ELECTIONS WITHOUT POLITICS: Television Coverage of the 2001 B.C. Election

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

In the School of Communication

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Abstract

This study examines election news in terms of its adequacy as an information source for voters and for political communications in general. Previous research on election studies in Canada focused on news reports of national election campaigns. By contrast, this study focuses on election coverage in British Columbia. It offers an exploratory and descriptive content analysis of the television news coverage of the 2001 British Columbia general election using data from the 6 p.m. news broadcasts of four major television stations during the twenty-eight day election campaign. The study utilizes quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the election topics, the sources quoted, the party coverage, and the dominant narratives and frames in the news discourse. Results on election topics indicated a predominance of campaign-related focus of news topics as opposed to issue-related focus. Results on source quotes indicate differences in the purpose and frequency with which political actors, individuals, "experts" and representatives of organizations were used. Analysis of party coverage and discourse frames demonstrated there were differences in how the parties were covered and that these differences put the incumbent NDP at a disadvantage. In addition, the election coverage drew upon two dominant and evaluative narrative structures in telling the “campaign story”: that of disruption/stability, and that of winner/loser binary oppositions. Common framing devices and metaphors in the news discourse were also reviewed and discussed. This study offers a number of observations about the political implications and significance of patterns and tendencies revealed by the research. Significantly, this study not only provides the first systematic and comprehensive data on television news coverage of a British Columbian election, it also offers much needed communications research about any provincial election, both within British Columbia, and in other provinces in Canada. By utilizing both content analysis and discourse analysis techniques of news analysis it offers a substantive benchmark for future studies. Finally, this dissertation makes the case for communications scholars to return their research attention to media and elections.

Keywords: politics and mass media, political communications, news media and elections, elections and television, television news, news analysis, content analysis of news, discourse analysis, British Columbia – elections, Canada - elections, mass media and politics, political discourse, election media studies, mediated politics, reporters and reporting.
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I also wish to acknowledge the many politicians who hold onto a fierce belief in the tenets of democracy. To be sure, there are those who seek only power, but in my experience these are few. The vast majority of elected officials I have encountered truly wish to make this world a better place. I thank them for being willing to succumb to the media glare for the sake of their vision.

And finally, I wish to acknowledge the many journalists who are deeply concerned with the role and responsibilities of a democratic media. While the practices of journalism may seem to get the 'short straw' in this dissertation, there are numerous dedicated news-workers who daily strive to make a difference within the economic and editorial limitations of their chosen profession. I thank them for continuing to try.
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AJA  American Journalism Association.
BC  The province of British Columbia
BCTA  BC Teachers Association - a union group
BCTV  The BCTV News Hour, which at the time of this case study, ran on Channel 11 (CHAN-TV). Owned by CanWest Global.
CanWest  CanWest Global Communications Inc. owned by the Asper family.
CBC  CBC News on Channel 3 (CBUT-TV). Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the public broadcaster in Canada.
CBSC  Canadian Broadcast Standards Council. An industry organization.
CCCS  The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, UK.
CCF  Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the precursor to the New Democratic Party in Canada.
CCPA  Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, a left-of-centre think tank.
CDNPA  Canadian Daily Newspaper Publisher’s Association
CTF  Canadian Taxpayers Federation. A non-governmental fiscally conservative advocacy group that is concerned with government spending and promotes a ‘flat tax’ system.
Election  A non-partisan office of the BC legislature that oversees and conducts research into BC elections.
BC  Fraser Institute – a right-of-centre and business funded think tank based in Vancouver.
FI  Global Television News, aired on Channel 13 (CKVU-TV) and was owned by CanWest Global (in trust) at the time of this research.
Global  Green Party of British Columbia.
Greens  The Glasgow University Media Group.
Liberals  BC Liberals. Not affiliated with the Liberal Party of Canada, and leaning more to the right of the political spectrum than the federal party.
MLA  Member of the BC Legislative Assembly.
NDP  New Democratic Party of BC. Affiliated with the federal NDP.
NGO  "Non government organization": usually refers to a non-profit group
Rep.  Representative of an identifiable and organized group.
Socreds  Social Credit Party of BC, once the ruling party, most are now members and/or supporters of the BC Liberals.
‘Streeters  See vox pop.
Unity  Unity Party of BC, arising from the social conservatives of the old Social Credit Party.
Vox pop  A shortened version of “vox populi” which translates as “voice of the people” and refers to impromptu interviews with unprepared members of the public, most often in public places, such as on the street or in shopping areas.
VTV  VTV News Hour, on Channel 9 (CIVT-TV) was owned by CTV, which in turn was owned by BCE (Bell Global Media) at the time of research.
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about the news media and the democratic exercise of politics. It looks at how the media report on politics, how they frame the debates and the participants, and what the role of the news media is, and should be during elections. More specifically, I use a case study of mainstream television news reports to examine reporting patterns of the 2001 British Columbia provincial election campaign. My analysis draws broadly on election media studies and political communications research in Canada, the United States and the UK to provide a starting point to explore theoretical questions about media and democracy, political discourse, and media's political significance. For this exploration, I also draw from the research literature of discourse analysis, cultural studies and critical media studies. My research is also grounded in a strong personal commitment to, (and moral belief about), the practice of democracy, the importance of electoral politics, and the normative role played by the dissemination of information about politics.

Why Study Election News Reports?

Focusing this case study on the data from election news reports offers a unique opportunity for media analysis for a number of reasons. First, elections are political snapshots of the struggle for parliamentary power between competing parties and their supporters, and between conflicting interpretations of political discourse, albeit all within the institutional mainstream of political activities. It has been popular in the last few decades to study political struggles in the non-parliamentary activities of interest groups, social movements and other groupings in “civil society”. For example, feminism, environmentalism, and the more recent anti-globalization movement have all had lasting and powerful effects on the popular consciousness. There are those who would argue (and have) that these struggles are where real politics take place. This recognition is long overdue. Yet, it is only when these diffuse expressions of ‘politics’ have affected governing policies, laws, regulations and, indeed, the policies of political parties themselves, that we can see actual political successes. Election campaigns are the
times when interest groups of various types try to achieve these successes by attempting to position themselves and their agenda within the news media (Taras, 1990, pp. 154-65). For that reason, election campaigns, and the media reporting on them, offer an interesting and important case study of political discourse.

Second, elections are a time when media are, arguably, at their best behaviour. It has been suggested that news media exercise more self-conscious attention to the journalistic traditions of "fairness" and "objectivity" during elections. For example, the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC), an industry organization, has generated standards that apply to news reporting. They emphasize that "news shall be represented with accuracy and without bias" and that news shall not be "formulated on the basis of beliefs, opinions, or desires of the management, the editor or others engaged in its preparation or delivery" (Canadian Broadcast Standards Council [CBSC], 2005). While membership in the CBSC is voluntary, and the remedies to complaints against broadcasters not meeting these standards have been criticized as weak and ineffective, it is nonetheless clear that the industry recognizes the relationship between the news media and democracy. Similarly, and more specific to elections, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), Canada's regulator of the airwaves, routinely sends out communiqués when an election is called, outlining broadcaster's obligations during election time. This circular reminds broadcasters of their duty under the Broadcasting Act 1991 and its Regulations. For example, broadcasters are urged to recognize that reporting of elections is part of their "service to the public". They need to "ensure the public's right to be informed of the issues involved so that it has sufficient knowledge to make an informed choice from among the various parties and candidates. This right is a quintessential one for the effective functioning of a democracy, particularly at election time" (CRTC, 2003). To be sure, the CRTC is cautious when it comes to commenting on actual news coverage, stating that "the Commission agrees with the arguments put forward that news coverage should generally be left to the editorial judgement of the broadcast licensee" Still, it sternly reminds recipients that the Act requires them to meet "high standards" and to provide "a reasonable opportunity for the public to be exposed to ...differing views on matters of public concern", as well as providing "equitable treatment of issues, candidates, and parties" (CRTC, 2003). Thus, broadcasters are reminded of their role in the democratic process and are, at least nominally, expected to be on their best behaviour when it comes to election reporting. How this societal commitment is reflected in their election
coverage and how it competes with the demands of a predominantly ratings-driven television media is worth examining.

Finally, and related to the last comment, elections offer media spectacle – where parties create visual events and pre-packaged news items to affect, if not control, the election agenda through the media. In response, journalists often adopt an adversarial tone, focusing on party strategy, poll results and other aspects of the election “horse race” rather than on policy issues. In the midst of this tension, media organizations vie for a higher market share of viewers. The news media’s adversarial attitude and attention to spectacle during election campaigns has frequently created controversy. For example, the Toronto Star’s Ottawa Bureau Chief Bob Hepburn was critical of his media colleagues for their allegedly unfair coverage of John Turner during the 1984 federal election: “We smelled blood and we attacked. With Mulroney we attacked at the end, but at the end people had already made up their minds” (quoted in Frizzell & Westell, 1985, pp. 55-56). In addition, research has indicated that the news media has its own agenda during elections. David Taras (1990) argues, as do many other media researchers, that the media are themselves in the campaign – “selling themselves, their prestige, their image” (p. 154). How do these other interests interact with the democratic role media have in an election?

