Media and Government:
The Role of the Director of Communications

by
Dimitris Soudas

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

under Special Arrangements with

Dean of Graduate Studies

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

© Dimitris Soudas 2015

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Spring 2015

Approval

Name: **Dimitris Soudas**

Degree: **Master of Arts**

Title: *Media and Government:*
The Role of the Director of Communications

Examining Committee: **Chair:** Dean of Graduate Studies or designate

André Gerolymatos
Senior Supervisor
Professor
Hellenic Studies Program

_____

John Harriss
Supervisor
Professor
School for International Studies

_____

Dimitris Krallis
Supervisor
Associate Professor
Hellenic Studies Program

_____

Mary-Ellen Kelm
Internal Examiner
Professor
Department of History

_____

Amikam Nachmani
External Examiner
Professor
Department of Political Studies
Bar Ilan University

_____

Date Defended: January 26, 2015

Partial Copyright Licence

SFU

Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

    a. human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics,

or

    b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University;

or has conducted the research

    c. as a co-investigator, collaborator or research assistant in a research project approved in advance,

or

    d. as a member of a course approved in advance for minimal risk human research, by the Office of Research Ethics.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed at the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

update Spring 2010

Abstract

Although there has been a significant discussion in the literature about technology's role in governmental communications, no study has focused on the Director of Communications, whose role is to control the flow of information in contemporary Canadian politics. This thesis examines the role that the PM's Director of Communications plays in conveying the PM's message to the Canadian public and how technology has impacted that role. The thesis will consider how the communication teams of various American Presidents and Canadian Prime Ministers have used the media and technology in demonstrating that while the medium of governmental communication has changed, the medium does not dictate the PM's tactics and strategies. Technology has changed how politics are presented, but not, fundamentally, the way in which they are performed. Accordingly, the Director of Communications' increasingly critical position in contemporary Canadian politics is related to both technology and political culture.

Keywords: Government; Political Warfare; Spin; Media; Technology; Information

This thesis is dedicated to my two mentors, my late mother Georgia and my late grandmother Efthymia. As well as to my wife Elizabeth, who has supported me unconditionally and to our three blessings, our children Georgia, Theodore and Katherine.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Introduction

Examining the Role of the Prime Minister's Director of Communications – Communicating Through a Filter

In 2011, Brian Mulroney reflected back on the media-related technological changes that had occurred since his time as Prime Minister and marvelled at the developments:

> If I went back into politics today, I'd be much rustier than John Turner ever was because the world has passed me by in terms of the technology and Twitter and Facebook and social media, and all of this stuff. We had none of that and so ours was pretty rudimentary. We tried to get a message out and it always went through the filter of the media that was there, primarily the Ottawa Gallery. During my early day there were fewer reporters on the Hill, and there was only one that was truly national newspaper, that was the Globe. And CBC was the main game in town in terms of television. And so what Ellie Albloom decided to put on for Mansbridge to read at night was it. And Albloom was one of our total adversaries, and made that very clear. I think the Globe was the only paper that was printed by satellite. It was right at the beginning of satellite printing and it was the only one. Nothing else was read outside of its locale.[1]

Mulroney – one of the great orators and masters of spin in his age – was accustomed to the media being concentrated in the hands of a few individuals at the national level or dispersed among news agencies at the regional and local level. However, in the last decades of the twentieth century, the media landscape has changed dramatically. Not only have the number of news outlets proliferated along local, regional, national, and multicultural lines – not to mention New Media – but so too has the speed of the news cycle increased; daily press deadlines no longer have any meaning in what

---

[1] Brian Mulroney, Interview by Dimitri Soudas, Montreal, September 19, 2011.

is now a 24-hour news cycle. These transformations created an environment in which even Mulroney acknowledged he would be completely out of place.[2] Indeed, even in the 1980s, his political rival John Turner was unprepared for the new media-related technological changes and the advent of the 24-hour news cycle. He appeared weak and uncomfortable in front of the television cameras and as a result, Turner suffered one of the worst Liberal defeats of the twentieth century and provided an early lesson on managing media communications in this new era.[3] The responsibility for communicating the government's message to the Canadian public could no longer rest with the Prime Minister alone. In a 24-hour news cycle it is beyond the scope of the position, simply because of the large number of media outlets that exist today. Moreover, technological changes have meant that all news stories now have the potential to make national and even international headlines, irrelevant of their scope.

Even though he was in touch with the media environment in which he was living, Mulroney still made serious mistakes as a result of these changes. In particular, he had believed in 'off the record' information, which was taken for granted among politicians and journalists for much of the twentieth century. By the 1980s this principle was no longer operant. Mulroney learned this the hard way when a conversation that was supposed to be off the record was covered in the press during the 1984 federal election campaign.[4] It was becoming increasingly clear that in order for the government to effectively interact with the media, communications policy could no longer be managed and planned off the corner of the Prime Minister's desk. No matter their experience or expertise, balancing the duties of governing the nation and crafting the government's message was beyond the abilities of any Prime Minister. Therefore, as a result of the changing media landscape Prime Ministers have had to increasingly rely upon their Director of Communications to ensure the effective delivery of their message to the Canadian people.

[2] In the 1980s, media in Canada was considered amongst the least diverse in the world due to the concentration of ownership amongst only a few figures and/or corporations. Walter Sonderland et al., *Media & Elections in Canada* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston of Canada, Ltd., 1984), 1-24.

[3] John Turner's media strategy and 1984 electoral defeat are covered in more detail in Chapter 3 below.

[4] Sonderland, 334.

Prime Ministers did not have a Director of Communications for most of the twentieth century. Only in 1957, was Prime Minister John Diefenbaker convinced by the national director of the Conservative party to appoint James Nelson to the newly created position of Press Secretary at an annual salary of $6,000.[5] However, when the position was first introduced, it was largely marginal, almost clerical; Nelson joked with the press that Diefenbaker kept his own counsel on press relations.[6] Initially, the role of the Press Secretary, the antecedent to the contemporary Director of Communications, was to liaise with the media on a regular basis, informing the media of upcoming Prime Ministerial trips, press conferences or announcements. They were also made available to the media for inquiries on upcoming media reports or for on–the-record reactions from the Prime Minister. This state of affairs endured as long as journalists could be relied upon to carry the Prime Minister's message directly to the Canadian people. In fact, into the 1960s it was common practice for Prime Ministers to have journalists on stipends in order to ensure that their message was communicated unmediated and free of alterations.[7] However, changes to the media landscape and to understandings of the role of journalists in the wake of the Watergate scandal in the early 1970s have upset this status quo.[8] In 1984, the position of Director of Communications was formalized under Brian Mulroney and has since developed into one of utmost importance within the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), where it now crafts and coordinates the government's message, at times even influencing public policy.[9] The new Director of Communications is one of the most visible faces of government, with influence and power beyond most Cabinet Ministers and is responsible for strategic planning, advertising, social media,

---

[5] Allan Levine, *Scrum Wars: The Prime Ministers and the Media* (Toronto: Dundrun Press, 1993), 213.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Rowland Lorimer and Jean McNulty, *Mass Communication in Canada*, 3rd Ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), 81.

[8] The Watergate scandal saw a redefinition of the role of journalists vis-à-vis the government. With the background of the growing opposition to the Vietnam War and the anti-institutional bias that this engendered, journalists now saw themselves as political watchdogs and the natural adversaries to the governing classes. The *Washington Post* investigation that uncovered the scandal is now seen as a kind of foundation myth for investigative journalism, with Woodward and Bernstein as important as Davie Crockett and Wyatt Earp were for frontier America. See: Hugo de Burgh, ed., *Investigative Journalism: Context and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 78-80.

[9] Levine, 335.

crisis and issue management, and above all being the voice of the Prime Minister. Not surprisingly, it was the decline of politicians' direct influence over the media that led to the role of the Prime Minister's Director of Communications becoming so vitally important.

The Prime Minister's Director of Communications and his or her teams have operated in a media landscape that has shifted considerably over the past fifty years. The development of communications technologies and newly emerging social media have greatly expanded the number of media outlets available for the dissemination of information and created what has become known as the 24-hour news cycle.[10] Gone are the days when media outlets in Canada were concentrated in the hands of a handful of individuals.[11] A consequence of this rapid expansion of news outlets beyond traditional print now means that reporters and the organizations that they represent compete to get accurate, timely and exclusive information.[12] The Director of Communications, placed at the nexus of government-media interactions and cognizant of these changes to the media landscape, is the natural beneficiary of this competition. This competition has provided the Director of Communications with a critical advantage in dealings with various news outlets. Directors of Communications are now given the choice of which outlet to use in order to communicate the government's message, and this choice is often as important as the information they provide. Accordingly, the Director of Communications has become the PMO's most important and potent tool for political communication.

The current role of the Director of Communications cannot be considered in isolation from its domestic political context. As the country faces new and increasingly complex challenges, it is clear that new demands are being placed on governments at both the federal and provincial levels. Different levels of governments cannot adequately resolve these problems by working independently of one another and the need for

---

[10] For an examination of this development see Howard Rosenberg and Charles S. Feldman, *No Time To Think: The Menace of Media Speed and the 24-hour News Cycle* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 1-33.

[11] Sonderland, 1-24.

[12] Maria Chaput and Andree Champagne, *Internet, New Media, and Social Media* (Ottawa: Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, 2012), 20.

collaboration and cooperation is clear.[13] This trend can be seen in the "growing interdependence" of both orders of government that has only increased since 1989 with the advent of globalization.[14] In a report, Ronald Watts stated that the interactive relationship between governments entails "greater governmental activism, which comes with a corresponding increase in the importance of the executive."[15] As members of the executive assume roles of enhanced prominence and visibility, the need for a centrally coordinated governmental communication strategy becomes all the more apparent. The government's agenda must be explained to an increasingly critical public and media, and in this new media environment, communication must be quick, effective, and delivered consistently on an on-going basis.[16] It is therefore not coincidental that the Prime Minister's Director of Communications became a permanent position in 1984, just as the effects of these changes were being felt.

This thesis explores the role of the Prime Minister's Director of Communications in the latter half of the twentieth century. It argues that changes in media technology have not fundamentally altered the Prime Minister's need to deliver the government's message to the Canadian public. In other words, while the tools and methods have evolved alongside developments in communications technology, the role of the Director of Communications has not changed: the government must communicate its message to the public in order to gain support for its agenda and, perhaps more importantly, maintain its position in power. There is, however, an inherent contradiction in this argument, insofar as this thesis claims a change in communications technology and practice on one hand, but no change in political culture on the other. Put another way, this argument applies to the field of political communications the French expression "plus

---

[13] For an example of this problem, see Edward McWhinney, *Chrétien and Canadian Federalism: Politics and the Constitution* (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2003), 99-126.

[14] Ronald Lampman Watts, *Executive Federalism: a comparative analysis* (Kingston, ON: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1989), 6. Globalization, as a term, is often ambiguous. For the purposes of this thesis, it is defined as the increasing interconnectivity of states, and the impact that this has upon their sovereignty. For an analysis of the phenomenon of Globalization, and whether it can be referred to as such, see Nayan Chanda, *Bound Together: How Traders, Preachers, Warriors and Adventurers Shaped Globalization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 245-270.

[15] Watts, 6.

[16] Ibid.

ça change, plus ça reste la même," meaning here that the fundamental goals of political communications are not substantively changed by developments in communications technology. This contradiction, however, is not a flaw in the argument, but an opportunity to interrogate the current state of communications practice in Canada in that technological shifts reveal the foundations of underpin Canadian political culture. Furthermore, this is not a rejection of Marshall McLuhan's dictum that "the medium is the message"[17] – the choice of medium is often just as important as the message itself – however, whether the message appears over social media, television, radio, or clay tablet, the need for the effective delivery of a government's message is not fundamentally altered. The effective and successful transmission of a government's message is crucial to the survival and success a government, indeed, the existence of a positive record is one thing, but if the public isn't properly aware of it, then it is of little effect.

This thesis further argues that while developments in communications technology have not fundamentally altered political communications practice in Canada, they have necessitated the creation of a Director of Communications with the specialized knowledge and skills to successfully navigate the changing technological landscape. It is often taken for granted that we are in the midst of a communication or information revolution, however, this is not precisely the case.[18] While the proliferation of important new communications technologies and social media have been impressive – platforms like Twitter and Facebook did not exist ten years ago – their impact has not fundamentally altered Canadian political culture. Rather, what is occurring is that these new technologies are magnifying and building upon existing aspects of Canadian political culture. The task then of the Directors of Communication is to know how to take advantage of these technological changes in order to more effectively deliver the Prime Minister's message to the Canadian people. Therefore, the so-called 'revolutionary' proliferation of important new technologies and social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, inform the role of the Prime Minister's Director of Communications.

[17] Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message* (Berkley, CA: Gingko Press, 2005).

[18] One specialist stated that: "We are in the midst of a communication and information revolution. Of this there is no doubt." Robert W. McChesney, *Communication Revolution: Critical Junctures and the Future of Media* (New York: The New Press, 2007), 3.

The various Directors of Communications have played a critical role in the development of governmental media policies. Eddie Goldenberg, a former Senior Advisor to Jean Chrétien, asserted, "good communications advisers are crucial to any political operation, and are difficult to come by in the best of circumstances. There are a lot of people who think they are qualified for the job; in my experience, few are any good; fewer are very good; and someone outstanding is extremely rare."[19] Indeed, the electoral success or failure of Prime Ministers can be seen to coincide with the quality of their Directors of Communications.

While the Director of Communications has become increasingly critical to the daily operation of the Prime Minister's Office, minimal research has been done on the role of the Director of Communications in crafting and coordinating the government's message and the relationship to the realization of the Prime Minister's political agenda. Rowland Lorimer and Jean McNulty explained the relationship between the media and the government as follows:

> The desire, indeed the necessity, of the press to carry information between people and their government makes for extremely close relations between government and the press. The government's desire to keep the press away from certain information, such as predecision [sic] information in cabinet documents, adds a certain ambivalence to the relationship. The desire of the press to maintain its independence and to demonstrate its separate integrity transforms that ambivalence into a love-hate relationship of the part of politicians. The dependence of the press on government for information makes that love-hate relationship mutual.[20]

While technically correct, these researchers overlook the key role that figures within both the media and government play in facilitating the relationship, specifically, that of the Prime Minister's Director of Communications. Research on the interaction between government and media often rely on generic and obfuscating terms of analysis.[21] While the subject often necessitates a degree of generalization, the over-

---

[19] Eddie Goldenberg, *The Way it Works: Inside Ottawa* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2006), 38.

[20] Lorimer and McNulty, 82.

[21] Ibid.

generalization of terms is likely responsible for the dearth of historical perspective in analyses of government-media interactions, which has been identified by Lister and others.[22] Moreover, the relative newness of the position of Director of Communications – it only became a permanent position in 1984 – further explains the scarcity of research on this role. Exploring the role of the Prime Minister's Director of Communications will therefore provide an important case study on a neglected area in the discourse of communications theory.

This thesis is presented in three chapters. The first chapter details the main communications technologies that have developed over the past fifty years, focusing specifically on the advent of television and the new age of social media. This examination will demonstrate that technology has not revolutionized the way in which the politics is practiced in Canada. Ultimately, advances in communications technologies have served to either help perpetuate or magnify certain aspects of Canadian political culture, rather than cause these practices to change substantively. The second chapter will analyze the impact that American government-media relations have had on Canadian communications policy. The relationship of U.S. Presidents with media and technology has had as important an impact on Canadian politics as that of American culture. According to Lorimer and McNulty, this relationship remains one of the five pillars on which Canadian culture is based.[23] It is therefore necessary to discuss American presidents' relationship with the press and technology. The third chapter examines communications policies of Canadian Prime Ministers since Pierre Trudeau, how these leaders were affected by developments in communications technologies, and the increasing importance of the Director of Communications. This examination will provide evidence that the effective use of communications technology has been an important driver for electoral success. It will become clear that Prime Ministers and Directors of Communications who were fully aware of the political and technological context in which they were most successful in communicating to the Canadian public, an achievement that translated into good approval ratings and electoral victories.

[22] Lister et al., 38.

[23] Lorimer and McNulty, 73; Frederick J. Fletcher and Robert Everett, "The Media and Canadian Politics in an Era of Globalization," in *Canadian Politics in the 21st Century*, eds. Michael Whittington and Glen Williams (Scarborough, ON: Nelson, 2000), 381-85.

