp decline in its support among the Quebec electorate during the 2015 federal election. Guy Lachapelle's contribution explores some aspects of the resurgence of the BQ as an important regional player in Canadian politics. Specifically, he unpacks how the personalization of politics combined with strategic appeals to specific slices of the Quebec electorate, namely the "conservative nationalists" played a key role in helping 32 BQ candidates – including leader Yves-François Blanchet – get elected on October 21, 2019. Finally, Jamie Gillies unpacks the role of populist political marketing appeals during the 2019 Canadian federal election in his chapter titled "The Populist Impact: The People's Party and the Green Party." As observed by several scholars (e.g. Casero-Ripollés et al. 2017; De Vreese et al. 2018; Nai 2018), populism has become an increasingly important approach to political communication and marketing in the last decade. It is used by political parties and candidates to reach out to and mobilize members of the public, especially in a context where there are growing levels of distrust for political institutions and more traditional channels of political engagement worldwide (Edelman 2020). Gillies contributes to the study of this phenomenon by first unpacking the structure of Canadian populism and its manifestation in the political arena. He then offers an analysis of the ways in which and to what degree populism impacted the political marketing efforts deployed by the PPC and the GPC during the 2019 Canadian federal elections.

On the other hand, several contributors to this edited volume have focused their work on examining how principles of political marketing can affect the unfolding of different facets of an electoral campaign. In his chapter titled "Go Knock Doors: "New" Dimensions in Market Intelligence," pollster David Coletto looks at the structure of market intelligence and how it impacted patterns of political marketing during the 2019 Canadian federal elections. He does so by exploring two aspects: (1) uses of market intelligence to by political parties – and their leaders – for designing their political and policy offerings, building their messaging and voter engagement operations, as well as reacting to day-to-day developments on the campaign trail; (2) the effects of digitization on the uses and

implementation of market intelligence in political marketing. It should be noted that Coletto's chapter makes a timely contribution to on-going academic efforts in Canada and internationally seeking to further understand the roles and effects of data in politics (e.g. Gebhardt et al. 2019; Konitzer et al. 2019). In a chapter focused on voters as consumers of durable goods, André Turcotte and Michal Moore examine consumer motivations as a way to understand voting behaviour in the election. Their research links consumer preference research and economic theory to our theme of political marketing using opinion studies of voter behavior. Finally, Vincent Raynauld and André Turcotte take interest in how the structure and the rollout of the political messages of political parties and candidates during the 2019 federal elections impacted the outcome of the electoral race. Specifically, they look at the way in which and to what degree the uses of wedge issues – namely abortion, immigration, and climate change – were instrumental in helping the BQ gain significant electoral momentum towards the end of the campaign and were detrimental to the performance of the CPC. Raynauld and Turcotte note that while many scholars have studied the effects of wedge issues on dynamics of electioneering internationally, few scholars have done so in the Canadian context (Hillygus and Shields 2008; Van de Wardt et al. 2014).

By offering a multidimensional and interdisciplinary look at the 2019 Canadian federal elections from a political marketing perspective, this edited work seeks to make two major contributions to the academic and more professional literature: (1) examine the ways in which Canadian political parties and their leaders considered a wide range of contextual factors (e.g. current events, structure of the media environment, evolution of the social and political dispositions of the Canadian electorate) in the development and implementation of their political marketing outreach and engagement efforts; (2) show how practices of political marketing are in constant evolution in Canada as political actors are constantly rethinking and retooling their approaches to compete efficiently with their opponents. Despite its focus on a specific electoral context, this edited collection lays the groundwork for additional theoretical and methodological research on the roles and effects of political marketing in and out of elections in the Canadian context and, to some degree, internationally.

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CHAPTER 2

The New (Old) Trudeau in 2019: The Challenges and Potential for Branding Prime Ministers in Government

Jennifer Lees-Marshment

Abstract This chapter explores the branding of Prime Ministers and Justin Trudeau's re-branding. It presents a theoretical framework, discusses challenges to maintaining the 2015 brand in government, and assesses the 2019 New (Old) Trudeau campaign brand. It shows the 2019

Thank you to Cliff Van der Linden for providing Vote Compass 2019 data on the leadership and top issues. I would also like to acknowledge The University of Auckland's funding for research assistants and their contributions: Salma Malik who collected 2015–9 sources and help characterize the 2015 promised brand, summer scholar Nicole Fletcher who collected and conducted initial analysis of 2019 campaign sources and Northern scholar Claire Boeckermann who conducted initial analysis of 2016–19 sources.

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brand was very future-oriented and aspirational, but also weak in honesty, leadership and credibility. The chapter provides insight into the challenges of branding all Prime Ministers in government, and makes recommendations for Trudeau's second term such as branding economy-friendly climate action policies and moving from 'Justin' to 'Team Trudeau.' The chapter suggests future research needs to explore managing political brands in government and explore policy branding especially to overcome the divide between environmental and economic policies.

Keywords Political branding • Brand personality • Policy branding • Justin Trudeau • Liberal

Introduction

Political branding is a key activity in political marketing. It helps candidates convey what they are offering and forge an emotional connection with voters. Once elected, governing makes staying true to that brand challenging: unpredictable events and crises makes it hard for leaders to deliver their promised brand. When they come to campaign for re-election, they have to transition from the "fresh new candidate" brand to the "experienced, but still in touch, Prime Minister" brand. This chapter presents a theoretical framework assessing a Prime Minister's brand, and discusses the challenges Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau faced in maintaining his 2015 brand in government before unpacking the 2019 New (Old) campaign re-brand. This provides insights into the challenges – and the potential – of branding all Prime Ministers in government.

Literature, Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Political branding is a major area of political marketing (Lees-Marshment 2019). However, only a few scholars have explored branding of new leaders in elections with exploration of brand maintenance in government (Langmaid 2012; Downer 2016; Barrett 2018). This chapter creates an integrated political brand model combining 5 different theories (Smith 2009; Needham 2005; Barberio and Lowe 2006; Langmaid 2012) to

explore how the party and leader attempt to brand and re-brand themselves and their policies in government (see Fig. 2.1).

This chapter assesses Trudeau's branding against this framework. To do so, the core themes of Trudeau's brand offered in 2015 were identified by an analysis of 2015 campaign material and the consideration of key post-election events during the 2016–2019 governing period. Sources related to these themes were collected for the governing period and official 2019 campaign and reviewed against the theoretical framework. In particular, 47 primary sources from the campaign – including election ads, Facebook posts and speeches – were subject to in-depth thematic and semiotic analysis (Rose 2001). This included taking into account verbal and visual material including words used, background images, hand gestures and the overall tone of communication. These were supplemented by the consideration of polls and Vote Compass data to assess branding effectiveness.

Leaders brand personality

- **Honest**: reliable, wholesome, sincere, real, down to earth
- **Spirited image**: daring, imaginative, up to date, trendy, cheerful, cool, contemporary
- **Leadership**: competent, intelligence, successful, hardworking, secure
- **Toughness**: masculine, tough, outdoorsy, rugged
- **Uniqueness**: original, different, unique, independent

Government brand effectiveness

- **Simple:** make it easy for voters to understand what is on offer
- **Aspirational:** convey a positive vision for a better way of life
- **Differentiated:** make the differences between the brand and the competition clear
- **Credible**: the government is seen as capable of delivering reasonable promises, and thus reassures voters it is not risky to support the brand
- **Symbolic**: convey positive values.

Policy branding

- **Appeal to universally desired values** and key phrases that resonate with voters and their values.
- **Claim the competition's brand lacks these values.**
- **Convey broader benefits beyond specific policies**

Rebranding

- **Rebrand and reconnect the leader:** acknowledge where the leader has gone wrong, do a listening tour and rebuild the relationship
- **Use co-creation research to identify solutions to a leaders declining brand:** ask the public how they would like the leader to behave using techniques such as two chair work, gossip games, role play and social dreaming
- **Expand the brand beyond the leader:** show the overall team not just the single leader.

Fig. 2.1 Theoretical framework for a Prime Minister's brand in government. (*Source*: adapted from Needham 2005; Smith 2009; Barberio and Lowe 2006; Langmaid 2012)

The Challenges with Branding in Government

In 2015, Justin Trudeau won the election with a fresh new brand promising "Real Change," more ethical "sunny ways" leadership, and policies making life better for Canadians, especially targeted on the middle class, supplemented by a projected idea of a "Better Canada" (Wharepapa 2019). The 2015 campaign manifesto and ads focused on issues such as economic growth and opportunity, immigration and refugees, as well as the environment. They talked about fiscal planning, fair and open government, and targeted groups including seniors and the middle class, within an overall frame of fairness. Trudeau was positioned as a listening and family friendly leader with lots of energy who was able to offer transparency in government in contrast to the long-standing Harper government.

However, this "fair" and "better" brand to bring "real change" created expectations unlikely to be fully achieved in government. Maintaining such a brand in government was made harder for Trudeau because his election brand was strongly oriented towards youthfulness, freshness, and energy, characteristics that are quickly tarnished by the pressures and constraints of being in office. Trudeau added gender to his brand personality soon after becoming Prime Minister by creating a gender-equal cabinet post-election, declaring "It's 2015," and repeatedly saying in 2016 that he was a feminist. These actions boosted the unique aspect of his brand personality but raised expectations even further.

A review of the 2016–9 period identified that Trudeau's brand was under threat throughout his first term of government. First, Trudeau engaged in a cross-country tour in 2017 to listen to people's concerns. This is akin to re-branding, which normally would not happen just two years after being elected. For example, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair's reconnection tour was carried out in his third term (Langmaid 2012). In line with the theory, he engaged with his critics and criticism, acknowledging there was more to do in response to question on Veteran affairs in Belleville, and listening to a somewhat lengthy and hostile question whilst sitting on a stool in Calgary. When a federal public servant in Kingston raised their concerns about problems with the Phoenix pay system, Trudeau said "I entirely agree with you – it is absolutely unacceptable that this has happened," empathised with the problems this caused people, and admitted "that this government, in everything we were doing in the first months, did not pay enough attention to the challenges and to the warning signs that were coming on the transition that we were overseeing"

(Trudeau Facebook 2017). This effectively conveying listening to improve his relationship with the public.

Second, key events damaged Trudeau's brand. Among them include the 2018 trip to India where repeated appearances in traditional Indian clothing were criticised as inappropriate and false as well as the 2019 SNC-Lavalin crisis which led to a review of Trudeau's actions and ethics. These threatened his brand in specific ways. They damaged the honesty and leadership aspects of his brand personality. The crisis involving a senior female minister also eroded the unique gender aspect of his brand cultivated in the first year of government. As Downer (2016)'s analysis of Australian Labor brand under Rudd in power found, when Rudd failed to keep key promises such as action on the brand-defining issue of climate change, it left voters with a severe case of post-purchase dissonance. This was the case with Trudeau. Trudeau's brand perception declined during Trudeau's first term of government and especially 2019 (Abacus Data 2019).

In branding terms, this meant that Trudeau could not simply repeat the same brand offering for 2019. Yet neither could he turn his back on everything he had promised in 2015, lest he lack credibility and continuity, and fail to capitalise on progress he had made. Thus he had to re-brand – but only partly.

Re-Branding in the 2019 Campaign

Analysis of the New (Old) Trudeau brand during the 2019 campaign showed that the Liberal party team attempted to re-define the leader by integrating discussion of economy with the environment, tax cuts with helping those less well off, and maintaining a future-orientation instead of resorting to the usual re-election branding of status quo. Encased in the aspirational slogan *Choose forward*, the two brand themes "choice" and "future" were woven effectively through a range of events and communication, and tactically in ways framing the Conservative opposition as going backwards – see Fig. 2.2.

Leaders Brand Personality

Spirited Image

Trudeau's speeches were often in the present tense and focused on building a more positive future, as illustrated by the following statement: "we

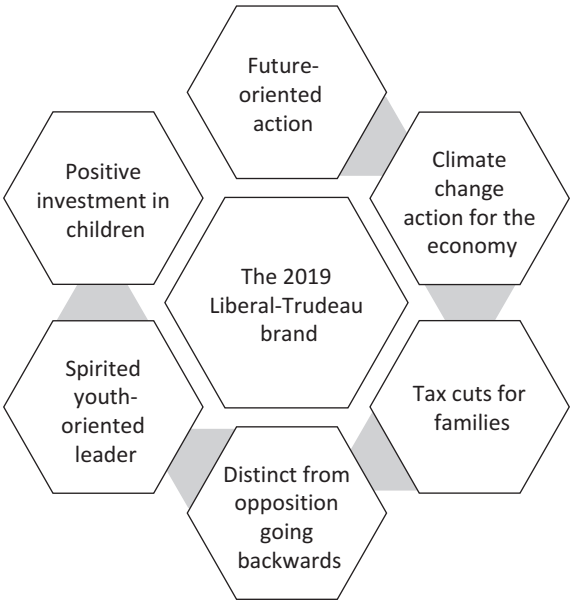

Fig. 2.2 The Trudeau-Liberal 2019 campaign brand

are choosing a more affordable, more fair Canada. We are choosing a cleaner, better country for our kids and grandkids. We are choosing forward" (Liberal Website 2019d). He was often pictured with young people including his own children in casual situations, such at home with his on the couch. He was also shown interacting with technology, meeting with party supporters in Alberta where Trudeau is shown in a spontaneous hug with a little girl, encouraging young people to add him on Snapchat, and high fiving a child at an event in Niagara Falls. Action and energy were also conveyed in a campaign video titled "Choisir d'avancer – Je Vote" where a diverse group of people are shown walking forward together, conveying a sense of movement and progress.

Toughness

Toughness was not conveyed very frequently, with just a few communication pieces indicating this aspect. One pictured Trudreau in a boxing ring, looking focused and concentrated with his "game face" with the caption "Debate Prep" to convey seeking to perform strongly and beat the

competition. In the ad "Forward," Trudeau speaks from behind a podium and declares "let's choose forward" with a tough stance and firm pointing to the audience and stirring music (Liberal YouTube 2019e).

Leadership

This brand attribute was conveyed less often than the spirited image personality but a range of sources conveyed leadership. Trudeau posted an endorsement from former President Barack Obama describing him as "a hard-working, effective leader who takes on big issues" (Trudeau Facebook 2019b). Election ads showed him declaring with a strong, determined tone emphasising the "will" – "We will make life more affordable, we will fight climate change and we will get guns off our streets' (Liberal YouTube 2019e). Another ad conveyed Trudeau's leadership and hardworking nature by showing him shaking hands with multiple people and statistics about new jobs.

Uniqueness

Uniqueness was not a key feature of Trudeau's campaign brand, perhaps due to the Brownface scandal where images emerged of Trudeau with dark makeup on his face, neck, and hands at an Arabian Nights-themed party at a school where he taught in his early 20s. Although Trudeau issued a formal apology for the behaviour saying "I shouldn't have done that' and 'I should have known better, but I didn't, and I'm really sorry" (Trudeau 2019a), this threatened his brand values of equality and failed to maintain continuity with their first term of government.

Honesty

Trudeau tried to convey an honest brand with more open, casual, authentic communication. The Liberal Party of Canada did so by showing pictures of Trudeau helping out feeding families during thanksgiving in local community. He could be seen bending down and getting down to children's height to engage with them, making him appear more sincere and real. He was also seen interacting with seniors at a game of lawn bowls and holding hands with members and supporters at a party event. An unedited selfie of him walking his kids to school in the morning showed him in casual clothing, in an ordinary street, with an unflattering angle. Despite these communication efforts, there was an air of dishonesty around him given the SNC-Lavalin and Brownface scandal.

Government Brand Effectiveness

Simplicity

The Liberal 2019 campaign slogan *Choose forward* was simple and straight to point. It argued for continuing the changes made over last 3 years in government, but also that the choice was in voters' hands. The two brand themes choice and future were woven through a range of events, communication outreach, and discussions about policy. For example, in a leaders' debate, Trudeau stated that "in a few days, Quebecers—and all Canadians—will have a choice to make about the future of our country… It's by electing people to government—not to the opposition benches—that we can make progress. On October 21, let's pull together and continue to move forward" (Trudeau 2019c). Facebook posts featured images of Trudeau holding a child next to parents and ad featuring women Liberal candidates included scenes of them running, emphasising the active aspect of the brand. Discussion of climate change policies included future-oriented phrases such as:

> We're not just investing in clean tech, and public transit, and climate resilient infrastructure – we're investing in Canada's future. We're investing in our kids, and we're investing in a better tomorrow. (Liberal Website 2019a)

Aspirational

The simplicity of the brand was matched by its' aspirational nature and images as well as by policy proposals conveying a positive vision for an improved way of life. This included an image of Trudeau writing notes while sitting on public transport. This conveyed the sense of movement and a statement on Person's Day, the anniversary of a landmark ruling for women's rights which argued "let's come together for a more equal world, and choose forward, for all of us," conveying a vision for a better future (Liberal Website 2019e). Policy announcements made multiple promises of benefits, especially to families. They included a tax cut for the middle class, lower cell phone bills, incentives to retrofit homes, cheaper medications and before and after school care, and a higher Canada Child Benefit.

Differentiated

The Liberals sought to convey how they were distinct from the Conservatives, They did so by (a) weaving this comparative framing throughout diverse forms of communication – web pages, speeches,

videos, adverts; (b) by negatively branding the Conservatives as diametrically opposed to the positive forward-thinking of the Liberals (c) by emphasising issues of importance to Canadians such as climate change and the economy and (d) by integrating traditionally right wing arguments with the left, combining environmental policy with economic arguments, and tax cuts to address inequality and help those less well off.

Vote Compass data indicated that the most important election issue for Canadians was the environment (30%), followed by the economy (20%) – all others were less than 10% (Vox Pop Labs 2019a, p. 2). Climate change was heavily featured in the Liberal's branding. For example, they featured a "climate change action checklist" in a simple table comparing the action proposed by them and the opposition which not only conveyed that the Liberals would take positive action but that the Conservatives would not (Trudeau Facebook 2019a). Discussion of environmental policy was also connected to the economy. When discussing their Climate change related policies Trudeau's speech noted the following: "Here's the long and the short of it: Our plan creates jobs and reduces pollution. The Conservative plan will cost more and do less" (Liberal Website 2019a).

The Liberals claimed to be better positioned to make life more affordable than the Conservatives. They provided another comparison table of affordability plans which indicated that the Liberals would lift substantially more people out of poverty (60,600 versus 19,200) and paying federal income tax (693,400 and 64,400) and would increase benefits such as child benefit and old age security. The Liberals also focused on showing differentiated benefits for the middle classes, noting in an ad that a re-elected Liberal government would help "those who need it most: middle class Canadians and people working hard to join them" with a tax cut. Given tax cuts are often associated with the right-leaning political parties, this sought to gain a competitive brand advantage in this area, with Trudeau arguing in the ad that Conservatives cut taxes for the wealthy only (Liberal Website 2019c).

The leaders' unique gender brand aspect was used in differentiation when comparing the Liberals and the Conservatives on the women's rights issue. Trudeau argued "whether it's health care or support for survivors of sexual assault, the Conservatives want to slash access to vital services and roll back the clock on women's rights" (Liberal Website 2019b). Another ad targeted at younger segments of the public noted that the Conservatives had "even opposed equal marriage and a woman's right to choose" (Liberal YouTube 2019d). Liberal ads also laid out the

differences between the two parties emotively by including images of the future generations likely to be impacted by future issues such as climate change and young kids referring to the potential to be left to deal with the problem themselves – see Fig. 2.3.

Credibility

The Liberals engaged in significant discussion of the economy. They communicated achievements in their first term, discussing the number of jobs already created. They also sought to make their proposed action in the area of the environment more reassuring by showing how they would create jobs and support the industry. More importantly, the Liberals responded to voters' concerns about the cost of living. The third most important election issue in the Vote Compass survey was the wealth gap, standards of living and redistribution (Vox Pop Labs 2019a, p. 2). They discussed economics on the level of the ordinary voter, seeking to make the benefits of their proposed policies tangible and relevant to day-to-day living. A Facebook post showed the dollar amount the average family would gain under a re-elected Liberal Government – $1500 from cutting taxes again and a reduction in cell phone bills. They noted that "between rent, groceries, and cell phones, monthly bills are going up. Canadian families deserve a government with a plan to do something about it. We'll make life more affordable for you." They used basic standard of living arguments to justify their policies:

> Middle class Canadians do the heavy lifting in our economy…So when we choose to give more help to the middle class and the people working hard to join it, we are choosing a stronger economy. We are choosing a more affordable, more fair Canada. (Liberal Website 2019d)

(Mother) 'Build on a serious climate plan' (Child) 'or leave the problem to us?'

(Man) 'Make gun control laws stronger' (Child) 'or weaker'

(Father) 'Let the Conservatives cut everything we care about' (Child) 'or invest in our future'

Fig. 2.3 Liberal election ad differentiating between the Liberals and Conservatives. (*Source*: Liberal YouTube 2019c)

Symbolic

Positivity and values were present in election ads discussing the protection and aspiration for diverse groups of people. An early campaign ad featured Trudeau on a bus discussing how he got into politics to help people who work hard, with the motion of the bus also fitting the overall forward nature of the brand. The advertisement "Up To Youth" asked young Canadians to join a movement and issued statements of what the party believes in, such as "we believe in keeping people safe," "protecting everyone's fundamental rights," and "we believe in taking real action to fight climate change" with images of the leader interacting with diverse groups of people. This culminated in a connection to the overall brand "it's up to youth to choose which way we go" (Liberal YouTube 2019d). Similarly, the *Choisir d'avancer – Je vote* ad conveyed positive symbolism with a diverse group of people walking forward on the street together, declaring "we want a country that protects a women's right to choose," "a country that cares about the environment," and "that helps families" and Trudeau at the end talked about "the path to progress" (Liberal YouTube 2019b).

Policy Branding

Appeal to Universally Desired Values

Values were interwoven through discussion of policies but only in a generic sense without specific phrases. For example, a stronger First-Time Home Buyer Incentive was discussed in terms of creating "safe and comfortable" homes for the "little ones" to grow up in. Trudeau pictured meeting with first home buyers, and a speech on climate change action talked about a Liberal vision that "moves Canada forward" (Trudeau 2019b).

Claim the Competition's Brand Lacks These Values

The Liberals repeatedly suggested Conservative policies focused on wealthy millionaires and positioned the Conservative leader as working for elites rather than ordinary people, with statements such as "Andrew Scheer wants you to think this election is about me. this election isn't about me. This election is about you" (Liberal YouTube 2019e) and claims the Conservatives were all about giving "tax breaks to millionaires" (Liberal YouTube 2019a).

Convey Broader Benefits
Discussions of climate change policy talked about "investing in Canada's future." They conveyed long-term benefits of policies, such as the Just Transition Act, to ensure workers have access to the training and support needed to succeed in the new clean economy and "help Canadian communities thrive now and into the future" (Liberal Website 2019a).

Rebranding

The brand was not extended beyond the leader to the Liberal team in the campaign as the theory suggests it should. Apart from posting images of candidates selected for the election on the party's Facebook, the majority of communication focused on the leader and his engagement with his supporters and the public.

The Effectiveness of the New (Old) 2019 Trudeau Brand

Overall, effectiveness was very mixed. Trudeau's brand personality was both maintained and damaged throughout the campaign. On the one hand, key attributes such as a spirited image were maintained with Trudeau frequently pictured as an approachable family man, high-fiving children, and interacting with young people. On the other hand, toughness was not a key strength and traditional formal leadership images were rarely featured. Uniqueness in terms of a focus on equality was also eroded with the Brownface scandal which then raised questions about the brand's integrity given previous declarations of being a feminist and "it's 2015." In terms of government brand effectiveness, the simple slogan – Choose Forward – was simple and aspirational with repeated talk about the future, which conveyed a sense of aiming for long-term goals. The Liberal brand was effectively differentiated from the Conservatives potential to take the country backwards. Significant attempts were made to make the brand credible and elements that symbolised positive values were also present to a limited degree. The campaign lacked specific branding of individual policies although Trudeau and the party did brand their policy programme overall as future-oriented, repeating words such as progress, action, families, and future. There was also no movement towards rebranding the government as Team Trudeau. Trudeau dominated his party's social

media, which made the overall brand vulnerable given the Brownface scandal.

This mixed effectiveness was reflected in public opinion data and the outcome of the election, which was marked by the Liberals being re-elected but without a majority. An Ipsos (2019) poll in late October showed that more disapproved (54%) of the performance of the Liberal government under the leadership of Justin Trudeau than approved (45%). Also, a majority (60%) of Canadians believed it was time for another party to take over. Vote Compass data collected between September 11 and October 6 showed that Trudeau had lower perceptions of trustworthiness – 3.9 on a 10 point scale – than most of the smaller party leaders. However, this was slightly higher than his rival Andrew Scheer who was rated as 3.6 (Vox Pop Labs 2019b, p. 7). Despite Liberal efforts to build brand credibility by claiming climate change policies were good for the economy, voters were not convinced. Trust that Trudeau would support economic growth was only a few percentage higher than the Conservative leader Andrew Scheer according to Nanos polling between April and August 2019 (Nanos 2019). Another poll for Global News (2019) suggested that the Conservatives were seen as best to handle the economy with 40% choosing them over only 28% preferring the Liberals. Furthermore, Vote Compass data suggested Trudeau's competence was perceived at the same level of the Conservative leader Andrew Scheer – both rated 4.1 on a scale of 0–10 – and lower than minor party leaders – NDP leader Jagmeet Singh was rated at 4.5 and Greens leader Elizabeth May 4.6 (Vox Pop Labs 2019a, p. 1).

Conclusion: Recommendations for Branding Prime Ministers and Future Research

Political branding is a substantial area of political marketing research. This chapter only serves to reinforce its importance. It also highlights the complexities of political branding in government as opposed to campaigns, something which has received less attention in existing literature. Overall, the 2019 brand met multiple political branding criteria to some extent, but had significant weaknesses in areas such as honesty, leadership, and credibility. Unfortunately for him and his advisors, being re-elected as a minority government only makes further branding in government more complex. As they progress through their second term in office and make a

1. Uphold Trudeau's unique brand personality focus on gender and equality throughout the next government
2. Evolve the government brand to a mature and long-term-orientation
3. Brand economy-friendly climate-action policies to convey broad benefits
4. Re-brand Justin as Team Trudeau to regain credibility for the next election

Fig. 2.4 Key recommendations for supporting the Trudeau-Liberal brand

bid for a third term at the next election, they need to take significant action – see Fig. 2.4.