All of these issues prompt important questions, since a vast majority of Canadians rely on the news media for information about politics, especially during an election. Few have direct knowledge of the election campaign or policies, and even the conversations of colleagues, friends, and family are often generated from news stories (Frizzell & Westell, 1985). Studies have shown that the media can influence what we think is important, what we talk about, and how we judge our political leaders and their actions. Indeed, over the past two decades, election research has indicated that election campaigns are important events capable of determining future governments. This view counters the older “classic” work from the Columbia School, which concluded that campaigns in the U.S. had minimal effect on an electorate highly identified by party (see in particular Klapper, 1960). By contrast, almost fifteen years ago Fletcher and Everett noted that “there were major shifts in party preferences during the campaigns in 1984 and 1988... reflect[ing] the growing volatility of voter’s party preference in Canada” (Fletcher & Everett, 1991, p. 180). Others have also noted a marked reduction in voter loyalty to party identification. The evidence suggests that many voters make their
decision during the campaign itself, thereby highlighting the role news media may have in this decision-making.

How the media report on these campaigns is a source of political controversy itself. In British Columbia, politicians have advanced various (and contradictory) claims about the role the BC news media have played in the province’s political events. Former Premiers Bill Vander Zalm (Social Credit 1988 - 1991), Mike Harcourt (NDP 1991-1996), and Glen Clark (NDP 1996-2000) all complained of being hounded out of office by a biased or adversarial press determined to undermine their leadership. In his memoirs Harcourt accused the BC media of having a right-wing bias and becoming the “law, judge and jury” in what they said and wrote about politics, including being “simply dishonest” about the NDP budgets (Harcourt & Skene, 1996, p. 170). He further asserted that there were “deep-seated, anti-NDP biases held by a number of press, radio and television journalists and their bosses” (p. 166). Some observers agreed with him. Historian David Mitchell (and once Liberal, then independent MLA in the provincial legislature) suggested that while the NDP were in power “the relationship, especially with government politicians, has become more adversarial” and that some press gallery members see it as their duty to “bring down the government of the day” (Mitchell, 1996). In contrast to Harcourt, Vander Zalm complained of a left-leaning media destroying his government, and some observers (such as the right-wing Fraser Institute) claim the news media give more coverage and more positive coverage to Liberal or left leaning issues and organizations and political parties. In their view the media are populated by Liberal and left-of-centre journalists and editors who allow their own personal views to affect their reporting. The result, the Institute claims, is unfair biases against right wing parties, governments and interests. ¹ This perspective of a “liberal media” has been popularized by other media researchers as well (Lichter, Rothman & Lichter, 1986).

Given the tenor of these debates, it is clear that comment on the role of the media in BC politics is likely to be partisan and divided.

In defence of their actions, the BC media have suggested that the existence of criticisms from both sides of the political spectrum demonstrates they must be doing something right. ² For example, Vancouver Sun political columnist Vaughn Palmer reacted to Harcourt’s criticisms by complaining that “as I understand it … overly critical

¹ See On Balance (National Media Archive 1995) the Fraser Institute’s newsletter on media content, especially issues from 1995-1996.
² This has been challenged by academic research -- See Karlberg and Hackett, 1996.
coverage of his government ... can be attributed to a right-wing, corporatist media bias" and asks how this accusation squares with the "hostile coverage the right-wing corporatist Vander Zalm government" received, according to Vander Zalm (Palmer, 1996). *Times Colonist* political writer Les Leyne made a similar comment when he juxtaposed right-wing media baron Conrad Black's complaints about journalists with Harcourt's. In the end, Leyne insisted, both Harcourt and Black attempt to spin their particular message using vast but different resources, and the consumer "is left to measure the torque either way..." (Leyne, 1996). Thus, these journalists see the BC news media as acting as an arbitrator of attempts by other elites to influence their content, but see little or no "unfairness" on the part of the media themselves.

Amidst these claims, counter claims and anecdotes there is little empirical data from which to test the veracity of competing positions. My research is designed to provide such data and to offer conclusions based on the evidence. While there are no prior empirical data on elections in BC, there have been a few studies of elections in two other provinces and more notably in the federal arena. These studies provide some benchmarks for my own work and they have helped give structure to my research and shape to the methodology. I provide the significant details concerning the methodology used in this dissertation in a methodology appendix; however, I will make a few brief comments about my approach here.

**Methodological Highlights**

The primary data for the case study discussed in this dissertation come from mainstream television news reports of the 28-day BC provincial election campaign in 2001. For the broadcast footage I video taped the 6 p.m. daily news shows from four major networks watched in BC (CBC, BCTV, VTV and CTV) for every day of the campaign. I also collected print news editions from the four major daily newspapers during the election: the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Province*, the western edition of the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* (two Vancouver based dailies, and two national dailies). While I did not conduct a content analysis of these print media, I referred to them

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3 I found research on media and elections in both Ontario and Quebec. The Ontario study was a content analysis of newspaper coverage of the 1962 provincial election, and analysed the amount, positioning and tone of coverage (Qualter & Mackirdy, 1964). Quebec election studies, published in English, include Charron's (1991) study on the relationship between the media and political parties during the provincial election campaigns from 1945 – 1990, and Gertrude Robinson's (1998) comprehensive discourse analysis of media coverage of the 1980 Quebec referendum vote.
periodically for comparative purposes. In addition, I collected print materials from the 1996 BC provincial election to provide an additional body of data for comparison and/or illustrative purposes. Other sources of comparative materials used in this study include government reports, research by academic and policy organizations, and research data from other elections in Canada.

The first component of my study is a quantitative content analysis focusing on the manifest features of the television coverage. I concentrated on three general areas of interest: the election topics, the sources quoted, and the coverage of the political parties. Within each of these three categories (here divided by chapter), I conducted occurrence and frequency tests, and comparative analyses, building on the data with each chapter. For example, for the study of topics in the election news, I was interested in the types of topics that occurred in the news stories, and how they divided between issue topics (e.g., the economy, taxes, social issues) and campaign topics (e.g., campaign activities, party standings in the polls). For the study of news sources, I calculated the occurrence and frequency of different types of sources that were quoted in election stories, considered in what types of story topics they occurred, and compared the relative attention each source type received. For the study of political parties, I calculated the party and leader occurrences in the election stories, the relative amount of time and focus accorded to each of the parties, and compared the types of story topics within which the two leading parties were most frequently found to be the story focus. In addition, I looked at the use of polling in the news reports of the parties, and the content of the feature interviews of the party leaders.

I also undertook an additional qualitative analysis of the transcripts from the election news stories. To do so I first conducted a review of the television discourse over the total twenty-eight days of data. In total, transcripts from the first half-an-hour of over 120 newscasts were examined and summarised, including the main news themes and story lines for each week of the campaign. Using a qualitative analysis software program (QSR NVivo), I looked for patterns in language, framing, and discourse by using an open-coding method as outlined by proponents of grounded theory and allowed for in the software program (see for example Cresswell 1998, pp. 56-57; Seale, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I undertook this supplementary qualitative approach to content analysis in order to discover what may be unique or “surprising” about the data, and
provided a level of depth and richness not usually found in previous quantitative election research studies.

All research studies are motivated in part by issues raised in the researcher's own biography and personal values. I subscribe to the notion that "those who acknowledge their own biases and limitations probably have a better chance of overcoming them than those who insist they are objective" (Lichtenberg, 1996, p. 240). In this spirit, I offer a summary of my own motivations. After years of political activism in various progressive movements, and government policy work in progressive areas, in 1992 I accepted a political position with the government of the day, the provincial New Democrats. I worked for approximately five years for the NDP government in Victoria, spending most of that time as a senior policy advisor in land-use issues (e.g. forestry, environment, aboriginal claims, fisheries) under Premier Mike Harcourt, and briefly under Premier Glen Clark. During that time, I struggled with understanding the relationship between the media and politics in British Columbia and the role of the media in politics. As an "insider" (i.e., both a government employee, and as a party affiliate) I had a different view of the veracity of some of the media stories I saw and read in the mainstream media. As a political appointment, I heard repeatedly from colleagues that the media were "biased" against the NDP. Certainly there appeared to be some support for this view. Still, to be fair, Mike Harcourt and the NDP had clearly benefited from former premier Bill Vander Zalm's media 'crucifixion' when they won the 1991 provincial election and formed government. Perhaps then, the media are merely "biased" against the governing party? Certainly, one prominent theory of the media (the 'adversarial theory', reviewed in detail in Chapter One) supports this view. But where was the evidence? My own experiences and curiosities brought me to the academic literature on news and politics and led me to explore the theoretical perspectives of these issues.