A critical examination of the role of the Prime Minister's Director of Communications is an important development for the study of media communications and politics in Canada. This thesis contains the insights of a true insider who once held the position of Director of Communications to the Prime Minister of Canada and the first-hand experiences of former and current Prime Ministers, Directors of Communications and prominent journalists. Ultimately, the position of Director of Communications has developed into one of utmost importance within the PMO, where it now crafts and coordinates the government's message, even influencing public policy. As one of the most visible faces of government, the role of the Director of Communications merits critical scrutiny and is a task to which this thesis now turns.

Chapter 1.

More Possibilites, More Problems - Techonological Development and its Influences on Communication Strategies

Modern technologies have increased the ways in which politicians can interact with the public. Thus, Patricia Morreale and Kornel Terplan noted that:

> The extent and ease of the Internet's adoption has had profound implications on all — including personal, business, and governmental — aspects of life. There are very few places on Earth that cannot be reached by the Internet. The success and complexity of the Internet is continuing to be realized.[24]

The pervasiveness of contemporary communications technologies and the speed with which information is now transmitted has, on the one hand, created new opportunities for governments to deliver their message to the public, but on the other hand, created new challenges. This point was made clear in the author's interview with Prime Minister Stephen Harper. The Prime Minister indicated that the increasing speed of news reporting – a phenomenon referred to as the 24-hour news cycle – has required the government to develop a reactive approach to crises and concerns. Consequently, the deliberative style that characterized governments' approach to communicating with the public for most of the twentieth century is no longer tenable in this new media environment.[25] When today's journalists find a promising lead or uncover a major story, they no longer have to wait until the next morning's paper is printed to see their report published. Instead, news reports are immediately uploaded onto the websites of media

---

[24] Patricia Morreale and Kornel Terplan, *CRC handbook of modern telecommunications* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2010), 1.

[25] Stephen Harper, Interview by Dimitri Soudas, Langevin Block, September 15, 2012.

organizations and their affiliates. This means that the drawn-out discussions and attendant delayed responses that characterized the conduct of the Director of Communications in the latter half of the twentieth century have become out-dated and are no longer an appropriate strategy for contemporary governmental media relations.

However, while developments in communications technologies have increased the speed with which communications strategies are developed and implemented, the view that this has represented a 'revolutionary' change to contemporary political practice is an overstatement. While innovations in communications technology have created new opportunities for smaller and more localized media outlets to access larger audiences than previously possible, these developments have not fundamentally altered the practice of Canadian politics.[26] Newer and smaller media outlets have in fact increased competition within the Canadian media industry and given the Prime Minister's Directors of Communications a greater array of options in choosing how to disseminate the government's message to the Canadian public.[27] For instance, there is a vibrant and expansive ethnic media establishment in the country, while Canadians are among the most 'wired' citizens in the world: "their use of the Internet, online video, social networking, and blogs exceeds that of their counterparts in Britain, France, Germany, and the U.S."[28] Nevertheless, there has been no change to the need of the government to communicate with the public, or to the desire to maintain message integrity. In other words, new technologies have not changed Canadians' reasons for interacting with their governments or vice versa. Rather, new communications technologies have simply increased the ways in which Canadians can interact with government. This chapter will therefore review the phenomenon of new communications technologies and assess their impacts on Canadian political culture. Ultimately, it will be shown that technology has not substantively changed the manner in which politics is conducted in Canada.

[26] Joel L. Swerdlow, *Media Technology and the Vote* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), 15.

[27] Dwayne Winseck, "Financialization and the "Crisis of the Media": The Rise and Fall of (Some) Media Conglomerates in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 35:3 (2010): 367-69.

[28] Ibid, 172. Not only are there are several hundred ethnic newspapers in Canada of varying size and quality, the presence of ethnic media extends to the airwaves and online: Karim H. Karim, "Are Ethnic Media Alternative," in *Alternative Media in Canada*, edited by Kirsten Kozolanka, Patricia Mazepa and David Skinner (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 166-167.

It is important to dispel the myth that technology impacts all societies in the same manner in today's globalized world. A society's culture remains an important factor in determining interactions between government and the public. For example, Hernan Bennett Galperin and Robert M. Lance Entman persuasively argued that the political cultures of the United States and Great Britain have led these countries' governments to develop divergent policies for integrating technology into political culture.[29] Political culture is not always highly mutable and can actually function to integrate change – in this instance technological change – into its existing framework. As a result, aspects of Canadian political and social culture need to be taken into account in order to determine the influence that they have upon the integration of communications technology into Canada's political framework.

The increasing complexity and diversity of Canadian society are factors that are driving the incorporation of new technologies into the country's political culture. For much of the twentieth century, Canadian society was characterized by its English and French linguistic solitudes, rather than as diverse and pluralistic. Towards the end of the twentieth century this began to change. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which was entrenched in 1982, reflected this changing outlook with its emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity.[30] The Canada of today is a multicultural state, in which citizens' competing interests and priorities are as wide-ranging as their ethnic and cultural backgrounds.[31] The media has responded to this heightened demographic diversification by creating interest- or ethnicity-specific news outlets. Such outlets cater directly to the interests of minority groups, who are often more reluctant to engage with mainstream media institutions than the majority of the population because of a belief that

---

[29] Hernan Bennett Galperin and Robert M. Lance Entman, *New Television, Old Politics: The Transition to Digital TV in the United States and Britain* (West Nyack, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 272-286.

[30] Joan Church, Christian Schulze, and Hennie Strydom. *Human rights from a comparative and international law perspective* (Pretoria, SA: Unisa Press, 2007), 82.

[31] For a discussion of the changes in Canada's demographics over the last fifty years (with an emphasis on the previous fifteen), see Daniel Hiebert, *Migration and Demographic Transformation of Canadian Cities: The Social Demography of Canada's Major Metropolitan Centres in 2017* (Vancouver, BC: Metropolis British Columbia, 2005), 4-15.

these institutions do not "reflect the reality of their communities."[32] Therefore, changes in the media landscape have followed the shift to a more multicultural society in Canada.

The government, too, has increasingly been required to address the needs and interests of minorities. In order for the government to reach out to an increasingly fragmented audience, the Prime Minister's Director of Communications must meet the challenge of devising multiple messages that not only target distinct populations, but also reflect the government's agenda and desired goals. It is therefore not surprising that according to a 1993 CBC news report, the Prime Minister's Director of Communications produced commercials that "differ in form as well as the substance, which will be simultaneously broadcast on various networks, various media."[33] However, these changes to the way that Directors of Communication communicate with the Canadian public are not as dramatic as they may first appear to be. The development of multiple, divergent messages have been an important part of the role of the Director of Communications in the past. Marjorie LeBreton, the Government's Leader in the Senate (2012) and a long-time political insider, noted that before the 1980s, "every city had two major newspapers, and you know, the *Ottawa Citizen*, the *Ottawa Journal*, the *Winnipeg Tribune*, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, there was the *Toronto Star* and the *Toronto Telegram*, and the *Globe and Mail,* and the *Montreal Star* and the *Montreal Gazette*."[34] Directors of Communication had to adjust their messages to suit these varied media outlets. Therefore, communications specialists had long been accustomed to tailoring the government's message to different audiences. The primary difference today is that the number of messages required has multiplied along with proliferation of new media platforms, which does not represent a substantive break with historical political practice.

Further continuities can be found in the need of governments to present themselves and political developments in a manner that supports their goals, and Canadian governments are no exception. This is evidenced by Canada's first Prime

---

[32] "The Report of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy. *Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age*" (Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute, 2009).

[33] La faute aux médias, "L'importance de la publicité dans une campagne électorale." *SRC Radio.* (May 15, 1993).

[34] Marjorie LeBreton, Interview by Dimitri Soudas, Langevin Block. September 21, 2011.

Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, who was forced to resign during his second term due to his inability to positively portray the financing of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, though not for lack of effort.[35] The difference between the current culture of 'political spin' and that of previous generations is less a matter of kind and more a matter of degree and capability. Modern communications technology now provides the Prime Minister's Director of Communications with more opportunities to engage in political spin, but does not fundamentally alter the need of government's to manage their image and political message. Technology does not dictate the political process. As Bill Fox, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's Director of Communications stated bluntly: "nobody should ever be hung up on the delivery mechanism, okay? Whether it's on a piece of paper or whether it's on a tablet, like, who cares?"[36] While the form of political communication may change, the message itself is not substantively altered by new communications technology.

New Media – broadly speaking, digital communications technology, such as blogs and other social media – has certainly created more opportunities for negative political exposure and politically damaging media reports. However, while these developments may represent a challenge to governments seeking to manage their image, research also suggests that it is reawakening an electorate that was previously largely disengaged.[37] Previous efforts to engage an apparently disengaged and apathetic electorate required significant resources from governments. Indeed, for Prime Minister's Directors of Communications to "inform an often apathetic electorate is to run costly political advertisements during and around popular TV shows.[38] The advent of New Media has lessened the need for such expensive campaigns, as the electorate instead mobilizes and engages across social media platforms.[39] However, these

---

[35] Levine, 3.

[36] Bill Fox, Interview by Dimitri Soudas, Langevin Block, September 16, 2011.

[37] Ben Shneiderman and Anne Rose recognized new media's potential for reawakening political sensibilities in 1995, early in the Digital Age. Since that time, this change has become yet another that is more one of degree than one of kind. See Ben Shneiderman and Anne Rose, "Social Impact Statements: Engaging Public Participation in Information Technology Design." Presented at *Symposium on Computer and the Quality of Life*, Philadelphia, PA, February 14-15 1996.

[38] Levine, 99.

[39] Amanda Clarke, *Social Media: Political Uses and Implications for Representative Democracy*. (Ottawa: *Library of Parliament*, 2010), 3.

methods of mobilizing the population rely on political practices that have been the cornerstone of Canadian political campaigns since Confederation. Nineteenth-century voters were mobilized by whatever means necessary; voters were sometimes "imported" from the United States by train or even tugboat to vote.[40] In essence, advances in communications technologies have wedded themselves to traditional political practices rather than causing these practices to advance in new directions.

While New Media has certainly created new opportunities for citizen engagement and mobilization, it has also contributed to the perception of a significant democratic deficit. These concerns, however, are rooted more in unwarranted speculation than in proven fact. The belief that the modernization of the communications industry has trivialized the political process, in that politics now operates at a far more "personal and vicious" level than ever before, is a common misconception.[41] Character attacks and smear tactics are neither a novel commodity nor an invention of the twentieth century, as they have existed since the Confederation of Canada in 1867.[42] Indeed, an early biography of John A. MacDonald, published in 1883, stated that:

> Every editor dipped his pen in gall; every column reeked with libel. Those who had no newspapers issued handbills, that might have fired the fences upon which they were posted… But there was a class of men who considered the poster too low a medium, and the newspaper not high enough for the formal conveyance of their loyalty or spread of their radicalism, and these flew to the pamphlet.[43]

The Canadian public is shocked by them and perceives them as new tactics because they are being transmitted in ways that were not possible with older communications technologies. While there is a superficial difference between an attack ad that appears in print and one that appears on screen, there is no substantive difference between the

---

[40] *A History of the Vote in Canada*, 2nd edition (Ottawa: Office of the Chief Electoral Officer in Canada, 2007), 44.

[41] "The Report of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy," 97.

[42] For an example of how political attacks were, quite literally, an art form see Peter and Aislin Desbarats, *The hecklers: a history of Canadian political cartooning and a cartoonists' history of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 1-20.

[43] J.E. Collins, *The Life and Times of the Right Honourable Sir John A. MacDonald: Premier of the Dominion of Canada* (Toronto: Rose Publishing co, 1883), 56.

two.[44] New technology has amplified what is really a venerable tradition in Canadian political culture, and has led to a perception of novelty.

Of all the communications technologies that have emerged in the past century, television has had one of the greatest impacts in terms of its capacity to accentuate already existent political practices. Although theorists repeatedly claimed that television had tremendous potential to revolutionize the way in which politicians conduct themselves, this assertion overstates television's impact and ignores the historical precedents within Canadian political culture.[45] According to communications specialist Matthew Robert Kerbel, the advent of television provided politicians with a novel medium that allowed them to engage in "wholesale politics on an unprecedented scale."[46] However, while the medium was novel, it did not change the way in which politicians interacted with the public. Instead, television gave politicians a larger audience to interact with than traditional newspapers did.[47] Having a larger audience gave politicians an opportunity to garner more support for their initiatives and activities, or denigrate the positions of their political opponents. However, for politicians to realize this benefit they have had to address television's tendency to privilege image over content. Indeed, as Kerbel noted, television has the ability to convey "impressions more easily than facts."[48] This was a lesson that Richard Nixon learned the hard way during the 1960 televised presidential debate with John F. Kennedy. The fact that Nixon began to sweat under the hot studio lights gave television viewers a negative impression of Nixon's performance, an opinion that was not universally shared by those who listened only to the radio

[44] For instance, compare the 1993 Progressive Conservative political ad, attacking Jean Chrétien for his facial paralysis, the so-called "face ad" and the print media coverage that followed. Ultimately, the print coverage was more damaging than the television ad to the PCs (the ad backfired spectacularly): Kenneth Whyte, "The face that sank a thousand Tories," *Saturday Night* 109:1 (Feb 1994): 14-18.

[45] For a breakdown of the debate about the impact that television has had upon society see Robert S Anderson, Richard S Gruneau, and Paul Heyer, *TVTV: the television revolution: the debate* (Vancouver, BC: Canadian Journal of Communication, with the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing, Simon Fraser University at Harbour Centre, 1996), 1-96.

[46] Matthew Robert Kerbel, *Edited for Television* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 208.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

broadcast.[49] However, this did not represent a substantive shift of previous political practice, as image has always been important. What has changed is that a poor showing during a debate or stump speech, for example, is no longer limited to a small audience, but is instead broadcast into the living rooms of the nation. This represents a change in degree, not in kind.

An examination of the relationship between television and politics necessitates a discussion of the issue of television's purpose. According to Kerbel, television is defined by the fact that it privileges entertainment over education.[50] This has meant that when politicians are on television they have had to emphasize their delivery as much as their message. The introduction of television cameras to the Question Period in the House of Commons in 1977 provides a prime example of how television has forced politicians to adjust their tactics in order to take advantage of the medium's potential.[51] Cameras have turned an otherwise civil affair into a sequence of dramatic action. Since polite, sophisticated, and intellectually driven dialogues would not receive as much coverage from media outlets as acrimonious and emotionally loaded dialogues, there has been a decline of the former in the House of Commons Question Period. The present decline in decorum is an issue recognized by all parties; indeed a report by the Standing Committee on Procedures and House Affairs stated that:

> All Members agree that the decorum in the House of Commons is a serious issue. While a legislative body is necessarily partisan, with strong feelings and high emotions, there are still limits to what should be permitted. Lack of decorum, and respect for the rules, negatively affect all of us, bringing the House of Commons as an institution into disrepute, and undermining the public's confidence in the parliamentary process.[52]

---

[49] Edmund F. Kallina, *Kennedy v. Nixon: The presidential election of 1960* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010).

[50] Kerbel, 207.

[51] Ibid, 273.

[52] "Report 37 - Review of Standing Orders of the House of Commons – Decorum." Adopted by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs February 27, 2007; Presented to the House on March 1, 2007.

Style has come to trump substance, which has directly impacted the strategies that the Prime Minister's Office and its Director of Communications develop for interacting with television reporters. Indeed, John Diefenbaker – much to the chagrin of his Press Secretary – thoroughly enjoyed sparring with reporters in the corridors of Parliament. With the admission of television and radio reporters to the gallery, and the realization that he was being recorded, Diefenbaker "became more cautious."[53] Although Directors of Communications have had to consider the manner in which something is said on television as well as what is said in the past, they must do so constantly today because television coverage of politics has both increased and intensified.

A related problem with the privileging of style over substance in Question Period is the revelation that television is not an efficient platform to inform the public about relevant social and political issues. As Kerbel explained, this is in part because television places greater emphasis on the delivery of images and impressions than it does on the expression of ideas and facts.[54] Bill Fox was the first Director of Communications to comment on this trend, noting that: "It's like a Hollywood movie, right? The visuals are part of it. The music is part of it."[55] Sarah Palin aimed to take advantage of this trend in her political campaign as a Vice-Presidential candidate during the 2008 American Presidential Election, eschewing substantive policy discussions for style above all else. As Ariel Gonzalez argued in the *Huffington Post,* her campaign emphasized "gut instincts" rather than ideas and concepts.[56] Consequently, intellectual discussion has given way to the spectacle of Palin that television created.