The chapter suggests that future research needs to focus more on how to manage political brands in government and refresh them in a way that suits a more experienced and older leader and government. It also raises a number of interesting areas to explore, including that we may need to change the toughness criteria within brand personality to strength, and be flexible about how that strength may be conveyed to accommodate Trudeau's focus on feminism and family and also female leaders such as the New Zealand Prime Minister Ardern who has argued that kindness is a leadership strength. Trudeau's attempt to overcome the traditional divide on climate change and the economy is also worth exploring as a potential way to manage this major policy tension that all western liberal democracies are facing. Political branding may yet move not just from campaigning to governing but to policy making, helping leaders to overcome division and a short-term focus often prevalent in modern politics.

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CHAPTER 3

Andrew Scheer and the Post-Harper Conservative Party: Materialist, Post-Materialist and Negative Branding

Kenneth M. Cosgrove

Abstract The extensive branding of the CPC from unification of the party and the rise of Stephen Harper to the disappointing 2015 campaign nonetheless demonstrated a disciplined political marketing of a leader and party that could not rely on popular leader appeals. Andrew Scheer inherited a party in need of a rebranding, but with the looming legacy of the Harper years given that Scheer is from the same wing of the party. In this chapter, the 2019 campaign is considered as a test of Scheer's leadership and how, as a materialist manager, as opposed to inspirational leader like Trudeau, he was unable to persuade voters in what is arguably an emotive era. The chapter also considers Canada in context to recent US elections and how materialist versus post-materialist values are playing out in campaigns.

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Keywords Negative branding • Managerial leadership • Inspirational leadership • Conservative • Andrew Scheer

The last two Canadian federal elections have featured a struggle between materialist and post-materialist brand stories, as well as a great deal of negative branding. They show the way in which market conditions impact how the political brand is constructed and deployed. These two elections demonstrate the way in which a challenger can successfully dethrone an incumbent but also how that challenger can adjust when they haven't lived up to all of their brand promises and are confronted with two new faces leading the major opposition parties. These elections illustrate the power that negative branding can have in shaping the composition of the electorate and the intensity of feeling amongst partisans. The Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) and the New Democratic Party (NDP) had negative feelings about the Harper Government during its time in office just like the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) hold them about the Liberal Trudeau Government. One of the biggest differences between these partisans is that the Liberals use a mix of materialist and post-materialist issues and values in their branding while the Conservative Party largely focuses on materialist issues and values.

The brand is an important tool to help scholars and observers understand the motivations behind individual vote choice. Political brands can present the voter/consumer with a variety of stories and emotions and, as such they are capable of supporting materialist or postmaterialist stories, as well as saying positive things about a candidate while simultaneously saying negative things about opponents. As noted by Norris and Inglehart (2019), much of modern politics is a fight between material and post-materialist values in which the post-materialist values have often, particularly in times of economic stability, come to predominate. Additionally, within the realm of post-materialist values there is a struggle between an authoritarian set of values that align with traditional institutions and cultural norms and a libertarian set of values. Canadian Conservatives have largely run on materialist issues and themes in the last two federal elections while their opponents have worked with a broader mix of economic, social, and cultural issues. The Liberal Party's branding of "Real Change Now" in 2015 and "Choose Forward" in 2019 mirror the aspirational/

materialist mix that the Democrats employed with Barack Obama's 2008 campaign ("Change You Can Believe In") and 2012 campaign (the single word brand "Forward"). Such branding allows different target audiences to engage emotionally with the political product, while the Conservative branding is largely transactional and materialistic. In other words, it aims at very specific audience segments.

This chapter considers Andrew Scheer's and the CPC's role in the 2019 election. The 2015 and 2019 Canadian federal elections can be seen as a fight over values in which the candidate with the stronger emotive brand triumphed over the candidate with the stronger material brand in the first campaign and did just well enough against a second materialist branding campaign to retain a minority government. The 2015 and 2019 Canadian federal elections show how branding can incorporate a fight over values as well as a partisan contest. The 2015 and 2019 federal elections show how strategic environments can impact the way in which a candidate and party choose to brand themselves. In 2015, the Liberals ran on the brand promise of "Real Change Now," something that resonated because Stephen Harper had been in power for almost a decade during which he had presented the country with a brand focused on good government and economic stability. Harper might not have been the warmest or nicest guy who ever lived and wasn't perfect as his 2015 marketing admitted. He had gotten elected by stressing competence, honesty, and a focus on navigating Canada through a global economic storm.

Harper had faced negative branding by the Liberals and the NDP throughout his time on the national stage. In part, this was a reaction against Harper's emotive branding, which sought to refocus the way Canadians understood their country's history and place in the world especially regarding military history and diplomacy. The Harper version of Brand Canada was more overtly masculine (Rankin 2012). This can be shown through the emphasis placed on the country's military history, the public celebrations around the War of 1812, and Harper's regular summer trips to the Arctic. Additionally, Harper's branding and government were not nearly as focused on keeping Quebec happy because his audiences were largely found from the suburbs of Toronto moving westward while the Liberals were based on success from Toronto eastward. This meant that many individual Liberal politicians and the Liberal Party's electoral fortunes depended on keeping Quebec happy. The party obsessed over Quebec's place in the federation. Further, many Liberals resided in Central Canada, while Harper resided in Alberta meaning the fate of Quebec in

the federation was a closer question for the former than the latter. The negative branding done against Stephen Harper was consistent but became more effective when scandals involving corruption surfaced among some of his Senate appointees and his inner circle. By 2015, the economy had gotten better and Harper's Government was mired in the same kind of high-profile scandals that it had used in its campaigns against the Liberals.

Canadian federal elections are exercises in multi-party branding. In addition to two large parties in the center, the Liberals and the Conservatives, the NDP has been a fixture on the left for decades, there is a Green Party that contests seats and a nationalist party in Quebec – Bloc Québécois (BQ) – whose fortunes have ebbed and flowed in the past few elections. The multiparty branding game in part explains why the Conservative Party, when it has worked with emotive branding, has chosen broad nationalistic themes like Harper's 2011 "Stand Up for Canada" when it has chosen to work with emotive branding focused on national identity. The Conservative pitches in 2015 and 2019 are much more materialist and emotionally muted compared to what the Liberals, the US Democrats, and Donald Trump have done in their branding. The latter three use the brand to tell values-based stories that are emotionally engaging and strike a balance between materialist and post-materialist values.

The 2015 and 2019 elections show how branding is impacted by a candidate's market position. Stephen Harper had gotten elected by promising to restore competence and honesty to government. His government had used branding and political marketing consistently throughout its term to play up its accomplishments in part helping it to stay in power for almost a decade. By 2015, his government had been in power for a long time, had done most of the things that it initially set out to do, and was suffering through notable scandals of its own. Given how long Harper had been there, the Liberals' choice of running on the "Real Change Now" theme made sense especially since the Liberals had been out of power since 2011 during which time the party had faced a near death experience in the form of talk of a merger with the NDP and had to watch Stephen Harper try to radically change much of the legacy that their icon Pierre Elliott Trudeau had tried to put into place and call into to question which party exactly was the country's natural governing party.

Voters engage with candidates for a variety of reasons and have varying levels of information about candidates. Producing such a unidimensional offering likely limits the number of new audiences that could be engaged. In turn, this raises the question of how many people were left to be

persuaded by Conservatives during the last two elections instead of being mobilized by them. In the socially sorted world in which modern politics takes place, the brand is a powerful tool because it can be adapted for either persuasive or mobilization reasons. The Conservatives' pitch in 2015 used the words "strong" and "strength" to show an emotive leadership trait, but their focus was largely materialistic. It's possible that this difference is a product of strategy or a sense among Conservatives that many Canadians do not share their more traditional positions on values issues.[1] In selling Stephen Harper, the party stressed managerial competence, leadership, strength and most importantly the economy. The party sold Harper using the tag of "Proven Leadership for a Strong Economy". It negatively branded Justin Trudeau in two ways. First, it ran a "he's just not ready" campaign providing a direct contrast to the Harper messaging around competence. When that didn't yield the desired results, it presented Justin Trudeau as being bad for people's material well-being. Harper, at some of his rallies, listed off individual conservative voter target types and added up what Justin Trudeau's campaign promises would cost those people by putting money on a table while a cash register bell rang in the background [i]. The negative branding adding up to a message that Justin Trudeau was unprepared, voting for him would be taking a big chance and come with a big price tag thus providing a direct contrast with the experienced Harper who had done so well in economic difficulty.

Despite changing the party leader for 2019, the Conservatives continued working with materialistic themes by using the materialistic and transactional slogan "It's Time for You to Get Ahead." In 2019, Andrew Scheer had a list of materialist issues focusing on the individual that were presented with branding that worked with the individual but made no aspirational or broad social argument. For example, in the ad "My Plan for Canadians," Scheer appears on the screen and says "My plan for Canadians? Lower the cost of living, leave more money in your pockets.[2]" He followed up by saying: "I have a plan to make life more affordable, to lower the cost of living, to leave more money in the pockets of Canadians".[3] Such branding and positioning assume people vote largely based on

[1] Phillippe J. Fournier "338Canada: The CPC's social conservative risk" "Macleans." January 12, 2020. https://www.macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/338canada-the-cpcs-social-conservative-risk/ accessed February 17, 2020.

[2] "My Plan" Conservative Party of Canada Ad. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkDEYHLcbo4 accessed February 17, 2020.

[3] Ibid.

economic issues, not identity issues. This something that Mason (2018) and Norris and Inglehart (2019) independently show is not always the case in the United States or globally among voters across the ideological spectrum. The Conservative self-positioning around strong, steady leadership could work as long as the economy was sound and there were no scandals, something that wasn't true by the time of the 2015 election. There were shifts in the political environment and the Liberals picked a leader who could emotively present Canada in a different way and engage with extant Liberal audiences while engaging with new ones: Justin Trudeau.

Trudeau's brand presented him as the heir to a beloved Liberal icon in his father. He was shown as a fresh face, but also built deeper fellowship with Liberal icon Wilfred Laurier thus putting Justin in the line of succession of great Liberal and Canadian leaders while subtly reminding Liberals and Canadians of the party's good old days when it won elections with such frequency that it was referred to as the country's "natural governing party." The youthful Mr. Trudeau could position Stephen Harper and Thomas Muclair as yesterday's political leaders and as representatives of parties and values outside Canada's mainstream political tradition. Trudeau was presented as optimistic, forward looking, feminist, progressive candidate.[4]

If the Conservatives under Harper and Scheer represented a Canada largely focused on economic matters, Trudeau's personal brand style and personality attempted to align the Liberals with a rising, diverse multicultural Canada interested in a plethora of social, identity, and economic issues. Advocating for "sunny ways" and change, Trudeau's branding stressed both a different style but also a sense that the LPC could deliver on its promises thus again positioning it as being different from the NDP and the Greens on the left and the CPC on the right. While incumbents always have to show that they have delivered, a multi-party system means that the incumbent can take heat from multiple directions. This situation is primed for negative branding. As Caruana, McGregor and Stephenson (2014) show, making people aware of what they don't like about their partisan rivals can be a strong engagement tool. Negative partisanship has the potential to engage and turnout voters. Negative branding can show people what they don't want and how showing up on election day would be one way to make sure that their least favored outcome doesn't come

[4] See Nimijean (2017) for an examination of Justin Trudeau and Brand Canada.

about. Branding is a key engagement tool to harness the power of negative partisanship. Parties out of power use negative branding to try to sell the voters on making a change. They also turn to this type of branding to convince voters to make a change by asserting that an incumbent has failed to deliver, perform or has some kind of scandalous aspect In parties use it to show that the challengers are unacceptable. Justin Trudeau and the LPC were ripe to be negatively branded in 2019 given the blackface scandal, a nasty public fight over ethics in government, Trudeau's trip to India and specific elements of policies that might alienate voters who had tried the product once and could be persuaded not to buy it again. That, performance, values or all three.

The negative branding the incumbent does can simply try to depict opponents as unsuitable options as Lewis and Cosgrove (2017) have noted happens in the North American context. Negative branding allows incumbents to depict opponents as being even worse that whatever flaws that the incumbent might have. Given the similarities between Andrew Scheer and Stephen Harper in terms of presentation of self, of Scheer's waffling on post-materialist issues like GLBT rights in general and his willingness to publicly support causes like Gay Pride or climate change by attending public marches. As Freeman (2018) noted: "The problem with Scheer, in some ways, is that he reflects all too well the true nature of the Conservative Party of Canada's base: a rump of anti-abortion, anti-gay marriage, older, socially conservative Canadians who hate the modern, urban, diverse place the country has become.[5]" Sure enough, Justin Trudeau went after his opponent for not marching in gay pride parades by saying: "It's just unfortunate that there are still some party leaders who want to be prime minister who choose to stand with people who are intolerant instead of standing with the LGBT community.[6]" The Conservatives meekly responded with a statement about Scheer's "opposition to discrimination in all its forms".[7] Trudeau had already differentiated himself visually from Scheer on this issue by marching in a number of parades in the past and by becoming the topped that by becoming the first sitting

[5] Alan Freeman "Face it, Conservatives. Picking Scheer was a mistake." ipolitics.ca Published on Jan 5, 2018 3:50 pm. Accessed February 17, 2020. https://ipolitics.ca/2018/01/05/face-conservatives-picking-scheer-mistake/

[6] Sean Boynton. "Trudeau blasts Scheer for not marching in Canadian Pride parades for third straight year". Global News. August 4, 2019. https://globalnews.ca/news/5726434/trudeau-scheer-pride-parades/ accessed February 17, 2020.

[7] Ibid.

Canadian Prime Minister to visit a gay bar and had led a government that publicly apologized and paid compensation to gay Canadians who had lost jobs as a result of past discrimination.[8]

Negative branding is not without its risks. It is possible that a party that works primarily with optimism can make a great impact if the other two parties take a negative approach as the case of the NDP in 2011 shows. The Liberals suffered a catastrophic defeat in 2011 in which Harper and the NDP under Jack Layton targeted specific audience segments while the Liberals were left with a shrinking middle. Harper's brand was Canada, the NDP brand was a brighter future, and the Liberals were stuck in the muddled middle with a candidate whom Harper negatively branded as self-interested and just visiting. Trudeau adopting a more positive, aspirational change persona in 2015 likely won some of the voters back to the Liberals in 2015 that the party had lost to the NDP and Jack Layton in 2011. Trudeau's 2015 persona, heritage, aspirational branding as well as policies won some of these disaffected voters back to the Liberal side. The Liberals had found a face that spoke to the aspirations of audiences that were not those in the Conservative coalition a process that was facilitated because Thomas Mulcair did not resonate with voters as had Layton. Harper's team responded to the Liberal change candidate by presenting him as an unserious figure who was "just not ready" to be Prime Minister. This juxtaposed the unserious Trudeau against the very serious Stephen Harper. The depiction of Trudeau as an unserious figure set up a clear contrast with that but part of Harper's problem was that his government had been in power for years, it had long ago dealt with the issues it had gotten elected to deal with, market conditions had changed and a decade of negative branding had been done around him. A lot of Liberals and New Democrats were anxious to defeat Harper and the negative branding of him could spur them on while depressing turnout among looser CPC identifiers.

Trudeau countered Harper's negative branding by arguing for change as an aspirational brand aspect. The aspiration reflected a desire by many to move away from the austere Harper persona and to have a government that seemed to reflect a demographically changing Canada. Trudeau advocated for a more gender and ethnically inclusive Liberal leadership and

[8] Gwen Aviles. "Justin Trudeau becomes First Canadian Prime Minister to visit a gay bar." NBC News July 30, 2019. https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/justin-trudeau-becomes-first-canadian-pm-visit-gay-bar-n1036156

made an effort to expand the party's support in the West. The campaign messaging revolved around themes of fairness, marijuana legalization, climate change, inclusion, and the idea that the public had grown tired of Stephen Harper and it was time for change. Further, the Liberals specifically took on the idea that Trudeau wasn't ready for government near the end of their campaign. Trudeau's public presentation was of a young, hip family man equally at home with heads of state or the average Canadians, with whom he was happy to take selfies and appear in their prom photos. Further, Trudeau emphasized his physical fitness and often appeared in public with his shirt either off or open. In contract, Harper looked very old and very serious. One candidate spoke to a younger audience and one candidate spoke to an older audience. This shows how the brand is everything in the way that a candidate is presented not just advertising.

By 2019, Trudeau's strategic position was closer to Stephen Harper's in 2015 than to his own I that cycle. In 2019, he again used an aspirational message. His incumbent status led him to face a difficult situation largely of his own making in that he had delivery and ethics problems. He had failed to deliver on electoral reform and balancing the budget within eighteen months (Nimijean 2016).[9] He was engaged in a high-profile scandal involving events in Quebec and got into a highly publicized squabble with his own caucus over his government's involvement in helping SNC-Lavalin. The net result of the scandal was magnified when the Ethics Commissioner issued a report in April, 2019 indicating that Trudeau had violated ethics rules.[10] Given that Trudeau had presented himself as being different from typical Canadian politicians, this seemed to weaken his "sunny ways" and change brand promises.[11] The optics of the situation were worsened given that Trudeau ended up in a public spat with his female Justice Minister: Jody Wilson-Raybould who resigned over the affair then testified in public about it shortly afterwards. Trudeau's handling of the affair raised questions about his brand promises of increasing gender and ethnic diversity given that Wilson-Raybould was an Indigenous Canadian in addition to being female.[12]

[9] https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/a-look-at-policy-areas-scrutinized-by-a-new-book-on-the-trudeau-government

[10] https://www.vox.com/2019/8/15/20806133/justin-trudeau-snc-lavalin-ethics-report-canada-elections

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

The Conservatives tried negatively branding Trudeau by saying that he was "not as advertised" and pointed out Mr. Trudeau's stylistic and substantive delivery failures. They tried to negatively brand him in a way that built on the "He's Just Not Ready" 2015 campaign by running a series of ads in which a "He's Not As Advertised" tag ran in the kind of box one usually sees in advertising that notes "as seen on tv." This branding was effective to an extent because it pointed out Trudeau's shortcomings. On the other hand, Stephen Harper had been in office for three terms, Trudeau had been there for only one thus the Liberals pitch that it was too soon to bring the Conservatives back into Government was believable and the Conservative branding was either negative regarding Trudeau or materialist. It lacked a values-based message to engage the audience. Andrew Scheer was much more managerial than inspirational and seemed to be offering Harperism without Harper. Scheer did not make the kinds of post-materialist aspiration values pitches that Trudeau did or tell a great aspirational brand story about what he would do if elected. Scheer's failure to position himself on these post-materialist values questions allowed Justin Trudeau to position himself as holding values that both represented a step backwards and a move away from what most Canadians wanted.

The NDP's new leader Jagmeet Singh was the physical embodiment of a new Canada in that he was young, a person of color, and a religious minority. Singh personally provided a clear visual contrast to the two white men leading the bigger parties. Singh produced a positioning problem for Trudeau in that he could attack from the left to argue that Trudeau's policies were too conservative. At the same time, the Conservatives could attack Trudeau from the right based around questions of personal competence and polices that were outside the mainstream. Singh took on Trudeau and Scheer by arguing that unlike them he was not a child of privilege or a connected insider. Unlike them, he knew what it was to struggle because of what one looked like or what it was to be from a community that was from outside the traditional vision of Canada that many people held. Thus, Singh repeated some of the optimistic aspirational branding that Jack Layton had used and at the same time he visually represented the rising demography of a diverse Canada in his branding and in the NDP advertising.

Because he was an incumbent and because his opponents were attacking him both on policy and personal ethics, Trudeau could build significant fellowship between Scheer and Harper while arguing that Singh was too inexperienced and his solutions too far outside the mainstream to be

taken seriously. Trudeau could not wage the same "sunny ways" campaign in 2019 that he had in 2015. The dictates of the market demanded that he brand his CPC challenger, Andrew Scheer, negatively, namely as an unacceptable alternative. Scheer was incentivized to negatively brand Trudeau as having not kept brand promises. The strategic situation advantaged Trudeau because he could argue his rivals were unacceptable in terms of values, experience or both. The voters might have been disappointed in Justin Trudeau in many ways but they had seen him do the job and in 2019 he was in a position to argue that his opponents weren't suited to do the job. It was easy for voters to see Justin Trudeau doing the job of Prime Minister now because he was the incumbent. Trudeau used negative branding to present his opponents as being far more radical and out of the mainstream of Canadian life than was he. In a values sense, one can argue that very little of what the Liberal Party had advocated was far from the centre of national public opinion even if it alienated a lot of voters in the Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta. Trudeau also did things like turn his blackface scandal into a more general moment of social education rather than his own personal scandal. Further, and Justin Trudeau had himself and had deep familial brand heritage into which he could tap. Trudeau, despite all of his failings in office, was able to raise significant questions about Scheer on aspirational values questions. Andrew Scheer presented himself as the materialist manager while Justin Trudeau presented himself as the leader as inspirational narrator. This type candidate his won election repeatedly in recent decades in both North American countries. The Liberal Party and Conservative party shared a structural problem in that Canadian politics is a multiple player game not just a two-player game as is found in the USA. While both major parties scored points through negative branding, the structure of the contest gave voters other viable options to choose from in the form of the NDP, the Greens and the Bloc. Just enough voters took those options or stayed home that neither the CPC or the LPC were able secure a majority.

Conclusion

Scott Adams (2017) cites the work of Robert Calidini to explain how the way in which a candidate is presented can prepare an audience for the subsequent messages that candidate sends. In the 2016 and 2020 election cycles in the United States, the two big users of persuasive techniques have been Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders. Additionally, both developed

the kinds of brands that are targeted and emotive. Love them or hate them, they find ways to draw clear distinctions between themselves and their opponents while engaging specific audience segments. The impact of social sorting is well understood in the United States and implicitly understood in Canada. In recent decades, Bishop (2009) detailed how Americans had become sorted by a variety of lifestyle and demographic factors into geographic clusters. Mason (2018) built on this work to show that American politics had become an identity-based activity. American politics has largely turned into the same kind of identity-based spectacle that the National Hockey League presents on a nightly basis. People identify with their specific image tribe as Turow (1997) describes it. The NHL's marketers actually discuss their fan bases in this way and American political parties have turned into something very similar. Canadian politics has strong partisan identities. Stephen Harper tapped into a sense of nationalistic identity with his marketing in 2011 and, one could argue, racial and religious identity in his 2015 campaign. Jagmeet Singh's introductory ad in Quebec offered a pitch something like these because he talked about how he had been treated differently because of his identity. Harper produced a very strong reaction to his brand and his term in office because it was new and because it was a threat to the extant order and in part because it hit on deeply held values in the country. Canadians articulated a sense of disappointment with Justin Trudeau that his opponents successfully tapped into but his neither his NDP or CPC opponent could close the sale with enough voters to displace him. This shouldn't be a surprise given that both parties were led by new faces and introducing a new product to market takes time. Trudeau might not have lived up to his original aspirational branding, but he didn't totally fail either. He had a decent enough record of things that he could point to as having delivered that he could argue he had, at least, kept some of his promises. This could be enough to fend off two lesser known inexperienced challengers.

This election raises a number of key questions about how branding can impact voter enthusiasm, how it shapes voters' understanding of candidate offerings, and what animates people to vote. Further, it shows how branding can be used to support materialist and post-materialist offerings. Scheer and Trudeau fall on distinctly different sides of the materialist/post-materialist divide. Scheer can be seen as a materialist and because of his articulation of traditional moral values an authoritarian using the definition developed by Norris and Inglehart (2019). Justin Trudeau articulated a more postmaterialist brand narrative but one that retained even

though it material elements in it like increasing taxes on some people to cut taxes for others and infrastructure spending. Trudeau has played the role of postmaterialist brand narrator. His CPC opponents were much more the materialist brand manager. Andrew Scheer was a managerially not inspirationally branded candidate. Trudeau could run as an aspirational candidate because, as Nimijean (2017) points out, to many people he expressed Canada's values better than Harper did Justin Trudeau was the inspirational post-materialist brand narrator and a narrator who borrowed liberally from his neighbor. Trudeau and his team literally just added a word to Barack Obama's 2012 campaign tag of "Forward" in 2019 by adding the word "Choose" just has his team had modified Obama's 2008 tag of "Change You Can Believe in" and "The Change We Need" to "Real Change Now". This isn't unusual in North America either. Trump recycled a Reagan tag in "Make America Great Again" (and uses the word real in his twitter handle), but built the kind of values based, social media optimized brand that Trudeau and Obama built and engaged in the same kinds of negative branding of his opponents as did Trudeau and Obama. In the combination of post-materialist and materialist values in their brand, Trudeau, Obama and Reagan stand apart from Scheer in particular and Scheer's inability to win as these other three did (and Stephen Harper had in 2011 via the use of nationalist branding) shows why the combination of these plus negative branding is a potent formula.

The problem for Conservatives as a party is that there is no obvious heir to Stephen Harper as the face of the party. Harper was able to appeal to a variety of voters across the country in ways that others might not. This is in part because he told a big emotive story about Canadian nationalism, positioned himself as the representative of this revived Canada and was able to brand his opponents as unacceptable. Harper, like Ronald Reagan in the US, was the person whom the various elements that made up the Conservative Party could agree on. Without him it remains unclear what is the next Conservative product and who is the face that represents it on the national stage. Andrew Scheer, in many ways, was about as close to Harper without being him as it was possible to get but all products have a shelf life and it's entirely possible that Harper's brand of conservatism has hit its expiration date.

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CHAPTER 4

Gliding In On a Wing and a Prayer: Jagmeet Singh and the NDP

James McLean

Abstract The 2019 campaign was the first in Canada with a party leader who is a visible minority and where all three major party leaders are Generation X or younger. Demographic changes in Canada and voting patterns played into an opportunity for Jagmeet Singh, who inspired the rank and file NDP grassroots, to run a new style of campaign in 2019 that could capture some of the momentum Trudeau had in 2015. This chapter explores how Singh picked up the pieces following the Layton and Mulcair years and thanks largely to lucky breaks and extensive use of social media during the campaign, he was able to hold on to NDP support outside of Quebec. But the chapter also exposes the failures and limitations of the NDP campaign, both in terms of branding and marketing.

Keywords Political branding • Leader marketing • Social media • NDP • Jagmeet Singh

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On the corner of avenue Mont-Royal and rue Chabot in Montreal's Plateau district stands an abandoned candy store, a former favourite of middle- and high-school students who would flock to the place at every opportunity. During the 2019 general election campaign, it became the storefront constituency office of Nima Machouf, the New Democratic Party's (NDP) candidate for the Laurier-Saint-Marie riding.

Laurier-Sainte-Marie is something of a storied riding. It was held by Gilles Duceppe, former leader of the Bloc Québécois, for nearly two decades. The NDP's Hélène Laverdière took it in the orange wave of 2011 and again in 2015. Laverdière elected not to run in 2019 (Library of Parliament 2020). Nima Machouf would be her chosen replacement.