My decision to apply a combination of content and discourse analysis to analyze television news reports should not be taken to suggest that others methods of news analysis are not important or useful. For example, political economy considers the economic influences and pressures on news content and the economic dynamics of news production including commercialization, corporatization, and concentration of ownership. A critical political economy perspective, as suggested by Golding and Murdock focuses on the "interplay between the symbolic and economic dimensions of public communications" (1996, p. 11) and to what extent economic pressure explains
news content. These are important considerations and have informed my research into the news media. However, in this study I am primarily interested in the symbolic and political significance of media content. From critical media studies to feminism, there has been increased recognition that discourse (linguistic choices) affects cognition and plays a role in the social construction of knowledge. Over the past few decades this theory has grown in stature until it is now generally accepted. The construction of a “message” or a “text” in media products is seen by some as the effect of a number of influences, from news production (Tuchman, 1978) to ownership imperatives (Bagdikian, 1990; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Winters, 1997). Consequently, uncovering media bias or ideology embedded in the media text provides an insight into the construction of communications products. Considering the predominant power and influence of news media in contemporary western societies, these insights can provide an important analysis of the media’s role in political discourse and, indeed, democracy.

The Case of British Columbia

While numerous studies on elections and the media have been conducted in the United States using both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, the role of the news media in Canadian campaigns has been a less researched topic. National elections have generated some interest on the part of media scholars, yet very little research has been done on provincial elections and none has reviewed British Columbia elections in particular.

To be sure, various publications, both scholarly and popular, have considered the role of the media in BC politics generally. An early example would be the standard undergraduate political science text After Bennett: A New Politics for British Columbia (Magnusson, Doyle, Walker & DeMarco, 1986), where scholars from Simon Fraser University consider the general role of the media in BC politics (Hackett, Pinet & Ruggles, 1986). More recently, attention has been paid to the media “blind spots” in the Vancouver Sun’s coverage of labour, corporate power and social inequality, using content analysis to review political and ideological considerations in that paper’s coverage (Hackett & Gruneau, 2000). In addition, a thorough and compelling history of the Pacific Press (owner of both of Vancouver’s dailies – the Vancouver Sun and the

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4 A more thorough outline of the political history and parties of British Columbia is included at the beginning of Chapter 5.
Province) makes a number of well-documented assertions about the political (and sometimes partisan) biases and preferences of editors and owners, and the effects this has had on news coverage (Edge, 2001). While both these later studies draw on empirical research, neither uses coverage of election campaigns as its source data. Finally, numerous biographies and popular reports of political leaders, parties and mandates have speculated on the role the media have played in highly partisan world of BC politics, but none has provided direct empirical evidence. This dissertation will begin to develop the research into BC politics and media. To do so it is important to understand the political and media environment before and at the time of the 2001 election.

As noted previously, no election is an event unto itself. It starts months, sometimes years before the official writ is dropped. In fact, it can be argued that elections are the sum total of years of shifting relationships between political parties, changing social environments and historical conventions. Although I will provide more detail about the political parties in British Columbia in Chapter Five, it is worth reviewing their electoral successes over the years now.  

At the beginning of party politics in BC (in the 1920s), the Conservative party held power until 1933, and were replaced by the Liberals, who remained in power until 1941. The 1933 election heralded the introduction of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) who became the official opposition in their first election by winning seven legislative seats. In 1941 the Liberals again won the election with 21 seats to the CCF’s 14 and the Conservative’s 12, however soon after the election the Liberals and Conservatives banded together under a Coalition banner. The Coalition banner handily won the next two elections (1945 and 1952) against the only other contender, the CCF (see for example Blake, 1985; Carty, 1996; Mitchell, 1987; and Palmer, 1987).

By 1952, the 'coalition' had become the Social Credit Party, when the Tory leader, W.A.C. Bennett, abandoned the Conservatives and became leader of the “Socreds”. The Socreds dominated BC elections for the next 35 years, with only one three year reign by the NDP under Dave Barrett to challenge the Social Credit dynasty. Liberal and Conservative Parties continued to run in elections, however won few seats.

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5 The following information was drawn from the Elections BC website and research papers (see reference list), and is presented in chart form in Chapter 5.
As noted above, the CCF performed well in their first election in 1933, and continued their strong showing in the next nine elections (up to the 1960 election) with a popular vote as high as 37.62% in 1945, and as many as 18 seats in 1952 (out of 52 total seats). After the 1960 election, the party changed its name to the New Democratic Party (NDP). The NDP ran in 1963 for the first time under the new banner, and in 1972 won almost 40% of the popular vote, 38 out of 55 seats, and a minority government under leader Dave Barrett. While their popular vote remained respectable in the next election (39%), the NDP lost the 1979 election to the renewed Social Credit Party, re-united under W.A.C. Bennett's son Bill Bennett.

The Socred party collapsed in 1991 after numerous political scandals and premier Bill Vander Zalm’s resignation. As the voters retreated from the Socreds, the 1991 election also saw the rekindling of the Liberals under then leader Gordon Wilson. Later, the Socreds changed their name to ‘Reform’ in an attempt to echo the federal success of the party with the same name. However, the new BC Reform party continued to lose members and supporters to the Liberals as a new Liberal leader (Gordon Campbell) shifted the party to the political right. In 1996 the Liberals won 41.82% of the popular vote (to the NDP’s 39.45%) but only succeeded in securing 33 seats to the NDP’s thirty-nine. While pundits had predicted a Liberal win in 1996, New Democrat Premier Glen Clark (who had replaced Mike Harcourt) squeaked into power. By 1999 Clark was under investigation for alleged influence peddling and was replaced by the NDP Attorney General Ujjal Dosanjh. At the time of the 2001 election, the NDP had been in power for 10 years, and the party was sitting low in the polls. At the same time, disaffected NDP supporters were showing substantial interest in the Green Party. The newly energized Liberals won the 2001 election (the topic of this case study) by a landslide.

This very brief review demonstrates a consistent historical division in the BC electorate. When a strong coalition of the centre-right and the conservative-right existed, it won elections. However, when there was an electoral split among the various conservative parties, or between the conservatives and the Liberals, the NDP was successful. Thus, past experience suggests that the NDP were unlikely to win the 2001 election because of the unifying of conservatives and Liberals under Gordon Campbell, and regardless of their political scandals or policies. Further, what made the defeat so
devastating for the NDP was the additional dynamic of a split on the left as the Green Party emerged as a political electoral force (an issue I explore in Chapter Five).

**The news media in BC**

Similar to the political situation, the media environment in British Columbia is, to some extent, unique to the province. To be sure, the BC news environment features the kinds of media, types of programming and organizational structures as other jurisdictions in Canada and beyond. These include a combination of radio, print and television news; the role of legislative press galleries; and the position of specialized political commentators. However, the specific media organizations and their the market shares are unique to the province. A brief survey of the structure and ownership status of the mainstream news media in BC indicates an industry that is highly concentrated in a few hands, and dominated by large corporate conglomerates. Vancouver, in particular, provides the second largest English language broadcast market in Canada. Thus having success in the competition for viewers can be lucrative.

At the time of the 2001 BC election, voters had a choice of four English television six p.m. news broadcasts in Vancouver. These were:

- **BCTV News Hour**, which ran on Channel 11 (CHAN-TV). BCTV had been recently acquired by CanWest Global the year before (2000) from WIC Western International Communications (owned primarily by the Griffiths family in Vancouver). Other assets, including CHEK TV in Victoria, were included in the sale, and carried the BCTV news hour at 6 p.m. The BCTV news hour was by far the most popular 6 p.m. news cast with a market share (of the over 18 year-olds) of over 26% of all TV watchers in the lower mainland and Vancouver Island. Combined with CHEK TV, which also carried the BCTV News Hour, the market share jumped to over 34%.

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6 In addition, an American owned and Bellingham based station, KVOS-TV, was successfully targeting its programs and advertising across the border to the Vancouver and lower mainland BC area. However, since it did not provide Canadian news reports, it does not enter into this analysis.

7 The market-share statistics used here were calculated from information collected from the stations, and their advertisers. It uses the 18 and over demographic, and the catchment areas of Greater Vancouver and Vancouver Island. The number represents the percentage of all viewers at that time of day – 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.
• Global News on Channel 13 (CKVU-TV) was at the time also owned by Global CanWest; however when CanWest bought WIC the CRTC ruled that they put this channel up for sale in order to avoid over-concentration of ownership in the Vancouver market. Until it was sold it was held in trust. Thus, at the time of the April and May 2001 election, CanWest Global owned this station in trust. It was later sold to CHUM, who now run it as CITY-TV in Vancouver. At the time of the election, the audience estimates for Global News were close to 8% of the over 18 year olds watching television at the time.

• CBC News on Channel 3 (CBUT-TV) is Canada’s public broadcaster. At the time of the election, the CBC ran the 6 p.m. news hour with Gloria Macarenko as a local news anchor. Audience estimates for CBC news at 6 p.m. in April and May of 2001 were just over 5% of the market share.

• VTV News Hour, on Channel 9 (CIVT-TV) was owned by CTV, which in turn was owned by BCE (Bell Global Media). While at this time the 6 p.m. news hour was run as a Vancouver broadcast, it has since changed its format from the VTV brand to run as a straight CTV affiliate. At the time of the election, the audience estimates for the VTV 6 o’clock news were only about 2% of the viewing audience.