Television further undermines the depth and quality of political dialogue and the debate by requiring politicians to speak in sound bites, rather than in a substantive manner.[57] As a result, television has encouraged the 'theatrics' seen during coverage of

---

[53] Levine, 214.

[54] Kerbel, 208.

[55] Fox, interview.

[56] Ariel Gonzalez, "Sarah Palin and Anti-Intellectualism in American Life," *Huffington Post*, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ariel-gonzalez/sarah-palin-and-anti-inte_b_225798.html. 6 July 2009. Accessed September 4, 2013.

[57] Patrick Malcolmson and Richard Myers, *The Canadian Regime: An Introduction to Parliamentary Government in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 124.

Question Period, which has become the norm within Canadian politics.[58] Indeed, "the media uses question period to get short, snappy rhetorical sound bites, good for print but even better for television" which members of the government and opposition benches have been only too happy to provide.[59] However, these theatrics have always been a part of politics and are not a novel development brought on solely by the advent of television political coverage. Historically, stage presence and charisma have mattered just as much as substantive policy positions. Indeed, one has only to recall the instance of Sir John A. MacDonald vomiting during a 1863 debate, and declaring to the crowd afterwards that that was what he thought of his opponent, in order to appreciate the venerable tradition of theatrics in Canadian politics.[60] Television may have caused politicians to amplify their theatrics, but it did not create them.

Television, for better or for worse, is an unavoidable reality in present-day politics. This does not mean, however, that politics starts and stops with television. Certainly, television should not to be regarded as a "suitable substitute" for governance.[61] It ought to be seen as one of the many instruments in the Director of Communications' toolkit to convey the Prime Minister's message to the Canadian people. To give a contemporary example, there is a perception amongst the Conservative Party of Canada that the majority of Canadian syndicated news outlets are left-leaning in political orientation. The Prime Minister Stephen Harper himself has sometimes made this assertion during interviews or press conferences and the Conservative Party of Canada has raised funds based on the CBC's perceived bias against Tories.[62] Major news reports that have portrayed the government in a negative manner have only fuelled this perception. However, if Conservative Directors of

---

[58] This state of affairs has led to frequent efforts at reform from both within and without the House of Commons. Most recently: David Moscrop, "It's Time for QP 2.0," *Ottawa Citizen*, 15 September 2014, http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/david-moscrop-its-time-for-qp-2-0.

[59] David A. Good, *The Politics of Public Management: The HRDC Audit of Grants and Contributions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 161.

[60] Cynthia M. Smith and Jack McLeod, eds., *Sir John A.: an anecdotal life of John A. Macdonald* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 77.

[61] Kerbel, 211.

[62] Steven Chase, "Tories ask donors to dig deep for 2015 election battle," *The Globe and Mail*, 22 May 2014, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/tories-ask-supporters-to-back-biggest-campaign-budget/article18789815/.

19

Communications stopped using these outlets to convey their message to the Canadian people, they would be placed at a distinct disadvantage vis-à-vis any political parties that did not do the same.[63] Nevertheless, while television may be the dominant medium from which the Canadian public obtains their political news, it is only one of many that are at the disposal of Prime Minister's Directors of Communications.

Moreover, statements highlighting the influence of television on political discourse must be approached with caution. While television has altered the way in which news is presented, it is unclear how deeply it has influenced the Canadian electorate. As former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney stated:

> [Politicians and media members] think, because we're in that bubble in Ottawa, we think that people come home from work and they just turn on Question Period [on the television]. [The public] pay no attention to it. None. Until an election is called, and only then do they focus and they really only focus during the debates. That's what I learned about it."[64]

According to Mulroney, the impact of televised coverage of the political process is restricted to elections. Indeed, in a 2002 survey, only just over half of respondents reported being involved in one or more political activity in the past year, which was not an election year.[65] This suggests a great deal of political disengagement by the Canadian public; Mulroney may be correct to suggest that television has not revolutionized the way in which politics is conducted to the extent that many individuals believe. It may have changed the way in which politics are presented to the Canadian people, but it has not changed the way in which politics are performed. In other words, pre-existing aspects of Canadian political culture – specifically the importance of image and the use of theatrics – have only been accentuated and exaggerated by the new medium of television, not fundamentally changed.

---

[63] Harper, interview.

[64] Mulroney, interview.

[65] "Indicators of Well-Being in Canada: Social Participation – An Overview," Employment and Social Development Canada, accessed 10 October 2014, http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/d.4m.1.3n @-eng.jsp?did=16.

Social media today is much like television in the second half of the twentieth century in that it is the communications technology with the greatest capacity to impact Canadian political culture. As Michael Dewing has argued, this is because social media has the potential to enhance civic participation, which has been on the decline over the past several decades.[66] Indeed, voter turnout during the last Canadian federal election held in 2011 was at near record lows.[67] Social media offers new ways for government and opposition actors to connect and communicate with citizens and creates new venues for the dissemination of political messages. As Amanda Clarke argued in *Social Media: Political Uses and Implications for Representative Democracy*, it enables politicians to better learn the needs and interests of their constituents.[68] Indeed, private citizens frequently use new media to "raise awareness about and generate support for particular causes."[69] To fulfill the opportunities afforded by social media, Directors of Communications need to be aware of this trend and engage with it. The fact that people with similar interests are communicating online and organizing around specific causes is advantageous to the Prime Minister's Directors of Communications. A sympathetic and receptive audience is only a Google search away for a Director of Communications seeking to promote a particular policy. Consequently, social media has the potential to significantly change how the Director of Communications performs his or her job.

However, social media will only fulfill its potential to significantly change how politicians interact with the public if politicians use it effectively. Canadian political actors have yet to maximize the full potential of social media, while their American counterparts are just beginning to realize its capacity to facilitate civic engagement.[70] In Canada, political actors appear unaware that a heavy reliance on social media is an effective means for actively recruiting or mobilizing supporters.[71] In fact, evidence suggests that

---

[66] Michael Dewing, *Social Media* (Ottawa: Library of Parliament, 2010), 3.

[67] "Voter Turnout at Federal Elections and Referendums," Elections Canada, accessed 10 October 2014, http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?dir=turn&document=index&lang =e&section=ele.

[68] Amanda Clarke, *Social Media: Political Uses and Implications for Representative Democracy*. (Ottawa: *Library of Parliament*, 2010), 1.

[69] Ibid., 3.

[70] Clarke, 1.

[71] Ibid.

Canadian political communications teams have primarily used social media to share and provide information, rather than to develop new strategies and tactics that use social media to recruit and mobilize supporters.[72]

Politicians and their staff should take advantage of social media's capacities by using it to solicit feedback and input from citizens as a more central aspect of the policy development process. Primary efforts to increase civic participation and feedback need to be made online. As a first tentative step, the Obama administration, for instance, has launched an online petition website called "We the People" that takes policy suggestions directly from the American people; Canadians may not be far behind.[73] Social media will be the bedrock of any such strategy, given its interactivity and ability to engage with the electorate in ways that have hitherto been unimaginable.[74] However, for it to become such a tool politicians and political strategists need to move beyond obsolete views that see social media as a means of information transmission, rather than the vehicle of two-way communication and engagement that it can become. The first party to recognize the potential of social media and employ it to its fullest potential will achieve a decisive advantage over the other parties while they struggle to adapt.

However, while social media offers a tremendous opportunity to political parties as they vie for electoral advantage, this should not be taken to mean that there has been a fundamental shift to Canadian political culture. In other words, while social media offers the promise of advances to political recruitment and mobilization, as well as civic engagement, it does not mark a fundamental shift in Canadian political culture. Social media, like the technological innovation of television before it, has brought political messaging to a much wider audience but has not fundamentally altered the message itself. Indeed, during the 2006 federal election, party social media accounts merely parroted party policy positions available elsewhere and made little effort to make use of

---

[72] Ibid.

[73] "We the People: your Voice in our Government," The White House, accessed 10 October 2014, https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/.

[74] Michael Xenos and W. Lance Bennett, "Young voters and the web of politics: the promise and problems of youth-oriented political content on the web," in *Young Citizens and the Digital Age Political Engagement, Young People and New Media*, ed. Brian D. Loader (Milton Park: Routledge, 2007), 48-49.

the interactive possibilities of the platform; one scholar described them as Internet-based lawn signs.[75] Social media has also facilitated a quickening of political discourse, in concert with the 24-hour media cycle, but again, the messaging has remained the same. In other words, while social media has provided for a quickening and expansion of political discourse, the nature of political discourse itself has not changed substantively. However, social media differs from previous developments in communications technology insofar as its potential has not yet been fully realized; the potential impacts to mobilization and recruitment tactics have already been mentioned, and there may yet be others. But to date, the impacts to political culture remain in the realm of the possible, rather than actual.[76]

Although technology has advanced tremendously in the past two decades or so, these advancements have not substantively altered political culture. Rather, they have functioned to either help perpetuate political culture or magnify certain aspects of it. The increasingly multicultural nature of Canadian society has contributed to the fragmentation of the media landscape and the multiplication of political messages, itself a pre-existing aspect of Canadian political culture. Moreover, while it has been argued that the spectacle of television has shifted politics and made them more 'uncivil', it has in fact magnified existing and underlying currents of Canadian political culture rather than create new ones. The impact of social media, on the other hand, remains in the realm of the possible. However, it has enormous potential to alter tactics of political engagement, recruitment and mobilization if Canadian political actors can be made to recognize its potential. Consequently, the impact of social media on Canadian political culture has not yet reached its full extent and can be expected to grow larger in future. However, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, this thesis predicts that social media will develop

[75] Tamara Small, "Still Waiting for an Internet Prime Minister: Online Campaigning by Canadian Political Parties," in *Elections*, ed. Heather MacIvor (Toronto: Emond Montgomery Publications, 2010), 173-198.

[76] Steve Patten has argued that to date Social Media has had little effect to date on the average Canadian's level of engagement with the political process. Rather it ahs served to facilitate deeper engagement for those who were already engaged. Ultimately, rather than leading to a more democratic society, social media may in fact threaten democracy through 'narrowcasting' and citizen profiling. Steve Patten, "Assessing the Potential of New Social Media," *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 36:2 (2013), 21-26.

along the same lines as television and instead merge with existing aspects of Canadian political culture, rather than lead to a revolution.

Chapter 2.

Does Big Brother Really know Best? American Media Relations and its Influence upon Canadian Politics

The American political system exerts a tremendous influence on the Canadian political system not only because of America's geographic proximity to Canada but also because of its stature as a political and cultural superpower. On a daily basis, Canadians are subjected to a media bombardment from our southern neighbours. US cultural exports influence what Canadian politicians, media, and citizens consider acceptable media practices.[77] This influence extends even to the work of the Canadian Prime Minister's Director of Communications; this is despite the fact that the U.S. presidential system separates its communications and press offices.[78] This division is an important distinction between the US and Canadian models. As former US Press Secretary Mike McCurry stated in an interview with the author: "you recognize, of course, that you had much greater authority and control of the message as the Prime Minister's Director of Communications because you were in charge of both halves of the equation"[79] In a Memorandum to the next American President dated August 7, 2008, McCurry wrote:

> The next U.S. president will face enormous challenges as "communicator-in-chief," managing an increasingly complex and adversarial relationship with the press corps and responding to the bewildering needs of fragmented audiences that no longer rely solely on "mainstream media" for information. Perhaps it is a time for a major revamp of White House communications functions, which have remained largely unchanged since first introduced in the Nixon era.

[77] David V.J. Bell, "Global Communications, Culture, and Values: Implications for Global Security," in *Building a New Global Order: Emerging Trends in international security* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1993), 163.

[78] Bradley H. Patterson, *To Serve the President* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 189.

[79] Mike McCurry, Interview by Dimitri Soudas, Telephone, September 27, 2011.

Traditional roles of actors like the White House press secretary need redefinition.[80]

America's traditional distinction between the communication and press offices – with the first focused on long-term planning and the second a reactive body – needs to be re-evaluated in light of developments in communications technologies and techniques.[81] In the future, the United States is likely to move towards something like the Canadian unified model of communications and press strategies. Nevertheless, despite these existing structural differences, US political culture has a significant impact on Canadian political practice.

Before turning to the discussion in earnest, however, the choice of the United States over the ostensibly more similar United Kingdom bears some justification. Both Canada and the UK are parliamentary democracies, with bicameral legislative structures and share the same head of state in Queen Elizabeth II. Moreover, similar party systems and practices of party discipline have both led to a degree of concentration of power within the office of the Prime Minister in both countries. The career of Alastair Campbell, former Prime Minister Tony Blair's Press Secretary from 2000 and 2003, responsible for making the government's case for war in Iraq to the UK public, is an excellent example of the new role that communications and spin play in contemporary political culture.[82] Indeed, his skill at political spin is such that *The Economist* called him the "Napoleon of Spin."[83] However, the immense cultural impact that the United States has on the Canadian political milieu is a significantly more important factor than the structural similarities between Canada and the UK, as Canadians look to the US as a model for their political expectations, and not to the UK. The sheer volume of cultural imports entering the country from Canada's southern border renders any differences in political structures negligible in a discussion on the evolution of communications practice in Canadian political culture and this chapter will show that Canadian communications

---

[80] McMurray, interview.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Peter Oborne, *Alastair Campbell: New Labour and the Rise of the Media Class* (London: Aurum Press, 1999); Alastair Campbell and Robert Stott, eds., *The Blair Years: Extracts from Alastair Campbell Diaries* (London: Hutchinson, 2007).

[83] "Bagehot: Alastair Campbell, Napoleon of Spin," *The Economist* 356.8178 (Jul 8, 2000): 58.

professionals have consciously looked to the US for inspiration and applied their lessons to the Canadian political landscape.[84]

The influence of American media relations upon the Canadian political system cannot be underestimated. Former Director of Communications to Brian Mulroney, Bill Fox explained: "You know, I drew some of [American communication's strategy] for sure. And I was always conscious of it."[85] For instance, the term 'spinning' and its modern practice – which is common in Canadian politics – originates in America.[86] Spinning is the process by which information that would otherwise be damaging to a party is presented in a positive light and is the American political practice that has exerted the greatest influence on the Canadian government-media relationship. According to Andrews, spinning serves to "explain away and thus repair the damage a candidate had done to himself" or to "inflict damage" on the opponent.[87] The emphasis on inflicting and avoiding political damage encourages an adversarial form of politics and can be seen in the following example.[88] During the lead-up to the 2011 Canadian federal election campaign, the new Liberal leader, Michael Ignatieff was the subject of a series of attack ads that painted him as a political dilettante who only wanted to be Prime Minister in order to pad his resume. His 30-year absence from Canada, during which he worked in broadcasting and academia in the US and the UK was used against him. In other words, his successful career abroad, a positive, was spun into a negative; Ignatieff was placed on the defensive and never shook the "Just Visiting" label. He was roundly defeated in the 2011 federal election, resigned and returned to private life soon thereafter.[89]

American presidents are subject to constant media coverage, and as such, cultivating a positive image in the media is vitally important to their success. Hacker,

---

[84] See above, note 76.

[85] Fox, interview.

[86] Leighton Andrews, "Spin: from tactic to tabloid," *Journal of Public Affairs* 6 (2006), 36.

[87] Ibid.

[88] For an example of how this negatively impacts media coverage see Elliot E. Slotnick and Jennifer A. Segal *Television News and the Supreme Court: All the News that's Fit to Air* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 230-245.

[89] "Michael Ignatieff Headed Back To U.S. For Full-Time Gig At Harvard," *The Huffingtonpost Canada,* 24 June 2014.

Giles, and Guerrero state that presidents who fail to properly manage their public image have "poor strategies to deal with opposing circumstances."[90] These poor strategies usually reflect presidents' inabilities to deal with criticism. The most typical inappropriate response to criticism is actively misleading the press. George W. Bush's administration provides an excellent example, in fact the best example, in contemporary American politics. For instance, in the lead-up to the Second Gulf War, the Bush administration repeatedly claimed that the regime of Saddam Hussein in Bagdad was developing weapons of mass destruction. The Bush administration went so far as to send the then Secretary of State, Colin Powell to the United Nations in an effort to recreate the famous presentation of US ambassador Adlai Stevenson during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.[91] Subsequent events proved to the American public that there were no weapons of mass destruction and that the Bush administration had deliberately misled the public. This revelation, coupled with the expense and tragedy of the war, led to a precipitous drop in Bush's approval ratings.[92]

One way that American politicians frequently avoid criticism is by conveying their message through regional media outlets rather than the mainstream national media. However, this is a tricky strategy and politicians must conduct a cost-benefit analysis before making the decision to speak directly to local or regional actors. As Hacker, Giles, and Guerrero argued, the potential benefit of avoiding the National Press Gallery must be weighed against the possibility that the national media might then "reinsert itself by

---

[90] Kenneth L. Hacker, Maury Giles, and Aja Guerrero, "The Political Image Management Dynamics of President Bill Clinton." In *Images, Scandal, and Communications Strategies of the Clinton Presidency*, ed. Robert E. Denton and Rachel L. Holloway (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 14.