I mention this because Laurier-Sainte-Marie is my constituency. It was easy to see that Machouf's headquarters checked a lot of boxes for the campaign's "ground game:" a bustling city street with constant foot traffic; a bus stop right outside the front door; a place with a sentimental connection to the neighbourhood. So why, over the course of a 40-day election campaign, did no one in Nima Machouf's headquarters try to talk to me? Why did no campaign literature appear in my mailbox? Why wasn't the candidate out on the street making contact at every opportunity? In 2011 and 2015, the riding had been awash in campaign literature. The local NDP campaign had energy. This chapter considers what happened to the NDP in 2019 and attempts to address the overall question of the lack of energy this time in the campaign.

Of course, it would be unfair to draw conclusions about the political marketing strategy of a national political party based on one campaign storefront in one urban constituency. But the "ground-game" experience with Laurier-Sainte-Marie was very strange. Common sense dictates that any kind of political marketing campaign requires, at a minimum, contact with the consumers of political messages: the voters. Yet here the basics were being ignored. It did not bode well for the NDP in Laurier-Sainte-Marie. As it turns out, it did not bode well for the NDP in general.

We would eventually learn that the NDP had money problems. There had been cutbacks to local campaigns. The Liberals had put a star candidate on the ballot, well-known environmentalist Steven Guilbeault. There were rumours that the Bloc Québécois was back and gaining momentum. All of these factors were of immediate importance to the people managing the NDP campaign in Quebec and across the country. But to understand just how deeply the party's prospects had changed in 2019, and how deeply Quebec was intertwined with those prospects, requires recent

historical context. Not coincidentally, the trajectory of that recent history coincides with the embrace by the party, incrementally through the 2000s and 2010s, of contemporary political marketing strategies: the increased use of "unelected advisers, market segmentation, and treating voters like consumers" as well as "poll driven leadership; preoccupation with image and brand; and the influence of money on campaigns" (Giasson et al. 2012, 17).

While the electoral breakthrough of 2011, which saw the NDP surge to an unprecedented 103 seats (59 from Quebec) and official opposition status on Parliament Hill, was largely painted by the media as a Cinderella story, in retrospect it has become clear that the outcome resulted from a golden troika of political marketing: long-term planning around sensible policies that the voting public could embrace; a certain amount of political synchronicity exploited by a charismatic leader backed by a seasoned team of operatives; and money.

As David McGrane (2019) convincingly argues in his analysis of the Layton years, Layton and his team crafted a long-term strategy to incrementally move the party closer to the "Liberal middle." This permitted the NDP to steal votes from the Liberals throughout the 2000s in English-speaking Canada with momentum gaining in 2006 and 2008, and most dramatically in 2011. The party's gains were aided and abetted by two factors: a wounded prime minister (Paul Martin) and the successive uninspiring Liberal leaders (Stéphane Dion and Michael Ignatieff) who replaced him; and a per vote subsidy that created a virtuous cycle of more funding from increased voter support that was used to convince increasingly more disaffected Liberal voters to switch to the NDP (236).

Equally, the NDP made no secret of its intention to woo Quebec voters. The Sherbrooke Declaration of 2005, where the party adopted a controversial 50-percent-plus-one referendum outcome as the threshold for Quebec to negotiate separation, laid out in plain language that Quebec would be key to the future of the party: "… the NDP has to make significant inroads in Québec in the medium and long term. The Québec question has too often been a stumbling block for the NDP. However, Québec must become a cornerstone of a movement aiming to become a government" (NDP 2005). With the 2008 election of Tom Mulcair in the former Liberal stronghold of Outremont (and an increase in the popular vote in Quebec from 7.5 percent to 12.2), the party had its Quebec beachhead and had internalized a series of Quebec-friendly policies "such as applying Bill 101 in federal jurisdiction, adopting asymmetrical federalism that

respects provincial jurisdiction by allowing the opting out of federal programs with compensation, and requiring future Supreme Court appointments to be bilingual" (McGrane 2011, 92). This Quebec-centric stance, together with Quebec-friendly policy promises, were in place at precisely the moment in 2011 when the Bloc Québécois ran out of steam, permitting the NDP to step in as Quebec's representative voice in Ottawa.

However, the "turn to Quebec" could not stand in as the entire winning strategy for a pan-Canadian party. To ensure that the rest of the country also warmed to the NDP, the party set aside most of its traditional big ticket, social-intervention policy proposals. Corporations would be taxed at a higher rate to make dollars available for social programs; there would be no more talk of taxing inheritances. The party would focus on "smaller deliverables."

As national campaign director, Brad Lavigne had been one of the guiding strategists behind the NDP's 2011 breakthrough. In an interview in early 2012 Lavigne, by then Jack Layton's principal secretary, was still elated over the party's rise to official opposition status and was happily forthcoming about how the "small deliverables" strategy had worked:

> I'm not going to fix every problem that you have, said the social democrat to the voter. But I can give you a break on your home heating. I'm going to take the GST off. It's reasonable, it's doable. I can do it with one stroke of a pen and you're going to see ten, twenty, thirty bucks a month off your heating bill. So we shrunk the offer so that it was easily understandable and it would hit right to the heart. Small things. Small business, tax cuts. Easily understandable. That was our jobs strategy … looking out for the small business operator, working hard, playing by the rules, we just want to give them a break. They will create the jobs. (McLean 2012, 177)

The key to the strategy was its broad appeal. "Small deliverables" would apply across the board, including in Quebec, while Quebec's distinct and historic identity concerns would be addressed by the application of policies based in asymmetrical federalism. All it would take is a leader capable of sealing the deal.

Jack Layton's political tenacity remains undisputed. Often overlooked, however, are the circumstances that permitted him to bend the difficult craft of national retail politics to the NDP's advantage. At intervals from 2004 through 2011, he was at the forefront of four general election campaigns. Between campaigns, he and the NDP used their status in Parliament

to amplify the party's messaging in the special circumstances of three successive minority governments, including the stretch from 2004 to 2006 where the NDP held the balance of power. This permitted Layton and his team to grow into the special circumstances of campaigning, to test and evaluate policy options and, perhaps of greatest importance, to permit the leader to become comfortable with the craft of humanizing messages for broad consumption. In 2004 the NDP gained a handful of seats; ten more in 2006; a further eight in 2008; and won a total of 103 in 2011.

There is an enduring photograph of Jack Layton during the 2011 campaign, already frail from the cancer that would take his life, wearing a Montreal Canadiens jersey and pouring pints at a Montreal pub. His obituary in the *Montreal Gazette*, which published the picture, summed it up: "Not only did he win a record number of Quebec seats in the last election — 59 out of 75 — but he did it almost single-handedly. Quebecers in droves voted for candidates they did not even know based on Layton's good name and smiling trustworthy personality" (Authier 2011).

This was the origin of "*un bon Jack*," French-language slang for "a good guy," Layton's Quebec alter-ego who could converse with Habs fans in their own argot and charm both the hosts and the vast, province-wide television audience on Radio-Canada's *Tout le monde en parle*. He was a Quebecker who had not lived in the province for 40 years, but who managed to slip effortlessly back into the culture. He was the plucky guy who used his cane like a prop, a reminder of another Quebec leader, Lucien Bouchard, who had faced dire circumstances and walked with a cane. Average people responded with warmth and generosity. The Bloc Québécois, with its tired Ottawa bashing, internal contradictions, and a played-out leader who seemed to be phoning it in, did not have a chance (McLean 2012).

The circumstances of Tom Mulcair's rise and fall are brutally straightforward. He was a capable opposition leader with a memorable flare for getting his teeth into an issue and chewing his way up the metaphorical leg. His relentless question-period pounding of the Harper government over the Mike Duffy affair earned him a degree of respect, if not love and admiration. The NDP's popularity, which had been in decline since Layton's death, rose again. But Mulcair was in an impossible position. Advancing the NDP's 2011 campaign promises while holding the ideologically hostile Harper majority government to account as official opposition leader was a non-starter. In 2015, Quebec francophone voters, who had supported Layton's vision for the province's future in 2011, split their

vote among the Bloc (39 percent), the Liberals (37 percent), and the Conservatives (17 percent) (McGrane 2019, 284). In the rest of Canada, about one fifth of "English Canadians who [prior to the election] reported that they would certainly vote NDP" ended up voting for the Liberals. In addition, almost half of the voters who said they would likely vote NDP and 62 percent who were thinking about it also went to the Liberals (280).

The party's election platform had not changed much under Mulcair. The emphasis remained on small fixes for average people and support for small businesses. The NDP would bring in a $15 per hour national minimum wage. Big corporations would still be taxed to pay for spending promises. On the funding side, the phasing out of the per-vote subsidy for political parties had still to take full effect. The party could still afford to run a professional, modern election campaign (Duggan 2018a). All of this is to say that Mulcair was a capable politician, but it was no secret that he irritated some members of caucus. His unwillingness to consider deficit spending gave the Liberals an opening on the NDP's left flank. Support for the NDP drained away.

When New Democrats failed to support Tom Mulcair at the party's leadership convention in April 2016, they set themselves up for a political marketing nightmare. Convention delegate, Shay Purdy, who had worked for both Layton and Mulcair, put the decision to dump Mulcair in stark relief: "[I]t's important to note that the broader political arena has evolved quite a bit," said Purdy, "[A]nd in a way that maybe doesn't favour the type of politician that Tom is. It's outside of Parliament. Jack was able to do both … Tom just couldn't move with it" (Boutilier 2017). In other words, Thomas Mulcair was not Jack Layton. However, New Democrats had failed to note that there was no one who could "move with it" waiting in the wings. Furthermore, the per-vote subsidy that had fuelled NDP fortunes in 2011 and, to a lesser extent in 2015, had been eliminated; the inner-circle of strategists who had contributed so much during the Layton and Mulcair years had largely moved on to other opportunities; and the long-nurtured strategy of moving the party toward the centre with small deliverables had failed to resonate.

To complicate matters, an element of the unexpected had been introduced during the 2015 election campaign – the Leap Manifesto – signed by many of the shining lights of English-language Canadian Arts and Letters. It was intended to put the NDP on a "progressive" swing to the left. Among the central declarations of the manifesto:

> The new iron law of energy development must be: if you wouldn't want it in your backyard, then it doesn't belong in anyone's backyard. That applies equally to oil and gas pipelines; fracking in New Brunswick, Quebec and British Columbia; increased tanker traffic off our coasts; and to Canadian-owned mining projects the world over. (Klein, Lewis et al. 2015)

The manifesto also called for "an end to fossil fuel subsidies. Financial transaction taxes. Increased resource royalties. Higher income taxes on corporations and wealthy people. A progressive carbon tax. Cuts to military spending." It called for a Quebec-style childcare program on a national scale; formal recognition of "the inherent rights and title" of Indigenous peoples; and a universal basic income.

It is open to debate how much the manifesto affected the party's fortunes in 2015; it was released comparatively late in the election campaign. But party delegates agreed to begin the discussion over adopting Leap at the same 2016 convention that saw Mulcair's leadership end. And although delegates to the party's 2018 convention did not support adopting the manifesto as party policy, it signaled and continues to inform a break from the moderate incrementalism that defined the party's trajectory from 2004 through 2015 (Duggan 2018b).

These are the conditions and challenges that confronted Jagmeet Singh when he accepted the party leadership in October 2017. To make matters worse, the new leader spends his first precious months stumbling through a learning curve that overestimated the carryover momentum of his leadership win and too often got him into hot water with seasoned political journalists (Kay 2017). He dithered over running for a by-election seat in Parliament. A rudderless caucus became restless. There were rumours of revolt.

In retrospect, it is fairly clear that Singh and his team were trying to adapt the traditional political-marketing playbook by following through on the "high-level production" aspects of core party influencers by switching to "low-level production" (Johansen 2012, 151). Having won the leadership contest – the loud and contentious aspect of high-level production – the leader would then be expected to reach out to the party membership "to engage in processes of deliberation, mutual persuasion, and consensus building." This kind of low-level production action is "constituted in activities aimed at retention of existing members, the recruitment of new members, and fundraising" (Johansen 2012, 151). In normal

circumstances this would have been a creditable exercise, but these were not normal circumstances.

It really cannot be overstated: modern election campaigns consume money at a horrifying rate. Expenditures on big-ticket items such as quality intelligence (polling and opposition research); paid communications such as spots and space in traditional advertising media (radio, television, and publications); the increasingly popular and expensive use of digital advertising on social media; low-tech advertising and promotional materials such as lawn signs and candidate pamphlets; travel; the increasing use of contracted strategic communication companies; even the support of a dedicated group of volunteers for the central campaign offices (who must be fed and housed), can easily run to millions of dollars. To put this in perspective, the NDP's national director, Anne McGrath, released broad figures at the end of January 2020 that put the party's post-election debt at $7-million. For further perspective, McGrath admitted that the total spent on the campaign was $11-million, and $10-million of that was borrowed. The accounting is in line with required finance reporting published in the lead-up to the election: in mid-August the Conservatives reported a war chest of $24.2 million; the Liberals reported $21-million; and the NDP $3.8-million (Smith 2019). In what must rate as the understatement of the year, McGrath admitted, "It's no secret in the last campaign we had some financial pressures" (Thurton 2020).

Assuredly, some of those "financial pressures" resulted from having a less-than-dedicated, dismissed, lame duck party leader occupying the leader's office until his replacement was chosen. The party's assets would have been further eroded by the costs of the leadership convention to replace Tom Mulcair. But it is an enduring mystery why Singh, after winning the leadership, did not then appear to take his role as chief fundraiser seriously. He preferred low-key events, "Jagmeet and Greets" that charged a modest admission fee and passed the hat for voluntary donations. Indeed, in August 2019 Althea Raj of the *Huffington Post* reported that Singh had "participated in only one $25 fundraising activity" all year (Raj 2019). Raj's inquiries arose from the absence of any declaration by the leader's office of fundraising where a minimum $200 contribution is required, the amount that triggers a report to Elections Canada. The NDP had reported no fundraisers that met the threshold. Indeed, by the end of 2019 the party had yet to engage in any fundraising that met the very low $200-per-contributor bar (Elections Canada 2020).

This left the NDP scrambling to find operating cash. As the writ period began, the party faced the real possibility that it would be reduced to a handful of seats. Certainly, there was talk of losing the 12-seat threshold for recognized party status. With such prospects looming, Singh and his campaign team were forced to make a series of decisions that, taken together, made it clear just how much trouble the NDP was facing. Rumours in June that the party would not be chartering a campaign airplane as it had in the past were discounted by party officials (Aiello 2019); by early September that had changed, with the party confirming that it would hire a campaign plane by the hour "here and there," and that its campaign tour buses would "spend extended periods busing around battleground areas;" indeed, as Adam Radwanski of the *Globe and Mail* went on to report:

> The belt-tightening will extend to every aspect of the campaign. Advertising will be modest compared with that of other parties. A party official estimated that the central campaign will have 50 or 60 staff members, down from more than 100 in 2015. Less will be spent on the ground to help local campaigns mobilize supporters. Spending will disproportionately be in regions where the NDP already holds seats and is trying to protect them, along with a few ridings mostly around Toronto and Vancouver it is targeting for pickups, with limited presence elsewhere. (Radwanski 2019)

Chief of Staff and Campaign Director Jennifer Howard, and Michael Belagus, each with considerable experience with the NDP government of Gary Doer in Manitoba were in overall charge. Each had been brought in to help restore discipline when Singh's early missteps had led to a near caucus revolt. Each was at the table when Singh, after more than a year as leader, finally ran in a by-election in Burnaby South and won, giving him the credibility afforded by daily exposure in Parliament. These were the professionals charged with saving the furniture. The campaign in Quebec would be run by Raymond Guardia, a veteran of the Layton years with a deep knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of Quebec politics.

But the marketing of the NDP in 2019 would be blunt and basic. A decidedly left-wing platform, released early for everyone to talk about, was full of unabashedly big-ticket items, some drawn verbatim from the Leap Manifesto. When costs were finally matched with promises, the numbers were eye watering: a $43-billion national Pharmacare program; $10-billion for a national childcare program; $2.5-billion each for green home

renovations and improvements to water quality in Indigenous communities. An NDP government would help to build a half-million affordable homes with an initial $5-billion "investment" and invest in clean transit and transportation. There would be free dental care for families earning less than $70-thousand annually. Interest on current and future student loans would be eliminated. There would be no more support for the oil industry; in fact, all of the NDP's promises would be funded with borrowed money and tax increases on corporations and wealthy Canadians. An NDP government would run a $32.7-billion deficit in its first year (Gatehouse 2019).

Many of the NDP's promises were based on a distinct nod to climate change activism, another acknowledgment of Leap's influence. A Jagmeet Singh government would ban increased tanker traffic off the coasts and give individual provinces a veto over national infrastructure projects such as oil and gas pipelines. The veto promise, delivered in French on *Tout le monde en parle* and in English on the CBC's *Power and Politics*, exposed the difficulties of dealing with the fraught politics of energy policy in the climate change area. Singh clarified that, as prime minister, he would not *impose* a national infrastructure project on unwilling provinces and that this, somehow, would be different than a veto (Wherry 2019). Quebec voters, who had already imposed a de facto ban on a pipeline to the Maritimes, remained unimpressed (Shingler 2019). Albertans, who had thrown out the NDP government of Rachel Notley the previous spring, electing Jason Kenney's fossil fuel friendly UCP in a landslide, were livid.

This episode exposes the pitfalls in running an election campaign that was more than usually reliant on "earned media," the euphemism employed by political communicators to describe news reporting and other journalistic opportunities (such as political interview shows like *Tout le monde en parle*) used to get political messaging in front of the public (McLean 2012, 47). Since earned media always relies on journalists transmitting political messages with as little distortion as possible – and attaching their professional credibility in the process – it can be very valuable to political actors. It can be equally devastating when journalists expose messy platitudes, evasions, contradictions, or outright lies.

On balance, Singh and the NDP had a number of things going for them by leaning more heavily on earned media. First, Singh, an observant Sikh with a penchant for bespoke suits and colourful turbans, cuts a striking figure. He speaks French well, if formally. He is measured and thoughtful when given the opportunity to leave the talking points behind and

speak from the heart. Second, it is natural for journalists and news organizations to be drawn to the two main political parties in an election campaign; however, party operatives would be aware of newsroom policies requiring balanced reporting and certainly of CRTC election guidelines requiring the allocation of "time on an equitable basis to all accredited political parties and rival candidates" (CRTC 2020). Third, while the Liberals and Conservatives were spending heavily on opposition research – digging around for past indiscretions and misrepresentations, weaknesses that could be exploited through negative publicity – NDP strategists (with their extremely limited "oppo" budget) knew that Singh could get traction by letting his opponents duke it out and making himself available to comment.

Justin Trudeau's past exploits as a performer in blackface offers perhaps the best example. As it happens, Shannon Proudfoot of *Maclean's* was covering Singh when news broke of a 2001 photograph of Trudeau taken from a yearbook at a private school in Vancouver where he had taught. Singh, the only racialized leader of a mainstream political party, was asked to comment:

> "Well, it's troubling. I mean, really, it's insulting," he said. "It's making a mockery of someone for what they live and what their lived experiences are. I think he's gotta answer the question why he did that, and what does that say about what he thinks about people who, because of who they are, because of the colour of their skin, face challenges, barriers and obstacles in their life. Racism is real. People in this room have felt it. I've heard the stories. I've experienced it in my life. He's gotta answer those questions." The diverse crowd around him burst into applause. (Proudfoot 2019)

This was a "Goldilocks" response: clear, measured, intelligent; just hot enough to chasten and just cool enough to remain dignified. Scarcely two weeks later Singh, attending a campaign event at Montreal's Atwater Market, was approached by an older white man who said: "You know what? You should cut your turban off, you'll look like a Canadian." "Oh," responded Singh, "I think Canadians look like all sorts of people. That's the beauty of Canada" (CBC 2019a). The clip went viral. The next night Singh sat down to be questioned one-on-one by selected Canadians on CBC's *The National*. As was becoming the norm, he came off as personable and likeable, even to those who might not have agreed with his politics (CBC 2019b). This was the Jagmeet Singh who would win a televised

debate a few days later by characterizing Justin Trudeau and Andrew Scheer as "Mr. Delay, Mr. Deny" (Winfield 2019). By October 21, Shachi Kurl of the Angus Reid Institute, a polling firm, was giving Singh credit for turning the NDP campaign around. Of Singh's debate performance Kurl said, "He was the most easy leader to connect with on a personal level, he felt somewhat the most authentic" (Thibedeau 2019).

It is a happy narrative that Jagmeet Singh's authenticity brought the NDP back from the brink of collapse. Poll numbers that had languished in the mid-to-low teens during much of the campaign jumped into the low-twenties as Canadians went to cast their ballots. It is an equally enticing to consider that Singh and the NDP would have done much better if they had just had more time. That claim is more debatable. The structural problems facing the NDP were, and remain, an existential threat. Even though the party managed to hang onto 24 seats, Singh must now confront the uncomfortable reality of leading a party with slippery toe-holds in regions that *must* have significant representation if the NDP is to have legitimacy: Atlantic Canada remains a sea of Liberal red, even with its single small outpost of Newfoundland orange; Quebec has been reduced to one NDP seat; and a single seat in Edmonton is surrounded by Conservative blue across the energy-producing heartland of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Squaring those circles will be a generational project.

Running another bare-bone election campaign is not an option. For better or worse, the age of big data is here and big data does not come cheap. Political advertising on social media, increasingly dependent on "dynamic creative optimization" – a digital tool that uses artificial intelligence to efficiently disseminate ad content – is becoming the new normal because it automatically targets thousands of websites and social media feeds (Stengel 2019). During the 2019 campaign the Liberals spent heavily on an ad featuring Justin Trudeau riding a city bus, telling his audience how he got into politics "to help people" (Geddes 2019). It was a coup. The ads were programmed to pop up in online columns published by prominent journalists, including columns about the NDP. In the face of this kind of sophistication a lucky viral gif on TikTok is not going to cut it.

But the core question for the NDP will be how to once again grasp the key to the kingdom, Quebec, under conditions that have reverted to the norm: federalist francophone voters don't need the NDP when the prime minister is a Liberal; and nationalists don't need or want the NDP when the Bloc Québécois is on its game. This was the takeaway from Laurier-Sainte-Marie on election night: the NDP and Bloc split the vote and the

Liberals, with a popular candidate, won by a ten-thousand vote margin. Furthermore, the new Bloc leader, Yves-François Blanchet – a canny politician and former PQ environment minister who earned the nickname "Goon" for his effectiveness in putting down a caucus revolt – a knows how to count. When Jagmeet Singh suggested that the NDP with its 24 seats in a new Parliament might withhold support for the Liberal throne speech – a bit of grandstanding intended to send a message that the NDP would use its "balance of power" as leverage – it took all of ten seconds for Blanchet to cut him off at the knees. The Bloc would support the speech. After all, the BQ had 33 seats, most of them formerly held by the NDP and all of them from Quebec.

The NDP must also commit more forcefully to a future where a meaningful climate change policy is front-and-centre or risk losing its environmental wing to the Green Party, and it must do so without further alienating the oil producing West. There is a small window of opportunity. The Conservatives and Greens are both looking for new leaders. Justin Trudeau is subdued. The Bloc is happy to keep the current minority government alive as long as it benefits Quebec. Even the NDP, citing its money problems, has kicked the can down the road, delaying for a year its national convention and leadership review. One suspects the party brass did not want to deal with the decapitation of another leader who is not Jack Layton. For Jagmeet Singh and the NDP 2019 was a reprieve, not a win. Tick tock.

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CHAPTER 5

The Bloc Is Back!: The Resurgence of the Bloc Québécois in 2019

Guy Lachapelle

Abstract With declining support for separatism as a solution to Québec's economic and social challenges, and with Parti Québécois failures to galvanize the sovereigntist movement in the Secular Charter debate and subsequent 2015 election, the Bloc had been squeezed out of the discourse of Québec's role within Canada. But the leadership of Yves-François Blanchet proved to be very effective in 2019 and the party was able to capitalize on shifting sentiment within the Quebec electorate and once again reclaim a unique brand of voice for Québécois in Ottawa. This chapter explores how Blanchet benefitted from mixed messages from other party leaders while the Bloc was disciplined in its branding and messaging to win back the support it had in the Bouchard and Duceppe eras.

Keywords Political branding • Sovereigntist movement • Dynamic leadership • Bloc Québécois • Yves-François Blanchet

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The 43rd Canadian election was called on September 11, 2019, at which point the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) was somewhat comfortably leading in Québec, polling at 37%, and the Bloc Québécois held third place with 21% (Leger, September 11). But the electoral campaign had an important effect on Québec voters that took many observers by surprise. The Bloc Québécois (BQ) with 32 seats has taken Québec by storm and has successfully removed several LPC and New Democrat Party (NDP) ridings. With only 10 seats in parliament after the 2015 elections, Yves-François Blanchet, leader of the BQ saw its number of seats in Canadian parliament triple after the 2019 election. The other side of the coin is that the NDP saw its number of seats in Quebec collapsing in the face of competition, mainly from the BQ, going from 16 seats to only 1 seat in Québec. Quebeckers have tirelessly placed their trust in the leader whom they consider best in accordance with their values (Cornellier 1995; Charbonneau and Lachapelle 2010). The 2019 Federal Election is no exception, Justin Trudeau and Yves-François Blanchet getting 66.7% of the total vote. Overall in Canada, the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) won the popular vote over the Liberal Party, 34.4% vs 33.1%, leading to a minority government.

The Bloc Québécois officially became a political party at its founding convention on June 15, 1991.[1] Seven leaders have succeeded one another at the head of the sovereigntist party and only two, Lucien Bouchard and Gilles Duceppe, led the party over the last eight (8) Federal Elections (see Table 5.1 and Fig. 5.1). For the 2019 Federal Elections, the Bloc Québécois with its new leader that had a greater appeal within Québec, mixed with a revitalized political agenda that was more in accordance with the general consensus of Québec nationalists, bloomed life into the BQ that was in disarray and could not find a leader less than a year earlier. The

[1] Lucien Bouchard created the Bloc Québécois in 1990 in the wake of the failure of the Meech-Langevin agreement and Canada's rejection of the principles of this agreement. In the aftermath of the 1995 referendum on Quebec sovereignty, Lucien Bouchard (1990–1996) chose to succeed Jacques Parizeau as leader of the Parti Quebecois (1996); Michel Gauthier (1996–1997) then became head of the BQ. But in the post-referendum turmoil, the Bloc struggled to find a leader capable of putting on Lucien Bouchard's shoes. During the Bloc's leadership race in March 1997, Gilles Duceppe took over the leadership of the BQ. On Monday, October 25, 1993, the date of the first federal general election in which the Bloc Québécois participated, the BQ became the voice of Quebec in Ottawa. On that date, and to everyone's surprise, the BQ won 54 of Quebec's 75 seats in the House of Commons and became the official opposition (Bouchard 1992, 1993).