At the time my research was undertaken, CanWest dominated the TV news market in Vancouver. It also dominated the major print media as well. The two major Vancouver dailies, the Vancouver Sun and the Province were both owned by Pacific Press, which had been sold by Conrad Black’s Hollinger Inc. to the Asper family’s CanWest Global Communications Inc. the year before. The circulation for the Vancouver Sun was approximately 177,475 during the week and up to 240,000 on the weekend. The Province’s circulation numbers were listed as slightly lower, with 163,000 during the week and up to 200,000 on the weekend.¹ Thus the combined print circulation indicated up to a half million newspapers. Both papers had been found in

¹ These numbers are from a 1999 Newspaper Costing Estimate Listing for the newspapers.
previous studies to have shifted to the political right under Conrad Black's stewardship, and this was not expected to change under the Asper family. In addition, CanWest Global bought out a number of other Hollinger Inc. assets in the 2000 sale, including the Victoria Times Colonist and a 50% interest in the then-new national print daily - the National Post. While the Post did not have a BC edition, its national circulation numbers reached 265,000. Similarly, CTV, described in CRTC documents as "Canada's largest English-language private conventional broadcaster" (CRTC 2001-3, Notice of Hearing) had recently been bought by Bell Canada Enterprises (BCE) which in turn owned the Globe and Mail. In 1999, the circulation numbers for the BC edition of this national daily was 37,500 during the week and up to 56,000 on weekends.

Thus, the 2001 election took place during a time with one of the highest levels of concentrated media ownership in BC history. Debates about the effects of both the concentration of ownership, and the corporate ownership of news media have been discussed by others and will not be reviewed in this study. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that whether or not ownership itself motivates political bias or preference, during the 2001 general campaign in BC, CanWest Global was listed as donating $30,000 to the provincial Liberals (Elections British Columbia 2001). Such a donation may not indicate an editorial decision on the part of the CanWest television and print holdings in BC, but it certainly does raise the question of the role of the media during elections.

What this Dissertation IS and IS NOT.

This work crosses many literatures. Because of this, I think it is important to note here what this dissertation is not. First, this is not an in-depth review of the history of party affiliations in the province of British Columbia. While I touch upon the party histories here, and again in Chapter 5, it is only to create a context from which to understand media coverage of this election and to make some critical judgements about the media coverage. I am also not attempting to offer a comprehensive comparison of one BC election to another. I periodically consider some examples from the 1996 election for the purpose of comparison, but I have not performed a longitudinal analysis of election coverage in BC. Rather, I have chosen to concentrate on an analysis of the particulars of the 2001 election. Nonetheless, while I do not undertake a comparative

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9 See Gutstein 1998 for an analysis of the Black/Hollinger take-over, and the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (CPBF) – Canada, 2002, for a discussion of other political shifts in Canadian media.
analysis of BC politics (and for that matter of BC media) vis-à-vis other provinces, I am hoping that this study will add to the research data on provincial politics and help these comparisons to be made.

This dissertation is also not a study of the specific political effects of this news coverage. I did not undergo focus group or other types of audience testing to determine the results that the specific news reporting might have had. Many social researchers before me have done this and have made speculations on news media effects. I will review their work in Chapter Two, and suggest where it may be relevant to this research. However, I do not undertake original research on the news media's effects in this election. Importantly, I will also not be looking at political advertising. While election ads are a fascinating topic, and one worth studying, I have chosen to concentrate my data on the content prepared and disseminated by reporters rather than by the major political players themselves. Finally, this is not a study about campaign strategies. This topic has also been considered by others and is not directly related to the study I conducted. Instead, this research concentrates solely on the television news media content of the 2001 BC provincial election, and on what patterns may be found in these data.

Chapter One begins with a review of the literature of election studies, primarily in Canada, outlining where my discussion follows and where it diverts from that tradition. I note how election research in Canada is primarily focused on national elections, and comes from a distinctive "political science perspective". There are significantly more election studies in the United States and I note some of these studies in as much as they help to situate the research I have done. I also outline the theoretical groundwork with which I position this study, including models of the role of news media in social and political life, and a discussion of the concept of media bias. The predominant models of media roles include popular views of media (as watchdogs on government, as responding to audience wishes, and as providers of public information), and the more critical views of media's roles (for example, as instruments of power, as providing structural limitations on information dissemination, and as hegemonic institutions).

Chapter Two outlines the research on how media content is constructed and how it is received. Since mine was an empirical study on news content itself, and did not empirically consider the actual creation of the news content, or the impact on the

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10 Election advertising studies have been done by others. In particular see Kline 1997; Romanow et al., 1999.
audience, this chapter draws upon the research of others in order to emphasize the importance of studying news content. How is news content created? Does it have any impact on those who consume it? And, ultimately, why does the study of news content matter? I review the influences on the construction of news (often referred to as 'news determinants') and the research trends in media effects, and consider what this might suggest about the media content in this election.

Chapter Three begins the focus on the specific content of the election news in 2001; in particular, the amount of news about the election compared to the rest of television news, and the topics contained within the election news stories. In this chapter, specific attention is paid to the division between 'issue related' stories as compared to 'campaign-related' stories. Campaign-related stories are those stories that are predominantly concerned with campaign activities, the party strategies, the polling results, or the horse-race aspect of the election. 'Issue stories' typically provide information on an issue, and may include the official party positions on these issues.

Chapter Four looks beyond the general topics of election coverage and includes a move to the actors and sources quoted in the television news reports. News sources have been the focus of substantial theoretical work on the part of communications researchers, but there has been little research on news sources in Canadian election studies. This chapter provides an overview of the types of sources that are quoted in election news, what they are quoted about, and the length and content of the quotable “sound bite”.

Chapter Five considers the coverage of the political parties in the election. It reviews the findings of the amount of media attention afforded to each party and to their leader, the political tone of the sources quoted, and the use of polling in the news. The chapter also offers a detailed account of the “feature interviews” with the party leaders, as conducted by three of the television stations during the election.

Chapter Six moves past the empirical results of content analysis to a review of the election discourse - "the campaign story" as told in news reports. The chapter begins with a detailed summary of the stories for each of the four weeks of the campaign. I then consider two approaches to discourse analysis of news reports – one which focuses on the narrative structures found in the overall text, and the other which

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11 For example, see Caplan, Kirby & Segal 1989; Duffy 2002; and Richards 2001.
looks at the dominant news frames. What, according to the TV news discourse, was the 2001 B.C. election actually about? How were those themes developed over the course of the 28 days? What themes and perspectives were left out?

The conclusion, provides a summary of the findings of this case study, and discusses the political significance of these findings, and implications for political news and the news media in general. I conclude from these findings that, among other things, the content of election news is lacking in discussions of policy issues, the use of public resources, or other important questions that concern the act of governing. It is from these observations that the title of this study emerged. The exercise of democratic politics is about far more than the election horse-race, the party scandals, the activities, and the photo-ops on the campaign trail. Electoral democracy is much more than crafty campaign strategies and clever slogans. While the news media inundates us with representations of the political parties and their campaigns, they seem reluctant or unable to inform citizens about the goals, values, and platforms of these same parties. We are entertained, but we are not informed. In this study, the television news media of BC offered us a representation of an election, but it was a portrayal that was notably empty of political substance.

Many stories could be told with these data. The analysis developed in the chapters that follows is only one of these stories. Indeed, the story I tell is largely descriptive – it is more like a map than a detailed attempt at causal explanation or theorization. In the end, the data may not have satisfied all my curiosities. But my hope is that the research adds to the body of academic work done on the news media and elections in Canada.

**Thoughts on Election Research**

Almost fifteen years ago the pre-eminent Canadian communications scholar Fred Fletcher oversaw a massive research project and edited a number of volumes about media and elections in Canada (Fletcher, 1991a, 1991b and 1991c). This extensive body of work was part of a federal government Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, commonly referred to as the 'Lortie Commission', and much of it has been useful in the writing of this dissertation. At a Southam lecture a few years later, Dr. Fletcher made some reflective comments about his work with the Commission and the future of election research in communications studies (1994). In particular, he
argued that elections needed to be viewed as exercises in communication, and that to understand the nature of politics and political discourse in a society we must move beyond the narrow view of elections campaigns as "nothing more than contests for power" – the dominant view from political scientists, journalists and party strategists alike (p. 131). He urged communications scholars to continue the important work of improving democratic communications.

Overall, the goal should be to make citizenship more meaningful and to encourage a campaign discourse that more closely approximates a civilized debate about the future of the country than an exercise in political marketing. (Fletcher, 1994, p. 148)

Yet, most of the published Canadian election studies from the last decade, with a few notable exceptions, have not included the perspective of communications scholars, and thus have neither drawn upon nor benefited from the communications research before it. While clearly out of fashion among communications scholars, election news research remains a vitally important area for study. This dissertation is, at least in part, an attempt to make a case for a return to the analysis of election news coverage as a key site for Canadian communications research.
CHAPTER ONE: ELECTIONS AND THE ROLE OF NEWS.

On April 18, 2001, British Columbia Premier Ujjal Dosanjh made his way from the provincial legislature buildings in Victoria to the Governor General's house to formally request the dissolution of parliament and thus start the provincial election. He was no doubt filled with foreboding. The news media had been commenting on his government's dramatically low standing in the polls for weeks, and the equally dramatic rise in support for the provincial Liberals (led by former Vancouver mayor and real estate developer Gordon Campbell). The polls indicated lingering public anger towards Dosanjh's New Democratic predecessor, Glen Clark, from whom Dosanjh inherited the leadership (and the Premiership) a few months earlier after Clark resigned in the face of a criminal investigation into influence peddling. 12 Pundits and journalists all agreed that this was not going to be a close race. The only question was, after governing the province for a decade, how bad would the NDP's defeat be?