[91] Press Release following Powell's presentation: UN Security Council, "Briefing Security Council, US Presents Evidence of Iraq's Failure to Disarm," 5 February 2003. For a rhetorical analysis Powell's presentation and the comparison to Stevenson's presentation, some 40 years earlier see: David Zarefsky, "Making the Case for War: Colin Powell at the United Nations," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10:2 (2007), 275-302.

[92] In May 2003 79% of Americans felt that the Iraq War was justified, which dropped to less than one in four by January 2007. Bush's approval rates dropped from 69% to 35% in the same time frame. These drops were largely due to the belief that Bush had actively misled the public in the lead-up to the Iraq invasion 2007. See Dana Milbank and Jim VandeHei. "Washington Post May 1, 2003 Gallup poll". *The Washington Post*. Retrieved May 23, 2013. "Poll: High Hopes For New Congress", *CBS News*. Retrieved 23 May 2013. "Presidential Approval Ratings," *Gallup Historical Trends*, retrieved May 23, 2013.

drawing attention to the bypassing and then adding their own interpretations to the process."[93] In other words, the perceived snub only draws further attention to the issue. The goal of an American president's press team is simple, yet difficult: dominate, but don't alienate. Media strategists in both the United States and Canada, fail to perform this careful balancing act. For instance, the Bill Clinton administration attempted to transform their practice of sidelining the national media from their successful 1992 election campaign into a presidential communications strategy, a strategy that created an "idle and frustrated national press." The administration was forced to reorganize their press strategy within six months of taking office.[94] The Harper government learned this lesson and achieved a measure of balance by including national correspondents in their campaigns, while simultaneously granting interviews to local media outlets.[95]

The above strategy is a traditional American government-media relations practice, however, changes in the media landscape brought on by developments in communications technology have made it less and less relevant. In the past, American and Canadian media coverage was largely restricted to the major national chains that dominated their respective executive and legislative press galleries for much of the twentieth century. However, they have lost their monopoly over national press coverage in the past decade and the number of political commentators has greatly increased; the Ottawa Press Gallery no longer controls Canadian political coverage.[96] For example, the CBC's evening news program *The National* has an audience of 600,000 to 700,000, while the evening newscast of *Fairchild Television,* a channel that markets itself to the Cantonese-speaking Canadian audience, claims 500,000 viewers.[97] A similar trend is

---

[93] Hacker, Giles, and Guerrero, 18.

[94] Denton, Robert E., Jr, and Rachel L. Holloway, *Images, scandal, and communication strategies of the Clinton presidency*. (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2003), 54-56.

[95] This practice remains in place during the Prime Minister's regular visits and announcements. However, Harper's communications team retains a degree of control over the press by typically allowing only four questions to the national media, and one to the local media. This practice has encountered some criticism from the press and the occasional altercation. See for instance: Michael den Tandt, "Stephen Harper's northern tour ends with ugly tussle between Chinese reporter and PM's RCMP security detail," *The National Post*, 23 August 2014.

[96] One scholar, commenting on the proliferation of political bloggers called it an "explosion of ankle-biting, semi-professional digital competitors." Robin V. Sears, "Harper vs. the Press Gallery: the frog and the scorpion," *Policy Options* 27:6 (July-August 2006), 7.

[97] Privy Council Research Office.

occurring in America, which has a large Spanish-speaking broadcasting audience.[98] The concurrent decentralization of the media has had a direct impact on how American presidents have approached public relations, which is explored through the examination of presidential press policies conducted throughout this chapter. Those presidents who have failed to acknowledge this trend of decentralization have often been those with the least successful communications policies. This has proven to be an important lesson for Canadian press and communications strategists.

Ronald Reagan was one of the modern presidents who successfully managed governmental-media relations. According to Carpini, his success at managing the modern president-press relationship was attributable to the following carefully calculated communications plan:

> [an] orchestrated policy of planning ahead, staying on the offensive, controlling the flow of information (both by inundating journalists with positive information and making potentially negative information more difficult to get), limited direct access to the president, only talking about issues the administration wants to talk about, speaking in one voice and repeating the same message many times.[99]

While some individuals were highly critical of this strategy and claimed it was undemocratic, it was an astounding success from a communication's standpoint. In fact, Ronald Reagan's approval ratings in his second term were the highest for a two-term president since Dwight D. Eisenhower's administration (1953 to 1961).[100]

The success of Reagan's press policy was largely due to the way that the American press was structured during his presidency. The President took advantage of the fact that there were a limited number of national journalists at the time by carefully

---

[98] During the 2014 July sweeps, Univisión, the largest Spanish language broadcaster in the US, achieved higher ratings than the big four – ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC – for the second year in a row. Carolina Moreno, "Univision Trumps English-Language Network Giants, Again," *The Huffington Post,* 1 August 2014.

[99] John C. Tedesco "Clinton's Public Relations Nightmares Begin," in *Images, Scandal, and Communications Strategies of the Clinton Presidency*, ed. Robert E. Denton and Rachel L. Holloway (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 44-45.

[100] "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Gallup Historical Statistics and Trends," *Gallup*, Retrieved May 23, 2013.

cultivating relationships with them.[101] The press became less willing to attack Reagan on issues that would have portrayed him in a negative light, such as the Iran-Contra scandal, because they feared that this would cause them to lose their privileged access to information.[102] Moreover, Reagan's press team tightly regulated the executive's message by limiting access to the president. As CBC Ombudsman Kirk Lapointe argued, this allowed the press team to consistently deliver a focused message, which is fundamental to a successful press strategy.[103] In short, Reagan's press management team recognized the advantages that the concentrated media allowed, and exploited them successfully in order to maintain a well-managed media policy.

George H.W. Bush, on the other hand, was not able to build on the successes of his predecessor because of the shifting media landscape that made his media policies obsolete. This failure was despite the fact that he retained Reagan's senior press team, most notably Reagan's Press Secretary, Max Martin Fitzwater.[104] As noted above, the media landscape was becoming more decentralized which made the consistent delivery of a focussed message much more difficult than during the Reagan years.[105] More importantly, however, the role of the 'presidential image' had risen in importance; as Lori Cox Han has argued, "many of the difficulties that Bush experienced in office had little to do with him personally but more to do with the changes to the political environment

---

[101] Robert E. Denton, *The Primetime Presidency of Ronald Reagan: The Era of the Television Presidency* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 27-8.

[102] Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989).

[103] Kirk Lapointe, Interview by Dimitri Soudas, Toronto, July 29, 2011.

[104] Reagan's Press Secretary, Max Martin Fitzwater and two Deputy Press Secretaries – B. Jay Cooper and Cary Foster – transitioned into the Bush White House. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, "White House Staff, Alphabetical List, 1981-1989," accessed 10 October 2014, www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/whitehousestaffalpha.htm; "The White House Staff of George H. W. Bush (Bush I) (1989-1993)," American Studies at the University of Virginia, accessed 10 October 2014, http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CDcQFjAD&url=htt p%3A%2F%2Fxroads.virginia.edu%2F~MA02%2Famacker%2FAdministrations%2FBush%2C %2520George%2520H.W%2FBush%252041%2520Completed%2FBush%252041%2520Staff %2520and%2520Advisers%2520%28completed%29%2FBush%252041%2520Staff%2520and %2520Advisers%2520%28completed%29.doc&ei=FEphVMDrKJCbyATrl4DQDA&usg=AFQjC NFZTA- G28x3Rfib4Al9mMnBxvcSug&sig2=kC1f6xRwhjkhu9RQ1xpBJA&bvm=bv.79189006,d.aWw.

[105] See also: Lori Cox Han, *Presidency Upstaged: The Public Leadership of George H.W. Bush* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2011), 49ff.

during the Reagan years."[106] In other words, public expectations of the image of the president had shifted to privilege style over substance.[107] Bush lacked the charisma and oratorical skills of Reagan and as such found it difficult to replicate his success in dealing with the media. For instance, in 1988, on the eve of the Republican National Convention, the campaign media guru, Roger Ailes put together a compilation of Bush's past media appearances. The result was difficult to watch: "There he was, in a series of awkward poses, thoughts cascading, hands flailing, syntax garbled, eyes wandering…. What he saw was a performance worthy of a Saturday Night Live parody by comedian Dana Carvey. It was, says a senior White House aide, 'the very worst of George Bush.'"[108] Ultimately, Bush had neither the oratorical skills, nor the stage presence to succeed in a new media landscape that privileged image over content.[109]

Moreover, Bush viewed the office of the presidency as one whose dignity placed it above the fray of political machinations.[110] Unfortunately for President Bush, this vision was more appropriate to presidencies of the first half of the twentieth century and not consistent with the adversarial role of journalists in the post-Watergate media era.[111] As Hill and Williams argued in *The Bush Presidency,* there was a growing "gap between [the] expectations and capability" of the American presidencies during the 1980s.[112] This gap reflected both the increasing popularity of television and the public distrust created by scandals such as Watergate. Reagan's outgoing personality, previous experience in Hollywood, and insights on the effect that the media spotlight had on politics helped him to navigate these changes**.** In contrast, Bush's outlook on the presidency was out-dated and consequently he found it extremely difficult to navigate the communications culture of the late twentieth century.

---

[106] Ibid., 12.

[107] Ibid., 4.

[108] James Gerstenzang, "Bush Needs the Speech of His Career, Again," *The Los Angeles Times,* 20 August 1992, A6.

[109] Han, 45.

[110] Ibid., 57-58.

[111] See above, p.3 and: de Burgh, ed., *Investigative Journalism*, 78-80.

[112] Dilys M. Hill and Phil Williams, *The Bush Presidency: Triumphs and Adversities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), 214.

Bush and Reagan's different outlooks on the role of the president in public life led them to adopt radically different press strategies. As Han argued, President Bush's press strategy can be summarized "as more access, more information, and less manipulation [than Reagan]."[113] Bush, the consummate Washington insider, saw stagecraft as unbecoming for a president while Reagan relied extensively on the power of television to convey his message to the American public. He performed on the media stage much as he had performed in Hollywood, making use of sound bites such as "trust, but verify."[114] Bush did not wish to employ such measures and as Han argued, the overriding tenet of his communications strategy appears to have been to take an "anti-Reagan approach."[115] This point was made clearly in a 28 January 1989 *Los Angeles Times* editorial on a speech Bush gave the previous day. The editorial stated: "Ronald Reagan, working from a polished text, may have been a great communicator, but George Bush, vamping it, gives an early impression of someone who's on top of his job."[116] However, the editorial also noted "the hastily summoned 11 a.m. meeting may have denied Bush the kind of mass audience that an evening session with live coverage by all the television networks would have offered."[117] Despite his ease with the press, Bush's tendency to avoid the spotlight worked to his disadvantage.

Bush's 1992 re-election campaign provided the most notable example of how this anti-Reagan approach worked to his disadvantage. His media strategy of simply providing information and not attempting to craft a consistent message had proven successful when things were going well, such as during the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the First Gulf War, however, it was ill-suited to more challenging circumstances. The economic recession of the 1990s provided an excellent example of such a circumstance. Any effort to engage with the economic issue by the administration saw an increase in the public perception that Bush was out of touch with ordinary Americans.[118] The

---

[113] Han, 14.

[114] Suzanne Massie, *Suzanne Massie during the Reagan Years*, accessed 15 June 2013, http://www.suzannemassie.com/reaganYears.html.

[115] Han, 15.

[116] "Bush: A Matter of Style," *Los Angeles Times,* January 28, 1989, 8.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Han, 17.

president's approval ratings dropped from a high of 91% during the First Gulf War, to around 30% leading into the 1992 presidential election.[119] Bush himself later recognized his inability to manage the media situation effectively. In an interview with the *Washingtonian* he stated:

> I just wasn't a good enough communicator. If [Reagan] had been in my place, he'd have cut through the opposition fog that everything was going to hell. He'd say, "Wait a minute, here are the facts, the reality." And the reality was that the recession had bottomed out in 1991, and the economy had grown not just by the 2.7 percent I claimed for the third quarter, but by 3.4 percent. And in the fourth quarter it grew at a very robust 5.8% - not exactly a recession… but I failed as a communicator.[120]

While attempting to positively spin an economic recession would have been challenging for any political leader, the fact that Bush was unable to improve his image when things were in fact going well suggests that his unwillingness to engage with the media was to blame for his increasing unpopularity.[121] Ultimately, Bush's failure to allow his communication team to craft a coherent message to the media, coupled with his decision to renege on a promise not to raise taxes, cost him the 1992 election.[122] Future presidents and their press teams have sought to avoid the Bush administration's failed approach to media relations.

Presidential views on the press and its relationship to the office of the president can be an important determining factor in US media-government relations. Mike McCurry, Clinton's Press Secretary from 1994 to 1998, recognized that the role of the 'chief communications officer' in the national leader's office went through a transformation in the latter half of the twentieth century. In 1969, during the Nixon presidency, Herbert G. Klein split press relations between the offices of the Press

---

[119] Ibid., 76-77.

[120] Victor Gold, "George Bush Speaks Out," *Washingtonian,* February 1994, 41.

[121] According to Gallup, Bush's popularity numbers reached a high water mark as the Soviet Union collapsed, but entered a steep decline in the year preceding the 1992 presidential election. "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Gallup Historical Statistics and Trends," Gallup, accessed 10 October 2014, http://www.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx.

[122] Han, 17.

Secretary and that of the Director of Communications. McCurry explained: "Yes, Kennedy and Johnson ushered in the modern televised presidency in the U.S. But you will see in the research that it was really Herb Klein during the Nixon presidency who created the modern structure of presidential communications in the US."[123] However, at times it has been difficult to ascertain the differences between the extents of these two individuals' influence, as McCurry explained:

> … sometimes the Press Secretary and the Director of Communications have equal status (as in my day with Clinton --- both jobs carried the designation "Assistant to the President" which is the highest rank on the White House staff equivalent to a 4-star general.) Other times in other administrations (most typically Republican), the Press Secretary has been subordinate to the Director of Communications (with the rank Deputy Assistant to the President.[124]

The reason for the distinction is one of political culture. McCurry elaborated:

> … it usually relates to the disdain a given President has for 'the press' the press secretary is a lesser figure when the President and the top aides to the president consider the press a necessary evil that needs constant control and supervision. When a President and his top staff want a more collegial, amicable relationship with the press, the Press Secretary usually has higher status on the staff (that was my situation).[125]

In other words, personal ideology and opinions about the press could determine an administration's media policy.

Bill Clinton and his communication team were initially unsuccessful at crafting a clear media policy. As noted above, this was partly the result of their strategy of ignoring the national media establishment.[126] In addition, immediately after the 1992 presidential election, the Clinton administration suffered from what Hacker, Giles and Guerrero described as a serious lack of "concentrated message focus."[127] They took on too many

---

[123] McCurry, interview.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] See above, p.29.
[127] Hacker, Giles, and Guerrero, 8.

issues at once and bad publicity accompanied even positive accomplishments.[128] Once Clinton gained his political footing, he began to appeal to values common to conservatives, liberals and independents; Hacker, Giles, and Guerrero note that appealing to common values is a "strong communication technique in political communication."[129] Moreover, according to Rachel L. Halloway, his focus was on implementing a pragmatic agenda for the nation.[130] This led Clinton to avoid divisive ideological issues and instead focus on issues and priorities that were relevant to the majority of the population. He was able to obtain broad support for his various policy initiatives. Despite a series of scandals, most notably the Lewinski affair, Clinton was able to maintain high approval ratings throughout his presidency.[131] As Hacker, Giles, and Guerrero explained, this achievement was supported not only by a buoyant US economy, Clinton's values politics, but also by his "Hollywood techniques" as part of a permanent public relations campaign.[132] Clinton essentially gained an expertise in capitalizing on style over substance that included relying upon "visual manipulation, storytelling, [and] simple emotional arguments laced with value terms, and patriotic appeals."[133]

The manner in which the George W. Bush administration handled the media reflected the evolution of American presidents' interactions with the media. The White House held off-the-record sessions with reporters before the president gave speeches to the public to discuss the context in which the speeches were to be given and outline "what the president want[ed] to accomplish" with the speech.[134] This had the effect of framing subsequent media reports and aligning it with the administration's

---

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid., 31.