Table 5.1 Electoral support for the Bloc Québécois

Federal elections	*Leader*	*% of valid vote*	*Number of seats*	*Voter turnout (%)*
2019	Blanchet	32.5	32	65.5
2015	Duceppe	19.4	10	67.3
2011	Duceppe	23.5	4	62.9
2008	Duceppe	38.1	49	61.7
2006	Duceppe	42.1	51	63.9
2004	Duceppe	48.9	54	60.5
2000	Duceppe	39.9	38	64.1
1997	Duceppe	37.9	44	73.3
1993	Bouchard	49.3	54	77.0

Source: Elections Canada, October 21, 2019 *Federal Election Results.* https://enr.elections.ca/National.aspx?lang=e

Fig. 5.1 Leaders of the Bloc since 1990

Lucien Bouchard (1990-1996)
Michel Gauthier (1996-1997)
Gilles Duceppe (1997-2011)
Daniel Paillé (2011-2013)
Mario Beaulieu (2014-2015)
Martine Ouellet (2017-2018)
Yves-François Blanchet (2019-)

Bloc surpassed the NDP as the third largest party in term of seats in Canada (32 vs 24), quite a feat for a subnational party that only runs candidates in a single province. The resurgence of the BQ, under the new leadership of Yves-Francois Blanchet, clearly indicate that the Party was able to capture a great part of the vote of most 'conservative nationalists' that supported the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) during the Québec election of 2018 (Lessard 2018). From the beginning of the campaign, Yves-Francois Blanchet clearly stated that the role of the BQ in Ottawa is to defend Québec interests. As a sovereigntist party, the Bloc' role is to promote Québec independence by showing that the values of Quebecers are different from the rest of Canada and that several federal policies are not serving well Québec interests.

But Yves-François Blanchet strategy was to take a more pragmatic approach to rally all nationalist voters under the same cause: to preserve the Québec political identity. The slogan of the BQ campaign, *Le Québec,*

c'est nous (that can be translated as *We are Québec* or *Québec is us*) was clearly an appeal to all voters who did not considered the other party leaders able to understand the "new nationalism" of Québec society. With this switch in the agenda, broader support for the BQ among younger Québécois voters was more likely, since they tend to oppose independence the most while not necessarily feeling less nationalistic then the older generation. Supporting Québec 'conservative nationalism' while excluding sovereignty as the main issue of the campaign turned out to be an appealing concept for many voters (Changfoot et al. 2012; Knight 1990). On September 15, 2019, Yves-François Blanchet and the entire team of BQ candidates, gathered in general council to officially launched the party's campaign on the theme "Quebec is us." Yves-Francois Blanchet made the following appeal to Québec voters:

> Quebec is us! It's all of us, that's what makes Quebec different. Secularism is us: it is the legitimate and democratic choice of Quebec that only the Bloc is defending in Ottawa. Clean energy is us: it is the future of a wealth-creating Quebec underserved in an oil Canada that refuses to take climate change seriously. French is us: it is our common language that only the Bloc is actively working to strengthen. We are the economy: it is our businesses in our regions that deserve to be defended by economic nationalists. Quebecers deserve to be represented by people who not only understand but celebrate everything that sets us apart. (Bloc Québécois, September 15, 2019; our translation)

The goal of this chapter is to look over the electoral campaign of the BQ to explain the resurgence of the Bloc especially by early October after the first televised debate in French. The personification of politics is one of the major trends that we observed in many democracies over the recent decades. Canada is no exception. The second determinant of the campaign was that the Bloc Québécois aligned its strategy to appeal to the "conservative nationalists" in Québec for whom the defense of Québec values and interests is their top priorities. Québec voters were also concerned at 51% to see the Conservatives back to power and 35% did not want to give another mandate to the Liberal (Leger, October 17–18).

Furthermore, for 50% of the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) supporters seeing Trudeau reelected was their main concern. The Québec government of Francois Legault pulled out the card of "nationalism" during the elections making a list of requests from the parties and their leaders. The

BQ aligned itself with the CAQ, being the only party in the elections that supported the demands from the Legault government. Such move garnered a lot of support from Quebecers who are supporters of CAQ. Finally, we will look over the issues of the campaign that reinforce the idea that the Federal governments, either Liberal or Conservative, were not in synergy with the Québécois aspirations.

The Personalisation of Politics and the Televised Debates

Quebecers had a strong negative impression of Justin Trudeau, especially concerning his overall environmental agenda, including the Energy East pipeline, his weak leadership in the case of SNC-Lavalin controversy, and about his position to bring to the Supreme Court Bill 21, the new Québec law on secularism Justin Trudeau and his party were perceived by Québec voters as a weak leader lacking a sense of direction.

One turnover of the campaign was certainly the blackface controversy when a picture of Justin Trudeau, dating back when he was a teacher at the West Point Grey Academy in Vancouver, was released by the magazine *Time*. The leaders of the three main parties, Sheer (Conservative Party of Canada), May (Green Party of Canada), and Singh (New Democratic Party), were very prompt to declare Trudeau a racist, but Blanchet was the only party leader to defend the Liberal leader: "Justin Trudeau has all the faults in the world, he is certainly not a good prime minister, he may not even qualify for the term 'competent,' but Justin Trudeau is not a racist." (Presse canadienne 2019) Blanchet's position was a turning point right at the beginning of the campaign by simply emphasing the lack of judgment of the liberal leader. Québec political leaders and nationalists are often described and perceived by the Canadian establishment as racist and intolerant; the reaction of the leaders of the three main Canadian parties was therefore in line with these regular attacks but again quite misleading.

Yves-Francois Blanchet' reaction was certainly more responsible because Quebecers are usually more sensitive to these types of comments, having a profound understanding of what the word 'racist' means. As one of the candidate of the BQ in the riding of Longueuil/Saint-Hubert puts it, the comedian and new MP Denis Trudel, this event was a turning point of the campaign showing that the BQ and its leader were ready to defend Québec values and peoples beyond party line (Desrochers 2019). For Québec

voters, the "Nous" includes Justin Trudeau! By late September, the Liberals were hit with the consequences of Trudeau's blackface scandal. In Québec, the LPC kept the bulk of their support, only dropping to 31% in opinion polls, and the BQ managed to pick up some of these losses and position themselves as the new runner-up in popularity, polling at 24% (Angus Reid, October 2).

For Québec viewers, the first leaders' debate was broadcast in French on TVA on Wednesday, October 2 followed by the English debate on CBC, Global, and CTV on Monday, October 7, were clearly the moment when the BQ started to see its popularity growing. In the days following the debates, in which Blanchet came out strongly in support of Bill 21 while Trudeau floated the idea of a legal challenge, the BQ's support in Québec went up to 35% while the LPC fell to 27%. The CPC was losing support in every province except British Columbia. By late October, opinion polls were starting to stabilize into what the final results would look like. With not much hope for recovery, Scheer's Conservatives polled at 15% among decided voters in Québec, with the Liberals and BQ neck and neck with 33% and 32% respectively (Leger, October 17–18). Nationally, Liberals and Conservatives were polling identically (28%), which was good news for team Trudeau, as they were leading in regions with more ridings to win. However, the Conservatives benefitted from having a more certain voter base, with 83% of those leaning Conservative being certain of their vote, compared to 79% for the Liberals (Leger, October 17–18).

The increase of support for the BQ can also be attributed by the decline of support toward the CPC and the deceptive position of Andrew Scheer over the issue of abortion among Québec voters and the decline of Liberal support. The push made by the Canadian elites in the media to shift the focus of the election on Andrew Scheer' anti-abortion views were successful in motivating left leaning voters to switch their vote from NDP to the LPC. After the French debate on TVA, Scheer was asked many questions on the abortion issue from the journalists and his thoughts and feelings about the issue were brought up and criticized all over the press. Scheer was then bombarded by the media with questions on which he stumbled to give nuanced answers that did not satisfy anyone on the left or the right (Harris, November 2). It was not until the day after the French debate, that Scheer admitted that he was a pro-life supporter but he had no intention to reopen this debate if elected as Prime Minister (Connolly 2019).

The Leger' opinion poll of October 9th indicated that 60% of Quebecers watch the French debate on TVA and only 25% the English debate.

Yves-Francois Blanchet was the big winner of the French debate according to 35% of the viewers, followed by Justin Trudeau at 16% and Jagmeet Singh at 7%. Andrew Scheer got only 2%. Following the English debate of October 7, respondents were asked if each of the leaders exceeded or was below the expectations of the voters. The only two (2) leaders that exceeded the expectations among Québec viewers were Yves-Francois Blanchet at 27% and Jagmeet Singh at 22% and the Andrew Scheer falls far below the expectations at 31% (Leger, October 9). Even if the BQ took some vote from the NPD, its leader Jagmeet Singh saw his popularity increase during the campaign, the NDP finally receiving 10.7% of the valid vote in Québec. The second French debate in French, on Thursday October 10, did not make a difference but confirmed that the stability of the BQ voters while continuing to consolidate its gains among LPC and CPC supporters.

The Québec 'New Nationalism'

Québec nationalism has followed historically some form of cyclical movement of formation, decline, and reformulation. With the coming to power of the CAQ to the provincial government in 2018, and the wave of the BQ in Québec in October 2019, analysts had two questions mind: Is Québec experiencing a new wave of nationalism? Does the message of 'conservative nationalism' presented by the CAQ the main cause of the advent of the BQ? In order to fully understand how the Bloc Québécois was able to return to the political scene forcefully, we must understand what are the political issues that the BQ knew how to use in order to rotate the electoral vote in its favor and the emergence of this new CAQ-BQ coalition (Béland 2019; Lester 2019). We have to wonder if these political issues affect the rest of Canada in the same way that they affect Québec. Following this reasoning, we must measure whether Québec is plunged into a new period of political nationalism, which may be marked by the coming to power of the CAQ. The BQ's mandate is to represent the interest of the Québec, while other political parties in Québec perceiving pan-Canadian political issues from a different angle.

One key determinant of the outcome of the 2019 federal election was the support of the BQ to the Québec government claims. It is not the first time that a Québec Premier gets involve in a Federal Election. During the 2008 campaign, the success of the BQ rested in large part on a strategy and a clear message: the Conservatives have not kept their promises, they

have not responded to the Bloc's requests. As the BQ argued, the promise of "open federalism" soon ran into closed doors. The controversy surrounding cuts or redesign of funding for cultural programs, as well as Canadian military participation in Afghanistan, which has never been supported by the citizens of Québec, have only reinforced the impression that the Conservative government listened more to his Alberta supporters as much as to their friends in Washington.

In addition, Gilles Duceppe and the BQ had an unsuspected ally: the Premier of Québec, Jean Charest. In 2008, the Quebec head of state took a "nationalist turn," understanding very well that if he wanted to form a majority government in the upcoming Québec election he had to be more attentive to this strata of the Québec electorate, which without necessarily being sovereigntist nevertheless wishes its Québec governments to adopt firm positions to defend Québec interests. Québec finance minister Monique Jérôme-Forget was also quite vocal arguing that despite the CPC's real efforts, the fiscal imbalance between the federal government and Québec was not resolved. For several members of the Conservative Party, Jean Charest has renounced his former Conservative friends but he also went against a certain non-aggression pact (Charbonneau and Lachapelle 2010, Lachapelle 2008).

During the 2019 Federal Election, this unwritten rule does not seem to exist in Canadian politics. Premiers Jason Kenney (United Conservative Party) from Alberta, Brian Pallister (Progressive Conservative) from Manitoba and Scott Moe (Center right) from Saskatchewan were involved at different degree during the campaign supporting in good part the Conservative party of Andrew Scheer. Premier Legault was also quite vocal when he clearly stated the six 'demands' from the Québec government that were supported by Québec citizens (% of support in bracket) (Girard 2019):

1. That Québec chooses the conditions for obtaining permanent residence, including level of proficiency in French and an assessment of the knowledge of Quebec values; (72%)
2. That Québec alone decides the number of immigrants (economic immigration, family reunification, refugees) welcomed on its territory; (71%)
3. That federally regulated corporations (e.g. banks) be subject to Bill 101; (71%)

4. That Québec alone manages the temporary foreign workers program to accelerate the arrival of these workers; (69%)
5. That the leaders of federal political parties commit not to challenge the law on state secularism adopted by the Government of Québec; (66%)
6. That a single tax return manages by the Government of Québec be implemented. (65%).

The potential voters of the BQ were very supportive of these claims more than followers of any other party. Liberal voters were also in favor at 51% of a single tax return managed by the Government of Québec. By supporting all these demands, the BQ was able to rally more voters.

The Key Issues of the Campaign in Québec

Among the top four issues of the campaign, the economy and taxes were the main concerns of voters both in Québec (36%) and in Canada outside of Quebec (43%). However, thanks to the sound economy in Québec with its lowest unemployment rates ever and a high number of jobs available, Québec voters were the last one to say that the economic voting is driving their voting intention. The second issue for Québec voters was the environment and the fight against climate change (21%) equally with social issues and helping those in need at 20%. Finally, and contrary to some expectations, the issue of immigration and identity was the concern of only 10% of Québec voters and only 7% of Canadian voters (Leger, September 25). So let's analyse how each of these four issues intertwined with voting identification.

However, in Québec, the economy and taxes were the main concern of 64% of the Conservative Party voters, 38% among Liberal and only 24% for BQ supporters. Not surprisingly, the environment and climate change were the top priority of the Green Party membership. Social issues and poverty were clearly the main issue of NDP voters at 42%. Among BQ voters, even if the economy was the top issue at 24%, the environmental challenge was second at 21%. Clearly, the Bloc Québécois was not a single-issue party being able to reach out several segments of the electorate under its umbrella.

The Economy and Taxes

The economy is always a key concern of voters in any electoral campaign and the issues of economic growth/decline, personal finance, and taxes mostly to the middle classes are at the heart of party platforms. During the 2019 Federal election, the economic folder brought different issues that involved Canada as a whole. Most parties competing in the elections lamented loss of power economy of the Canadian and Québec middle class. In particular, the widening gap between the average Canadian and the Canadian 1%, the economic influence that the economic giants have from the Web and the media in our Canadian markets and content, were examples quite often mentioned about the inequities of our fiscal system. The solutions were presented under the form of tax credits for the middle class (PLC), medical insurance covering a greater range of care and a heavier tax on the 1% (NPD) to tax credits (CPC), and cut in subsidies given to polluting companies (BQ).

As for the tax on Internet giants, imposing a tax seems to be an integral part of the platforms of the PLC, NPD and BQ. On the other hand, Québec finds itself once again in a delicate situation, Québec being the main producer and consumer of French-language media content in North America. The issue of foreign media in Canada mainly affects the Québec, because the attractiveness of foreign productions disaggregates the fragile profitability of productions in the Québec market, directing revenues from foreign productions presented in Québec and Canada to foreign economies. That is why the BQ, going against the consensus of the imposition of the tax on the media, proposes the royalty of 13% collected from GAFA (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon), "to which we could add Microsoft, Spotify, Netflix and many others benefit from the work of Québec creators and journalists. They pay no taxes in Canada. The Bloc Québécois proposes that Canada be inspired by France and impose the web giants at the height 3% of their activity on Canadian territory. The BQ also proposes the creation of a group of reflection bringing together the whole of the Francophonie on the promotion and protection of cultures French speakers on online platforms" (Bloc Québécois 2019).

In its platform, the BQ economic policies were clearly in line with the Québec nationalism of the Legault government. Support of the flagship of the Québec economy, to protect the 3500 jobs of SNC-Lavalin, to support foreign investments and technological start-ups, fighting tax havens, to support in agriculture the supply management system and the

prosperity of farms, to support Québec regions facing a shortage of qualified manpower, were among the proposals. These proposals were clearly in line with the actual concerns of the electorate.

Environment and the Fight Against Climate Change (Energy, Carbon Tax and Petroleum Pipeline)

The second important issue for Quebecers during the 2019 Federal Election was environment and how governments and citizens can respond to the global warming over fast climatic changes. Clearly several indicators, such as late winters, more ecological events and disasters are increasingly affecting the planet. Greta Thunberg's visit in Montreal on September 27, 2019 shed light on the importance of the environmental issues for Quebecers and clearly polarize the debate between the BQ and Liberal proposals to resolve this issue.

The central issue here was about the western Canadian industry, which is still very dependent on fossil and polluting energies, compared to the complex Quebec's energy that depends on hydroelectricity, a much cleaner energy. The challenge that developed during the 2019 elections demonstrated energy independence of Québec compared to neighbouring western provinces (Dumont 2005, 20). When suggesting projects acquisition of oil pipelines crossing Québec territory, the Québec population and officials from more than 35 cities and small towns opposed the Trudeau government' proposal, deploring the ecological costs associated with this project. To the suggestion of an "energy corridor" proposed by Andrew Scheer in the Conservatives' electoral platform, Yves-Francois Blancher and the BQ opposed it, stressing that Québec did not need Canadian oil but also why Quebecers should accept such project when Ontario has constantly refused to buy Québec hydroelectricity.

Therefore, the Bloc Québécois was proposing a "green tax / carbon tax," but we see a distinction dividing the question in two between the PLC / NPD and the BQ. The PLC wishes to maintain the format of a carbon tax and by introducing a gradual rate increase. The NDP mainly supports the same idea, whereas the BQ rather proposes a system of equalization, compensating for the greener provinces (notably Québec) and giving the burden to the provinces polluting the most (Boisclair, 22-09-2019). The issue of environmental protection and climate change, though that a pan-Canadian issue is not unanimous in the rest of Canada

as we observed a different approach in Québec from the rest of Canada (Froschauer 2011).

Social Issues, Helping Those in Need

During the last federal election, the BQ proposed a clear social-democratic platform renewing in some ways with its traditional political base. The goal was to appeal to those voters who had supported the NDP in 2011 and 2015. The BQ also wanted to get support from voters over 55 years old by proposing a reform of the federal pension programs, the income security supplement and to secure the private pension plans. As we know, more and more voters are and will be over 55 years old in the next few years and this new 'gray power' will be certainly quite appealing to political parties. The BQ was also proposing better services for peoples who stay at home and want to offer some tax credit for services receives privately.

In its program, the BQ did propose also better health services by asking the Federal government to transfer more resources to the provinces and an increase of 6% per year until in reach 25% of the total health cost in Québec. The Federal Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada headed by Roy Romanow recommended few year ago that the federal government should re-establish and invest some funds to help provinces to face the future challenges of our health system. The fiscal imbalance that was at the hearth of both the Parti Québécois (PQ) and the Liberal Party of Quebec (LPQ) in the early 2000 has never been completely resolved and the goal of the BQ in Ottawa will be to pressure Ottawa to fulfill his promises.

Concerning social housing policy, the BQ was in tune during the last campaign will all the groups asking for more social housing to facilitate the access of affordable housing for peoples and families, especially in the greater Montréal, where it is more and more difficult to get an apartment are a reasonable price. The BQ was also supportive of the proposal by the former leader of the CPC, Rona Ambrose, that judges must be better trained to respond to the sexual harassments' cases.

Immigration and Identity

The twenty-first century has been marked by a new wave of immigration to countries developed from the West. The mass crossing of refugees on Roxanne Road in Québec and the great amount of asylum seeking in

recent years causes discord in speeches policies of political parties during the electoral campaign. Canada is a country that is home to several refugees for several years and has built a reputation as a safe country for asylum seekers and viable for immigration. Thousands of immigrants arrive in Canada to search for a better life, and the Canadian government is present to facilitate their integration among the Canadian population. The debate during the 2019 electoral campaign was that the safe third country agreement, a Canada-US agreement on asylum seekers, encourages illegal immigration and asylum claims by immigrants crossing the Canadian-American border, for fear of being refused at the United States gates (Schué 2019). In Québec, this issue comes in the form of a fear for the loss of Quebec culture and the French language. Despite a certain autonomy conferred by Ottawa to the provincial government of Québec, Québec is still forced to follow a majority of Ottawa requests and recommendations.

The immigration issue therefore gives wind the Quebec CAQ government to make requests to Ottawa such as a reduction in immigration admitted to Québec, greater autonomy in selecting the type of landed immigrants based on provincial demand and the right to impose a value test. Quebecers to improve the integration of immigrants into a culturally diverse population different from the rest of Canada. While the other parties emphasize the distinct authority of the Québec facing immigration, they propose policies leaning on the status quo, proposing greater funding for integration and proposing to negotiate with the Prime Minister Legault of Québec in order to find a happy medium for its requests, the BQ supports nationalist demands of the CAQ leader.

Concerning Bill 21, Yves-Francois Blanchet argued during the campaign that he did not want to discuss the issue of religious signs but about the "Recognition of Quebec's choices." In the BQ platform, the party insist on the principle of the respect of Québec decision: "The National Assembly passed law 21 on secularism because the separation of religion and the state is a fundamental element of Québec identity. Our choices in terms of living together (vivre-ensemble) belong to us and Ottawa doesn't have to take our money to challenge directly or indirectly this law supported by a large majority of Quebecers. The BQ will oppose any desire by the federal government to challenge the right to Québec to make its own choices regarding secularism and living together" (Bloc Québécois 2019, 4).

The intention by the Legault government to brand Bill 21 as a natural extension of deeply held identity values of secularism, combined with reactions from the rest of Canada that were broadly oppositional, Québec voters were sensitive to any challenge of their cultural identity, laying the groundwork for an increase in support for the Bloc. However, the first, Bill 21 did not have a significant issue in the 2019 Federal election. The Québec confined nature of the debate meant that most people outside of Quebec had low political awareness of the issue, and thus did not comprehend much of the debate surrounding it. The subject was only brought up, once, during the English televised debate, and was not picked up on again outside of Québec, and none of the changes in party popularity outside of Quebec seem to have been related to that aspect of the debate.

Following the first official televised debate, which was the only high-profile moment the subject of Bill 21 received during the election, only two leaders experienced a significant swell of support in the polls: the NDP and the BQ. Given that Yves-Francois Blanchet was the only leader to give substantive comments on Bill 21, combined with the fact that there was some backlash against Trudeau in Québec for his apparent willingness to challenge the law, Blanchet's defence of the law indicated that he was in line with the Québec government and the Québec population. While the Bloc's popularity did rise following the debate, discussion on Bill 21 was not substantive enough to have any effect on Québec voters even if Justin Trudeau recognized that the Québec government as the right to impose linguistic tests to the new immigrants (Boisclair, October 10). Furthermore, Blanchet himself openly said that he did not want to talk about secularism or the bill during the election.

Conclusion

The electoral behavior of Quebec voters has been the subject of various speculations and explanations. Some have argued that Quebec voters have always sought to strike a balance between elected officials in Quebec and those chosen at the federal level. Others believe that Quebecers' vote has always been the result of linguistic division while others claim that they still prefer to support parties led by a Quebecer. However, electoral studies speak rather of a certain constancy of the voters as for their party line. In general, Québec voters have traditionally voted for the same political party or family in Québec and at the federal level. The hard core favorable to the PLQ had remained more or less the same for the Liberal Party of Canada

over the years except in special circumstances such as the aftermath of the sponsorship scandal.

However, the question of the support of the sovereigntist voters in the federal elections remains interesting and crucial for the future of the sovereigntist movement. Have the PQ activists been consistent in their political allegiance? If in the 1970s, they abstained from voting or voted blank following the strategy of the PQ, some still voted for the NDP, for other third parties and even in some cases for the LPC. They even helped elect Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservatives in 1984 and 1988.

Since the BQ arrived in Ottawa, the nationalist/sovereigntist vote found a new home base. There have been increasing contradictions as to the true objectives of Canadian federalists vis-à-vis Québec. The multiplication of minority governments clearly indicates the increased regionalization of Canadian politic. If we ignore Quebec's votes before the BQ arrived in Ottawa, we see that the CPC obtained at least a majority of seats in the House of Commons during the elections of 1972, 1974, 1979, 1980, 1984 and 1988; In addition, even though the rest of Canada had voted in the 1972, 1974, 1980 – and now 2019 elections for the CPC -, it was the Liberal Party of Canada that won the majority of seats thanks to the casting vote of Ontario. While in Québec the debates continued over the merits of Federalism vs Québec sovereignty, Quebecers were electing members of the Liberal Party, the rest of Canada voted overwhelmingly for the Progressive Conservative Party. The creation of the Bloc Québécois almost 30 years ago at least made it possible to demonstrate that two social projects lived side by side without really knowing each other (Legault 2019).

The political climate of Canada after the 2019 federal elections seems to have gotten more complicated than simplified. With a minority liberal government in place, the Bloc Québécois seems ready to play a more active role in the decision-making process of the House of Commons rather than simply be the only federal sovereigntist party in Ottawa. The selection of party leaders this time around did not seem to influence Québec voters to vote for either the LPC or the NDP, even if the liberal got more seats and percentage of the vote in Québec. The Conservative party ran in Québec a campaign that heavily favoured the West and was misaligned with the social and economic realities of the vast majority of Québec voters. In front of these choices of 'national' leaders, Yves-Francois Blanchet was a well-spoken leader for the "nouveau" BQ (Auger 2019). With a high likelihood of a minority government at the end of the campaign, the Bloc Québécois managed to rally voters around its newfound

'nationalist/sovereigntist' approach. With regards to decentralization or the respect of Québec autonomy, the resurgence of the BQ shows that the Québec/Ottawa struggle is not away. In fact, the rise of the BQ as a clear subnational party in favour of Québec nationalism.

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CHAPTER 6

The Populist Impact: The People's Party and the Green Party

Jamie Gillies

Abstract The Brexit Referendum and the 2016 election in the United States upended traditional political marketing and branding techniques, not to mention an extended era of politically correct executive leader discourse. But Canada has seen this as well, with the election of Rob Ford in Toronto, the 2015 niqab debate, and more politicians speaking out unfiltered through their own social media channels. This chapter considers the 2019 election as a test of whether populist and nationalist themes, kept relatively isolated in recent Canadian elections, are used as election tactics. It considers the failures of both the People's Party and Maxime Bernier, and the Green Party and Elizabeth May, in capturing either right wing or left wing populism around issues such immigration and the environment, during an era that seems ripe for these kinds of appeals. The chapter raises the question of whether in Canadian political culture, given the resilience of non-partisan voters and the lack of party identification, these types of appeals are effective.