The certainty expressed by most commentators that the 2001 B.C. election was "Gordon Campbell's to loose" is one of the factors that makes this election such an interesting case study on political reporting. Since the public perception was that the election would be a Liberal landslide, did this affect the way the media reported on the election? What topics were the most prevalent? How were these topics dealt with? Who were the primary "spokespeople" or sources used to introduce or give information about these topics? How were the topics framed? How did the coverage of the different parties and leaders compare with each other during the 28-day campaign? To what extent did the news media meet their own oft-stated intentions of providing accurate and fair news reporting?

As I will outline below, research has shown that election coverage tends to follow certain patterns due to factors such as the limits and constraints on the reporters, the demands of the media organization, and the traditions and conventions of campaign coverage. To what extent are these patterns apparent in this study?

12 Two years later Glen Clark was found not guilty on all charges.
There are also several more theoretical concerns to consider in looking at this, and all elections. What is, and what should be, the role of the media during an election? While the outcome of the 2001 B.C. election was arguably not an issue, to what extent did the election reporting nonetheless meet the communication ideals of a democracy? These are common questions to be tackled in research about political communications, and this study is no exception. However, my hope is that by anchoring such theoretical considerations in an empirical case study of political media coverage in the province of British Columbia I may begin to provide a link between the theory and the practice in a localized and specific way.

The news media devote enormous resources to election reporting. And sometimes journalists worry about their coverage, wondering if it is fair, accurate, and of good quality as a source for voters to make their decisions (Frizzell & Westell, 1985). Several manuals and guidebooks have been prepared to assist journalists in this endeavour. It is important to note that the characteristic of news discourse about politics and politicians has been dramatically affected by the dominance of television as a major source of entertainment. News about campaigns, and indeed the campaigns themselves, tends to adopt the entertainment values of television, increasing the emphasis on personalities, images and the creation of high drama or intrigue. Researchers have found that certain patterns of reporting have remained consistently fundamental to media reporting on elections in the last few decades. These are:

1. **The horse race.** Media coverage of elections represents the campaign as a "horse-race" rather than as a debate between the party policies. Critics claim that the coverage emphasizes the electoral race itself in terms of ratings and polls, momentum and slumps, and party strategies rather than the political issues themselves. Such an emphasis "gives the news the kind of dramatic narrative structure valued by modern television" (Hallin, 1992, p. 21).

2. **The sound bite.** The messages that a politician delivers to the public are covered in very short and simplified "sound bites," sometimes only a single quoted sentence that is taken as representing the whole campaign strategy or platform of the candidate. Television—with its

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13 See for example the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council documents on broadcaster's ethical responsibilities, found on their website, listed in the bibliography.
short, fast-paced stories—has had the largest impact on the length of sound-bites, which fell in Canada from approximately 60 seconds in the 1960s to under ten seconds in 1993 (Hackett & Hissey, 1996, p. 37). The reliance on sound bites reduces the ability of candidates to communicate any real policy content to voters and instead limits the impact or focus to one of image, rather than issues.

3. **The leaders.** As with much of news media coverage of politics, the focus of election campaign news is on the leader, personalizing the election issues and especially focusing on their gaffes, or conflicts with audiences and the public. Leaders are the main source of sound bites, visual stories and debates, while many other candidates running for election are relegated to small local newspapers or community weeklies (Taras, 1990).

4. **Going negative:** Critics argue that together this kind of focus on an election campaign frames politics and politicians in a negative light. (Ansolabehere & lyengar, 1995; Fallows, 1996a). Politicians are seen as only out to look good and get elected, not concerned or interested in issues or in effecting change. This results in a “spiral of cynicism” about the political process and a citizen’s ability to effect change, or motivations to try (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997).

These and other characteristics are considered in the chapters ahead. But before analyzing the data collected I will provide some theoretical benchmarks of comparison, as well as an understanding of the assessment criteria I will use. The first half of this chapter offers an overview of a number of relevant academic studies of elections and news coverage of politics relevant to this work. This will lead to a discussion of theories of the news media’s role in contemporary democratic societies, and a discussion about the problematic concept of media bias.

**Election Studies**

Research into election media content in Canada can roughly be divided into three categories; those that have focused on news media content as an empirical and quantifiable phenomenon; those that have analyzed news media as a discourse, and
have focused on interpretative contexts (for example media agenda-setting and framing); and those that have considered media effects and focused on the behaviour of voters in response to media content. The categories may overlap with one another, and some studies employ more than one type of analysis. Nonetheless, for the purposes of analysis I will review each of these categories in turn and consider how they inform this study.

**News Media Content**

As stated above, elections are not merely one-time events, but the culmination of historical situations and shifting political structures. Similarly, media coverage of an election campaign is not a unique event only affecting the relevant election. Over the years, the practice of reporting on an election campaign has developed into a collection of routines and conventions. These patterns have been confirmed in studies of election reporting practices and content in Canada and internationally all other western industrialized nations.

The first scholarly book on a Canadian general election covered the General Election of 1957 (Meisel, 1962) and concentrated on voting behaviour and campaign strategies. It was not until the 1974 general election that the question of media reporting of the election garnered academic attention. For the three elections of 1974, 1979 and 1984 a group of political scientists at the Universities of Windsor and Carleton conducted the first content analysis of selected newspaper coverage of a national election, and thus began the use of content analysis as the traditional method of media studies of elections in Canada (Clarke, Jenson, Leduc & Pammett, 1979, 1984).

Content analysis refers primarily to a quantitative method of analyzing news reporting by categorizing, counting and comparing/interpreting messages in media texts samples (Berger, 1982; Berelson, 1952; Carney, 1972). It typically involves developing a sampling system, managing and categorizing the sample material into units of study (headlines, leads, sources), and coding the data based on frequency of occurrences, associations, correlations, clustering, use of images and/or contextual classifications.

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14 I primarily use Canadian federal election studies in this review for two reasons: First, I use federal studies since there is very little academic work published on provincial elections and the news. Second, I use Canadian studies as my base literature since it is arguably more relevant to British Columbia elections than US studies. My intent here is to concentrate on, and add to, the scholarship in Canadian.
(Krippendorf, 1980). For example, studies on the Canadian federal elections have considered the following:

1. **The amount of election news:**

   Typically this is measured as the space devoted to the election vis-à-vis the total editorial space (or time if it is television) for all news stories, and calculated using numbers of stories and/or volume inches in print. Results have suggested that all media devote substantial amount of space (and resources, for that matter) to election coverage, but that the number of election items has steadily decreased since 1984 (see for example Dornan & Pyman, 2001).

2. **The type of election news stories:**

   News item “types” are usually classified as: news, news analysis, background pieces, opinion columns, editorials, photos, letters to the editor and cartoons, with a few variations between studies. The amount of each type of item is used to determine the breadth of coverage being offered. A summary of studies using this method noted that while “straight news” items were a strong majority in the 1984 election coverage in Toronto major dailies (73%), by 1993 this had reduced to as little as 55% in some newspapers, indicating a "swing from straight news coverage to opinion-based coverage" (Dornan & Pyman, 2001). This result echoes a similar trend in US election reporting towards a tendency for reporters and pundits to offer their opinions and analysis of the election campaigns as an increasingly larger component of election news. Potential impacts of this shift are discussed in later chapters.

3. **The topics and issues of news stories:**

   Typically election reporting topics have been divided into two types: 1) the “issues based” or “policy” topics, which focus on party policies and campaign content, and 2) the “process” or “campaign” stories which look at, for example, campaign strategies, party “blunders”, standings in the polls, voter behaviour, and leader performances at debates. For example, in a study of newspaper coverage of the Canadian General election of 1984, close to three-quarters of elections stories (74%) were about something other than party policies. However, this number decreased in 1988 (to 63%), increased slightly in 1993 (69%) and substantially decreased again in the 2000 election (49%) (Dornan & Pyman, 2001). (Importantly, these results are for the number of items only, and do not identify the length or depth of the stories, the
placement, nor the "framing" of the stories, as will be discussion below.) As well as "process" stories, media studies have looked at the topics of policy stories for various elections, sometimes comparing them to the poll results of what voters think of as the main topics. In most cases, the economy scores high on the list, including macro economic issues such as government spending/deficits, taxes, and national economic standing, as well as micro economic issues such as unemployment, poverty. For example, in 1988 the largest economic issue was free trade. Other dominant issues in Canadian elections have included health care, crime, immigration, environment, aboriginal claims, and education.