[130] Rachel L. Halloway, "Clinton's Televised Town hall Meetings as a Political Strategy: The Illusion of Control," in *Images, Scandal, and Communications Strategies of the Clinton Presidency*, eds. Robert E. Denton and Rachel L. Holloway (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 83.

[131] It must be acknowledged that despite these extremely high presidential approval ratings, his trust and honesty ratings were extremely low. Hacker Giles, and Guerrero, 4.

[132] Ibid, 9.

[133] Richard Perloff, *Political Communication: Politics, Press, and Public in America*, (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 19.

[134] Patterson, 191.

communications strategy. Moreover, once speeches had been given, the press secretary would sometimes also administrate a conference call, which allowed reporters to ask follow-up questions.[135] Answering the reporters' questions was a means of ensuring that the president's message was delivered and understood. By providing controlled access to the President's office, mediated through the Press Secretary, helped to frame the political discourse, which ultimately resulted in the effective management of the media.

Bush's media policies were actually a continuation of those developed by the Clinton administration and reflected ongoing changes in the contemporary media landscape. During the Clinton era it was standard practice for cabinet members to give "explanatory briefings" to the press before Clinton made major policy announcements.[136] These were meant to "set the stage for the presidential statement."[137] For Bush, cabinet members had a different role. They were seen as "part of the 'echo' of what the president has already said, rather than a voice in the initial stages of explaining the president's policies. They are used to keep a presidential theme going, rather than to go into deep policy explanations." [138] The first rule of the Bush administration's communications department was that message clarity and content were non-negotiable, which required that there be no deviation from the message. This message discipline is especially important given the proliferation of media outlets and newsmakers. The competition to dominate the front page and to consistently make headlines has therefore become much more intense. Given that so much news content is now available to journalists, Press Secretaries and communications specialists must exercise a great deal of discipline in order to "stay on message" and to "stay on what you want to talk about."[139] If they fail to abide by this principle, they have little success in conveying their message to the electorate.

[135] Martha Joynt Kumar, *Managing the President's Message: The White House Communications Operation* (Baltimore, MD: JHUP, 2010), 250-252.

[136] Patterson, 191.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Kumar, 81.

[139] Patterson, 192.

Message discipline can be seen expressed in the Bush administration's practice of having communications goals determine themes, and themes determine schedules, rather than the other way around.[140] The top stories in daily news coverage of the Bush administration were ignored if they were not consistent with its communications goals. This caused tension at times, as was seen in the Bush administration's handling of the Hurricane Katrina disaster in 2005. As the disaster progressed, Bush remained focused on the Iraq war and provided only cursory remarks on Katrina. This led many to view him as callous and unconcerned with the welfare of his own people.[141] The failure to address the growing humanitarian crisis only further exacerbated the situation. Thus, slavish adherence to daily communications schedules can run aground on breaking news stories. This is a lesson that the Harper government has internalized by recognizing the need for a reactive and responsive media strategy.[142] As such, during both the 2006 and 2008 federal election campaigns, the Conservatives had rapid response teams in place to react to crises and produce political attacks.[143] In preparation for the coming election, the Conservatives opened a political War Room to great fanfare in 2007; their Liberal opponents took to calling it a "fear factory."[144] The speed of campaigning in the digital age has necessitated the development of capabilities such as these.

The Obama administration has taken advantage of new media and begun to employ it in an effective manner. Macon Phillips, Obama's former Director of New Media, saw social media like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as opportunities for politicians to "put out their message first, without interference"[145] The rationale behind the new and continually upgraded WhiteHouse.org website is to provide the American public with a forum that is based on the principles of "interactivity and transparency."[146]

[140] Ibid.

[141] Patterson, 192.

[142] Harper, interview.

[143] Tom Flanagan, *Harper's Team: Behind the Scenes in the Conservative Rise to Power, 2nd edition* (London; Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 304.

[144] "Tories show off 'war room'," *The Toronto Star*, 2 April 2007, accessed 10 October 2014, http://www.thestar.com/news/2007/04/02/tories_show_off_war_room.html.

[145] Eric Benderoff, "Macon Phillips: the man behind the President." *Tribune Reporter*, Feb 24, 2009, http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/chi-tue-macon-phillips-new-mediafeb24,0,6751735.story.

[146] Ibid.

In other words, President Obama's press strategy is not simply to pump out information, but to speak directly to the American people. Furthermore, an effort is made to present the president's message in an entertaining manner. According to Phillips, information that is not presented in this way will be perceived as "boring, not informative, and static."[147] By bringing the president's message directly to the American people, the Obama administration is able to bypass the mediating influence of the press and guarantee message integrity.

The Harper government has begun to apply these lessons to the Canadian political scene through the use of YouTube to speak directly to the electorate. Called 24 Seven, the weekly webcast is an official production of the Prime Minster's communications team. A typical segment opens to the strains of "Maple Leaf Forever" and follows the Prime Minister during his week of political engagements. It contains policy announcements, appearances by cabinet ministers, and visits with heads of state. The stated goal of the program is to "show Canadians what their government is doing for them."[148] Tightly scripted, the program is an obvious platform for the government to broadcast their message directly to the Canadian people, highlighting their priorities without the mediating influence of the press, thus ensuring message integrity.

Macon Phillips equated technological innovation with public accountability and greater transparency. He accepted that Obama's voice would not be the only political voice on the Internet. In fact, he maintained that "allowing your critics to speak, even on the Web sites you control," is one of the challenges that politicians have to contend with today.[149] When asked what advantage a government gained from communicating with millions of citizens through social media, Phillips replied:

> Newspapers are still important but we need people to surface data and
> interpret it. Government will take a stab at that but the private sector
> can innovate faster. The advantage for people who are interested is

---

[147] Ibid.

[148] "24 SEVEN: Behind the Scenes," YouTube video, 0.54, The official YouTube channel for the Prime Minister of Canada, https://www.youtube.com/user/pmocpm.

[149] Benderoff. It should be noted, however, that one is hard-pressed to find evidence of the existence of any such "criticism" on the White House website.

that they can hold government more accountable. And also to make more people interested in government.[150]

Some might say that the "open data part of open government" is a threat to corporate interests that make a lot of money off the public's confusion and the "general absence of navigable information."[151] At the same time, the more that the electorate turns to government websites as a source for reliable information, the more incentive special interests, such as insurance providers in the case of Healthcare.gov, will have to participate and fully represent themselves on the website.[152] Once the website obtains a critical mass of followers it will become self-sufficient and potentially, could face many of the same issues that confront mainstream media outlets. As a result, the use of new media is a double-edged sword and both Canadian and American communication specialists need to take these issues into account in serving their clients.

While American political communications practices have proven to be a model for Canadian communications specialists, one must approach their impact upon Canadian political culture with caution. Beyond the obvious structural differences between the two countries, specifically the division of communications functions in the US and the obvious differences between republican and parliamentary systems, there is also a significant cultural resistance to American influences that exists north of the 49th parallel. Indeed, according to former Mulroney communications advisor Luc Lavoie, "I am convinced that Canadian political culture will never be that close to American political culture."[153] This response is partly explained by CBC anchor Peter Mansbridge who observed that the Canadian public's response to American-style developments is: "it shouldn't be that way, it's American."[154] This perspective is given additional credence by CTV anchor Lloyd Robertson, who recognized Canadians' sensitivity to American

[150] Debbie Well, "Q & A with White House Director of New Media Macon Phillip,." *Social Media Insights Blog,* September 9, 2009, http://www.debbieweil.com/blog/kojo-nnamdi-q-a-with-white-house-director-of-new-media-macon-phillips/.

[151] Nancy Scola, "The Cost of Adding Prices to HealthCare.gov." *Personal Democracy Forum*, July 1, 2010, http://techpresident.com/blog-entry/cost-adding-prices-healthcaregov.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Luc Lavoie cited in Scula.

[154] Peter Mansbridge, Interview by Dimitri Soudas, Toronto, September 17, 2011.

influence in stating: "anything that gets close to the American system is going to be criticized."[155] Given this resistance, American political practice is therefore unlikely to come to dominate Canadian political culture. Nevertheless, Canadian communications officers must take note of American developments as an important source of inspiration, but at the same time remain sensitive to Canadian resistance to US political culture.

This chapter has set out to demonstrate that American media-government relations have had an impact on Canadian political and communications culture. The US has provided a number of models and lessons to Canadian communications professionals, especially the Prime Minister's Director of Communications. Ronald Reagan's presidency demonstrated that the structure of the media landscape was an important factor in the development of a communications strategy; concentration in the national media, coupled with a personal touch contributed to his success in delivering his message. These lessons were reinforced during the presidency of George H.W. Bush who failed to recognize the changes that occurred to the media landscape. A media strategy that focussed on common values ensured that Bill Clinton enjoyed record high approval ratings, despite numerous serious personal scandals. On the other hand, George W. Bush's record low approval ratings were not aided by a failure to deal with media criticism, despite the emphasis on message discipline by his communications team. Lastly, Barack Obama has done the most to integrate new media into presidential communications strategy, thereby providing a model for governments wishing to deliver their message directly to the people, without the mediating influence of the press. Canadian communications specialists have observed and internalized many of these lessons, most notably by the current Harper government which has learned to achieve a measure of balance when dealing with local and national media outlets, but also through the emphasis on new media as a means to bypass the press as a mediating influence and guarantee message integrity. Ultimately, despite fears over the negative influence of American culture on Canada and the differences between the two countries, communications specialists have readily applied these lessons to the Canadian political milieu.

---

[155] Lloyd Robertson, Interview by Dimitri Soudas, Toronto, September 20, 2011.

Chapter 3.

Lessons Learned and Lessons Ignored from the Trudeau Era to the Present: The Communication Strategies of Canada's Prime Ministers and the Increasingly Important Role of the Director of Communications

Previous chapters have explored the impact that technological developments and American communications practices have had on communications strategies in Canada. With this foundation in place, this chapter will now turn to an examination of the strategies that Canadian Prime Ministers and their communications staff have employed in light of these impacts and provide an assessment of those strategies. Critically important to the success or failure of a communications strategy is the Prime Minister's Director of Communications who must remain abreast of the political and technological context in which they operate. It will become clear that Prime Ministers and their Directors of Communications who were fully aware of the political and technological context in which they were operating generally conveyed their message successfully to the Canadian public. In contrast, those who failed to adapt to the advances in communications technology and the attendant shifts occurring in the media landscape, failed to deliver their message effectively. Ultimately, those who failed to do so paid the price at the ballot box.

Former Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau had a rocky relationship with the media because he refused to develop or nurture positive working relationships with members of the media. This was a sea change from the previous Liberal administration of Lester Pearson who, according to Press Secretary and Special Assistant Richard

O'Hagan, had "chummy" relations with the media.[156] O'Hagan, who later served as Trudeau's Special Advisor on Communications – a position that corresponds most closely with the role of today's Director of Communications – was well aware of existing norms in media-government interactions. However, cultivating 'chummy' relations with the press was not a priority for Trudeau who was never "totally comfortable" with members of the press and generally did not respect them.[157] He believed that the press gallery consisted of persons who were his intellectually inferior and possessed "limited knowledge" of social issues and current affairs.[158] This perception dictated his interactions with the media and as a result Trudeau refused to "stroke journalists' egos, grant them the access they required, or cater to their needs."[159] Instead, he considered access to the inner sanctums of power to be a privilege that did not extend to the press. However, Trudeau was not oblivious to the issues that his dislike for the press created in terms of advancing government policy. According to O'Hagan, Trudeau's primary reason for hiring him in 1975 was to work on "[Trudeau's] communications with the media."[160] Ultimately, it was Trudeau's personal disdain for the media that led to the institutionalization of media management within government.

Control over the lines of communication between the government and the press was the rule rather than the exception for the Trudeau administration. Trudeau guarded information jealously from the media; indeed, he was a firm believer in the "inviolability of cabinet secrecy."[161] Trudeau assumed that there was nothing he could do to prevent the media from eventually turning against him and so as a result, he went to great lengths to avoid being put in a position that required him to pander to the media.[162] This led to an indifference of his media coverage.[163] The press responded to Trudeau's practice of denying them access by adopting a strategy of relentless criticism. For example,

[156] Richard O'Hagan, Interview by Dimitri Soudas. Toronto. September 25, 2011.

[157] Martin O'Malley, "Pierre Trudeau." (n.d.). *CBC News Online*, accessed September 14, 2012, www.canadahistory.com/sections/politics/pm/pierretrudeau.htm.

[158] Levine, 266.

[159] Ibid., 267.

[160] O'Hagan, interview.

[161] Levine, 277.

[162] Ibid., 267.

[163] Ibid.

members of the press charged Trudeau's government with poor news management and the excessive manipulation of information.[164] The press' potential to distort the Prime Minister's messages was front and centre for Trudeau and O'Hagan; indeed, this was the reason they disliked political scrums, which the latter described as "chaotic and unorganized."[165] However, the goal is always to maintain control of the agenda and get your "message to the public with the greatest frequency and the least distortion possible… on your time frame, not the media's."[166]

What Trudeau and O'Hagan failed to realize was that there was a crucial difference between fraternizing with the press and maintaining professional working relationships with those primarily responsible for communicating the PM's message to the Canadian people. Trudeau conflated the process of courting the press with the notion of sleeping with the enemy, which wasn't surprising given that he once referred to the media as a bunch of jackals.[167] According to CTV's Lloyd Robertson, relations between the press and politicians during Trudeau's time can be best described as a "kind of good old boys network."[168] Dismissing all journalists as irrelevant and discounting their worth placed Trudeau and his communications team at a disadvantage. Interactions between the PMO and the press were limited, tense and hostile, often leading to "shoving matches in the parliamentary hallways scrums" or meetings that turned "sour" or "deathly silent."[169] Simply put, alienating the press led to hard feelings on the part of journalists and was reflected in their coverage of Trudeau and his government.[170] As a result, Trudeau needed to interact more directly with the Canadian public than previous PMs and to this end, began to rely more heavily on the medium of television in order to get his message across to Canadians.

[164] Ibid., 284.
[165] O'Hagan, interview.
[166] Levine, 287.
[167] Levine, 266-268.
[168] Robertson, interview.
[169] Levine, 268.
[170] Ibid., 291.

Television served as the ideal vehicle for Trudeau and he used it to effectively communicate with the Canadian public. Television's "focus on personality, style, and showmanship," provided the "ideal medium for transmitting [his] charisma."[171] As Robertson noted, Trudeau was the "first prime minister to really understand television."[172] Levine attributed Trudeau's success exploiting the medium to his acute awareness of "TV's powerful intimacy."[173] Television created the perception that Trudeau was not separate from members of the Canadian public and instead, was interacting directly with them. Television satisfied the public's desire for the "dramatic" and the "electrifying."[174] He could dominate the television screen because – despite his personal faults and privileged background – he had an unrivalled capacity for appearing to relate to Canadian citizens and appear accessible to them. Trudeau's famous pirouette behind Queen Elizabeth II in 1977 or his 1971 reply of 'fuddle duddle' to one reporter's request for clarification to comments he made in the House of Commons, are but two examples that captivated the Canadian people.[175] Television helped Trudeau communicate an image of a leader who was on an equal playing field with average Canadians.[176]

Trudeau successfully employed television to communicate the government's agenda to the public. However, using the medium in this way was not without its challenges. Specifically, television served to privilege image over content and as a result, the visual component of Trudeau's political communication strategies became increasingly important. According to Robertson, this led Trudeau to the realization that in order to obtain public support for future policy proposals he needed to control the image that was being constructed of him on the television screen.[177] Trudeau's need for control over the medium grew and as Levine noted, his "contest with the media over access to

---

[171] Ibid., 269.

[172] Robertson, interview.

[173] Levine, 270.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Pirouette: Andrew Duffy, "The story behind the pirouette," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 16 June 2001, A1; Fuddle duddle: "1971 – Trudeau's 'fuddle duddle' incident," *CBC Digital Archives,* accessed 10 October 2014, http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/politics/prime-ministers/fuddle-duddle-incident.html.

[176] Levine, 269.

[177] Robertson, interview.

information and setting the political agenda became even more strained."[178] While the 24-hour news cycle and the implications it would create were still years away, the need for Prime Ministers to have increased control over the construction of their image was already apparent.