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Introduction

The Brexit Referendum in the United Kingdom and the 2016 election in the United States upended traditional political marketing and branding techniques, not to mention an extended era of politically correct executive leader discourse. But Canada has seen this as well, with the election of Rob Ford in Toronto, the 2015 niqab debate concerning wedge issue identity politics (see Chap. 8), and more politicians speaking out unfiltered through their own social media channels. The 2019 election was a test of whether populist and nationalist themes, kept relatively isolated in recent Canadian elections, are used as election tactics. But parties need to be wary of Brexit, as well as the Trump and Clinton 2016 campaigns, since both could be considered failures in terms of generating enthusiasm beyond the base and expanding appeals to moderate swing voters. In Canada, given the resilience of non-partisan voters and the lack of party identification, these types of 2016 appeals may backfire.

The federal election of 2019 saw Canada veer towards both right-wing and left-wing populist appeals with a new party billing itself along the lines of right-wing populism elsewhere in the United States and Europe, and a group of voters focused on climate change as a cause that outweighs all other policy areas. But how impactful populism really is in Canada is less clear. Part of the challenge is that the European-style populism driven by anti-immigration slogans, Islamophobia, and these appeals to nationalism and state sovereignty, does not fit well in Canada which has embraced multiculturalism for decades. That is not to say it has not taken root but support for these populist appeals in Canada was there long before these neo-populist benchmarks like the Brexit referendum and Trump's 2016 campaign. However, populism failed to take off in 2019 and has shown signs that it is receding. Whether the appeal was about immigration or it was about climate change, it has not manifested itself like other countries. This chapter considers the populist impact with respect to the marketing and branding campaigns of both the People's Party of Canada and the Green Party of Canada. It attempts to answer the broad question of why these two parties failed to capitalize on right wing populism and left wing environmental populism in a global era that seems amenable to both messages.

Understanding Populism in Canada

To recognize where this outlet is coming from and why it has limited success, the modern roots of populism need to be addressed. There have always been populist tendencies in Canada. If we exclude the histories of the two brokerage parties, the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) and the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), populist parties have existed for over a century. Part of the reason is that Canada's founding and subsequent history never closed off the labour socialism political stream that was snuffed out in the United States in the 1910s. As a result, more radical politics, driven by labour uncertainty in urban areas and poor working conditions, along with an agrarian populism with socialist tendencies from farm collectives, combined to form a brand of populism that challenged the elites of Montreal and Toronto. Two distinct cleavages of that populism formed; one was the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, a prairie-centered party that combined the agrarian, urban labour and socialist strands that would cease being populist following the election of Tommy Douglas's Saskatchewan government in the 1950s. Prior to the CCF, the success of the various United Farmers Parties of the four western provinces, left-wing progressive populism had always been an undercurrent of the subsequent New Democratic Party. On occasion, such as bringing in universal health care, policies of various CCF and NDP governments have had elements of populism. In recent years, labour and social policy activists have split their support between the NDP and the federal and various provincial Green parties. The Green Party of Canada (GPC) has always had an activist, populist grassroots but the issue of climate change has created a populist fervor among Green parties worldwide.

The other strand is more fitting with the populism that seems to return to Canada every generation. The Social Credit movement was an anti-socialist, social conservative political movement that took hold in western provinces in the 1930s. Elected as the government of Alberta, Bill Aberhart, and later Ernest Manning established a western-based populist party that would become the governments of British Columbia and Alberta until the 1970s.

At the national level and in provinces east of Manitoba, populism did exist but with limited electoral success. The Creditistes in Quebec, various agrarian parties, provincial New Democrats and labour organizations, and small provincial parties organized around a particular policy or grievance with the government sometimes would win provincial seats or form the balance of power.

At the national level, just as the provincial populist parties had died out, with Social Credit losing a landslide 1991 British Columbia provincial election, two parties, the Reform Party of Canada and the Bloc Quebecois (BQ) formed to upend federal politics.

The BQ is not inherently populist but the Parti Quebecois (PQ) during the 1995 Quebec referendum made populist appeals to Francophones in attempts to divide the Quebec population. This was epitomized on the night of the vote when PQ leader Jacques Parizeau blamed "l'argent et des votes ethniques" for the referendum loss. The sop to anti-Semitism and Anglophone immigrants tarnished the reputation of the PQ and BQ. Quebec populism has increasingly focused around Quebec societal values, with former PQ leader Pauline Marois's secular charter as a prime example. The election of the Coalition Avenir Quebec (CAQ) and Francois Legault in 2018 shows how populist appeals can be absorbed into Canadian political parties.

The Reform Party led by Preston Manning, son of Ernest Manning, was driven by a right-wing populist ideology and grounded in the western alienation felt by voters in the western most provinces but with unique Manning ideological ideas, including a libertarian personal responsibility flank as well as a family values social conservative flank.

While all of these political movements developed on the periphery of the political centre in the eastern cities, they share a common anti-elitist sentiment. But the similarities stop there. Left-wing progressive populists attack corporate control and elite institutions when they fail to protect workers, human rights, and gradually over time, the larger social safety net and services.

Right-wing populists speak to "common sense" solutions, individual responsibility and often blame establishment policies, especially with respect to immigration and social policies that expand rights, and target minority groups they see is destructive to the social fabric. One can draw a direct line from Aberhart's Social Credit philosophies, with evangelical Christian elements that trafficked in anti-Semitic and anti-establishment views, to Maxime Bernier, leader of the People's Party of Canada (PPC), the new populist party that advocated "smart populism" with a 50% reduction in immigrants to Canada (People's Party of Canada 2019) as well as courting Islamophobic and family values candidates and views.

Modern Populism in Canada

Following the Reform/Canadian Alliance merger with the Progressive Conservatives into the CPC, as well as the decline in populist appeals in the era of revived Quebec sovereigntist discussion, both major parties seemed to avoid populist appeals. The post-1995 Chrétien and Martin era as well as all but the last year of the Harper years, populism was relegated to sidelines in national debates. Stockwell Day, the leader of the Canadian Alliance campaigned in the 2000 election on a family values platform that had populist elements but this was rejected by eastern Canada and the failures of the Alliance to capitalize led to the unification of the right. The only really successful populist politician was Toronto mayor Rob Ford, who became mayor in 2010 on a platform of suburban resentment at the downtown Toronto core.

With the final weeks of the 2015 federal election campaign, populism returned to Canadian politics. Canada had largely avoided a national discussion on neo-Islamophobia, stemming from a post-9/11 public ill at ease with Islam. While the Charter of Values discussion in Quebec was driven both by a Quebec cultural nationalist and an anti-Muslim banning of head scarves, the national discussion had been largely avoided by the major parties keeping a safety valve on views outside of the mainstream. But by the end of the 2015 election campaign, as Harper and the CPC slipped in the polls, they chose to discuss the niqab and whether this religious tradition did not fit with Canadian values. It was a campaign tactic that initially aimed at focusing on expanding Conservative support in and around Quebec City but it gradually became a national discussion. The campaign then proposed a Canadian government hotline to focus on "barbaric cultural practices." Harper tried to claim the high road, arguing that niqabs were "rooted in a culture that is anti-women" but the anti-Islamic hotline proved to be a step too far. While the Conservatives won more seats in Quebec, they lost the national election as the public turned on Harper's divisive populist desperation. Andrew Coyne (2015), summarizing the fault lines exposed by the Conservative playing the niqab card, argued that:

> We talk a lot about Canadian values in this debate. I am inclined to think that, in their own way, it is the niqabistes who best embody those values. In their ornery unwillingness to bend to others' sensitivities, in their insistence

> on going their own way on a matter of principle, those women are in the finest Canadian tradition of hellraising. I think we ought to let them be.

The election of Justin Trudeau led to a Canadian moment in which the prime minister and the values of the country were all of a sudden in step with progressive social change epitomized with the Obama coalition. But it did not last long.

2016 saw both the Brexit referendum in which voters in the UK decided to leave the European Union, driven by populist nationalist UK Independence Party and parts of both the Conservative and Labour parties. The Brexit fault lines exposed a genuine racist undertone to the vote, as hinterland constituencies outside of the England's major cities condemned the decades of European Union immigration. Part of this was driven by unveiled racism, attacking subcontinent and South Asian immigration even more than European migration, something which had little historical to do with the role of the UK in the Europe. But Brexit became a rallying cry for populists everywhere. In the United States, Donald Trump's campaign focused on populist anti-immigration closed borders themes as they shook the Republican establishment and won a razor thin election victory over Hillary Clinton. At the same time, driven by the German government decision to allow over a million refugees fleeing the Syrian civil war crisis, right wing populism driven by anti-immigration returned to Europe in almost every country. A mix of old pro-Nazi, pro-communist nationalist forces appealed to public perception of porous borders and racist stereotypes to topple long standing regimes. In Germany in particular, the rise of a far-right alternative has shaken the German political system to its core as Andrea Merkel has seen her party' support slip amidst German political turmoil.

Canada was not immune to the populist turn but it occurred at the provincial level first. Doug Ford's Ontario election victory in 2017 signaled that populist appeals could work in Canada and that politicians can play on the resentments of voters. Ford's victory demonstrated that Trump-style focusing on simplistic messages that explained complex problems to voters could work. It did not help matters that the incumbent Liberals under Kathleen Wynne were deeply unpopular. Ford's victory also exposed the limitations of populism as well. Only by luck did they avoid an NDP surge in the middle of the campaign that could have hampered their victory. It also showed that had Christine Elliot, the moderate

candidate that nearly defeated Ford in the leadership contest, won she may have even had a larger share of the vote.

But Ford's family style of playing on suburban resentment was not necessarily a model for long-lasting effectiveness. Within months of the election, Ford's unpopularity matched Kathleen Wynne's and his flurry of unpromised cuts to social services angered even diehard Conservative voters.

In 2018, the Quebec and New Brunswick elections also saw populist appeals move to the forefront of the campaign. Francois Legault and the CAQ won a massive majority government in 2018 as a centre-right soft-sovereigntist party with populist tendencies. While not a classic populist party, they certainly took the PQ secular values charter and repackaged as a policy aiming straight at Quebec cultural institutions. Without an effective opposition campaign and with the deeply unpopular incumbent Liberals unable to mount much of a campaign, CAQ won a massive victory. The enacting of Bill 21, a ban on religious symbols in the public sector, has widespread support among Francophone Quebec despite court challenges and protests.

In New Brunswick, an Anglophone based right wing party called the People's Alliance led by Kris Austin won three seats in the 2018 election and were able to secure the balance of power in the legislature by partnering with the Progressive Conservatives. The People's Alliance platform is driven by its signature policy, namely an end to duality, a system of bilingual and bicultural accommodation in public services that has been in place since the 1960s. Austin's party, despite trying to tone down the language rhetoric associated with the upstart Confederation of Regions Party of the 1990s, that formed the official opposition in New Brunswick as an Anglophone rights party, the supporters of the People's Alliance blamed bilingualism and an unsubstantiated almost paranoid belief that Moncton-area elites control the government.

And in Alberta during the 2019 campaign, Jason Kenney, capitalizing on an unpopular NDP government led by Rachel Notley that surprised everyone four years earlier by winning a majority government, made repeated populist appeals to voters, channeling an almost Republican Party resentment towards Ottawa, Justin Trudeau, the NDP, whom he characterized as communists, and any group that did not fit an Alberta values litmus test. During the campaign, Kenney attacked gay-straight alliances at high schools, perceived Edmonton bureaucratic elitism and the unpopularity of the Trudeau Liberals. While not all populist, some

candidates were openly homophobic and Islamophobic, and yet Kenney won an electoral landslide.

Left wing populism is different from both an organizational capacity and from a political standpoint. Picking up from the social progressivism of the CCF/NDP, populism on the left has not been much of a factor in elections. While social protesting is certainly part of the Canadian political landscape, the NDP had traditionally occupied the populist left space in national elections, especially with respect to labour, environmental and economic justice issues. But since Jack Layton's passing, the NDP no longer represents all of those populist voices. That has led to a fragmentation politically of the progressive left between the NDP and the Greens. It has also allowed the federal Liberal Party space to rhetorically claim left wing issues such as environmental and Indigenous social justice. Justin Trudeau successfully ran on those issues in 2015. But the failure to deliver on his two signature issues is one of the reasons why Trudeau was reduced to a minority government in 2019.

The difference in 2019 however was that no other party was able to claim the mantle and harness left wing populism. In fact, the Green Party's very campaign seemed to eschew its activist wing and play for the middle of the road voter. In an era of widespread environmental protests, as well as Indigenous activism on a large scale, the Greens were incapable of managing this populism.

The 2019 Federal Election: The People's Party, Populist Appeals and Limitations

White supremacists, racists, homophobic and transphobic candidates, anti-elite conspiracy theorists, family values conservatives who support gay conversion therapy, anti-feminists who blame elites for an anti-men agenda are all part of the Canadian political scene today. But the 2019 federal election exposed the limitations of any of these appeals at a national level. This despite the creation of a genuine far right populist party that could threaten the amalgamation of Conservative movements in Canada. As Duane Bratt and others have argued, with that unite the right movement, populism ceased being a good national appeal. In many respects, the PPC, with Maxime Bernier, is a throwback to the Reform Party appeals as he tells voters he is the Albertan from Quebec. Bernier has courted a loose amalgamation of fringe political ideologies driven by a reduction in

immigration including Christian Heritage supporters, the alt-right, white supremacists, anti-Islamic voters, Quebec conservatives who lean sovereigntist, family values anti-LGBTQ politicians, and supporters like Rob Ford's widow Renata Ford.

But populism did not play a major role in the 2019 campaign. Bernier has been unable to garner much support nationally and in leaders debate performances, he was mostly ignored. Andrew Scheer, Conservative leader, even distanced himself from Bernier and the PPC in the one English language debate. Even on Bill 21, which is still being debated at the provincial level and is subject to court challenges, the federal parties are unified in their dislike of the law, despite weasel words by all of the leaders in not wanting to offend the Quebec electorate. Legault warned all the parties that any incursion into this debate or attempts to challenge it would hurt their ability to attract Francophone voters. Despite widespread opposition to the law outside of Quebec, and some provincial premiers like Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister forcefully opposing it, it has been more convenient for the federal party leaders to avoid the issue.

The CPC platform offered a half-populist policy promise to lower foreign aid by 25% and to stop providing aid to wealthier countries in exchange for putting that money back in the pocket of 'hard working' Canadians. They have also coordinated with provincial Conservative counterparts on a useful populist tack with attacks on the Liberal government focused on the 'job killing' carbon tax. While not denying climate change is occurring, Scheer and other provincial Conservative parties suggest that pricing carbon and having taxpayers foot the bill is not good policy. But in terms of populist appeals, the Tories did little to try to win over the far right. Scheer in fact spent much of his time as leader since 2016 distancing himself and the party from candidates who have written racist and homophobic posts on social media, as well as a Conservative senator, Lynn Beyak, who argued that residential schools provided positive experiences. Scheer even categorically promised to take social conservative policy wedge issues off the table with a Conservative government. Further, far right and alt-right media outlets like Rebel Media have been sidelined somewhat from the CPC mainstream after the Canadian public roundly condemned opinion pieces written during the Charlottesville protests. Scheer's only foray into populist politics was tepid support for the 'yellow jackets' but really only in attacking the LPC government's record on support for the oil and gas industry in Alberta. Unlike many

right-of-centre parties elsewhere, Scheer has tried to steer the Conservatives towards the centre.

Perhaps the most telling moment in the 2019 election campaign with respect to populism came in the only English language debate when Scheer differentiated himself from Maxime Bernier, who he narrowly defeated to win the Conservative leadership. Scheer said that:

> You have gone from someone who used to believe in an immigration system that was fair, orderly, and compassionate and now you are making your policy based on trying to get likes and retweets from the darkest part of Twitter. (Aiello 2019)

One of Bernier's problems was the opportunistic way he has embraced alt-right tropes despite the fact he ran a leadership contest for the Conservatives as a libertarian-minded fiscal hawk. While some populists have probably liked that the People's Party has some funding and some organization, it was driven top down from one person as opposed to bottom up through a grass roots movement. This made Bernier a bit of an outlier even in the right-wing populist movement. It is as if Bernier was running on a Trump-lite agenda but with Ron Paul as the intellectual force behind it as opposed to Steve Bannon.

Preston Manning's development of the Reform Party started with a rural Alberta base that grew gradually over three election cycles. Bernier failed to concentrate on an area of the country, including his own backyard in and around Quebec City. The messaging of the PPC in 2019 was inconsistent. Save for the focus on a 50% reduction of immigrants to Canada, they have attracted candidates with different and sometimes competing agendas, most notably with right to life and family values activists joining the party early as well as a number of anti-LQBTQ candidates. Bernier seems to have only been able to attract disaffected Tories who feel they no longer have a party home and outright racists who publicly air Islamophobic and anti-Semitic sentiment, not to mention conspiracy theories. Unlike a populist campaign like the 2016 Trump campaign, where fringe-based supporters made up a small section of his actual voters, Bernier seems to only have a following among these groups.

Bernier was also unable to create a national debate on immigration either. In August 2019, he was criticized for putting up billboards in parts of the country that said "Say No to Mass Immigration." Instead of a supportive grass roots of the party selling that message, the advertising

company that produced them condemned them after a public outcry and they were taken down. The PPC had such diffuse support that Bernier had to crisscross the country without concentrating on any seats except his own riding of Beauce. Even there, voters turned on him on election night.

Even the PPC advertisements and messaging lacked coherence. What is interesting is that Bernier really does not advance an economic populism about reinvigorating blue-collar and manufacturing jobs. This puts him at odds with successful populist appeals. He focused on corporate welfare abolition and leveling corporate tax rates. He also attacked multiculturalism and political correctness. This fits with the conservative right concerns with elitism and free speech. Bernier also focused attacks on ending equalization, ending supply management for agriculture, and rejecting global climate change. The problem here is that the 'populist' elements lack coherence, without that push for an economic populist agenda. And in between the lines of these policies is a libertarian up by the bootstraps ethos, which runs antithetical to pure populism (People's Party of Canada 2019).

It is telling that the People's Party chose an advertising campaign that was almost exclusively social media based, driven by the PPC and Bernier's presence on Twitter and Facebook. Without financing for television ads, the PPC spent $22,645 on Facebook advertising between June–October 2019. Almost all of these ads were targeted at the three youngest male demographics (ages 18–24, 25–34, 35–44) and with no geographical concentration (Facebook 2019a). So even in their targeted ads, the People's Party did not seem to concentrate on one region specifically.[1]

As the election drew to a close, it came out that the CPC had hired long time strategist Warren Kinsella to target Bernier and the PPC in an attempt to get him removed from the leader debates during the campaign. While Bernier was allowed to participate, Kinsella's involvement demonstrated two interesting things about Canadian populism. The first was that while Scheer and the CPC may have been motivated for political expedient reasons to exclude Bernier and not split the vote on the right, they also publicly differentiated themselves and separated themselves from much of Bernier's rhetoric. There was no embrace of People's Party ideas within the Conservative Party platform or in Scheer's words and speeches on the

[1] I am grateful to Tamara Small for sharing her presentation from the 2019 Atlantic Provinces Political Science Association annual conference and for the links to the Facebook Ad Library, which provide details about paid political spending.

campaign trail. The second was that parties and strategists were not afraid to call out racist, xenophobic and homophobic behaviour, even right of centre parties. Credit is perhaps due to Andrew Scheer and Warren Kinsella for standing up to the most virulent elements of populist appeals, especially around immigration, even if the campaign to discredit Scheer was not primarily motivated out of a spirit of altruism.

Bernier's failure, given the exposure the People's Party received nationally, likely will set back populism in Canada. Even the so-called Wexit movement that has gained steam following the 2019 election is regionally based, lacks leadership that is articulate or strong, and comes across as a disorganized regional Tea Party movement. The populist caterwauling from Premiers Doug Ford and Jason Kenney is not popular within Ontario and Alberta as "common sense" solutions for delivery of services fall on an electorate disillusioned with their leadership. Given the coronavirus crisis, even the most populist elected leaders have largely fallen in line with support for the Trudeau-led federal government.

The Green Party: Climate Change and Populism

On September 27, 2019, just weeks before the Canadian federal election, Greta Thunberg led a climate change protest in Montreal that gathered an estimated half a million people. The majority of Canadians, like other social democratic nations, are strongly in favour of immediate action on climate change. The environment proved to be the most important issue for voters in the 2019 election. Each major party included a climate change plank to their platform. Even the CPC whose support in Alberta might have blunted an environmental message still offered a platform that addressed the Paris agreement. All of this begs the question, left wing eco-populism and environmental populism should have been on the table during this election and yet why did those voices not find a political home in the election? The GPC especially should have been able to marshal grassroots environmental populism in an election that should have provided them with an electoral breakthrough. But this result was not to be. Guided by a hapless marketing campaign and leadership even unaware that it had real strength in parts of the country, Elizabeth May and the GPC actually received less support in the 2019 election than it had previously. Ironically, it was Jagmeet Singh and the NDP, who took the environmental mantle from the GPC and won some of what would have been a green-centred vote distrusting of Trudeau's rhetoric. Singh effectively used social media

to mock the Liberals' environmental record. Singh's tweets about Trudeau's pipeline purchase started trending and helped lead to a surge of support for the NDP. The hashtag #youboughtapipeline trended online and helped Singh re-establish NDP bona fides on left wing social issues. Still, voters motivated by the environment did not overwhelmingly support the NDP. But nor did they support the GPC.

The GPC problems started with their election slogan. As if focus grouped by middle of the road voters, for some reason it became "Not Left. Not Right. Forward Together". This is similar to right wing populist slogans as an alternative to the main brokerage parties. It also seemed to suggest that GPC supporters were centrists who had abandoned the LPC and the CPC. While this may be true for some disaffected former party supporters, the GPC grassroots is resolutely left of the NDP on a lot of issues, with the environment often as the most important issue. The slogan and marketing of May as a centrist alternative voice did not match with the party's true support nor where their growth lies. While it might have been effective in May's own riding on Vancouver Island, GPC support elsewhere in the country is a grassroots driven left wing support, especially in regions where NDP support has declined like Atlantic Canada.

The messaging by the GPC was also overly complicated. Where Singh saw the opportunity to say no to a pipeline, May had a complicated relationship with this file and at one time had favoured pipelines over rail transport for crude oil and bitumen. But in her responses to how to tackle climate change, May's brand of nuance was not made for 2019. Instead of screaming from the rafters "Now, and at all cost," May seemed lost when discussions turned to climate change expressing disappointment with Trudeau but without becoming the leader of the climate fight. Some of this undoubtedly is the double standard sexism on a debate stage with men yelling over each other. But some too rests with her inability to coalition build during this election cycle. That is linked to their failed party messaging.

The one bright spot for the GPC was where environmental populism was harnessed effectively. In the federal riding of Fredericton, in New Brunswick, the GPC activists and organizers on the ground seemed to defy the national party and rely instead on the hard-won gains they had made at the provincial level. Using many of the same activists and supporters at two levels of government, they concentrated on a riding that had been hard hit by climate change. Fredericton had experienced two consecutive 'once in a century floods' and in Jenica Atwin, the GPC found a

candidate who was a quick study and who was able to articulate why climate change was important to voters. Fredericton is a bellwether riding for the Liberals and Conservatives, and a reliable indicator of political winds across the country. But in 2019, the GPC won a three-way race that was not a harbinger of any political change. The GPC vote actually declined in most parts of the country in an election where voters cared about climate change.

The GPC campaign team's lack of understanding of or unwillingness to acknowledge Green support in both New Brunswick and especially in Prince Edward Island, where the provincial Green Party is now the official opposition, helped to tank the campaign where it could have had a breakthrough in a number of ridings. Their failure to mount a serious campaign in Guelph, in rural northern provincial federal ridings where environmental justice, especially in Indigenous communities, could drive Green support, and in particular in Atlantic Canada, was hard for GPC activists to take.

The GPC's haphazard marketing and branding is particularly evident in analyzing their social media spending in 2019. The Greens spent $54,368 on Facebook ads between June–October 2019. Almost all of the ads were focused on voters in British Columbia and Quebec (Facebook 2019b). The ads in Quebec focused on candidates they believed had a shot, likely the result of uncertainty about the Quebec electorate in 2019. Almost none of the ads targeted Atlantic Canada and not a single national ad focused on Jenica Atwin. Despite internal polling and genuine belief within the Fredericton community that it was a three-way race, the GPC provided almost no support for Atwin until late in the game with local ad-buys. But none of the social media ad targeting funds were spent on her.

Conclusion: Is Canada a Bulwark Against Populism?

While Canada's centre-right political parties at the provincial and federal level are willing to engage a populist policy area when it suits them, especially if they see a way to cut into support for left-of-centre parties, and they are willing to use social media and align themselves with right wing organizations willing to spread falsehoods and misinformation, the CPC, as well as most of the provincial PC and Conservative parties, have not endorsed populism. Conservative politicians are well aware of the group of people who would be persuaded by populist messaging. But thus far, including in the 2019 federal campaign, they have refrained from the kind

of race and immigration dog whistling associated with right wing populism. They have stepped over the line before as with the niqab debate but, like the LPC, on most populist issues they tread lightly.

For those concerned about Maxime Bernier and Doug Ford, who are trafficking in populist rhetoric and utilizing strategists who see the potential in populist appeals, they should be worried. So far, we have had a couple of populist leaders win leadership contests and hijack a party, as Ford did in Ontario. We have seen the return of a couple of grass roots provincial movements based around the airing of long-standing grievances. And Bernier was an odd fit for a populist party given his lengthy establishment resume and contradictory ideological leanings. But that is not to say the PPC cannot build a grass roots network that could legitimize contemporary right-wing populism in a Canadian context. It just may take a couple of election cycles to establish how populism succeeds.

In an election year in which a 15-year-old girl from Sweden was the most recognizable face of populism in the world, the GPC seemed to refuse to join that fight to develop a generation of climate change activists. Their timidity and a branding and marketing exercise that placed them to the right of the NDP was a major mistake. The lack of support for candidates who had a credible chance demonstrates that the Greens are hapless with respect to national branding and marketing. Jenica Atwin represents the future of Green populism and is likely best positioned to become the leader of a movement that could combine environmental populism, Indigenous activism, and economic justice issues into a credible alternative to the NDP. The 2020 rail blockades have exposed the governing Liberals as either non-resolute or just hypocritical on Trudeau's signature environmental and Indigenous files. The Greens have an opportunity to claim that mantle in the next election. But they need a change in leadership and a change in political marketing. Fanning the flames of populism can be a dangerous game sometimes. But the Greens have to realize that it is in their interest to at least try to engage emerging activists in which left wing populist themes are prime motivators.