4. The political parties and their leaders:

Studies have compared the reporting between the parties and their leaders in respect to: the amount of coverage each has received; the placement in the news; the editorial tone; and, in some studies, the effect on audiences (i.e. whether it was "read" as favourable or unfavourable). For example, a study from the 2000 Canadian election found that over 60% of election reporting had party leaders as the principle actor, and other studies have noted that the tone of coverage of the leaders is generally negative (Dornan & Pyman, 2001; Gilsdorf & Bernier, 1991). In addition, studies have shown that while leaders of the two major parties often receive similar amounts of coverage, the tone, or attention score (placement in the paper) has been by no means equal. Importantly, while the emphasis of election news is focused on the leaders, their behaviour and their activities, this is only the case for the major political parties. Minor parties and local candidates are generally neglected by national media (Hackett, 1991b), and some studies have suggested that party coverage tends to favour the incumbent (Gilsdorf & Bernier, 1991).

5. The sources of the news stories:

To a much lesser extent, content analysis studies have considered where the news reports originated. Typically, this has meant making a distinction between national and local news sources, and resulted in conclusions that national stories were favoured by most media. There has been no published content-analysis research into the spokespersons or sources used in Canadian election news stories, although this has been the focus of other studies on non-election political news (Hackett, 1985; Hackett &
Gruneau, 2000; Papas, 1991). Who is quoted and how these sources are used in the news media will be the focus of Chapter Four of this study.

6. The impacts of election news:

Content analysis as a method does not normally allow for quantifiable results on the impacts of election reporting. Nonetheless, some studies have conducted limited focus group testing of media content using coders or other researchers to determine the likely reaction to certain types of news coverage. For example, two studies (Frizzell & Westell, 1985, 1989) had content coders (mostly university students) identify whether the stories they were coding were “favourable”, “neutral” or “unfavourable” to the party leaders or party in the story. The researchers were attempting to determine what the “average person’s” reaction may have been. Generally, the coders found that all but 5% of the stories were neutral, and most of the non-neutral stories were editorials or commentaries. There were two noticeable exceptions from these elections. First, in 1984 the national newspapers repeatedly ran a photo of Conservative leader Robert Stanfield fumbling a football. This photograph was significant to the researchers since Stanfield had successfully caught the football a number of times during the photo shoot, however it was a fumble that was printed on the front page of the Globe and Mail on May 31, 1974. A second example involved 1988 front page photo of Liberal leader John Turner. What was significant about this photo was that the results of a trick of lighting and the placement against a back-drop resulted in a photo that that depicted Turner as if he had horns growing out of his head. The reasons for the selection of both of these photos (when alternatives were clearly available) was not explored. However, the researchers admitted that while these photos were read as unfavourable impressions against the two party leaders by the coders, they suggested that there was no evidence that such blatant examples of ‘reporter mischief’ had any real effect on voting (Frizzell & Westell, 1985, 1989).

American and British studies have taken similar approaches when using content analysis. Most of the early work on news media content studies – such as Gans’ groundbreaking study of the television evening news (1980), Galtung and Ruge’s important work on news values (1981), and the Glasgow Media Group’s series on politics in the UK news (Philo, Hewitt, Beharrell & Davis, 1976, 1980 & 1982) – utilized some form of content analysis. As a method of inquiry, content analysis offers a claim of scientific objectivity that is attractive to many researchers and journalists alike and
characteristic of the era of American behaviourist media research within in which it developed (see Hall, 1982, for further discussion). Content analysis measures, calculates and provides empirical evidence that can be used comparatively. The amount of election news or the type and depth of stories can map significant shifts in overall coverage. For example, content analysis is a valuable tool for comparing news reports of the “horse-race” of the campaign vs. the “straight news” reports on policy issues in order to evaluate the news media’s performance as an objective information source in democratic societies. In summary, content analysis remains, overall, a useful method of handling a large volume of data and for making broad generalizations about content.

To be sure, content analysis also has its weaknesses (for classic critiques of content analysis see Woollacott, 1982; and Hackett, 1984). For example, it assumes that manifest content somehow equals significance. Yet, counting or measuring the frequency of a word, topic or spokesperson in the news does not necessarily equate to a measure of its significance in the discourse used. The following is a very simple demonstration. In a content analysis study, a series of articles repeatedly mentioned one political party more than the other. An unsophisticated use of content analysis method could therefore conclude that the party who received “more” stories and more story focus received favourable coverage by the media. This conclusion assumes that a higher volume of coverage translates into higher attention score and thus a positive treatment by the party. However, if that same party coverage was consistently focused on criticisms of the party’s economic policies, or leadership problems, the higher volume of coverage may in fact be evidence of a negative bias within the media. Without looking into the context of the coverage, the framing of the discourse around it, or the criteria of evaluation used, the construction and application of the categories and coding of content analysis methods could render the research meaningless. Clearly, this is inadequate. It demonstrates how content analysis stand or falls by the categories it develops. Since the method requires the fragmentation of the parts of a contextual whole in order to create categories and units to code, it is limited in its ability to “read between the lines” or note different contexts within which a message or a “sign” may be used. Even within the discipline of content analysis, proponents have struggled with the

15 This example may appear far-fetched, yet it is drawn directly from the content analysis techniques of the Fraser Institute’s National Media Archive newsletter (Cross, 1997). In analyzing its methods I concluded that their conclusions were often misguided. Clearly, a content analysis study is only as good as the question it poses, only as accurate as the design permits, and only insightful if the context is considered.
problem of uncovering meanings from frequencies (Krippendorf, 1980, p. 10). Researchers have attempted to compensate for the lack of an embedded theory of significance in content analysis by looking at quantifiable aspects of the message content such as placement (front page vs. back page), or “balance (amount of positive vs. negative news of parties or issues). Increasingly sophisticated and complex statistical methods have also been used to refine the analysis, resulting in the recognition that the more precise the measuring instrument, the richer the data (Johnston, Blais, Brady & Crête, 1992).

As well, from an epistemological view, content analysis implies a concept of bias and objectivity that not only assumes the media can and ought to accurately reflect the real word (thus ignoring the role media play in the construction of meaning) but is also inadequate for looking beyond manifest messages to the underlying social context, structures and ideology which creates a context for these messages (Hackett, 1984). In the 1970s, critics of the method, and subsequent work on media and ideology, paved the way for a different form of media analysis that took a contextual and discourse-based approach to media content. The integration of some of this work has resulted in news and election studies that consider news media as discourse, and analyze the content using concepts such as framing (outlined below). Admittedly, content analysis alone cannot uncover meaning in a text, and critical theorists have criticized its usefulness. Nonetheless, I maintain that it provides a useful background for many election studies. While we cannot assume that frequency equals significance, it is equally problematic to assert that frequency is meaningless. Content analysis can be, and has been used successfully to uncover some election news trends, and I will use a simple form of it to begin analysis in this case study.

News as Discourse

Studies that begin with the view that news media content is a discourse draw upon the literature that views language as having a role in the social construction of reality (Fowler, 1991; Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clark & Roberts, 1978; Hartley, 1982; Hodge & Kress, 1988; Van Dijk, 1988). With the odd exception, contemporary media theorists do not believe that the news media merely present “facts” and accurately mirror reality. Instead, theorists have recognized the news media as having a role to play in the construction of reality through economic, social, cultural, institutional and/or linguistic
practices. For example, Hall (1986) notes that journalistic content is created and combined in processes and practices of selection, editing, design, layout, format and narrative that frame certain issues in certain ways. "It matters profoundly what and who gets represented, what and who regularly and routinely gets left out, and how things, people, events and relationships are represented" (Hall, 1986, p. 9). The news media represent the world through symbolic content, but it is a representation where "each particular form of linguistic expression… has its reason" (Fowler, 1991, p. 4 – italics added). The reason, states Fowler, is to “make things mean” – whether it is to reinforce the social and political values and institutional practices in legitimating one form of meaning and downplaying another, or to challenge the status quo. Discourse matters. And the way in which news discourse matters can be revealed in discourse-oriented news analysis.

Discourse analysis is an approach to media content that arose from developments in structuralism/post-structuralism, linguistics and philosophy. The term “discourse” became prominent in the work of French theorists Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes as a way of focusing on specialized “fields of study” which develop their own language and conventions (Barthes, 1966, 1967 & 1977; Foucault, 1972). These fields of study in turn exercise certain “discourses of power” (Foucault, 1972). Structuralism, as it applies to language, refers to how “meaning is constructed in texts, the term applying to certain ‘structures of language’ consisting of signs, narrative or myths” (McQuail, 1994, p. 244; see also Hawks, 1977). Early linguistic structuralism is evident in the field of “semiotics”, the “science of signs” proposed by Saussure (Barthes, 1967, 1977). Later, structuralism was an inspiration for “critical linguistics” (Fowler, 1991; Hodge & Kress, 1988, 1993). Semiotic analysis 16 looked at how meaning is generated in texts by studying the “signs” used and the “codes and conventions” which structure the usage and meaning of these signs (Danesi, 2000). It divides the sign into a signifier (or sound image, such as the word dog) and signified (the concept the sign is referring to, such as a small mammal that barks and that we keep as a pet) in order to emphasize how the relationship between the two is arbitrary (the word dog and the thing dog have no direct linkage, but the word has come to mean the animal). Applied to news discourse, semiotics invites the analyst to consider the “structured whole” of news

16 Saussure called his method and theory “semiology”. However critical linguistics (Fowler, 1991; Hodge and Kress, 1988) used the term ‘semiotics’ – originally from American linguist Charles Pierce but often with reference to Saussure. ‘Semiotics’ was further adopted by news analysis researchers (Hartley, 1982; Fiske, 1987 and others) and because of this I have adopted the term here.
discourse as opposed to the fragmented parts studied in more traditional content analysis (Hartley, 1982, p. 15; also see Lemke, 1995; Phillips and Jorgenson, 2002; Phillips and Hardy, 2002; Van Dijk, 2001).