It has been said that the rules of the "politics-media game" were forever altered after Trudeau.[179] Indeed, when Joe Clark became Prime Minister, the media was overwhelmingly obsessed with finding stories that emphasized and exploited the private aspects of life, rather than give serious consideration to substantive policies he was trying to promote.[180] For instance, during a 1978 world tour that Clark undertook as the new Leader of the Opposition in order to buttress his foreign policy credentials the headlines focussed on his gaffes and blunders, rather than policy. Facile statements such as "Jerusalem is a very holy city" and questions about the age of a farmer's chickens were gleefully reported in the Canadian press and made Clark seem woefully unprepared to be Prime Minister; losing the journalists luggage didn't help either.[181] This fixation with the personal reflected an increasing trend towards the tabloidization of news, that is the shift from the factual to the superficial or sensational.[182] The shift away from sophisticated discussions of complex initiatives towards superficial analyses of trivial matters highlighted a consumer culture that was eager for "gossip and entertainment disguised as news."[183] Clark's short term as Prime Minister, 273 days, provides evidence of this new reality.

Clark failed to respond well to the changing media environment. Rather than accept the new political reality, he employed a media strategy more suitable to an earlier period when the media was not as adversarial. In stark contrast to Trudeau's practice of

[178] Levine, 272.

[179] Ibid., 292.

[180] Ibid., 294.

[181] Ibid., 293.

[182] S. Elizabeth Bird, "Tabloidization: What is it, and Does it Really Matter?" in *The Changing Faces of Journalism: Tabloidization, Technology and Truthiness*, ed. Barbie Zelizer (London: Routledge, 2009), 40-41.

[183] Lou Dobbs, "All the news that's fit," *US* News, February 15, 2004. http://www.usnews.com/usnews/opinion/articles/040223/23dobbs.htm.

granting limited access to the media, Clark opted for a doors wide-open policy. As Levine noted, he was committed to an "open and honest administration" that did not refuse to answer any questions.[184] This commitment was reflected in Clark's government tabling of the first ever Access to Information legislation in October 1979.[185] Clark was willing and eager to submit himself to constant questioning, and yet, the "kindliness and friendliness" that he showed to the media was not reciprocated in the coverage he received. In fact, his display of good will did not prevent journalists from "being critical to the point of ruthlessness."[186] It is interesting to note that neither Trudeau's nor Clark's communications strategies proved to be entirely successful. As noted above, Trudeau did not hold the press in high regard and consequently distanced himself from them. In turn, he felt the media's backlash. While Clark's openness to the media merits praise, his 'nice' approach was a dismal failure from a communications strategy insofar as he was not able to secure decent approval ratings, and subsequently lost the 1980 election to a reinvigorated Liberal party.[187] Ultimately, this was a result of an inability to accept the changes that had occurred in the media landscape.

In 1984, John Turner succeeded Pierre Trudeau as Prime Minister, beating out Jean Chrétien for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada. His communications strategy bore many similarities to that of Clark's in that it was better suited to another political era. Turner's relations with the members of the media were generally described as positive prior to his becoming Prime Minister, primarily due to his openness with them.[188] When he became Prime Minister he was unable to make the shifts in communications strategy necessitated by the increased scrutiny that came with the office. This came to the fore most notably during his campaign to become the Liberal leader after Pierre Trudeau retired for the final time in 1984. Turner now appeared to lack the confidence for which he had been previously known and appeared timid before

---

[184] Levine, 301.

[185] Mike Larsen and Kevin Walby, eds. *Brokering Access: Power, Politics, and Freedom of Information Process in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 8.

[186] Levine, 301.

[187] A Gallup poll had Clark's party down double digits against the Liberals on the eve of the election: Jeffrey Simpson, "Clark says Gallup poll foggy as West Coast weather," *The Globe and Mail*, 9 February 1980.

[188] Levine, 314.

the cameras.[189] Indeed, journalists who had lately sung his praises were now "surprised at how nervous he was, constantly wetting his lips and clearing his throat 'machine-gun style.'"[190] However, it was not Turner who had changed, but the political and media environment that focused on style over substance and he and his communication team failed to adapt.

Turner employed numerous techniques to improve his media image when he served as a cabinet minister in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Most notably, before going on camera he would apply a stick of pancake makeup to his face in order to make himself more visually appealing to the cameras.[191] In 1984, such tactics proved problematic, as Richard Nixon had learned during the 1960 presidential debates against John F. Kennedy discussed above. Indeed, as columnist Marjorie Nichols of the *Vancouver Sun* noted on 17 March 1984, actions like this were "all on the record now."[192] Under Trudeau, media relations had gone from cordial to adversarial and the members of the press were certain to jump on any action that could portray the Prime Minister as 'weak' – as they did with Turner. According to Levine, by the time that Turner re-entered politics in 1984, the Parliamentary press gallery had expanded in number, and it was impossible for Turner to maintain personal relationships with every journalist, as he had once been able to do.[193] Levine described him as something out of a Grit museum, a relic in modern times:

> In private, his "gutsy, slangy" language was regularly laced with four-letter words, and he spoke about women as if he were still in a college locker room. He still believed he could go for late-night drinks with the "gentlemen of the press" or "the guys." When one female reporter became overly aggressive in questioning him, his response was, "Down girl!"[194]

[189] John Sawatsky, *The Insiders: Government, Business and the Lobbyists* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1987), 199.

[190] Levine, 316.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Marjorie Nichols, *Vancouver Sun*, March 17, 1984.

[194] Levine, 316.

[194] Levine, 316.

Turner's failure to recognize how the press was portraying him to the public put him at a major disadvantage, which was only compounded by the fact that on television, politicians' appearances mattered as much, if not more, than the substance of their ideas.

The increasing importance of television in politics and the consequent elevation of the image were not factored into Turner's communications strategy for the 1984 election campaign and as a result, Turner's stint as Prime Minister was a short one. During television appearances Turner appeared nervous and out of place in front of the cameras.[195] There was "no greater blunder" than failing to appear prime ministerial on television in the 1980s and Turner committed this blunder.[196] Turner's image problems were compounded by party infighting and his failure to deliver a focused and consistent message. Indeed, as Simpson noted, Turner was often at odds with his own advisors.[197] Ultimately, Turner was unable to replicate his victory at the leadership convention and lost the 1984 federal election to Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative Party.[198]

Mulroney's media savvy stood in stark contrast to the ineptitude that Turner and his media advisors displayed in their communications strategies. As Turner's chief rival, Mulroney learned from his opponent's mistakes. Mulroney appreciated the fact that the press gallery was not composed of people who were his friends. Moreover, he had already learned the hard way that there was no such thing as 'off the record' conversations with reporters.[199] This was due to the competitive atmosphere of the contemporary media environment and the adversarial situation that Prime Minister Trudeau had created in media-government relations. At the same time, Mulroney shared Trudeau's awareness of the power of television. As he explained to the author:

---

[195] Ibid.

[196] See above, Turner's lip smacking and nervousness: Levine, 316.

[197] Jeffrey Simpson, "Vincible Liberals" in *The Canadian General Election of 1984: Politicians, Parties, Press and Polls,* ed. Alan Stewart Frizzell and Anthony Westell (Toronto: Dundern Press, 1985), 15-16.

[198] Eric Mintz, "The Canadian General Election of 1984," *Election Studies* 4:1 (April 1985), 71-75.
[199] Levine, 320.

> … the importance of television itself. Of course I knew that before and I was ready for it. Turner was not. John was rusty and…. He was a good man. John Turner was a good man but he wasn't ready for a campaign. I was. He wasn't. And in a country like ours that no matter what people say, if it's not on TV it didn't happen. And with regard to the campaign itself, nobody pays any attention to the campaign until the debates.[200]

During the 1984 federal election Mulroney made good use of this advantage, delivering a knockout blow to John Turner during the leader's debate from which he never recovered.[201] The importance of the televised debates was only further reinforced for Mulroney during the 1988 election:

> [this example] illustrated to me the enormous impact of television. We think, because we're in that bubble in Ottawa, we think that people come home from work and they just turn on Question Period. They pay no attention to it. None. Until an election is called, and only then do they focus and they really only focus during the debates. That's what I learned about it.[202]

Mulroney recognized the importance of the televised debates to his electoral success and the shift in the media landscape that this represented. Ultimately, he used it to his political advantage.

Additionally, Mulroney recognized that there were lessons to be learned from American political culture and sought to integrate them into his communications strategies. As Oliver explained: "Canada really studied the United States because [the Reagan presidency] was when the US was completely breaking free in the use of imagery [that] capture[d] public attention."[203] Mulroney understood that implementing the lessons from the United States was critical to his political success. In 1984, this led him to make the critical decision of appointing Bill Fox as the PM's first Director of Communications.[204] While, Fox made the occasional faux pas, he was the ideal

[200] Mulroney, interview.

[201] Levine, 322.

[202] Ibid.

[203] Craig Oliver, interview by Dimitri Soudas, Ottawa, 3 August 2011.

[204] Levine, 335.

individual for the position.[205] He was one of the few individuals in the 1980s who recognized that the Canadian media landscape was evolving as a result of technological developments in communications technology. Consequently, Fox was eminently capable of dealing with the new political environment and knew how to maximize the government's response to it in order to best convey Mulroney's message to the Canadian public. As Fox explained, the traditional way of managing the media "was not sustainable" and the "Canadian tradition of officials speaking on background only was not a sustainable position with the emergence of technology and electronic media."[206] Fox's recognition of this made him one of the most influential figures in contemporary Canadian communications.

During the Mulroney era, Canadians were constantly bombarded with images of the Reagan presidency. As noted above, Reagan's ability to exploit television and employ his image to maximum political effect was one of the defining aspects of his presidency.[207] Fox brought Reagan's media strategy to Canada and successfully adapted it to the Canadian political environment. Within the new political culture, the PM's image mattered as much as political events. As Fox explained: "[Television] is like a Hollywood movie, right? The visuals are part of it. The music is part of it. And at the time I was pretty sharply criticized as you know, he's photo op crazy, preoccupied."[208] This is likely what led members of the media to criticize Mulroney's presentation for being too "slick"[209] and accuse him of "Americanizing" the Canadian political system.[210] It is also salient to note that while the media did not always like Fox's techniques, the Canadian public did, granting comfortable majorities to Mulroney's Progressive Conservatives in back to back elections.[211]

---

[205] Even Fox describes his "King of Ooga-booga" reference in regards to the Prime Minister not receiving his photo at Buckingham Palace as a "colossal mistake." Fox, interview.

[206] Ibid.

[207] See above, Chapter 2.

[208] Fox, interview.

[209] Levine, 328.

[210] Fox, interview.

[211] Mintz, 71-75; Lawrence LeDuc, "The Canadian Federal Election of 1988," *Election Studies* 8:2 (August 1989), 163-167.

Although Fox was generally successful at conveying Mulroney's message to the Canadian people, he never fully succeeded in gaining the media's affection for the Prime Minister. Despite the lessons he had learned from Turner, Mulroney actively courted the approval of the media, thinking that the friendships that he had cultivated in the media before entering federal politics would guarantee him positive coverage; they did not. Mulroney, in a 1992 interview with *The Globe and Mail* commented: "I made a mistake. I thought it was possible to maintain this kind of relationship."[212] His approval-seeking tendencies proved to be a serious political liability when it came to dealing with the "tough, cynical, and all too moralistic Canadian media of the 1980s."[213] While Turner had failed to present a positive and 'prime ministerial' image to the media, Mulroney's communications team managed to create a far more persuasive image by balancing the Prime Minister's desire to be liked with the exploitation of the new adversarial media tactics available to them. For example, stories would be leaked "shamelessly," and often just before a reporter's deadline with a "few extra nuggets to give him an edge on the competition."[214] According to Fox, Mulroney's emphasis on his image earned him the gratitude of photojournalists, cameramen, and others who focused on image, rather than content.[215] Indeed, "one reporter from the Edmonton Journal gushed about his 'Paul Newman eyes,' his Robert Redford 'wavey hair' and his deep voice, 'the resonance of a Lome Greene school of broadcasting grad.'"[216]

Fox was successful at integrating traditional techniques into his communications strategy as well as innovating. Traditional strategies that exploited the greater competition in the media landscape employed by Mulroney, Fox, and other members of the Prime Minister's communications team included: giving journalists previews of upcoming events with the caveat that they not write the story until what was considered to be the appropriate time; taking reporters aside for private conversations; soliciting reporters' views on what they believed to be the next best step for the government to

[212] Levine, 334.
[213] Ibid., 329.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Fox, interview.
[216] Levine, 331.

take; and leaking confidential information.[217] The morality of these strategies may be questioned in light of the changing adversarial government-media relationship. However, the media was initially very successfully in meditating the message that Mulroney wished to convey to the Canadian public and these methods were the only available means by which Mulroney could gain control over the message.[218] Mulroney, and the communications team led by Bill Fox, eventually supplemented these strategies in favour of centralizing all government communications within the PMO.[219] This centralization was beneficial in that it brought unprecedented control over the government's message and halted leaks to the media. Fox wanted to leave nothing to chance and such a high degree of centralization was desirable because it served to minimize the risk that the government's message could be distorted.[220] Ultimately, control of the Prime Minister's message was meant to remain with the government, and not the media.

Print media continued to play an important, if declining, part in Canadian government-media relations during the Mulroney era, even as the Prime Minister and his communications team increasingly tailored their message to television, giving pride of place to images. The continuing relevance of print media was highlighted by the major upheaval that resulted when The *Globe and Mail* published an article in which Mulroney was quoted saying that he was "roll[ing] all the dice" with the Meech Lake Accord by leaving his final appeal for provincial ratification to the last minute in order to manufacture a crisis atmosphere.[221] Although print journalism still possessed the ability to shape public opinion, its integrity was compromised by to the demands of rapid modernization, which led countless reporters to resort to "petty and frivolous"

---

[217] John Sawatsky, *Mulroney: The Politics of Ambition* (Toronto: Macfarland, Walter, and Ross 1991), 280.

[218] Mulroney and his press team learned well the lessons of their first few years in office, where they frequently lost control of the message. The 1988 federal election that followed saw the PC campaign tightly control access to the Prime Minister in what was a successful effort to control the image that Brian Mulroney portrayed to the Canadian public. Jeffrey Simpson, a journalist for *The Globe and Mail* called it the "politics of the cocoon." Levine, 345; 344-346.

[219] Ibid.

[220] Fox's point is substantiated by Ian Macdonald's analysis of his management style. See: Ian L. Macdonald, *Mulroney: The Making of a Prime Minister* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1984), 229.

[221] Levine, 328.

journalism.[222] As Levine argued, stories were published about Mulroney regardless of "whether all the facts were known or not."[223] The press concerned itself largely with putting out stories that questioned the character, integrity, and ethics of Mulroney and his wife.[224] Mulroney responded to this sensationalist shift by attempting to limit the questions he answered. He took to standing on the staircase outside the House of Commons in front of the Parliamentary Press Galley and would only answer questions that he wanted to answer, pretending not to hear questions that he didn't.[225] Although competition among media outlets could be detrimental to the Prime Minister, Fox was able to see how to exploit that competition using the aforementioned traditional media strategies in order to turn that liability into an advantage.

Mulroney resigned in 1993, and was succeeded as party leader by Kim Campbell, Canada's first female Prime Minister. However, Campbell lost the federal election in the fall of the same year to the Liberals led by Jean Chrétien.[226] The new Prime Minister and his Director of Communications, Peter Donolo, had the benefit of an advantageous political environment. When Chrétien took office, his primary political opposition was so completely fractured that he was able to correctly call former Prime Minister Clark the "leader of the fourth party."[227] Campbell's Progressive Conservatives were reduced from 156 to two seats, while the emergence of two new parties, the Bloc Québecois and the Reform Party, created a sea change in Canadian federal politics. With the opposition in turmoil, Chrétien's administration was under much less pressure to develop an innovative communications strategy than would have been the case if the opposition had been strong. Furthermore, most political actors had come to accept the new technological era that Canada had entered adapted to the new communications and

---

[222] David Hayes, *Power and Influence: The Globe and Mail and the News Revolution* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1992), 280-92.

[223] Levine, 342.

[224] Ibid., 338.

[225] Ibid., 342.

[226] Lawrence LeDuc, "The Canadian Federal Election of 1993," *Election Studies* 31:2 (1994), 163-168.