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CHAPTER 7

Go Knock Doors: "New" Dimensions in Market Intelligence

David Coletto

Abstract The 2006 Canadian election is considered a pivotal election with respect to the introduction of new market research techniques and approaches by the Stephen Harper campaign team. This development led to a dramatic evolution in public opinion research. The new techniques have heralded an approach more akin to market intelligence than traditional public opinion research. This chapter consider market research in the context of the 2019 election by using in-depth interviews with campaign managers and research leads from Canada's three largest political parties. If offers interesting findings and concludes that sometimes the best approaches for new market research innovations are simply to double down on traditional techniques such as knocking on doors.

Keywords Market intelligence • Market research • Data-based politics • Public opinion research • Traditional marketing techniques

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@Goknockdoors is a Twitter account that was created in August 2015. Its description stated that "Liberals win by knocking doors. Go do that." In the age of predictive analytics, big data, and Cambridge Analytica, that seems out of step. But as political parties grapple with, and take of advantage of, new technologies, what is old appears to be new again. As Susan Delacourt of the *Toronto* Star reported in August 2019, a few weeks before the official start of the federal election campaign, the election was shaping up to be a "door-to-door election campaign" (Delacourt 2019). But going door to door is no longer just a tool to introduce a candidate to voters or to ask a household to put a lawn sign in front of their home. It has become an important, maybe the most important, source of market intelligence for Canadian political parties.

Without market intelligence, political parties cannot seek advantage over other parties. By integrating the electorate's needs and wants into the development of their political product, parties and candidates can better respond to changing environments, evolve as issues and circumstances change, and ultimate become more market oriented. For this reason, market intelligence lies at the core of political marketing and how a political party or campaign uses market intelligence signals the type of orientation the organization has to its political market.

Using in-depth interviews with campaign managers and research leads from Canada's three largest political parties,[1] this chapter explores the evolution in market intelligence in Canadian federal elections by answering two questions:

1. How did Canada's political parties use market intelligence to learn what voters wanted, devise their strategies, and react to campaign events?
2. Was the 2019 Canadian General Election a continuation of the trend towards digitization and data-based politics or did it represent a departure from recent developments?

The tools and methods used to gather market intelligence have evolved as technology and knowledge have improved and changed. The 2019

[1] Hamish Marshall, CPC campaign manager, Jennifer Howard, NDP campaign manager, and Daniel Arnold, LPC pollster and research lead each agreed to not only be interviewed but have their names associated with their comments in this chapter. Each of the interviewees also reviewed the chapter and their comments for accuracy.

Canadian general election offers insight into the new dimensions of market intelligence as Canada's main political parties refined innovations from the previous election, utilized core research methodologies, and shifted their primary gathering techniques away from the telephone and towards digital sources and more rudimentary, and somewhat surprising, door knocking.

Using these first hand accounts adds to the political marketing literature on market intelligence. Qualitative research is essential to exploring the market intelligence methods used by parties to understand voters and this chapter aims to fill in gaps in the research. The use of market intelligence in the lead up to and during the 2019 Canadian general election represents both continuity and change for the main political parties. For the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC), it was about optimizing the efforts made in 2015 to professionalize its data and research operations, while continuing its open and integrated data-based decision-making structure. For the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), the first after the Stephen Harper era, the 2019 election was led by a researcher and data-focused campaign manager, who also relied heavily on data and research to make decisions. It also shifted its primary voter contact mode away from telephone outreach and towards door-to-door canvassing. The New Democratic Party (NDP), constrained by its budget, relied less on market intelligence than in the past two elections as it sought to market a new leader in its more traditional role as a niche player in the political market.

Market Intelligence and Political Marketing in Canada

Market intelligence is to political marketing what a foundation is to a home. Strategies and tactics are built on top of a deep knowledge of the political market. The concept of political marketing is strongly linked to the gathering and use of market intelligence. Without market intelligence, political marketing does not work. The study of political marketing in Canada has included an assessment of the form, development, and evolution of market intelligence by political parties. While Canadian political parties have often incorporated and learned from innovations in other countries or jurisdictions (Giasson et al. 2012), the approach political parties have taken to understand voters often follows its orientation with voters.

As Canadian political parties shifted from being primarily product-oriented organizations to sales-oriented, their use of market intelligence expanded, using research to better understand how to sell their candidates and platforms to voters. The widespread use of voter surveys, tracking polls, and focus groups helped connect campaigns to voters directly. The intelligence was used to inform strategies, optimize messaging, and track performance during an election campaign. As the political parties sought to become market-oriented, more sophisticated market intelligence tools were incorporated including voter segmentation, centralized voter databases populated with extensive direct voter contact operations, and digital advertising analytics. The CPC was the leader in developing a powerful database that it used for fundraising, voter contact, and voter mobilization efforts. The LPC and NDP, recognizing that they were at a disadvantage, soon tried to catch up.

There was also a shift away from using external research consultants such as "official pollsters" and bringing the research or market intelligence function in house (Turcotte 2012). In-house researchers worked closely with a new crop of big data experts, who introduced the parties to predictive analytics, and integrated all the data sources into centralized consoles or dashboards that senior campaign leaders and local campaigns could access to help measure performance and better understand their respective political markets (Patten 2018, 53).

Based on how market intelligence was deployed in the 2019 election, both the LPC and CPC parties in Canada appear to be market-oriented. They appear committed to understanding "the expressed and latent wants and needs of voters" and integrating that knowledge throughout the thinking and decision making within the marketing function of the party (Giasson et al. 2012, 7). The NDP aspires to be market-oriented, but both internal debates about the role of research and market intelligence and resource limitations have made it hard for it to become market-oriented (McGrane 2019).

But the 2019 campaign raises further questions that are addressed in this chapter, namely, did the 2019 Canadian election represent continuity or change in terms of how Canadian political parties used market intelligence and how they gathered that intelligence? And how did technological change impact these choices?

Market Intelligence in the 2019 Election

To understand the new dimensions of market intelligence in the 2019 election, in-depth interviews were conducted with party insiders with deep knowledge about their party's approach to research, data, and market intelligence. In early 2020, I interviewed Hamish Marshall, CPC campaign manager, Jennifer Howard, NDP campaign manager, and Daniel Arnold, LPC pollster and research lead. Each interview lasted about 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted either in-person or over the phone. All three agreed for their comments to be attributed to them.

The remainder of the chapter reports on what these insiders shared about the party's approach to market intelligence, what was different from previous elections, and they learned from the experience.

The Liberal Party of Canada

"The culture was already there," according to Dan Arnold when asked to describe the Liberal Party's approach to market intelligence in the interview conducted in early 2020. And that culture was directly linked to a change in the party's leadership with the election of Justin Trudeau. "If you go back to when Justin Trudeau became Liberal leader, there was definitely a big switch in the party…to being much more data-driven and using data to make those types of decisions."

As the incumbent government seeking its second mandate from voters in 2019, the LPC's approach to market intelligence was similar to its approach four years earlier. Although the party lost seven points of market share and was reduced to a minority in Parliament, its understanding of political marketing was thorough and deep.

This was not always the case. As Susan Delacourt notes, former Liberal Party president Alf Apps lamented on the state of the party's market intelligence after the party's historic defeat during the 2011 Canadian election (Delacourt 2016). Comparing his party to that of the successful Conservatives, he argued the Conservatives have "pioneered a form of campaigning in Canada that turns politics into a highly sophisticated science, based almost exclusively on data and evidence, with its political messaging, based on detailed individualized and aggregated intelligence" (Delacourt 2016, 287–288). The Liberals, by contrast, were far behind in both capacity and willingness to use data and market intelligence to develop its product and make informed decisions.

The party's victory four years later in 2015, from 36 seats to 184, was a political marketing master class in taking a compelling political product (Mr. Trudeau), incorporating advanced market intelligence into every aspect of the party's organization, and converting a desire for change into "one of the biggest political comeback stories in Canadian political history" (Delacourt, 294). Data had become so important to the party that it if an incumbent Liberal member of parliament wanted to prevent an open nomination election, before about a year before the 2019 election, he or she had to participate in at least two "voter contact day of action" in the previous 12 months, and attempted to knock on 3500 doors or make 5000 phone calls (Rana 2018).

The LPC market intelligence effort in 2019 mimicked its successful effort four years earlier. In the lead up to the 2019 election, it conducted regular public opinion polling and held focus groups with eligible voters who were leaning to vote for the LPC or who had voted Liberal in 2015 but were leaning to another party. When the formal campaign started, it conducted nightly tracking telephone polls, while using online surveys every week to explore specific issues in more depth. Like in 2015, data was critically important and centralized with data flowing in from door knocking, phone canvassing, and online feedback tools the party used to engage with supporters and potential supporters. (Arnold, interview 2020). All this data was reported through its central "Console" reporting tool which was upgraded from 2015 to allow local campaigns to access data along with new graphics.

The campaign management relied heavily on market intelligence to guide all its decisions and it was highly integrated and shared throughout the campaign and party organization. The market intelligence work was managed internally. The LPC did not have a party pollster. Dan Arnold coordinated all the party's research, prepared the research memos, and participated in many of the strategy sessions. The extent of the party's reliance on data and its willingness to share extensively across different levels of the party's organization required a certain level of trust that doesn't always exist in campaigns and data.

Like in 2015, the Liberals did not rely on a sophisticated voter segmentation to guide its decision making or strategy. Instead, it focused on broad demographic and regional variables like age, gender, or suburban voters, while also segmenting voters by past and intended future voting behaviour.

Predictive analytics gave the LPC much more accurate and precise insights on specific voters than a hyper segmentation model could deliver. "I've looked at those types of things," said Arnold referring to segmentation models. "You lose a bit more than you gain if you start to get too focused on them (segmentation). Sometimes it's easier from a storytelling perspective, but from an actual ad-buying or decision-making perspective, the predictive models were more effective than a hypothetical model." (Arnold, interview 2020). Along with being able to predict who might vote Liberal, market intelligence helped the Liberals recognize that affordability and cost of living issues were a top concern for voters.

> I think we definitely knew in the years leading up to the campaign that affordability was the biggest concern for Canadians. And we asked a lot of questions about what's stressing people out in their day to day life. Housing was at the top of the list, but cell phone bills and other things, that found their way into the platform, were also raised. We were trying to find specific things that we could respond to. (Arnold, interview 2020)

But as the campaign started in mid-September, it became obvious to the Liberal campaign leadership that everyone was talking about affordability so "there wasn't a lot of real cleavage points between the parties on the issue." Instead, the on-going research being conducted by the campaign, as well as metrics from its digital advertising, signaled that gun control, climate change, and Doug Ford's spending cuts in Ontario were areas that the LPC could differentiate themselves from the CPC.

At the same time, the daily tracking polls and regular focus groups with swing voters allowed the campaign to assess how voters were reacting to the day-to-day campaign events. Specifically, when photographs and videos of Justin Trudeau in blackface were released in the second week of the campaign, the campaign team was monitoring its intelligence sources closely to see if it would have a lasting impact on the electorate and any insight into how to respond. The focus groups in particularly were enlightening because they showed that most voters the LPC were targeting were not moved by the blackface controversy. Arnold notes that within two days of the photos being released, "everybody had seen the Prime Minister's comments and they all believed he was genuine when he apologized, and they had seen his response. They recognized that while Justin Trudeau has many faults, he's not a racist." (Arnold, interview 2020).

This gave the campaign confidence that it would survive this crisis and allowed it to shift the focus back to Andrew Scheer.

Arnold feels the party had a good understanding of the electorate. Decisions about its platform, its positioning, and the party's approach to the election campaign were heavily informed by the market intelligence it had spent the previous four years refining and collecting. "But I think in terms of what was actually important to people, we had pretty good intelligence in terms of who our target voters were and where our target ridings were. I think that was more precise this time than even 2015 in terms of where we were moving our chess pieces on the map" (Arnold, interview 2020). Ultimately, the 2019 election was more continuity than change for the Liberal Party's market intelligence program. As the incumbent, the Liberals had access to more intelligence from in the years between the elections and as Arnold said near the end of our interview, "maybe less of the innovation you would get when you're the third party just trying to like blow it up and do whatever works." (Arnold, interview 2020).

The Conservative Party of Canada

Since the party was formed after the merger of the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative Party, the CPC has been a Canadian political marketing leader thanks to its innovative use of market intelligence. The 2019 Canadian election was unique for the party in many ways. It was the first since 2006 in which it was not the incumbent party running for re-election. It was the first since 2004 with a party leader other than Stephen Harper. Following his leadership election victory in 2016, Andrew Scheer brought together a team of advisors and campaigners that had experience working in CPC campaigns but were younger and brought with them a different approach to strategy and market intelligence.

The 2019 election campaign was led by Hamish Marshall, a public opinion researcher and strategist who had worked for Stephen Harper in the Prime Minister Office (PMO), managed the party's 2008 research program, and had successfully managed Andrew Scheer's leadership election. He is also currently a partner a research-based strategy firm. With a data-driven campaign principal, market intelligence was core to the decision making and planning around the 2019 Conservative campaign effort. Market intelligence "is very important because we need to understand where the voters are at and what they care about," said Marshall in an interview. "My approach to the campaign was to have a look hard at the

data and to make sure the data was incorporated into all decision making." (Marshall, interview 2020).

For Marshall and the CPC campaign, market intelligence was central to the campaign strategy and tactical choices. But unlike in previous years, the campaign relied exclusively on quantitative research methods and data sources with limited qualitative research incorporated into the party's market intelligence program. The party had a telephone survey tracking program in target ridings. It used online survey research to explore deeper topics. It developed a predictive analytics tool that Marshall himself admitted "was far from perfect" but was still valuable to guide party tactics. But it did no focus groups. Neither the party's advertising nor its messaging was tested in focus groups. Instead, the CPC campaign relied on its survey data and data flowing from its direct voter contact efforts.

The party did use market segmentation but not in the same way the party had done in previous elections. In fact, Marshall felt the work that was done by the CPC in 2005 wasn't accurately described in reports. "When I got hold of the data in the spring of 2006, I discovered that most of the descriptions that were used were not accurate. And there was a lot of colour that told the story, but they were actually based on the people we were communicating with." Like Dan Arnold's assessment, Marshall felt that clustering and segmentation is good for conceptualizing different voter groups and can help with broader narrative but has limits in applying it to actual campaigning.

"The problem is that you could do some great clustering and cool stuff like that. It comes from really interesting segments that are out there. The replicability of them is very, very difficult. You end up with clustering that tells you groups that are skewing your way or not but they are hard to target and replicate again in the future." Market intelligence was used to develop a deep understanding of what was on people's minds, "what was keeping them up a night." "We spent a long time figuring out what problems people had in their lives," Marshall told me. Because he believed strongly that voters ignore parties that talk about things that "are irrelevant to their lives."

Late in 2018, it became clear through their research that affordability and the cost of living were top of mind to voters open to voting CPC. "Voters were very motivated around cost of living issues. So, we built our offering around that issue because it connected with what people wanted and it would help inoculate us from the usual Liberal attack saying

a Conservative government was going to be evil and scary." (Marshall, interview 2020).

Finding a way to inoculate the CPC and Andrew Scheer from attacks around spending cuts was particularly important. Research suggested that reducing foreign aid spending would not only be accepted by the public but was quite popular. "We had to demonstrate that we were both fiscally conservative and focused on balancing the budget while protecting programs that people valued." Their research confirmed that promising to cut foreign aid by 25% would both break through and would be popular. A win-win from the campaign's perspective.

Apart from platform development, market intelligence was also instrumental in helping the campaign team understand how to approach Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Research demonstrated that their view of Justin Trudeau "was all wrong." They had assumed that coming out of the 2015 election that there were lots of Canadians who didn't think he was very smart but wanted change, so voted for him. But what they learned was that "if you thought Justin Trudeau was not intelligent you were already voting Conservative. For everyone else, many actually used the term intelligent to describe him." This finding suggested that their narrative about the Liberal leader had to change. "If we were talking about how he didn't understand things, that he was a bad Prime Minister who was out of his depth, we would only be talking to our base and very few accessible voters." (Marshall, interview 2020).

Apart from not using focus groups as a tool for market intelligence, perhaps the most significant shift for the party was its direct voter contact efforts and the multi-methods the campaign used to measure impact and understand the political market. Since 2004, telephone canvassing had been a major component of not only its outreach to voters, but also a source of data. "In past door knocking data was more inconsistent, came in in dribs and drabs and had to be entered after the canvass was over. We didn't really have a real-time sense of what was happening day to day." With the new online application canvassers could enter data instantly on a mobile device, feeding data into the central campaign. Once in the central database, the campaign could even direct digital ads to specific households. "We can take responses from door knocking and turn that intelligence directly into marketing. If you know that someone in a specific household cares about defence issues, you can him them directly with an ad on Facebook if you have their address…If someone at the door says they care about the carbon tax and are undecided about who they will vote

for, we can run anti-carbon tax ads to those people." (Marshall, interview 2020).

And the campaign's reliance on door knocking increased because of the decline in telephone response rates. "No one picks up their phone anymore. So, we get very little from direct phones." So much so that the party incentivized its members of parliament to canvass regularly in the lead-up to the election in much the same way as the LPC. "We recognized MPs and candidates who knocked on the most doors and incentivized them with prizes like digital ad buys," said Marshall. "That data was critically important to the campaign."

With less emphasis on hyper segmentation, little to no qualitative research, the development of predictive analytics, and a big shift away from the live telephone canvassing the party had used for direct voter contact, the CPC's market intelligence in the lead up and during the 2019 federal election was substantially different than in previous years. The importance the party placed on market intelligence to guide its political marketing strategy was consistent from previous elections. With party coffers flush with financial resources, Marshall reported that the campaign likely spent about the same amount or more on research and market intelligence than in the past and that pre-campaign spending limits actually prevented it from doing more than it would have liked to do. (Marshall, interview 2020).

The New Democratic Party

Whereas the CPC's market intelligence was constrained by the statutory spending limits in place during the campaign, the NDP's efforts to understand and respond to the electorate was limited by its lack of financial resources. For the NDP, the 2019 campaign was about defending gains the party had made in 2011 while trying to convert goodwill its new leader Jagmeet Singh had with the public.

Since 2008, the NDP had invested both a substantial amount of time and money in improving its market intelligence operations. After the 2008, it used market intelligence to "overhaul" its product, "transforming not just its image, but its policies" to capture a larger share of voters who had become disengaged with politics (Delacourt, 267). At the same time, it centralized organizing and decision making, building a central voter list and database and cutting ties with the provincial New Democratic parties that it has been dependent on for resources, data, and intelligence.

After Jack Layton passed away from cancer in 2011 and Tom Mulcair became party leader, the NDP continued to modernize and professionalize its market intelligence and data operation. "In the 2011 federal election, there was still no nationwide NDP voter contact database, a necessity for postmodern campaigning. In preparations for the 2015 election, the party had as a top priority the creation of a single national voter contact database called Populus accessible through a web portal" (McGrane, 75). That database was used again in 2019 but little was done in the intervening years to change its structure or function within the party. The NDP relied a lot on focus group research. In fact, unlike the Conservative campaign manager, the NDP's campaign manager Jennifer Howard prefers focus groups to quantitative research. "I find in the lead up to an election, especially when you are working with limited funds, that focus group research is more valuable in actually getting to hear from people. You can hear what their perception are of what you're doing, what their perceptions are of your leader, what their perceptions are of other leaders." (Howard, interview 2020) Getting the opportunity to test out different ways of talking about issues and hearing the feedback like in my experience, focus group…is a more valuable kind of research.

Howard's preference for focus groups was also at least informed by her concern about the potential inaccuracy of polling. "And I feel like that maybe even more the case now that it is increasingly difficult to do telephone polling. I am still not entirely certain how reliable internet-based polling is. So I prefer, you know, being able to like sit behind the glass and watch the group and hear how they react and hear how they talk about things and I have always found that to be the most kind of valuable market research." One of the long-standing debates in the NDP, as in many other labour or progressive political parties, is the extent to which its strategy and policy offering should be oriented to voters through research as opposed to an overarching ideology informed by its members and the broader progressive movement. The NDP's campaign manager recognized that tension: "I think the concern from activists in any party, ours and others, is when you let polling and focus groups decide what you care about. I don't actually think that's what you use research for. I think parties have to be faithful and authentic to things that they care about and their philosophies and their ideology. I don't think you're ever successful allowing research to dictate the principles of your party. What research does, in my view, is show you the best way to talk about those things that connects to the people who you're trying to win over to vote for you. For

me it's much more about: how do you craft a message that reaches your intended audience?" (Howard, interview 2020).

When I suggested that the NDP may not be market-oriented, she responded: "I don't know if that's entirely accurate that we are not market-oriented. But you know, we don't use polling to determine what positions we are going to take on an issue. I think it informs it for sure. And informs, how much you're going to talk about that issue, how much you're going to highlight it. But for me, the value of it is understanding the things voters care about and how to talk to them about it." And understanding what voters cared about did inform the campaign's strategy and policy focus. But like the Liberals, the NDP did not rely on an in-depth segmentation of the electorate. Instead, Howard notes that the party focused more on engaging its traditional voters and finding a way to motivate them to vote.

While the NDP did understand that certain demographic groups, especially young people, were much more open to voting NDP than others, it did not use an extensive segmentation to guide its decision making (Howard, interview 2020). Ultimately, the NDP's budget constraints limited its ability to execute an extensive market intelligence program. Howard describes the party's understanding of the electorate as "barely adequate" and while the party made the most of what it had access to and the quality was good, "it was not enough" (Howard, interview 2020).

New Dimensions in Market Intelligence

The tools marketers use to understand their audience change as technology changes. How the parties approached market intelligence in the 2019 Canadian federal election confirms this trend. While traditional methods like daily tracking polls, focus groups, and benchmark studies were used extensively, the use of segmentation and direct voter contact through live telephone calls appears to be in decline. If 2006 represented the professionalization of market intelligence in Canada's political parties with the CPC's use of in-house researchers, hyper segmentation, and centralized database management, the 2015 federal election was the first in the increasing digitization of Canadian political marketing.

By 2019, data and market intelligence had become critically important to the two largest Canadian political parties. Market intelligence and its value has become ingrained in the party's operation. Decisions are not made unless there is data guiding the decision. The LPC shared intelligence widely, provided access to local campaigns, and assessed the

campaign's preparation and performance on the data it was collecting. The data was so important that a LPC member of Parliament's chance at being re-nominated as the party's candidate was dependent on the number of doors he or she knocked on. The CPC continued its market-oriented approach in 2019 but did approach market intelligence differently. The importance of voter segmentation seemed to be less prominent, as did its reliance on telephone-based direct voter contact. Instead, data derived from door-to-door canvassing and polling became the primary source of market intelligence for the party.

The NDP was ultimately constrained by a lack of money. Market intelligence was valued by the party and the campaign leadership, but the limitation on the quantity of it meant that the NDP was at disadvantage when compared with its primary competitors. The party relied more heavily on publicly released polling and its campaign manager admitted that its understanding of the electorate was adequate at best. Shifts in technology and consumer behaviour requires market intelligence tools to shift as well. The 2019 Canadian election represented both continuity and change in market intelligence. The rise of predictive analytics and digital advertising coincided with the decline of telephone-based direct voter contact. Somewhat ironically, "go knock doors" in the age of digital first campaigning was the "new" dimension in market intelligence for Canada's main political parties.

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CHAPTER 8

Voters as Consumers of Durable Goods

Michal C. Moore and André Turcotte

Abstract The political marketing literature often refers to voters as "consumers" and this body of research borrows concepts from marketing and business applications. However, it generally stops short of examining the voting process from well-known marketing analyses such as price points, points-of-purchase and purchasing decisions. This chapter examines vote choice in the 2019 Canadian election as if parties and their leaders were products, policies were price points and the election was modelled the same way as any other purchasing decisions. It examines consumer motivations as a way to understand voting behaviour and links consumer preference research and economic theory to the theme of political marketing using opinion studies of voter behavior.

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Introduction

The 2019 Canadian Federal elections presented a unique opportunity to pose, and examine, an alternative hypothesis of voter behavior and choice. That hypothesis posits that voters behave rationally to claims by candidates by using common methods of consumer comparison shopping for durable goods.

The historical literature in both economics and political science support the thesis that voters have economic issues (and the general economy) in mind when they choose or vote. The information, data or position papers available to them, however, will be by definition incomplete, especially regarding complex assumptions about economic claims or forecast performance. Yet consumers will have to form non-deterministic beliefs based on available information (Dube et al. 2012: 27). We believe this allows us to view voting and preferences using alternative consumer comparison models to influence the response to election and candidate claims prior and during elections. This argument is underpinned by three key points supported by data in this chapter.

- People vote based on personal preferences or history in favour of promises or claims made during periodic or scheduled elections;
- Voters can and do apply learned experience as consumers to this process;
- An appropriate proxy that explains this process is to apply the information available on reliability, cost effectiveness and performance for so-called durable goods where

    (a) the expected use or performance period is long
    (b) the choice involves an unique or isolated choice rather than recurring purchase
    (c) information is available and is incorporated into the choice
    (d) more than one alternative is available and choosing is exclusionary, i.e. one choice excludes others

Before we turn to the data, we will provide some background to this arguably new approach to looking at electoral behaviour.

Background

The marketing and selling of politicians like "soap or detergent" has been part of political lore for decades. The origins of this analogy are uncertain but we find traces of it for over seventy years. Vance Packard, in his controversial and popular book *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957), suggested that parties merchandise their candidates and issues using the same methods that business has developed to sell goods. Joe McGinniss received international attention when he wrote a book about the marketing of Richard Nixon during the 1968 presidential campaign and entitled his book *The Selling of the President 1968* (1969). While this may be part of popular discourse, this aspect of voting behavior has received unequal attention in academic circles.

In this chapter, we examine consumer motivations as a potential model to understand the voting behavior of Canadians in the 2019 federal election. Our research suggests there is a link between the field of political marketing – as evidenced throughout this edited volume – and economic theory and the study of consumer preferences. To develop this hypothesis, we have conducted three successive opinion studies of voter behavior that may explain vote choice in the 2019 Canadian federal election. Our approach differs from past research by equating the act of voting to the purchase of a durable good. The methodological approach follows later in the chapter after a review of the theoretical underpinnings of our study. Also included in the appendix are key elements from the survey instrument since the goal is to provide a starting framework for further research looking at voters as consumers.