For example, continuing on with the word used above, while dog has come to mean a canine animal that barks and wags its tail, in certain contexts it has also come to mean someone who is not attractive, especially in reference to a woman. Which of these meanings is encoded in the language is influenced, to varying extents, by the context within which the word is used; the words around it, the relationship to other referents, the syntax, etc. Consequently, meaning is understood as not being based on some external notion of reality but on the “structural relations that exist within a sign system” (O’Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery & Fiske, 1994, p. 281). Sign systems can only be understood if we look at their relation to one another, and (from a critical perspective) their relation to discourses of power.

Semiotics and critical linguistics also propose the central importance of binary opposites in language - that meaning is created by the relationship of a sign to what it is not, and therefore as a negative relation: e.g. bad/good, criminal/police, chaos/order. Further, these approaches may look at, intertextuality (the conscious or unconscious use of material from other previously created texts such as parody or style), modality (the clues to truth-claims in an utterance), lexical classifications (word choices), transitivity (e.g. passive or active speech), and mode of address (e.g.: formal vs. informal speech). They may also consider the use of specific linguistic devices for analysis - e.g. question marks, distancing or identification language, institutional voices, grammatical style and rhetoric (Hall et al., 1978; Hartley, 1982; Hodge & Kress, 1988 and 1993). All of this is used to determine how the underlying codes, rules and form of language work to make a discourse meaningful. Not surprisingly, this type of linguistic approach has sometimes resulted in long and painstakingly detailed analyses of a single text, media story or news broadcast.

Many of these methods have been retained in the broader application of discourse analysis although some have been found to be more effective and manageable than others. Some important studies have used different versions of this kind of discourse analysis to make useful observations. For example, discourse analysis informed by Marxism, was utilized in media studies by a number of cultural theorists including the well-known Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in
Birmingham. For example, researchers at the CCCS undertook ground-breaking analysis of media involvement in the construction of a "mugging" crisis in London (Hall et al., 1978). The CCCS researchers examined how language was used to create a "preferred meaning" encoded within certain media messages which reinforced a conservative cultural consensus – a hegemony. They sought to discover how meaning in the news text was limited, and observed that:

...in order for one meaning to be regularly produced, it had to win a kind of credibility, legitimizing or taken-for-grantedness for itself that involved marginalizing, down-grading or de-legitimizing alternative constructions.... (Hall et al., 1978, p. 67).

Other founding work in the field of critical news discourse analysis included the Glasgow University Media Group's look at media representation of trade unions as well as other social movements (Philo et al., 1976, 1980 and 1982); Todd Gitlin's analysis of American media coverage of the radical student movements of the 1960s (1980); and John Hartley's early analysis of television news (1982). In addition to the work noted above, numerous studies and methodological texts following the concepts of discourse analysis, have drawn from the field of 'critical linguistics'. Notable pioneers in this tradition include Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress (1988, 1993), Norman Fairclough (1992), Roger Fowler (1991) and Teun van Dijk (1988, 1998, 2001).

Discourse analysis arguably provides an advancement over more traditional content analysis. It considers media messages as part of a structured whole and includes a recognition that the significant item may not be the one repeated most often but the one given the greatest weight in its placement or context of a text. Indeed, as Hackett (1984) points out, in discourse analysis, the very codes themselves are the object of analysis. This establishes the ability to recognize the exceptional as well as the frequent in a text. Thus, discourse analysis' interest in the relationship between different parts of the sign-system or message shifts the focus from manifest messages and allows for the study of meaning within a media text. However, as a method, discourse analysis has its flaws as well, the two most prominent being that it cannot handle large amounts of material and that it leaves the researcher to rely too greatly on subjective interpretations of the data. Nonetheless, studies that have recognized the news media as a discourse have added significant insight and have provided an important

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17 These studies have been variously named socio-linguistics, social semiotics, discourse analysis and, the current favourite, critical linguistics.
complement to content analysis. This has resulted in a number of useful convergences between the two approaches.

For example, one manageable way to apply a discourse analysis approach is look at news content in terms of "framing". The use of the term "frame" originates in the work of Erving Goffman (1974) and was used by Gaye Tuchman in her book on the social production of news (1978). Todd Gitlin expanded on the concept (1980) by adding the concept of *hegemonic ideology* as a framing device. By the term "hegemonic ideology" Gitlin was referring to Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci's core concept that "those who rule the dominant institutions secure their power in large measure directly and indirectly, by impressing their definitions of the situation upon those they rule" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 10). In this way, argues Gitlin, the news media often adopt the dominant definition of events, and reinforce it through standard routines and procedures that result in a particular framing of news stories.

Others have since continued to use 'framing' to refer to the persistent patterns of selectivity on the part of the news media that result in highlighting certain material or perspectives at the expense of others (see for example Clow, 1993; Entman, 1993; Iyengar, 1991; Shah, 2001). These framing studies are concerned with how media organize the news discourse in routine ways that indicate patterns of interpretation and presentation that can be discerned through analysis. For example, Mathew Mendelsohn (1993) identified the frames of interpretation that TV news applied to the 1988 Canadian election campaign. He argued that these frames affect political discourse and the voter's understanding of the campaign, making it more likely that voting will be based on leadership tours and "horse race" coverage than on actual political or policy issues. Similarly, a study in the US, found that, although a wide range of topics were presented by the networks, the concentration of *issue frames* was not nearly as dense as those for candidate ads, political polls, the debates or voting possibilities. "As a result, the media's focus on campaign processes and strategies draws the reporter closer to the campaign strategist and further from the citizens" (Tedesco, 2002, p. xvi).

Generally then, discourse analysis employs a number of methods to analyze the elements or "signs" that are used to produce meanings, using codes and conventions that help to reference some "reality" while at the same time excluding or marginalizing other ways of knowing. For example, discourse analysis may look at: what and who is considered newsworthy; how are the main election topics framed and what "referents"
are used to guide in the interpretations? Who is accessed as an expert or a spokesperson and what does this suggest about who and what has status and power in the discourse

The Political Effects of News Media

While the next chapter surveys the research on the political effects of the news media, some general comments about this topic are useful to this discussion.

Early American research into the political effects of news media in the 1940s and 1950s concluded that the media campaign had “minimal effect” on voters who primarily based their voting behaviour on previously aligned party identification (see Klapper, 1960 for a summary of this work). Likewise, Canadian studies up to as late as 1979, were unable to “detect any significant relationship between paying attention to campaign coverage and switching between the 1972 and the 1974 election” (Clark et al., 1979, p. 290). In later work, however the same authors admitted there was a potential for media and campaign influence (Clarke et al., 1984). Most media scholars and political scientists now recognize that the news media have some political significance. Exactly what kind of effects, how much, and why, all remain matters for debate. Some of this on-going debate can be attributed to the approach and methods used to explore media effects. For example, the “minimal effects” conclusions, from the early 1940 and 1946 studies by Lazarfeld and his colleagues (Lazarfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1948, 1968) were the result of researchers’ attempts to determine if the media persuaded their audience to vote a certain way. These researchers were looking for short term, direct and observable media effects during the period of an election campaign, and they concluded that the news media merely reinforced pre-existing opinions, but did not cause significant effects.

Few media researchers still subscribe to the “minimal effects” model, in part, due to the extensive and groundbreaking work of Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) and later Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder (1987). For example, Iyengar and Kinder conducted studies that correlated major media coverage of issues with general surveys of what Americans considered the most important issues facing the country. The authors found that when television repeatedly reported on one issue over a period of weeks, that issue became one that voters considered of high political importance. This was the case regardless of viewers’ rating of the issue on an “importance” scale.
prior to the news reports. Further, the ‘agenda setting’ effect was found even among respondents who had not themselves viewed the actual television news casts, indicating that the news media not only set the agenda for those who consume it, but also for the general population. The researchers concluded that the news media set the agenda of political discourse by focusing attention on some issues and away from others. In addition, later research by the same scholars (Iyengar, 1991; Iyengar & Reeves, 1997; McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, 1993) suggested that by setting the agenda for political discussions, television news also affected voters by influencing what topics and issues they considered when evaluating the political candidates and their parties – thus, “priming” them on how to vote. Agenda setting and priming studies have demonstrated that the news media are influential in “setting the agenda” and in “priming” voters, both during, and between elections. The evidence suggests that, while the news media may not directly tell voters who to vote for through a direct persuasive method, they do have a substantial influence on what problems are considered the most serious, and this, in turn, has the potential to effect their democratic decisions.