[227] Jean Chrétien, *House of Commons Question Period*, November 30, 1999.

media landscape.[228] Nevertheless, the relative level playing field shared by all political parties, the fractured political environment, and the increasing diversity of media outlets made Peter Donolo's position critical for effectively conveying Jean Chrétien's message to the Canadian public. Donolo's success at this task would help consolidate the significant position that the Director of Communications now holds in Canadian politics.[229]

Although Donolo did not transform the position of Director of Communications, he consolidated its control over news management by demonstrating its importance to contemporary communication strategies, especially with the advent of the 24-hour news cycle. While this news cycle arguably began with the establishment of CNN in the U.S. during the 1980s, the network's format was not immediately adopted by Canada.[230] Canadians would have to wait until 1989 for their own domestic cable news network. In fact, as Fox argued, Canadian media significantly resisted the adaptation of American media practices in the 1980s and early 1990s.[231] With the constant bombardment of American media and cultural products on Canada, this eventually changed as Canadians came to accept and expect American media practices, especially the 24-hour news cycle.[232] Chrétien was fully aware of this development, as he explained in an interview with the author:

> The technology changed something. In my mind it's... You know we
> would have reaction very rapidly, so if I said something at eight o'clock

---

[228] For instance all parties made ample use of television advertising to get their messages across during the 1993 election: Walter C. Sonderlund, "Advertising in the 1993 federal election," *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 18.1 (Spring 1995), 16-22.

[229] Jean Chrétien won three back-to-back majority governments and earned the nickname "Teflon Jean" for his ability to survive political scandals with his popularity intact. LeDuc, "The Canadian Federal Election of 1993," 163-168; Lawrence LeDuc, "The Canadian Federal Election of 1997," *Election Studies* 17:1 (1998), 132-137; Lawrence LeDuc, "The federal election in Canada, November 2000," *Election Studies* 21:4 (2001), 655–659; David Krayden, "Harper channels Teflon Jean in crisis mode," *ipolitics.ca,* 21 May 2013, accessed 10 October 2014, http://www.ipolitics.ca/2013/05/21/harper-channels-teflon-jean-in-crisis-mode/.

[230] "1989: Cable channel CBC Newsworld launches," *CBC Digital Archives*, accessed 10 October 2014, http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/arts-entertainment/media/media-general/launch-of-cbc-newsworld.html.

[231] Fox, interview.

[232] Edelgard E. Mahant and Graeme S. Mount, "The U.S. Cultural Impact upon Canada," *American Review of Canada Studies* 31:3 (Autumn 2001), 449-465.

and I did... I mispronounced a word or did not express myself clearly, voluntarily or not voluntarily, I will be hit later on because by that time it would be on the air. In the good old days it was a cycle until tomorrow morning.[233]

Managing the now 24-news cycle became increasingly important to an effective communications strategy, requiring the Prime Minister's Director of Communications to adjust their practices accordingly.

Donolo demonstrated the importance of Directors of Communications in the new media age by crafting media strategies that maintained message integrity and developed effective, long-term, and proactive communication policies. In order to maintain message integrity, it was critical for the Director of Communications to ensure that key figures within the federal government knew what the message was and coordinated accordingly. According to Donolo:

> So, after some consultation we came up with this idea that I would chair a committee that, Eddie and Chaviva would be there to kind of show that it wasn't just communications people, right, that it was serious. And the permanent committee would be comprised of the chiefs, well, they were EAs mostly, chiefs of staff, not communications people […] then we would have a, we would have an agenda that would have standing items, including a look ahead. There would be a refresh every week. But every agenda would also have the, kind of like major initiatives.[234]

By ensuring that everyone within government was aware of and communicating the same information, Chrétien's Director of Communications was able to improve message integrity.

Donolo built upon Fox's legitimization of the Director of Communications. During Fox's tenure as the Prime Minister's Director of Communications he secured the inclusion of the Director of Communications in cabinet meetings and Donolo was able to expand upon the powers that came with this access. However, he did not do this for personal aggrandizement, rather it was simply a pragmatic response to contemporary

---

[233] Jean Chrétien, interview by Dimitri Soudas, Ottawa, 17 July 2011.
[234] Peter Donolo, interview by Dimitri Soudas, Toronto, 3 August 2011.

technology and media culture. In Donolo's words: "after about four months in office in '93-94, stuff was happening, stuff was flying by me, (inaudible). Stuff was happening we were not aware of."[235] The amount of information that a Prime Minister was expected to be aware of was increasing exponentially due to the innovations in media technology. The Director of Communications was needed to manage this information and allow the PM to focus on the more important job of governing the state. Donolo helped to institutionalize the practices of a successful Director of Communications during a period of stability, especially after the 1995 Quebec Referendum. This consolidation and further institutionalization of communications functions within the PMO under the auspices of an increasingly influential Director of Communications would, however, form the beginnings of a long-term media strategy.

Changes to Canadian media culture and technological developments have reached their apex under Prime Minister Stephen Harper.[236] Concurrently, the media's hostility towards the position of Prime Minister has become commonplace. Members of the Ottawa press gallery have launched charges of unfairness against Harper and his communications department, stemming largely from frustration over the manner in which reporters' questions are selected for response and the frequency of Harper's announcements.[237] This is not a new development, nor one caused by technological developments. Rather, it is in part a reaction to Prime Minister Trudeau's attitude towards the media in the 1970s, which caused a reorientation of media-government relations, and due to the new role that the media assumed in the wake of the Watergate scandal.[238] Both developments saw Canadian media become more critical and less deferential in their coverage of the government.[239] However, the Harper government was

---

[235] Ibid.

[236] As I was the Director of Communications for Stephen Harper from 2010-2011, and served as Press Secretary from 2006-2010, I will principally rely on the analysis and statements of others in order to minimize the influence of personal bias.

[237] Jane Taber, "Control freak Stephen Harper versus pack journalism," *The Globe and Mail*, August 12, 2012, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-notebook/control-freak-stephen-harper-versus-pack-journalism/article1376861/.

[238] See above, p.3 and: de Burgh, ed., *Investigative Journalism*, 78-80.

[239] Levine, 273-274.

able to surmount this critical stance and achieve a measure of approval from the Canadian people. As CTV's Robertson explained:

> But, his competence has won the day, which people appreciate. I mean that's why they won the election. You guys won the election because people said, we know who these people are now and it's not scary Stephen Harper anymore. It's kind of, you know, the guy knows what he's doing. He runs a pretty good government. Our economy, everybody understands we're the best in the world now. So we can, we can break through that other stuff, which at times would be a problem for them, because they have managed to show effectively, you people managed to show effectively, that competence was the single most important thing.[240]

Robertson was commenting on the public's perception of Harper as someone with a hidden agenda, a view promoted by his political opponents as recently as the 2011 federal, which saw Harper win his first majority government.[241] Harper was able to win a majority despite this viewpoint and go on to demonstrate that there was nothing to fear from a Conservative government. This was a communications success for Harper and his communications staff. Indeed, David Akin, the Sun Media Ottawa bureau chief, described Harper as one of the "best politicians" in terms of dealing with media.[242] Harper's victory has shown that electoral success could still be achieved without actively courting the media as previous prime ministers had done, Brian Mulroney most recently.

However, there is a difference between courting the media and actively striving to alienate them. During Sandra Buckler's tenure as Harper's Director of Communications, she was perceived as having done everything she could possibly do to antagonize the press.[243] Even more problematically, she was not considered to be a useful source for information. The media saw little merit in turning to her for information because she did not appear interested in communicating with them beyond "standard media lines and

---

[240] Robertson, interview.

[241] Barrie MacKenna, "Searching for clues to Harper's so-called hidden agenda," *The Globe and Mail,* 17 April 2011, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rob-commentary/searching-for-clues-to-harpers-so-called-hidden-agenda/article624117/.

[242] Taber.

[243] Harper Index, "Buckler, Sandra – Former lobbyist is one of Harper's top advisers." *Straight Goods News*, accessed September 14, 2012, http://www.harperindex.ca/ViewArticle.cfm?Ref=00131.

press releases."[244] For example, she once emailed former Calgary Herald columnist Don Martin the following answer to one of his questions: "off the record, not for attribution, no comment." In essence, she refused to engage with the media and as such abrogated any degree of control that she may have had in managing the government's message. This was at best a dubious strategy because refusing to interact with the media did not stop critical stories from being written, instead it removed any control that the Director of Communications might have had over the message. At the same time, it was not a completely unreasonable strategy given the lessons that the Conservative Party learned form their 2004 election defeat. One commentator claimed that the party suffered from an "an epidemic of foot-in-mouth disease. A number of Tory MPs and prominent supporters made stupid and politically incorrect remarks."[245] Harper learned these lessons and imposed rigorous message discipline on the party. In other words, "Mr. Harper inoculated his troops" and won the 2006 federal election, a practice that Buckler brought into the government's communications strategy to mixed reactions from the media.[246]

Stéphane Dion and Stephen Harper's contest during the 2008 federal election illustrates the centrality of modern communications to a successful campaign. The conservative strategy aimed in part to promote an image of Harper as a solid and reliable future leader, while portraying Dion as an ideologue who was out of touch with reality.[247] This strategy is consistent with the "first rule of political messaging", which McLean defines as: "establish and maintain the leader's image lest your opposition define it for you."[248] By making the messenger the message, Harper in effect "*became the Conservative campaign*" around which the whole campaign flowed.[249] Moreover, Harper was also inspired by the American strategy of avoiding mainstream media outlets

---

[244] Ibid.

[245] Jeff Sallot, "How Harper won the election," *The Globe and Mail,* 23 January 2006, http://v1.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20060123.welsallot0123/BNStory/specialDecision2006/.

[246] Ibid.

[247] James McLean, "The Messenger is the Message," *Policy Options Politiques* 29:10 (2008), 13.

[248] Ibid.

[249] Ibid.

wherever possible, and interacting directly with regional and ethnic media outlets.[250] In comparison, the Conservative campaign's communications strategy was much more sophisticated than the Liberal machine. For instance, during the campaign, Conservative ads denouncing the Liberal Green Shift environment proposal hit the airwaves before the opposition even had a chance to make an official announcement.[251] As a result of these communication strategies, the Conservatives outclassed Dion's campaign and formed the next government, while Dion was forced to resign as Liberal leader.

This chapter has explored the significant changes that Canadian government-media relations have undergone since Trudeau was elected Prime Minister in 1968. Pierre Trudeau, along with the effects of Watergate, was largely responsible for creating an adversarial press that forced him to use the new medium of television to take his message directly to the Canadian people. Television ushered in a shift to image politics, not a new development per se, but an aspect of Canadian political culture that was magnified by the new communications technology. Trudeau's style and charisma allowed him to succeed in this new media landscape, something that his successor John Turner failed to do. Brian Mulroney and Stephen Harper, however, built upon Trudeau's foundations and Canadian communications strategies now place the leader's image at the centre of election campaigns, something that Harper used to his benefit during the 2008 election, to the detriment of Stéphane Dion's campaign. Moreover, the Harper government has shown that tight message discipline can overcome an adversarial media, although too tight a control can be perceived as stifling, as was the case during the Sandra Buckler's tenure as Harper's Director of Communications.

The post-Trudeau era has seen increasing attention given to a government's communications strategy and the Prime Minister's Director of Communications is now central to this process. Brian Mulroney's Director of Communications, Bill Fox, was responsible for a number of important innovations to the position. He imported American communications tactics to the Canadian political milieu, such as Ronald Reagan's 'Hollywood' approach to his image. More importantly, however, Fox was responsible for

---

[250] Tom Flanagan includes this under the sixth commandment of Conservative campaigning: Flanagan, 283-284.
[251] McLean, 13.

60

bringing government communications functions directly into the PMO and brought unprecedented control over a government's message. Peter Donolo, Bill Fox's successor under Jean Chrétien, built on these foundations and consolidated the role of the Director of Communications at the heart of government by creating a place for communications at the cabinet table. The growth in influence of the Prime Minister's Director of Communications has been driven by changes in the media landscape. The 24-hour news cycle, the proliferation of media outlets and an increasingly adversarial press has created a need for a designated individual with the necessary skills and expertise to effectively convey the government's message. Ultimately, the Director of Communications position has become integral to the process of crafting and delivering the government's message.

Conclusion

The media landscape has undergone significant changes in the last half of the twentieth century. Advances in communications technology, such as television, the Internet and social media have altered the way that we as citizens interact with our political leaders. However, while these changes have been impressive – connecting people in ways never thought possible – they have not substantively changed Canadian political culture. Rather, these changes have functioned to either help perpetuate political practice or magnify certain aspects of it; calls of a 'revolution' in communications have been overstated at best. The increasingly multicultural nature of Canadian society has contributed to the fragmentation of the media landscape and the multiplication of political messages, itself a pre-existing aspect of Canadian political culture. Moreover, while it has been argued that the spectacle of television has shifted politics and made them more 'uncivil', this thesis has shown that it has in fact magnified existing and underlying currents of Canadian political culture rather than create new ones. Social media on the other hand, has enormous potential to alter tactics of political engagement, recruitment and mobilization, but its impact has not yet reached its full extent and can be expected to grow larger in future. Essentially, while advances in communications technology have changed the medium through which political messages are communicated, it has not changed the performance of politics and the need of politicians to effectively communicate with, and project a positive image to, their constituents.

In addition to the impact of new communications technology, Canadian political culture has also felt the impact of America, our geographic neighbour and political and cultural superpower. The U.S. has provided a number of models and lessons to Canadian communications professionals, especially the Prime Minister's Director of Communications. Ronald Reagan's presidency demonstrated that the structure of the media landscape was an important factor in the development of a media structure; concentration in the national media, coupled with a personal touch contributed to his

success in communicating his message. These lessons were reinforced during the presidency of George H.W. Bush who failed to recognize the changes that were occurring to the media landscape. A media strategy that focussed on common values ensured that Bill Clinton enjoyed record high approval ratings, despite numerous serious personal scandals. On the other hand, George W. Bush's record low approval ratings were not aided by a failure to deal with media criticism, despite the emphasis on message discipline by his communications team. Lastly, Barack Obama has done the most to integrate new media into presidential communications strategy, providing a model for governments wishing to deliver their message directly to the people, without the mediating influence of the press. Canadian communications specialists have observed and internalized many of these lessons, especially the current Harper government. Harper and his communications staff have learned to achieve a measure of balance when dealing with local and national media outlets and experimented with the use of new media. Ultimately, despite fears over the negative influence of American culture on Canada and the differences between the two countries, communications specialists have readily applied these lessons to the Canadian political milieu.

A key actor in the application of these lessons has been the Prime Minister's Director of Communications. The roots of the position can be found during Pierre Trudeau's tenure as Prime Minister, whose disdain for the media required the creation of a specialized position to deal with government-media relations. The position of Press Secretary and Special Assistant, first held by Richard O'Hagan, was eventually formalized in 1984. Since then the position has gradually increased in importance. Brian Mulroney's Director of Communications, Bill Fox, was responsible for a number of important innovations to the position. For instance, he imported American communications tactics to the Canadian political milieu, such as Ronald Reagan's 'Hollywood' approach to his image. However, his most lasting contributions have been more institutional in nature. Fox was responsible for bringing government communications functions directly into the PMO and bringing unprecedented control over a government's message. Peter Donolo, Jean Chrétien's Director of Communications built on these foundations and consolidated the role of the DC at the heart of government by creating a place for communications at the cabinet table. The growth in influence of the Prime Minister's Director of Communications has been driven

by changes in the media landscape. The 24-hour news cycle, the proliferation of media outlets and an increasingly adversarial press has created a need for a designated individual to manage government-media relations with the necessary skills and expertise to effectively convey the government's message. Ultimately, the Director of Communications position has become integral to the process of crafting and delivering the government's message.

The position of the Prime Minister's Director of Communications has undergone significant evolution over the past three decades since its formalization in 1984. After a mere three decades, driven by changes to the media landscape and communications technologies, the Director of Communications has moved form relative obscurity to a seat at the cabinet table. This move has blurred the line between policy and publicity in that a policy's communication strategy has the potential to be just as important, if not more so, than the actual policy itself. Moreover, these same changes that have propelled communications strategies to heart of political power in this country, have also provided governments with the ability to manipulate public opinion to their own ends. This has proven to be an opportunity for governments seeking to implement important, if unpopular policy decisions on a sceptical public, but has also been a challenge to the Fourth Estate seeking to hold to government to account. What effects these changes may ultimately have on the function of parliamentary democracy in Canada remains to be seen and is a question that this thesis leaves unanswered.