Theoretical Underpinnings

More than sixty years ago, Anthony Downs changed the way political scientists and economists imagined elections. In his book titled *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957), Downs proffered a theoretical and practical dialogue about the determinants and consequences of vote choice in liberal democracies. He aimed to create a voting model solidly rooted in economic theory with the assumption that every government seeks to maximize political support, while every voter seeks to maximize his or her

own utility. Each voter did this by applying a rational evaluation of future choices or outcomes he or she expects from competing parties (Downs 1957: 39). Downs' general conception of democracy assumes a mechanism whereby political parties, similar to Schumpeter's "competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Downs 1957: 269), must account for the preferences of voters of one party over another. Therefore, there is no need to assume that political parties are motivated by a desire to give voters the policies they want. He assumed parties were forced to do this in order to assure their primary goal of winning elections – or in Downs' terminology – maximizing votes. From the perspective of the electorate, voting is a choice between alternative candidates; voters make their choice by estimating what "their expected utility" (Downs 1957: 20) might be with each of the possible candidates.

Downs' key assertion is that a rational voter will devote very little effort to becoming well informed before voting. Downs argued that in the real world, uncertainty and the lack of information prevent even the most intelligent and well-informed voter from behaving rationally, therefore he or she bases his or her judgment upon those few areas of government activity where the difference between parties is great enough to impress them (Ibid.: 31). A vote-maximizing incumbent party will choose a policy within the voters' set of utility preferences. In fact, failure to do so will cause this party to lose the election.

Candidates or issue managers typically expect voters to focus on the areas that affect them directly – primarily the economy. The state of the economy (current and expected) becomes a crucially important indicator in this model since it acts as a shortcut simplifiying the voting decision of the uniformed and uninterested electorate. The logical conclusion of Downs' seminal work led the way to a thorough examination of voting choice as it occurs within the broader social context. Downs' work inspired a generation of scholars in both political science and economics and contributed to the early development of the field of voting behavior. However, over time, the analytical focus moved away from economic variables towards attitudinal, opinion and socio-demographic variables. Works such as *The People's Choice* (1949) and *The American Voter* (1960) supported and drove that change. The economic framework for analyzing voting behavior became largely confined to the study of socio-economic and political variables. This in turn has opened a significant door in the area of *marketing* to attract future voters.

This new area of research is well developed in Jennifer Lees-Marshment's scholarly works. She nudged contemporary research efforts in voting behavior in new directions, defining as well as creating the field of political marketing. The main assumption is that marketing is central to political life. Lees-Marshment and her colleagues suggest that:

> A large number of political players, including presidents and prime ministers, politicians and parties, as well as government departments and councils turn to marketing in their pursuit of political goals. Market research is used when deciding on policies and service design, to understand the people they serve and seek votes from want and need; voter profiling helps create new segments to target; strategy guides the creation of the political brand to develop an attractive vision; internal marketing guides the provision of volunteer involvement; analytics and experimental research test and refine communication messages; and delivery management sets expectations and helps to convey progress once a politician is elected or a programme has begun. (Lees-Marshment et al. 2019: 1)

With this new focus on marketing and other ancillary subjects linked to the field of business and management, there is a renewed interest to focus on economics argument in explaining the process through which citizens get to their voting choice.

We suggest that voters can be characterized as "consumers" of a type of durable good, available periodically in a limited market (e.g. country, province, region of residence). Accordingly, voters as consumers are allowed to make a choice. This hypothesis simply states that consumer "choice" is roughly analogous to voter choice in process, deliberation, and intent. To stretch this analogy a little further, the choice is over a "good" which can be "returned," but only through a cumbersome and time-consuming recall process or by waiting and voting to reject the earlier choice made. In this sense, voters and elections can be viewed as a limited term market where "goods" are on sale only during a limited period when choice or options are made available. Future market opportunities become dependent variables that will emerge after the initial choices have been installed and are given a chance to work. Thaler and Sunstein's description of this type of "heuristic" (2008: 19–20) (underpinned by earlier work by Kahneman and Tversky 2000[1]), is broadly useful here, characterizing a

[1] In psychology, heuristics act as simple, efficient rules for forming judgments and make decisions. They are mental shortcuts that usually involve focusing on a single aspect of a

market choice where voting can be either automatic – e.g. rapid and instinctive, or reflective – e.g. deliberate and self-conscious. The choice(s) are not mutually exclusive and may be combined by voters who want a "party" outcome and will ignore individual characteristics of certain candidates.[2]

Consumers acquire goods and services in various markets where they literally vote their choice and preference by completing a purchase. Broadly, these purchases can classified as either durable or non-durable goods. In real life (or economics), a durable good does not quickly wear out, and is useful – or has utility – over time rather than being completely consumed in one use.[3] The implied duration is long term and performance is expected to match claims by the manufacturer. Arguably, these very characteristics should describe candidates for major office or important public issues.

Consumers – and voters – are faced with a range of expected questions when choosing among alternatives. After considering the descriptive characteristics (and assuming they choose to vote), they must draw conclusions regarding expected performance of the candidate or issue, the likelihood that the choice will perform as advertised and is superior to the alternative, that it will resist amendment or replacement and that it is not likely to fail if enacted. It is widely acknowledged that voters have a need to distinguish the quality of messages or candidates in their advertising and pronouncements (Chong and Druckman 2007). Voting with incomplete information can be discouraging for voters, not unlike seeking out adequate and reliable information on significant goods choices (e.g. voting or refraining from voting). For instance, Strebel et al. (2004) suggest that frustration during the purchase process for high-technology durable goods has a significant effect on the probability that consumers will commit to a technology and make a purchase.

complex or sequential problem or issue. It is well known that heuristics can lead to errors of "cognitive bias that may affect choices in decisions such as voting. Heuristics may underlie *automatic*-type judgments; they may provide useful support for deliberative evaluation when only limited information is available.

[2] An individual candidate may for instance be running solely on a platform of working within and for a unified party objective or super candidate such as Premier, where their own platform is conformity to the party platform.

[3] Consumer durable goods range widely with examples that include automobiles, books, household goods (home appliances, consumer electronics, furniture, tools and medical equipment.

We maintain that in an open and competitive election process, informed consumer choice is closely analogous to voting and requires the same data sorting that characterizes consumption of a periodic durable good. This characteristic allows a range of participation (from informed to uninformed) options to be identified. At the most basic level, a voter can participate (show up and vote) or not, literally voting by withholding their vote. A corresponding analogy suggests a withheld vote can be seen, in aggregate, as a lack of confidence in the candidates or platforms, and allows for a future expected vote to be superior to a wasted current vote. A withheld vote is a conscious choice and reflects or can portend the level of long term support for the winning party in an election. This choice can also reflect economic-type indifference on the part of the voter, a preference that says no candidate or platform is deemed superior to any other. Additionally, votes may be strategic in nature, literally voting for alternatives that deny one candidate a plurality. Withholding a vote (consumption) for goods in this manner can diminish their popularity or attraction and if the volume is great enough, the product may be substituted, discounted in price to gain attraction or even withdrawn from the marketplace. We suggest that it can be possible to use voter opinions and preferences to determine the discount they assign to their choices and predict not only election outcomes but subsequent changes that will describe future plebiscites or even the relative success of those who "win" an election. The analogy here is the satisfaction of consuming any durable good where the utility of the product is reflected in return rates, repeat buying or brand loyalty, or a willingness to participate in any given market (election) or not.

Another important aspect of our analysis reflects the characteristic that consumption and choice of goods typically take place within a *marketplace*. A marketplace (a periodic plebiscite) can be defined as a forum where buyers and sellers (voters and candidates) have open entry and exit and where competition exists to enable information to be extended to consumers. The concept of a marketplace – where well accepted in economics – has been seen in negative terms in the field of voting behavior. As Andreas Gestrich summed up:

> Opinion polling permeates political life, and critics fear that it will undermine democracy by turning political decision-making from a rational exchange of arguments into a marketplace, where values and principles are

> shaped and sold like cars and clothes according to the short-lived preferences of a volatile public opinion. (Bruckweh 2011: v)

Related to this aspect are assumptions regarding the role of economic conditions and issues have been generally discussed in the economic literature as early as the 1960's, typically focused on the general economic environment, but not in the context of consumer "choice". We presume that voters and consumers are in fact using a more personal and narrow focus in evaluating candidate and party claims, namely imposing cost elements in their choices.

Economic "costs" are involve some calculus of behavioral and social prices coupled with some concept of both behavioral and social budgets. Consumers presumably factor these concepts into a vote for programs or candidates that will influence their social and personal environment for some time into the future. They are translating a calculation of real scarcity into expected performance or value represented during campaigns. In this calculation, they are effectively comparing the relative values of alternatives over an assumed future time period. However, the decision to vote may be difficult to justify from the standpoint of expected utility maximization alone. Put simply, the probability that a citizen's vote will affect the outcome is so small that the expected gains from voting are outweighed by the costs in time and effort. Such analyses treat rational behavior as synonymous with expected utility maximization (Ferejohn and Fiorina 1974). In the end, the consumer/voter must create a rationale for the choice that follows or is informed by common decisions in everyday life, in other words as a proxy for durable or significant goods' purchase.

This highlights a key question regarding choices when we consider that, "if only promises matter, why should incumbents worry about the consequences of what they do when in office" (Lockerbie 2008). This question opens the issue of whether or not voters have enough information to intelligently distinguish between issues and candidates, and if so, treat them as durable, reversible or long-lasting choices. Lockerbie elaborates by suggesting if a candidate makes a promise, and then purposefully does not keep it, voters in all likelihood make note of that at the next election. This is roughly analogous to making a consumer-based choice for a hard good. Voters and consumers have to "rely on the concrete, the experiential." However, in elections, the record of past performance and expectations may be either obscure or incompletely documented, or open

for invented or revisionist interpretations. There is no political equivalent of full disclosure or record-keeping.[4]

Nevertheless, we suggest that for all intents and purposes, most consumers typically make their choices for services or goods based on price (where price can be a proxy for quality, durability, utility or access). Their choices also reflect a time characteristic, where lifespan of the good or service is an issue, with some expectation of recurrence or replacement (as well as failure) being part of the decision to prefer one good or service over another. For this discussion, we utilize a simple characterization of *choice*, based on two alternatives that are proxies for human thinking and decisions and use these to simply describe a consumer who votes in an election for a candidate, platform or issue.

Other elements are in play in the decision leading to the purchase of a durable good. Goods and services may be replaced by newer models (obsolescence), or that future versions may decline in real or relative price (increased access or availability). In most cases, consumer purchases will reflect some sense of durability (literally the ability to exist for a long time without significant deterioration or change in quality or value). For instance, if a consumer assumes a product will change or be renewed at set intervals, then the only question is quality or performance during some fixed or limited period of time (an expectation of minimal competence or service).

Extending our analogy to electoral behavior, we suggest that consumers literally vote each time they purchase a good or service in some marketplace. A key difference, however, in elections is that they are not open to choice (participation) except at well-defined times. This allows us to characterize voters as consumers faced with a periodic choice of durable or semi-durable goods.[5] Consumers are used to this mechanism, since by definition, durable goods are expected to perform as advertised over an extended period of time, when they will be replaced by a similar or better performing model. In economic choices, durable goods are deemed necessary for "normal" living situations, an analogy we can extend to the

[4] With regard to the voting behavior of expected utility maximizers see McKelvey, Richard and Ordeshook, Peter, "A General Theory of the Calculus of Voting," in Mathematical Applications in Political Science, VI, ed. Herndon, James and Bernd, Joseph (Charlottesville, Va.: The University of Virginia, 1972).

[5] The distinction between durable and semi-durable is purposefully imprecise, literally a proxy for the confidence a voter has that the "winner" of an election will deliver (reward) the voter by consistent or reliable performance.

need for political institutions and corresponding elected representatives. In the case of durable goods, the conventional wisdom is that prices will fall and new choices, often higher quality ones, will arrive. As a result, many consumers purposely delay their purchase of these goods. When they do purchase, consumers often have in mind that they will replace the model with a superior model in the foreseeable future. We want to see if this may also hold for those who participate, or not, in the electoral process.

Methodology

Accordingly, we intend to test the hypothesis that voters in democratic countries actually subconsciously treat alternative candidates and issues using the same criteria by which they compare and contrast durable goods. To do so, a total of three studies were conducted between June and October 2019. Specifically, the first wave was completed between June 5th and 11th 2019, well before the beginning of the actual election campaign. The second wave was conducted between Sept. 4th and 10th, 2019; days before the writ was dropped while the last wave was done during the last week of the campaign; between October 16th and 20th 2019.

The rationale behind the three waves was to try to capture what goes on in the public mind as the imminence of the vote decision (or "the purchase") approaches. In each wave, a total of 1500 adult Canadians who were eligible to vote were interviewed. Data collection was done through an online survey using internet panel technology. Key questions from the survey instrument is included in an appendix to this chapter. As we mentioned at the onset, our intention in this chapter is exploratory and should guide further refinement of our research approach.

Findings

The findings from the first wave of research give us some indications of existing parallels between voting and purchasing a durable good. First, politicial brand loyalty is very low in Canada. Seven-in-ten (70%) Canadians change their vote depending on party leaders and issue positions, while less than a quarter (24%) always vote for the same party. When deciding which party to support, Canadians believe it is very (72%) or somewhat (23%) important that politicians do what they say they are going to do – somewhat akin to delivering on their "brand promise". While only 5% of

Canadians think it very likely (and another 33% think it somewhat likely) that politicians will actually do what they say they are going to do, there are consequences for failing to do to so. In fact, more than half of Canadians (55%) say they did not vote for someone in the past precisely because they didn't do what they said they would do. There are other evidence showing symmetry between how Canadians look at voting and purchasing a durable good. For instance, 46% of Canadians strongly (10%) or somewhat (36%) agree with the statement that "when thinking about deciding on how to vote… it's a lot like shopping"; while 27% somewhat disagree while another 22% strongly disagree.

One of the noteworthy findings from the project is how stable attitudes about vote choice and purchasing decisions were through the three distinct waves of research. It was our expectations that as Election Day drew near – and the immediacy of making a decision loomed – Canadians would be more likely to draw from a consumer frame to help guide their choice. In fact, there was no statistically significant change from the first to the third wave on all the items we discussed so far. While this contradicts our hypothesis, the stability is surprising and suggest that for those voters who are adopting a consumer frame to voting, it appears to guide their perception of politics beyond the act of voting.

As a way to further isolate similarities and differences between voting and the purchase of a durable goods, we asked Canadians their opinions on a series of statements. Specifically we asked: "when you think about deciding on how to vote/making a major purchase, do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with these statements…"

Items for Voting

I rely heavily on the party I trust
I look for the party that will give me the most benefits
I look for the party that will cost me the least
I am often intimated by all the choice and information that's available
I gather as much information as I can and methodically compare parties
I consult my friends to get their opinion
I read opinion pieces in the paper, and editorials to help me decide
I base my decision on my gut feel
I rely on my spouse or partner to help me decide

Items for Major Purchase

I rely heavily on a brand I trust
I am often intimated by all the choice and information that's available
I look for the item that has the most benefits
I look for the least expensive one
I gather as much information as I can and methodically compare features and benefits
I consult my friends to get their opinion
I read consumer reviews or online ratings
I base my decision on my gut feel
I let my spouse or partner decide

Once again, there were no significant differences between each waves of research. Accordingly, we report – below – the results after combining the three waves and therefore relying on a samples size of 4500 participants (Table 8.1).

Among the nine items evaluated, seven yielded very similar findings. Looking for the most benefits is key both when it comes to purchasing an items (94%) and voting (70%). Similarly, Canadians compare features and benefits when they decide to make a purchase (89%) or when they choose which party to support (74%). Brand trust plays a similar role in voting (65%) and shopping (77%) and agreement for the lost cost alternative is almost identical amongst voters (50%) and consumers (57%). The findings

Table 8.1 Comparison between voting and making a major purchase

Item	*Voting*	*Purchase*	*Item*
Brand trust	**65% (17% strongly)**	**77% (19% strongly)**	**Brand trust**
Offer most benefits	**70% (21%)**	**94% (38%)**	**Offer most benefits**
Least expensive	**50% (13%)**	**57% (15%)**	**Least expensive**
Compare features/ benefits	**74% (24%)**	**89% (42%)**	**Compare features and benefits**
Consult friends	33% (6%)	58% (12%)	Consult friends
Read reviews/opinions	58% (12%)	83% (36%)	Read reviews/opinions
Feel intimidated by all the information	**33% (7%)**	**45% (10%)**	**Feel intimidated by all the information**
Rely on gut feeling	**50% (10%)**	**56% (11%)**	**Rely on gut feeling**
Let spouse decide	**20% (4%)**	**24% (4%)**	**Let spouse decide**

point to symmetry on three other items; reliance on gut feeling (50% for voting/56% for purchase dedision); experiencing a level of intimidation by the amount of information available (33% for voting/45% for purchase decision); and while this is not the reality in the majority of cases, nevertheless 20% of Canadians let their spouse decide which party to support and 24% do the same when making a major purchasing decision.

With regards to differences between choosing a party and a durable good, Canadians are significantly more likely to consult their friends to help them make a purchase (58%) than for guiding their voting choice (33%). Furthermore, while more than four-in-five Canadians (83%) read reviews and ratings to help them make a wise purchase, only 58% do so before going to the ballot box. A final point to be made about our findings is that there were no statistically significant difference across partisan lines.

Conclusion

We had very specific objectives in this chapter. The general objective was to further develop the links between political marketing, economic theory and consumer preferences. We used the 2019 Canadian Federal Election as our research setting and reviewed the findings of a public opinion study conducted between June and October 2019. Our approach was different from previous studies (Dube et al. 2012; Ferejohn and Fiorina 1974; Lockerbie 2008; Strebel et al. 2004) by equating the act of voting to the purchase of a durable good. We drew specific conclusions pointing to existing parallels between voting and purchasing a durable good. While much of our analysis was exploratory, there was symmetry in findings on a majority of the items and dimensions evaluated in the study. Accordingly, the importance of economic considerations in voting behavior goes beyond what is generally suggested by the economic voting literature or analyses pointing to the importance of economic issues in influencing the vote. Canadians appear to have transferred a consumer behavior framework to help them guide their vote choice. Pundits and pols have often referred to the marketing of politicians as consumer items. Our findings suggest that politicians may not only be sold to the electorate like consumer goods but voters similarly “purchase” their representatives.

Appendix: Survey Instrument/Voters as Consumers Survey

1. **Are you aware that there will be a federal election in Canada in October?**

   Yes
   No

2. **Thinking of how you feel right now, if a FEDERAL election were held tomorrow, which of the following parties' candidates would you, yourself, be most likely to support? [random]**

   Liberal
   Conservative
   NDP
   Green
   Bloc
   People's Party
   Would not vote
   Don't know

3. **How likely are you to vote in the federal election in October?**

   Very likely
   Somewhat likely
   Not very likely
   Not likely at all

4. **If you had to say, how closely do you follow politics in the news?**

   Very closely
   Somewhat closely
   Not very closely
   Not closely at all

5. **In the next year or so to you intend to, or would you like to make any significant purchases (valued at over $500)?**

   Yes
   No

6. **Please read the following statements about Canadian politics and indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each. [Random]**

   My country is divided between ordinary people and elites
   Politicians care more about staying in power than doing what's right
   There is a political party that understands what it's like to be me
   Politicians lie to get elected
   The government doesn't do anything for me

   Agree strongly
   Agree somewhat
   Disagree somewhat
   Disagree strongly

7. **How important to you is it that politicians do what they say they are going to do?**

   Very important
   Somewhat important
   Not very important
   Not important at all

8. **How likely is it that politicians will do what they say they are going to do?**

   Very likely
   Somewhat likely
   Not very likely
   Not likely at all

9. **Have you ever stopped voting for someone because they didn't do what they said they would do?**

   Yes
   No
   Can't remember

10. **How easy is it for you to learn about what the different leaders stand for in any given election?**

    Very easy
    Somewhat easy
    Not very easy
    Not easy at all
    Don't know, I don't follow politics

11. **Generally speaking, how much do you trust most political leaders?**

    I trust them a lot
    I trust them somewhat
    I don't trust them very much
    I don't trust them at all

12. **Do you only vote for those politicians who you trust?**

    Yes
    No
    Sometimes

13. **Generally speaking, when it comes to deciding how to vote, which comes closest to your view?**

    I will vote for the same party I always do
    I change my vote, depending on the leader or issue in an election
    I don't vote

14. **What would you say is more important to you, what the party in power did last time, or the parties promise in the election?**

    What the party did last time

What parties promise in the election
Both
Neither, I won't vote

15. **When you think about making a major purchase, how much would you agree or disagree with these statements? [Random]**

I rely heavily on a brand I trust
I am often intimated by all the choice and information that's available
I look for the item that has the most benefits
I look for the least expensive one
I gather as much information as I can and methodically compare features and benefits
I consult my friends to get their opinion
I read consumer reviews or online ratings
I base my decision on my gut feel
I let my spouse or partner decide

Agree Strongly
Agree somewhat
Disagree somewhat
Disagree strongly

16. **When you think about deciding on how to vote, how much would you agree or disagree with these statements? [Random]**
I rely heavily on the party I trust
I look for the party that will give me the most
I look for the party that will cost me the least
I am often intimated by all the choice and information that's available
I gather as much information as I can and methodically compare parties
I consult my friends to get their opinion
I read opinion pieces in the paper, and editorials to help me decide
I base my decision on my gut feel
I rely on my spouse or partner to help me decide
It's a lot like shopping for anything

Agree Strongly
Agree somewhat
Disagree somewhat
Disagree strongly
Additional Demos

D4. What is the highest level of education completed?

High school or less
College or trade/skills training
Some university
Completed undergraduate university degree
Post graduate degree

D5. What comes closest to your annual household income?

Less than 50,000
50,000 to 100,000
100,000 to 200,000
More than 200,000
Prefer not to answer

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CHAPTER 9

Divide Et Impera: Wedge Politics in the 2019 Canadian Federal Election

André Turcotte and Vincent Raynauld

Abstract Canada is not immune to political parties using wedge issues to promote their party and incorporate those issues into marketing and branding. In this chapter, three specific wedge issues, immigration, climate change and abortion, are analyzed and considered within both the Quebec and national campaign. It considers how the structure and the rollout of the political messages of political parties and candidates during

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the 2019 federal elections impacted the outcome of the electoral race. It also puts wedge politics within a Canadian context to understand that while perhaps not as prominent as other jurisdictions, these issues can still play a role and can move parts of the electorate.

Keywords Wedge politics • Public opinion • Immigration • Climate change • Abortion

Overview

The 43rd Canadian general election led to important changes to the structure and political makeup of the Parliament of Canada. The Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) formed a majority government before the writ was dropped on September 11, 2019. Canadian voters decided to return the party to power but denied it a majority of seats. The LPC ended up forming a minority government with 157 of its members getting elected while the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) managed to get the most votes but elected only 121 candidates to form the official opposition. Of particular interest for this book chapter is the rise of the Bloc Quebecois (BQ), which secured 32 seats in Parliament compared to 10 during the last federal election in 2015. This was a surprising performance since the party – plagued with bitter internal divisions less than a year earlier – was barely expected to survive (Forrest 2019). Also of interest is the relative fall of the New Democratic Party (NDP), which won 24 seats compared to 39 seats in 2015 (CBC News 2019).

This realignment of the Canadian political landscape was fueled by different factors that affected the tone, tenor, and trajectory of the electoral race. As in most campaigns, scandals and controversies plagued some political parties and candidates and affected the coverage they received from the mainstream press. Those scandals and controversies also affected the public political conversation both online and offline, as well as causing shifts in the public opinion. One example is the publication of pictures and videos of Justin Trudeau – the LPC leader – in black and brownface by the magazine *Time*, the national television network *Global News* and other journalistic outlets. This forced the LPC to deviate from its electoral messaging and outreach strategy and engage in crisis communication and mitigation (Kambhampaty et al. 2019; Stephenson and Armstrong 2019).

Elements of party leaders' ideological, political, and social identity also influenced how some aspects of the electoral campaign unfolded. For example, CPC leader Andrew Scheer's personal views on abortion (Tasker 2019) and NDP leader Jagmeet Singh's Sikh religious background (Curtis 2019) – he was the first person who was part of a visible ethnic and religious minority to lead a major political party on a permanent basis at the federal level in Canada (Ballingall 2019) – influenced how they were perceived and evaluated by some segments of the Canadian electorate at different moments of the campaign.

This chapter zeroes in on the ways in which and to what degree wedge politics impacted the messaging and outreach efforts of political parties and candidates and, by extension, shaped the outcome of the 2019 federal electoral contest in Canada. In the context of this chapter, wedge issues – which are often controversial in nature – are defined as any political or policy concern that "both divides the opposition and creates consensus among one's own supporters" (Hillygus and Shields 2008: 37). In many cases, this type of issues can lead to the emergence and/or strengthening of factions within the electorate and, by extension, heighten levels of polarization and mobilization among them (Wiant 2002). To some degree, it can contribute to dynamics of "factional politics," which is can be viewed as an approach to political messaging and mobilizing catering to the very specific preferences, interest and goals as well as a distinct socio-political profile of specific slices of the voting public (Carol et al. 2016; see also Raynauld and Turcotte 2018). Hillygus and Shields (2008: 2) point out that wedge issues have become an integral component of the presidential campaigning tool chest in the United States. Building on their study and other scholars' work (e.g. Becker et al. 2010; Carson et al. 2016; Heinkelmann-Wild et al. 2019), this chapter takes a case study approach to explore how wedge issues can impact political parties and candidates' ability to connect with segments of the electorate during an election cycle. Specifically, it offers a statistical analysis of how specific issues – immigration, climate change, and abortion – impacted dynamics of political opinion formation during the 2019 federal electoral campaign in Canada. The findings suggest that the wedge issues of immigration, climate change, and abortion shaped some aspects of the electoral race nationally and helped the BQ gain public support in the province of Quebec, especially in the later stages of the campaign.

Wedge Issues and Electoral Campaigns

Wedge issues' role in and effects on governance and electoral politics in the United States and, to a much lesser degree, internationally have received significant academic attention over the last two decades (e.g. Carson et al. 2016; Dostal 2017; Jeong et al. 2011; Heinkelmann-Wild et al. 2019). Much less attention has been paid to dynamics of wedge issue politics in multiparty political contexts (Van de Wardt et al. 2014). More specifically for this book chapter, few scholars have taken interest in how they are affecting political processes at the local, provincial, and federal levels in the Canadian context (e.g Dumouchel 2013; Maioni 2014; Kiss et al. 2014). This chapter fills this gap in the academic literature by examining how wedge issues impacted the 2019 Canadian general election in the complex multiparty system in Canada.

Political and policy issues play an important role in shaping different facets of an electoral campaign, including public opinion formation, levels of voter attention and engagement, as well as mass media coverage (Becker et al. 2010; Hillygus and Shields 2008; Wiant 2002). As noted by Becker, Dalrymple et al. (2010), contemporary voters – who are exposed to diverse and often polarizing information and viewpoints through a wide range offline-based (e.g. television, radio, newspapers) and digital media platforms (e.g. news websites, social networking services, micro-communication platforms) – often pay attention to and participate in political processes in ways reflecting their vested interest in and their desire to address one or multiple issues that they care about personally. For the purpose of this chapter, it is possible to distinguish two types of political and policy issues. On the one hand, non-wedge issues can be viewed as giving "rise to conflicts along party lines, because they map onto the dominant political cleavages that gave rise to modern party systems" (Heinkelmann-Wild et al. 2019: 3). In other words, they can be seen as aligned to the "dominant dimension of contestation in a party system" (Van de Wardt et al. 2014: 987). In many countries, the left-right division governs the ways in which issues are perceived by and affect political attitudes and behaviors among a large portion of the voting public (Jeong et al. 2011; Van de Wardt et al. 2014).

On the other hand, wedge issues are defined by two main features. First, they cut across traditional social, political, and ideological cleavages that are at the core of traditional – or more established – party systems. Second, they have the potential to generate intra-party rifts and, by

extension, have destabilizing effects on the base of support of a political party or a candidate. In some cases, wedge issues can be the source of "partisan realignment" of varying depth and scope (Jeong et al. 2011; Heinkelmann-Wild et al. 2019). The first use of wedge issues for electoral politicking can be traced back to Lee Atwater – one of Ronald Reagan's political advisor – who "introduced a more divisive and aggressive form of campaigning to contemporary American politics" (Wilson and Turnbull 2001: 385). As noted previously, wedge issues can now be seen as an integral part of the electoral outreach and engagement strategies of political parties and candidates in several countries. According to Wilson and Turnbull (2001: 386), wedge politics represents "a calculated [and sophisticated] political tactic aimed at using divisive social issues to [attract and maintain public attention,] gain political support, weaken opponents and strengthen control over the political agenda."

Van de Wardt, de Vries et al. (2014) point out that it is possible to identify two main ways in which wedge politics can be leveraged for political gain by political parties and candidates. First, as voters are exposed to wide-ranging political appeals through different media platforms, they can develop and roll out political messaging and outreach campaigns targeting issues that are of importance to voters and convincing them that the political party or candidate they support will either ignore them or will address them in unsatisfactory ways if elected ("voter-centered approach") (Hillygus and Shields 2008; Van de Wardt et al. 2014). Second, political parties and candidates can exploit the "potential for internal divisions within parties on an issue where party leaders and activists or different factions of a party may hold different views" ("party-centered approach") (Van de Wardt et al. 2014: 988). The goal of both approaches is to intensify existing or generate new divisions within supporters of a political party or candidate in order to generate some form of partisan realignment. It should be noted that wedge politics is rooted in leveraging political or policy issues that are often highly divisive and polarizing in nature. Wilson and Turnbull (2001: 386) point out that this form of politicking often seeks to harness "resentment towards minorities as a means of extracting political advantage." Sensitive issues that have been used for wedge politics in different national contexts (e.g. Canada, Australia, United States) include immigration, class, race, as well as religion (Carson et al. 2016; Hillygus and Shields 2008; Hutchings and Valentino 2004).

Building on the work of Heinkelmann-Wild, Kriegmair et al. (2019), it can be argued that wedge issues are generally used in different ways by

political parties and candidates depending on their status and their position in electoral races. More mainstream political parties and candidates who typically have a larger base of support tend to shy away from wedge issues in order to preserve cohesion among their ranks as well as prevent or limit the loss of voter support. They employ different strategies to reduce the importance of a wedge issue, including by "politicizing alternative issues (i.e., distracting), by denying the problem (i.e., neglecting) or by refraining from formulating unambiguous policy positions (i.e., blurring)" (Heinkelmann-Wild et al. 2019: 3). However, there are situations where these tactics can fail to distract voters from paying attention to potentially divisive political issues. Challenger political parties and candidates – who tend to have a narrower and sometimes fluid base of supporters – can opt for a different approach. They can exploit the potential of wedge issues to insert division and, in some cases, conflict within supporters of their more mainstream competitors and garner new supporters who adhere to and support their vision of specific political or policy issues. They can do so by signaling their refusal to compromise as well as enhancing "the credibility of their commitment to" the wedge political or policy issue (Heinkelmann-Wild et al. 2019: 5–6).

As noted previously, few studies have been conducted on dynamics of wedge politics in Canada. However, it is possible to argue that wedge issues are many and are often tied to regionalism as well as the linguistic, sociodemocratic, and cultural particularities of specific slices of the electorate (Small 2007; see also Maioni 2014). This chapter supplements existing literature by taking a deep dive into the role and effects of key wedge issues in different facets of the 43rd Canadian general election.

Methodology

To be effective, the electoral impact of wedge issues needs to be determined ahead of the writ being drawn. In the months leading to the beginning of the election, campaign strategists determine which issues, if any, can cement the support of some of their key supporters while at the same time, isolating significant segments of their opponents' coalitions. To understand the impact of wedges issues in the 2019 Canadian federal election, a study was conducted by Public Square between May 31, 2020 and June 10, 2020. A total of 4500 Canadians over the age of 18 and eligible to vote participated in an online study. The data was weighted to reflect

the demographic composition of Canada according to the latest census data from Statistics Canada. The study was made available to the authors for the purpose of this chapter.

Findings

The Public Opinion Environment

The first step in isolating the potential impact on wedge issues is to get an overview of the public opinion environment; what do Canadians care about? What are they worried about and is there some potential differences amongst key groups of voters. When asked the question: "What, if anything, are you most worried about?" two-thirds of Canadians (32%) mentioned cost of living, ahead of climate change (19%), health care (10%), immigration (8%), trade agreements (7%), and social inequality (6%). While the cost of living was the main concern in every region of the country, it was much lower in Quebec (27%) where climate change was a close second at 22%. Also of note is that only in Quebec did we see concern about immigration reached double-digit level at 11%. There were some important differences along party lines. Undecided voters (42%) and Conservative voters (37%) were those most likely to be worried about the cost of living (42%). In contrast, Liberal voters were almost split between cost of living (28%) and climate change (25%). This situation also exists amongst NDP voters (31% for cost of living and 29% for climate change) while the Greens were substantially more worried about climate change (45%) than the cost of living (23%). An interesting dynamic – one conducive to capitalizing on wedges issues – was evident early on in Quebec. Amongst Bloc voters, while 23% were worried about climate change and another 19% were concerned about the cost of living, some 17% were particularly focused on immigration. Moreover, while the People's Party was a marginal player in the election, fully 27% of its supporters were mainly worried about immigration. From the onset, party strategists had three options: (1) each could play to their base; (2) they could also go after undecided voters on the single issue of cost of living; or (3) the Bloc could try to expand its support by focusing on immigration as a wedge issue. Such a strategy would undermine efforts by the Liberals, NDP and – to some extent – the Conservatives to make gains in the province of Quebec. As we will see, this is what the Bloc did.

There was more evidence pointing to immigration and climate change as issues that offered strategic potential for the Bloc. While immigration was not the main concern for most Canadians, a significant proportion of Canadians, and even more Quebecers, saw this issue with some trepidation. When asked: "Thinking about the upcoming Federal election in October specifically, which issues are most concerning to you?" one-third (33%) of Canadians identified immigration as their main concern, with a high of 36% in the province of Quebec and 43% among Bloc supporters.

To further understand the potential strategic impact of immigration in the 2019 Federal election, Canadians were asked the extent to which they agree with a series of statements about immigration. As Table 9.1 demonstrates, while there was genuine and widespread concern about the impact of immigration on Canada's society, this concern was much stronger in Quebec and particularly amongst Bloc voters. While a very strong majority of Canadians (76%) agreed that "Canada should be doing more to encourage skilled labour to immigrate to Canada", fully 80% of Quebecers were in agreement with this view. Moreover, two-thirds (64%) of Canadians believe that "Illegal immigration is becoming a serious problem in Canada." More to the point, 76% of Quebecers and 86% of Bloc voters share this view about illegal immigration.

A similar hardening of opinion against immigration can be found when we examine other statements. More than half of Canadians (56%) but two-thirds of Quebecers (65%) and 79% of Bloc supporters are "worried

Table 9.1 Immigration as a wedge issue

Statement	*Canada (% agree)*	*Quebec only (% agree)*	*Bloc supporters (% agree)*
Canada is doing a great job of keeping criminals and suspected criminals out of the country	50%	48%	31%
Illegal immigration is becoming a serious problem in Canada	64%	76%	86%
I'm worried that accepting too many immigrants will change Canada	56%	65%	79%
Canada should be accepting more refugees	43%	43%	35%
Canada should be doing more to encourage skilled labour to immigrate to Canada	76%	80%	77%

that accepting too many immigrants will change Canada." Half of Canadians (50%) but only 31% of Bloc supporters think that "Canada is doing a great job at keeping criminals and suspected criminals out of the country." Only 43% of Canadians and 35% of Bloc supporters agree that Canada should be accepting more refugees.

Climate change also offered some strategic potential as a wedge issue. There was near unanimous belief that climate change is real in Canada. Fully 85% of Canadians hold that opinion but the highest level is in Quebec at 89%. Two-thirds of Canadians (65%) felt that Canada was not doing enough to fight climate change. This sentiment rose to 76% in Quebec and to 79% among Bloc supporters (Table 9.2).

There was a general sense of ambivalence about the other aspects of the climate change question. Quebecers (50%) were slightly more like to be confused than others (41%) about the carbon tax; two-thirds of Canadians (33%) and 36% of Quebecers did not really know what to do to help prevent climate change. As we will see in the next section, immigration was more efficient in driving support for the Bloc and away from others but climate change also contributed to the unexpected rise of the Bloc. But of all the issues of the 2019 election, none was more controversial than abortion.

When asked whether they were worried that the Conservatives will reintroduce abortion legislation, a majority of Canadians in every region except Alberta and the Prairies expressed such concern. Specifically, 58% of Canadians agreed that this was a possibility. Quebecers were the most worried (65%), slightly more than voters in Atlantic Canada (61%), British

Table 9.2 Climate change as a wedge issue

Statement	*Canada (% agree)*	*Quebec only (% agree)*	*Bloc supporters (% agree)*
I don't understand the carbon tax	41%	50%	49%
It doesn't matter what Canada does if other countries don't do their part	63%	68%	69%
I believe in climate change	85%	89%	88%
I don't know what I can do to help prevent climate change	33%	36%	27%
Canada is not doing enough to fight climate change	65%	76%	79%

Table 9.3 Abortion as a wedge issue

Group	*Strongly agree (%)*	*Somewhat agree (%)*
Canada	31%	27%
Conservatives	7%	17%
Liberals	49%	30%
NDP	47%	27%
Greens	40%	35%
Bloc	49%	24%
BC	31%	28%
Alberta	23%	24%
Saskatchewan/Manitoba	23%	25%
Ontario	30%	26%
Quebec	35%	30%
Atlantic Canada	37%	24%

Columbians (59%) and Ontarians (56%). Albertans (47%) and voters in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (48%) were less worried than other Canadians that a Conservative government would reopen the abortion debate (Table 9.3).

The abortion issue also divided voters along partisan lines. While only 24% of Conservative voters were worried that a Conservative government would re-introduce abortion legislation, 79% of Liberals, 75% of Greens, 74% of NDP voters and 73% of *Bloquistes* were worried about that possibility.

Wedge Issues and Vote Choice

As we mentioned earlier, the pre-election study provided by Public Square was conducted in July 2019; four months before Election Day. Each party was conducted similar polling and were aware – well ahead of the vote – of the potential of certain issues to divide the electorate. But there were little signs of things to come. At the time of the Public Square study, an Abacus poll put the Liberals and Conservatives tied at 32% in national voting intentions, ahead of the NDP at 16% and the Greens at 11%. The Bloc polled at only 4% nationally which translated to 19% in support in the province of Quebec. The Bloc was well behind the Liberals in Quebec (33%) and the Conservatives received the support of 24% of decided

Quebec voters.[1] The election campaign began after Labour Day in September and very little had changed. An IPSOS poll published shortly after Labour Day showed the Liberals and Conservatives tied at 35%, followed by the NDP at 19%, the Greens at 9% and the Bloc still at 4% (or 19% in Quebec and still trailing both the Liberals and the Conservatives). It is difficult to establish a clear correlation between issues and vote choice. It is even more difficult when considering wedge issues. However, if we look at the dynamics of vote choice during the campaign, we can draw some inference that immigration, climate change and abortion had an impact on the final outcome.

In Quebec, the immigration issue started to get some attention in late September. It was linked to Bill 21 – a legislation passed by the Quebec government banning public workers in positions of authority from wearing religious symbols – and how the respective parties would deal with the provincial legislation. Bill 21 also introduces rules that require citizens to uncover their faces to receive a public service for identification or security purposes. The Bill is clearly meant to deal with Quebecers' concerns about the impact immigrants are having on changing their society. Every political party tried to avoid the issue and each party leader pledged not to interfere with this provincial legislation. However, Bloc Leader Yves-François Blanchet positioned himself as the defender of Quebec's right to assert its secular view of society.

Looking at voting intentions for the first three weeks of September, there was very little movement in party support. From Labour Day until the last week of September, support for the Liberals ranged from a low of 32% to a high of 36%. Conservative support varied between 31% and 38% while NDP support ranged between 11% and 15% while the Greens saw their support fluctuate between 8% and 13%. In Quebec, Bloc support remained below 20% until September 20, 2019 and then, it began to climb steadily. Bill 21 and immigration remained part of the media coverage in Quebec and by late September and early October, coverage about climate change picked up in the province. While correlations are impossible to establish and many factors contributed to fluctuations in voting intentions, it remains that between September 21, 2019 and October 2, 2019, the Bloc overtook the Conservatives for second place in support in the province of Quebec. From that moment, Bloc support steadily

[1] Polling data can be found at Canada Poll Tracker (www.newsinteractive.cbc.ca/elections/poll-tracker/Canada).

increased, from 22% on October 2, 2019 to 30% one day before the election. During that time, Liberal support varied very little. It fluctuated between 34% on October 2nd and 33% on October 20, 2019. The rise in support for the Bloc was clearly at the expense of the Conservatives which saw their support drop from 21% to 14% during the same period.

The abortion issue was a late comer as an election issue but there is some evidence that it also had an impact on the outcome. As noted above, British Columbians, Ontarians, Quebecers and Atlantic Canada residents were those most worried that a Conservative win would lead to re-opening the abortion debate. In the last two weeks of the campaign, support for the Conservatives dropped 3 points in British Columbia and among Ontario voters, 4 points in Atlantic Canada and 7 points in Quebec.

Conclusion

Ever since Lee Atwater produced the infamous Willie Horton Ad in the 1988 U.S. Presidential Election, there has been a fascination about the impact of wedge issues on election outcome. That particular ad has gained notoriety because it is perceived as one – if not the – driving force behind the victory of George H.W. Bush over Michael Dukakis. But like much of political lore, the real impact of wedge issues in politics is more nuanced.

The literature on the topic is varied and does suggest that wedge politics can work (Hillygus and Shields 2008; Van de Wardt et al. 2014). Under some circumstances, issues dividing the electorate along social, political, and/or ideological cleavages can be leveraged to create intra-party divisions and split existing traditional bases of party support. The literature also suggests that wedge issues – despite its U.S. origins – may be more efficient in multi-party systems. This being the case, the gap in interest about the Canadian situation is surprising and this chapter aimed to address this lacunae.

Our analysis suggests that three specific issues – immigration, climate change and abortion – were used as wedge to divide the electorate and played a role in the 2019 Canadian Federal Election. We have been very careful in stating that it is always problematic to establish direct connection between issues and election outcomes. But in many ways, the approach taken by each party in the 2019 election mirrors almost exactly the framework developed based on the work of Heinkelmann-Wild, Kriegmair et al. (2019). The two main parties – the Liberals and Conservatives – attempted to play to their base and focused on top-of-mind issues. With its small

regional base, the Bloc saw an opening and capitalized on wedge issues – especially immigration and climate change. As the election neared and the outcome was uncertain, the specter of re-opening the abortion debate was used against Scheer's Conservatives. The findings of this book chapter make a modest contribution to the understanding of the role of wedge issues in the Canadian political context. More work is required in order to further unpack their effects in and out of elections. This chapter also suggests that once the political environment is conducive to wedge issues, political parties need to choose a path. The NDP never decided which path to follow and hesitation may not be an option once efforts are made to divide and conquer.

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CHAPTER 10

Conclusion: Déjà Vu All Over Again?

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Abstract The final concluding chapter offers a synthesis of the main points put forth in the book but also considers Canadian elections and election research within the framework set out by Leduc et al. It concludes that the 2019 election fits within the historical flows of elections and that stable keys to the Liberal minority government victory were identifiable.

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It also considers this election and its impacts on our understanding of political marketing and frames how political parties might conduct future Canadian election campaigns.

Keywords Justin Trudeau • Andrew Scheer • Jagmeet Singh • Yves-François Blanchet • Liberal

The morning after the election, Canadians were awakened to the news that they had elected a minority government. This scenario had been almost unimaginable a few months prior when all signs pointed to another Trudeau victory. Elected just four years before, the Trudeau government had created expectations of hope and change which turned out to be difficult to implement.

The irony of this opening paragraph is that it can be describing the morning of October 31st, 1972 or the morning of October 22nd, 2019. The parallels between the two periods are striking. As most Canadians may have studied or can remember, Pierre-Elliott Trudeau was elected in 1968; carried by a wave of Trudeaumania. Four years later, the first time he faced re-election; he barely managed to hold on to a minority. His son, Justin, did not create the same level of enthusiasm when he was elected Prime Minister in 2015 but nevertheless won a solid majority of the seats. Just like his father, he was reduced to a minority situation the first time he sought a renewed mandate.

There are many factors influencing election outcomes. In this book, we have reviewed several issues and variables from the field of political marketing which contribute to making sense of elections. For instance, Jennifer Lees-Marshment (in Chap. 2) focuses on the importance of political branding and how this can help explain the Liberal election performance. She mentioned that the branding efforts around Justin Trudeau's image had mixed results. She pointed out the differences between party branding and leadership branding and how the Liberals – as a party – successfully demarcated themselves apart from the Conservatives. While Trudeau's brand suffered from the "Brownface" fiasco, this successful demarcation in positioning may have saved the party. Kenneth Cosgrove also looked at the issue of branding in politics. This author raises different perspectives. He links branding to campaign dynamics and how it can mobilize voters as well as providing a useful heuristic to explain what parties have to offer. Cosgrove makes the pertinent argument that such forces

may be more relevant than ever as voters are going through the relatively new phenomenon of social sorting along lifestyles, geographic and demographic clusters. But while those two chapters bring unique perspectives, one cannot help but feel echoes of the past. Discussions of values and beliefs in politics go back to Almond and Verba's The Civic Culture (1963) and have been examined ever since. Moreover, Lees-Marshment's discussion of the 2019 Liberal slogan – *Choose Forward* – suggest that it might have been as vacuous as the 1972 *The Land is Strong* and how both may have contributed to the similarity in electoral outcome.

Other chapters evoke similar reactions. James McLean examines the NDP campaign and chronicles its efforts to adjust its approach to the new realities of big data and sophisticated tools such as dynamic creative optimization. But the author himself admits that in the end, the result may well be the product of an old norm of Canadian politics: "federalist francophone voters don't need the NDP when the prime minister is a Liberal: and nationalists don't need or want the NDP when the Bloc Québécois is on its game". The consequences of the strength of the Bloc is made clear in Lachapelle's chapter and points to the fact that contrary to speculations and maybe wishful thinking for some, the Québec/Ottawa struggle remains a reality of Canadian politics. And we cannot fail to mention that according to Coletto, the newest and latest in market intelligence in Canada is to use technology to allow campaign to go "knock on doors".

There is no denying that the political marketing literature has opened up new areas of inquiry and as the chapters in this book demonstrates, provide unique perspectives on the study of electoral behaviour. A potential next area of analysis could be about reconciling the innovations from political marketing with the stable, almost immutable forces which appear to frame the context of elections, at least in Canada.

In *Dynasties and Interludes* (2010), LeDuc et al. introduced a framework within which the historical flow of electoral behaviour in Canadian federal elections could be evaluated. While Canadian voters have demonstrated weak political identification, little attachment to social cleavages and a propensity to vote to "throw the rascals out" from time to time, the authors identify a series of constraints on electoral behaviour that may not be obvious or apparent. When federal elections are put in historical context – looking at elections not in isolation but over the period starting in 1867, a few patterns emerge.

According to LeDuc et al., despite the vagaries and particularities of each election going back to 1867, it is possible to identify stable keys to

victory in Canadian federal elections. For the authors, while "the parties have had considerable freedom in [structuring the choices available to voters in an election]… the parties are not totally free to structure electoral choice in any way that they wish" (2010: 35). Accordingly, to be successful in Canadian election, political parties must be favorably positioned on three main dimensions:

(1) The key economic questions of the time;
(2) Issues of national integration or national unity; and
(3) Preservation or expansion of the welfare state (Ibid.)

The authors suggest that "sustained mastery of the three issue areas of economic, national unity and social welfare issues provides the key to the reasons why some political leaders and their parties have been able to establish dynasties that stand the test of time, while others have not" (41).

Evidence of successful dynasties can be clearly identified. Of note, four of the six dynasties in Canadian history have been Liberal dynasties. Conservative Leader John A. Macdonald was the first to rule for an extended period of time and arguably defined the process through which political parties can manage to win repeatedly. His National Policy was designed to address the three key policy areas of economic prosperity, social welfare and national unity. Macdonald's success was not lost on his Liberal successors and both Laurier and King adopted the same blueprint to establish their respective dynasties. In some ways, we can also find similarities with both the Trudeau and Chrétien eras. Further support for this framework is found when examining the dynamics of those governments which were not as successful. Throughout the years, Alexander Mackenzie, Robert Borden, R.B. Bennett, Arthur Meighen, John Diefenbaker, Joe Clark and Brian Mulroney failed to stay in power for extended period. The Diefenbaker and Mulroney examples are particularly insightful. Both leaders were elected with massive majorities and both had support across the countries. Mulroney in particular possessed all the necessary characteristics; bilingual, with a strong base of support in Quebec and a clear focus on improving the economy. For his part, Diefenbaker's appeal was more limited with his lack of control of French and his smaller western base of support but he nevertheless rode a significant wave of support from Quebec. In the early days of his administration, Diefenbaker moved expertly on the welfare front with salary increases for federal employees and government assistance for depressed sectors of the economy. But

within a couple of years, he demonstrated his inability or unwillingness to address the stable constraints of Canadian politics. After his 1958 sweep, Diefenbaker refused to appoint a Quebec Lieutenant in his Cabinet. In fact, he appointed only three Francophones to his Cabinet and all in minor roles (Ibid, 207). He appeared tone-deaf to most of the struggles facing Canadians and shrugged off signs of economic downturns. This led to the creation of two new political parties – one from the West and one from Quebec – and by 1963, the Liberals were back in power.

The similarities with the Mulroney years are, once again, eerie. Like Diefenbaker, PC Leader Brian Mulroney was also elected with a massive majority. Unlike Diefenbaker, he understood the importance of Quebec and regional representation. He had a very ambitious agenda on two of the three key dimensions: a free trade agreement with the U.S. and bringing Quebec back into the Constitution. While he managed to get re-elected in 1988 mainly on the strength of the Free Trade Agreement, by 1993, Mulroney had exhausted all of his political capital in trying to deal with national unity and resigned. The turmoil created by the constitutional wrangling led to creation of two new political parties – one from the West and one from Quebec – and by 1993, the Liberals were back in power.

Leduc and Pammett further refined their analysis and applied it to the Harper years (2011, 2016). Conservative Leader Stephen Harper managed to win three consecutive elections and was in office for almost ten years. This makes him the second most successful Conservative leader in Canadian history, only behind John A. Macdonald. The road to the Harper Dynasty was tortuous. It was built on the remnants of a very divisive period for Conservatives. When the Reform Party and its Leader Preston Manning burst on the political scene in the late 1980s, their success decimated the Progressive Conservative Party. It took more than a decade to put the pieces back into place. When he became Conservative Leader in 2003, Harper inherited a party with questionable credentials on the three pillars of electoral success in Canada. The Party had some bona fides on the economy and Harper immediately provided some credentials on that front. It was perceived as antagonistic towards the Canadian welfare system and had little credibility in Quebec.

It is in the 2006 election that Harper re-positioned his party. As Leduc and Pammett demonstrate: "In the social and economic policy areas, the Conservatives retreated from the large-scale funding and tax cut pledges which had caused them so much grief in 2004 and announced smaller-scale targeted promises in both areas" (Leduc and Pammett 2011: 321).

And with regards to the other pillar – national unity – "the conservatives saw a major opportunity because of the continuing of the continuing problems of the sponsorship scandal was causing the Liberals" (ibid; 322). Harper embraced improved provincial autonomy and for a while, benefitted from that positioning. More importantly, the Conservatives successfully repositioned themselves using many of the lessons that were germinating in the political marketing field. (See Flanagan 2007). Their successful alignment lasted until 2015. But their defeat in that election can be attributed to the reality that by that time the Harper Conservatives no longer had control of any of the three key electoral issues: "the sputtering economy made it difficult for the party to get mileage out of claiming credit for past performance […] the focus on balanced budgets and deficit reduction made it impossible for the Conservatives to propose new social programs […] and finally, the Conservative Party found itself on the wrong side of a number of national unity issues" (Pammett and Leduc 2016: 377).

In some ways, this book opens the door for a further examination of the potential analytical marriage between political marketing and a more traditional look at electoral behaviour. The 2019 Canadian Federal Election shows that some forces and dynamics do play a role in securing some continuity in electoral behaviour. It would be interesting to investigate how political marketing internalizes those apparent constraints in explaining outcomes. At the same time, change does occur and political parties engage in transactional politics with some success as illustrated in the chapter by Turcotte and Moore in this book. We may be at a point in time when the two fields reconnect to further contribute to our understanding of all the disparate elements which coalesce to influence how people vote.

Going forward into 2021, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergency response by the Trudeau government will weigh heavily on voters and on how the other political parties and leaders approach the next election. Canada has not had wartime-style government since 1945 and future political marketing and branding may be framed entirely through the lens of this crisis. For Justin Trudeau's part, his legacy and how he might run and lead the Liberal Party of Canada for a third mandate will likely depend on the party framing the campaign as a referendum on the response to the global pandemic. The brand durability and the

marketing of that brand will be on full display should public opinion be positive following the crisis. If the response is seen as a failure, opposition party strategies will shift to accommodate that sentiment. The 2020 U.S. presidential election will likely be a harbinger of things to come.

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

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