The role of the Prime Minister's Director of Communications in communicating the government's message to the Canadian people has been a neglected topic. This is partly because of the relative novelty of the position, having only been formalized in 1984. The increasing importance of the position has therefore caught many political scientists, communications specialists, politicians and bureaucrats off guard. This thesis offers an introduction to the topic and provides communications specialists and academics with a foundation for further research. For specialists, it offers lessons on how communications policies have developed and implemented in the past and how they can be improved in the future. For academics, it delineates the important role that the Director of Communications plays in terms of facilitating government policy and demonstrates why the role merits further investigation. This thesis therefore addresses a

gap in the literature and in so doing, advances a greater understanding of contemporary Canadian politics as a whole.

Bibliography

Unpublished Interviews

Chrétien, Jean. Interview by Dimitri Soudas. Ottawa. July 17, 2011.

Donolo, Peter. Interview by Dimitri Soudas. Toronto. August 3, 2011.

Fox, Bill. Interview by Dimitri Soudas. Lagevin Block. September 16, 2011.

Harper, Stephen. Interview by Dimitri Soudas. Langevin Block. September 15, 2012.

Lapointe, Kirk. Interview by Dimitri Soudas. Toronto. July 29, 2011.

LeBreton, Marjory. Interview by Dimitri Soudas. Langevin Block. September 21, 2011.

Mansbridge, Peter. Interview by Dimitri Soudas. Toronto. September 17, 2011.

McCurry, Mike. Interview by Dimitri Soudas. Telephone. September 27, 2011.

Mulroney, Brian. Interview by Dimitri Soudas. Montreal. September 19, 2011.

O'Hagan, Richard. Interview by Dimitri Soudas. Toronto. September 25, 2011.

Oliver, Craig. Interview by Dimitri Soudas. Ottawa. August 3, 2011.

Robertson, Lloyd. Interview by Dimitri Soudas. Toronto. September 20, 2011.

Secondary Sources

"1971 – Trudeau's 'fuddle duddle' incident." *CBC Digital Archives.* Accessed 10 October 2014. http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/politics/prime-ministers/fuddle-duddle-incident.html.

"1989: Cable channel CBC Newsworld launches." *CBC Digital Archives*. Accessed 10 October 2014. http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/arts-entertainment/media/media-general/launch-of-cbc-newsworld.html.

A History of the Vote in Canada, 2nd edition. Ottawa: Office of the Chief Electoral Officer in Canada, 2007.

Anderson, Robert S, Richard S Gruneau, and Paul Heyer. *TVTV: the television revolution: the debate*. Vancouver, BC: Canadian Journal of Communication, with the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing, Simon Fraser University at Harbour Centre, 1996.

Andrews, Leighton. "Spin: from tactic to tabloid." *Journal of Public Affairs* 6 (2006): 31-45.

"Bagehot: Alastair Campbell, Napoleon of Spin," *The Economist* 356.8178 (July 8, 2000): 58.

Bell, David V.J. "Global Communications, Culture, and Values: Implications for Global Security." In *Building a New Global Order: Emerging Trends in international Security*, edited by David Dewitt, David Haglund, and John Kirton, 159-184. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Benderoff, Eric. "Macon Phillips: the man behind the President." *Tribune Reporter*. February 24, 2009. http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/chi-tue-macon-phillips-new-mediafeb24,0,6751735.story.

Bird, S. Elizabeth. "Tabloidization: What is it, and Does it Really Matter?" In *The Changing Faces of Journalism: Tabloidization, Technology and Truthiness*, edited by Barbie Zelizer, 40-50. London: Routledge, 2009.

Bolter, Jay David and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999.

Campbell, Alastair and Robert Stott, eds. *The Blair Years: Extracts from Alastair Campbell Diaries.* London: Hutchinson, 2007.

Chanda, Nayan. *Bound Together: How Traders, Preachers, Warriors and Adventurers Shaped Globalization*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007.

Chaput, Maria and Andree Champagne. *Internet, New Media, and Social Media*. Ottawa: Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, 2012.

Chrétien, Jean. *House of Commons Question Period*. November 30, 1999.

Church, Joan Christian Schulze, and Hennie Strydom. *Human rights from a comparative and international law perspective*. Pretoria, SA: Unisa Press, 2007.

Clarke, Amanda. *Social Media: Political Uses and Implications for Representative Democracy*. Ottawa: *Library of Parliament*, 2010.

Collins, J.E. *The Life and Times of the Right Honourable Sir John A. MacDonald: Premier of the Dominion of Canada*. Toronto: Rose Publishing co, 1883.

de Burgh, Hugo, ed. *Investigative Journalism: Context and Practice.* London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

Desbarats, Peter and Aislin. *The hecklers: a history of Canadian political cartooning and a cartoonists' history of Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979.

Denton, Robert E. *The Primetime Presidency of Ronald Reagan: The Era of the Television Presidency*. New York: Praeger, 1988.

Denton, Robert E. Jr. and Rachel L. Holloway. *Images, scandal, and communication strategies of the Clinton presidency*. Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2003.

Dewing, Michael. *Social Media*. Ottawa: Library of Parliament, 2010.

Dobbs, Lou. "All the news that's fit," *US News*. February 15, 2004. http://www.usnews.com/usnews/opinion/articles/040223/23dobbs.htm.

Elections Canada. "Voter Turnout at Federal Elections and Referendums." Accessed 10 October 2014. http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?dir=turn&document=index &lang=e&section=ele.

Employment and Social Development Canada. "Indicators of Well-being in Canada: Social Participation – An Overview." Accessed 10 October 2014. http://www4. hrsdc.gc.ca/d.4m.1.3n@-eng.jsp?did=16.

Flanagan, Tom. *Harper's Team: Behind the Scenes in the Conservative Rise to Power. 2nd Edition.* London; Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009.

Fletcher, Frederick J. and Robert Everett. "The Media and Canadian Politics in an Era of Globalization." *Canadian Politics in the 21st Century*, edited by Michael, 381-85. Whittington and Glen Williams, Scarborough, ON: Nelson, 2000.

Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest* (Summer 1989): 3-18.

Gallup. "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Gallup Historical Statistics and Trends." Accessed 10 October 2014. http://www.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx.

Galperin, Hernan Bennett and Robert M. Lance Entman. *New Television, Old Politics: The Transition to Digital TV in the United States and Britain*. West Nyack, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Gold, Victor. "George Bush Speaks Out," *Washingtonian,* Feb 1994, 41.

Goldenberg, Eddie. *The Way it Works: Inside Ottawa*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2006.

Gonzalez, Ariel. "Sarah Palin and Anti-Intellectualism in American Life," *Huffington Post*. July 6, 2009. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ariel-gonzalez/sarah-palin-and-anti-inte_b_225798.html.

Good, David A. *The Politics of Public Management: The HRDC Audit of Grants and Contributions.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.

Grant, George. "Thinking about Technology." In *Communication History in Canada*, edited by Daniel Robinson, 41-43. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Hacker, Kenneth L., Maury Giles, and Aja Guerrero. "The Political Image Management Dynamics of President Bill Clinton." In *Images, Scandal, and Communications Strategies of the Clinton Presidency*, edited by Robert E. Denton and Rachel L. Holloway. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003.

Halloway, Rachel L. "Clinton's Televised Town hall Meetings as a Political Strategy: The Illusion of Control," *Images, Scandal, and Communications Strategies of the Clinton Presidency*, edited by Robert E. Denton and Rachel L. Holloway. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003.

Han, Lori Cox. *Presidency Upstaged: The Public Leadership of George H.W. Bush*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2011.

Harper Index, "Buckler, Sandra – Former lobbyist is one of Harper's top advisers." *Straight Goods News*. Accessed September 14, 2012. http://www.harperindex.ca/ViewArticle.cfm?Ref=00131.

Hayes, David. *Power and Influence: The Globe and Mail and the News Revolution*. Toronto: Key Porter, 1992.

Hefzallah, Ibrahim M. *Critical Viewing of Television: A Book for Parents and Teachers*. London: University Press of America, 1987.

Hiebert, Daniel. *Migration and Demographic Transformation of Canadian Cities: The Social Demography of Canada's Major Metropolitan Centres in 2017*. Vancouver, BC: Metropolis British Columbia, 2005.

Historica Dominion. *Marshall McLuhan*. Accessed June 10, 2013. https://www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/marshall-mcluhan?media_type=41&.

Innis, Harold A. *Empire and Communications.* Toronto: Dundarin Press, 2007.

———. "From Empire and Communications." *Communication History in Canada*. Ed. by Daniel Robinson. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Kallina, Edmund F. *Kennedy v. Nixon: The presidential election of 1960*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010.

Karim, Karim H. "Are Ethnic Media Alternative." In *Alternative Media in Canada*, edited by Kirsten Kozolanka, Patricia Mazepa and David Skinner, 165-184. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012.

Kerbel, Matthew Robert. *Edited for Television.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994.

Krayden, David. "Harper channels Teflon Jean in crisis mode." *ipolitics.ca,* 21 May 2013. Accessed 10 October 2014, http://www.ipolitics.ca/2013/05/21/harper-channels-teflon-jean-in-crisis-mode/.

Kroker, Arthur. *Technology and the Canadian Mind: Innis/McLuhan/Grant*. Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1984.

Kumar, Martha Joynt. *Managing the President's Message: The White House Communications Operation*. Baltimore, MD: JHUP, 2010.

La faute aux médias, "L'importance de la publicité dans une campagne électorale." *SRC Radio*. May 15, 1993.

Larsen, Mike and Kevin Walby, eds. *Brokering Access: Power, Politics, and Freedom of Information Process in Canada.* Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012.

LeDuc, Lawrence. "The Canadian Federal Election of 1988." *Election Studies* 8:2 (August 1989): 163-167.

———. "The Canadian Federal Election of 1993." *Election Studies* 31:2 (1994): 163-168.

———. "The Canadian Federal Election of 1997." *Election Studies* 17:1 (1998): 132-137.

———. "The federal election in Canada, November 2000." *Election Studies* 21:4 (2001): 655–659.

Levine, Allan. *Scrum Wars: The Prime Ministers and the Media*. Toronto: Dundrun Press, 1993.

Lister, Martin, Jon Dovey, Seth Giddings, Iain Grant, and Kieran Kelly. *New Media: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Lorimer, Rowland and Jean McNulty. *Mass Communication in Canada*, 3rd Ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Macdonald, Ian L. *Mulroney: The Making of a Prime Minister*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1984.

Mahant Edelgard E. and Graeme S. Mount. "The U.S. Cultural Impact upon Canada," *American Review of Canada Studies* 31:3 (Autumn 2001): 449-465.

Malcolmson, Patrick and Richard Myers. *The Canadian Regime: An Introduction to Parliamentary Government in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009

Massie, Suzanne. *Suzanne Massie during the Reagan Years*. Accessed June 15, 2013. http://www.suzannemassie.com/reaganYears.html.

McLean, James. "The Messenger is the Message." *Policy Options Politiques* 29:10 (2008): 12-17.

McLuhan, Marshall. *The Medium is the Message*. Berkley, CA: Gingko Press, 2005.

M.cLuhan, Marshall and David Carson. *The Book of Probes*. Edited by Eric McLuhan and William Kuhns. Berkley, CA: Gingko Press, 2011.

McWhinney, Edward. *Chrétien and Canadian Federalism: Politics and the Constitution*. Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2003.

Mintz, Eric. "The Canadian General Election of 1984." *Election Studies* 4:1 (April 1985): 71-75.

Morreale, Patricia and Kornel Terplan. *CRC handbook of modern telecommunications*. New York, Taylor and Francis, 2010.

Oborne, Peter. *Alastair Campbell: New Labour and the Rise of the Media Class.* London: Aurum Press, 1999.

O'Malley, Martin. "Pierre Trudeau." *CBC News Online.* Accessed September 14, 2012. www.canadahistory.com/sections/politics/pm/pierretrudeau.htm.

Patten, Steve. "Assessing the Potential of New Social Media." *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 36:2 (2013): 21-26.

Patterson, Bradley H. *To Serve the President*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008.

Perloff, Richard. *Political Communication: Politics, Press, and Public in America*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998.

"Poll: High Hopes For New Congress", *CBS News*. Retrieved May 23, 2013.

"Presidential Approval Ratings," *Gallup Historical Trends*, retrieved May 23, 2013.

"The Report of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy. *Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age*." Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute, 2009.

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. "White House Staff, Alphabetical List, 1981-1989." Accessed 10 October 2014, www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/whitehousestaffalpha.htm.

Rosenberg, Howard and Charles S. Feldman, *No Time To Think: The Menace of Media Speed and the 24-hour News Cycle*. New York: Continuum, 2008.

Sawatsky, John. *The Insiders: Government, Business and the Lobbyists*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1987.

———. *Mulroney: The Politics of Ambition*. Toronto: Macfarland, Walter, and Ross 1991.

Shneiderman, Ben and Anne Rose. "Social Impact Statements: Engaging Public Participation in Information Technology Design." Presented at *Symposium on Computer and the Quality of Life*, Philadelphia, PA, February 14-15 1996.

Scola, Nancy. "The Cost of Adding Prices to HealthCare.gov." *Personal Democracy Forum*, http://techpresident.com/blog-entry/cost-adding-prices-healthcaregov. 1 July 2010. Accessed September 24, 2012.

Sears, Robin V. "Harper vs. the Press Gallery: the frog and the scorpion." *Policy Options* 27:6 (July-August 2006): 5-8.

Simpson, Jeffrey. "Vincible Liberals." *The Canadian General Election of 1984: Politicians, Parties, Press and Polls.* Ed. Alan Stewart Frizzell and Anthony Westell. Toronto: Dundern Press, 1985.

Smith, Cynthia M. and Jack McLeod, eds. *Sir John A.: an anecdotal life of John A. Macdonald*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Sonderlund, Walter C. "Advertising in the 1993 federal election." *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 18.1 (Spring 1995): 16-22.

Sonderland, Walter C. et al. *Media & Elections in Canada*. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston of Canada, Ltd., 1984.

Slotnick, Elliot E. and Jennifer A. Segal. *Television News and the Supreme Court: All the News that's Fit to Air*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Small, Tamara. "Still Waiting for an Internet Prime Minister: Online Campaigning by Canadian Political Parties." In *Elections*, edited by Heather MacIvor, 173-198. Toronto: Emond Montgomery Publications, 2010.

Swerdlow, Joel L. *Media Technology and the Vote*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988.

Taber, Jane. "Control freak Stephen Harper versus pack journalism." *The Globe and Mail*. August 12, 2012. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-notebook/control-freak-stephen-harper-versus-pack-journalism/article1376861/.

Tedesco, John C. "Clinton's Public Relations Nightmares Begin." *Images, Scandal, and Communications Strategies of the Clinton Presidency*, edited by Robert E. Denton and Rachel L. Holloway. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003.

UN Security Council. "Briefing Security Council, US Presents Evidence of Iraq's Failure to Disarm." 5 February 2003.

Watts, Ronald Lampman. "Executive Federalism: a comparative analysis." Kingston, ON: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1989.

Well, Debbie. "Q & A with White House Director of New Media Macon Phillips." *Social Media Insights Blog.* September 9, 2009. http://www.debbieweil.com/blog/kojo-nnamdi-q-a-with-white-house-director-of-new-media-macon-phillips/.

Winseck, Dwayne. "Financialization and the 'Crisis of the Media': The Rise and Fall of (Some) Media Conglomerates in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 35:3 (2010): 365-393.

The White House. "We the People: your Voice in our Government." Accessed 10 October 2014. https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/.

"The White House Staff of George H. W. Bush (Bush I) (1989-1993)." American Studies at the University of Virginia. Accessed 10 October 2014, http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CDcQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fxroads.virginia.edu%2F~MA02%2Famacker%2FAdministrations%2FBush%2C%2520George%2520H.W%2FBush%252041%2520Completed%2FBush%252041%2520Staff%2520and%2520Advisers%2520%28completed%29%2FBush%252041%2520Staff%2520and%2520Advisers%2520%28completed%29.doc&ei=FEphVMDrKJCbyATrl4DQDA&usg=AFQjCNFZTA-G28x3Rfib4Al9mMnBxvcSug&sig2=kC1f6xRwhjkhu9RQ1xpBJA&bvm=bv.79189006,d.aWw.

Whyte, Kenneth. "The face that sank a thousand Tories." *Saturday Night* 109:1 (Feb 1994): 14-18.

Xenos, Michael and W. Lance Bennett. "Young voters and the web of politics: the promise and problems of youth-oriented political content on the web." In *Young Citizens and the Digital Age Political Engagement, Young People and New Media*, edited Brian D. Loader, 48-63. Milton Park: Routledge, 2007.

Zarefsky, David. "Making the Case for War: Colin Powell at the United Nations." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10:2 (2007): 275-302.