Canadian election studies have sometimes supported these findings. One of the most thorough studies of media effects in Canada was conducted by Johnston et al. (1992) in their analysis of the 1988 federal election. Using an extremely sophisticated method of media effects analysis they concluded:

What we know at this point is that an instrument designed specifically to be sensitive to campaign effects found them. This naturally raises the question: to what extent is this discipline’s slighting of campaign effects mainly the result of a failure to look for them? (Johnston et al., 1992, p. 253)

The news media have the greatest effect on voters when voters are paying attention. To be sure, both American and Canadian studies show that voters pay increasing attention to the news media during elections, likely because of a large decrease in party identification. For example, in the Ontario election of 1977, only 28% of respondents admitted they used the media as the basis for their voting decision – although more than two-thirds of them said they turned to the media to find out the main issues in the campaign (Fletcher & Everett, 1991). However, by 1988 a Macleans magazine poll, conducted by Decima Research, found that about 51% of respondents reported finding the media coverage helpful in their vote decision. The jump from 28% to over half of respondents looking to media to guide their voting decisions is supported by other studies as well, indicating that the news media play an increasingly important
role in the political and democratic process. Exactly what role they play to some extent depends on the perspective that is taken.

Role of the News Media in Politics

There are vigorous debates and differences of viewpoint within the academic literature on the role the news media play in political communications. Such questions include: the extent of the media's independence from (or subordination to) political and economic power; the influences which shape politically relevant news; the actual impact and functions of media within the political system; and the appropriate balance between free market and regulatory mechanisms in shaping the political communication system. Generally speaking, these on-going debates originally polarized into two competing perspectives: Liberal pluralism, and critical perspectives, but have developed some significant convergences and areas of agreement in the last two decades.

Liberal pluralism represents a long-standing view of how media operate in western liberal democracies. This view states that in such societies power is shared, or diffused among competing groups (or “elites”), with no one group dominating the public or political agenda. The very nature of this competition between groups—as exercised through mechanisms such as the marketplace, democratic elections and legislation—holds the potential for the abuse of power in check. The result is a plurality of power-centres and an accommodation between diverse interests, underwritten by a shared set of social values or a consensus regarding societal norms and authority. From this perspective, political power is observable and therefore containable. The media are viewed both as an arena where interest group contestation is played out, and as an institutional centre of power in their own right with their own interests.

Within liberal pluralism the relationship between the media, political parties and other sources of power and influence is seen as “variable and contingent” with each keeping the other roughly in balance. Elections, in this view, are seen as contests between the parties and the media, with each side in this contest having its own resources and arsenal (Hackett & Hissey, 1996, pp. 39-40). The media's weapons are said to include the access to mass audiences, the credibility and trust audiences have in

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18 This section draws substantially from material I had previously written as a monograph for a University course in Political Communications designed for university students in Ukraine. While the monograph was published in Ukrainian, it has not yet been published in English. See Cross and Hackett, 1999.
media, the ability to expose or moderate the politicians’ agenda, and the liberal philosophy of freedom of the press. A political party’s resources include the financial resources to buy media time and the opportunity for governments to undertake economic or judicial harassment of media. Liberal pluralism sees this as a “fair fight”.

Some liberal pluralist theorists conceptualize the media as serving a number of functions. This perspective is derived from a more general theory of functionalism. In its broadest application, functionalism claims to explain the existence of both institutions and practices in terms of the necessary functions they perform for both individuals and society. In this view, the media are theorized as, for example, contributing to the socialization of individuals and to the ordering of society. Functionalism sees media as both “self-directing” and “self-correcting” and having no particular ideological role of their own (McQuail, 1994, p. 78). Therefore, functionalism,

...suits pluralist and voluntarist conceptions of the fundamental mechanism of social life and has a conservative bias to the extent that the media are likely to be seen as a means of maintaining society as it is rather than as a source of major changes. (McQuail, 1994, p. 78)

However, it must be said that functionalism, at its most basic, employs circular logic, since it begins with the assumption that any institutional practice must serve some positive purpose to society or it wouldn’t exist. Nonetheless, the use of the concept of media functions persists because it serves to describe the relationship between media and society. Its continued usage underscores the need to make a distinction between manifest or latent functions of the media whose effect may be to reproduce social order (as suggested by functionalism) and the concept of media functions as a normative assumption (one regarding what the media’s function should be). Within the perspective of liberalism, then, three key roles are assigned to the news media: those of public watchdog, consumer representative, and information source.

**News Media as ‘Watchdogs’**

A large number of journalists believe their major role should be to investigate the claims made by government for accuracy and veracity. This role of a “watchdog” implies neutrality, independence and investigative activities as well as an interest in exercising public vigilance in relation to those with most power. Indeed, research shows that journalists tend to believe they should “look out for the interests of their audience, whom they claim to represent” (McQuail, 1994, p. 195). This, they argue, is clearly different
from having any kind of partisan advocacy. To reflect this watchdog role news journalists, especially those who cover politics, have taken a skeptical, if not cynical, stance with governments, challenging actions and casting doubt on many programs. Some commentators have suggested that the level of skepticism and cynicism inherent in the media’s coverage of politics is what the public wants from the “watchdogs”, implying they are merely representative of the public’s interest. Certainly, this watchdog function parallels the historical or formative role of media as defenders of free speech against authoritarian governments, and it anchors the related perspective that media must have complete independence from government in order to fulfill this goal successfully. The deregulation of broadcast media in many western countries, notably the USA, but increasingly in Britain and other western democracies (Curran, 1996a, p. 84) demonstrates, to some extent, the strength of this perspective. Public broadcasting has suffered from lessening support partly because of the belief that, notwithstanding its putative autonomy from government, it is nevertheless too subject to government influence to function as a public watchdog. This is a common refrain even where regulation, for example, seeks to ensure the right of citizen reply or diversity of access to the media. The primary requirement for media to fulfill the watchdog function, it is argued, is complete freedom from government interference and a healthy skepticism of those in power.

Yet, although skepticism may be appropriate for a watchdog, there are increasing concerns that the level of hostility found in the media towards the public process and politicians is not at all what the public wants. Journalist James Fallows (1996b) argues that the constant competition from the weekday trash-talk shows have led journalists to do “horrible things” without coming to an ethical analysis about their behaviour. While journalists justify their intrusiveness and excesses by claiming that they are the public’s representatives, asking the questions their fellow citizens would ask if they had the privilege, in fact, they ask questions that only their fellow political professionals care about. And they do so, states Fallows, “... with discourtesy and rancour that represents the public's views much less than they reflect the modern belief that being independent boils down to acting hostile...” (1996, p. 50). A journalist’s “natural instincts” is to present every issue as if its real meaning were political in the meanest and narrowest sense of that term with no analysis of the complex problems of public life. And Fallows suggests that the decreasing attention to thoughtful and incisive content (instead offering business
boosterism and political hostility) is the cause of the diminishing news audience, not the result of an attempt to woo audiences back.

Different from Fallows' view, some of the media's hostility has been linked to the fact that politicians and journalists are "locked into a competitive struggle to control the mass media agenda" -- that they are driven to develop their own tactics of control and to respond to the other side's attempts (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, p. 128). For example, politicians have responded to the increased pressure and criteria for rhetorical effectiveness imposed by television by creating public relations positions and spending resources on image and messaging advice. Journalists, on the other hand, have fought back from the overly scripted content by focusing on the process rather than the substance, to see politics as a game and to give inordinate amount of coverage to blunders and to manufactured scandals. Interestingly, when politicians are not overly scripted or polished they are publicly ridiculed by the press as lacking in savvy and good judgement. 19 Thus, we end up with an adversarial climate between denigrated politicians and frustrated journalists. What does this mean for the coverage of politics and of public policy issues?

It is often said that politicians invite whatever treatment they receive from the media when they become public figures. "They bring it on themselves", journalists may say, or "it comes with the territory." Academically, this increased visibility of the powerful has been linked to a media-caused transformation in the compression of time and space. For example, John Thompson suggests that there is a "changing relationship between media and power, part of the broader shift in the nature of the public sphere" (1994, p. 120). Thompson states that the very boundary between the public and the private has become a central debate in politics. The transformation of "publicness" --i.e.: the ground upon which we practice democratic communication-- has shifted to mediated communication that in turn creates an imperative to visibility. Politicians, argues Thompson, have "little choice but to submit to the law of compulsory visibility" (1994, p. 137). This may be true, but compulsory visibility appears to apply to only some forms of power and not to others. Some have argued that while those in the public sector have an increasing amount of hostile and intrusive reporting applied to them, the economic sector is powerful because of their ability to remain invisible to us. And this is

19 An example of this is demonstrated by the coverage of BC premier hopeful Bob Skelly during the 1987 provincial election campaign where, in one of his early press conferences, he stumbled over his speech. Clips of this damaging moment were prominent on television news through-out the length of the campaign.
problematic since the economic sector wields much more power over our lives and the state affairs than the state itself (Harvey, 1990).

James Curran (1996a) also critiqued the liberal pluralist conception of the public watchdog as a primary role of the news media. First, this role appears to apply to only one form of power—that of the state. Curran noted that in developed liberal democracies, other forms of power—notably that of corporations—have largely escaped critical scrutiny by the media, who themselves are primarily owned by corporate entities. This has also resulted in uncritical approaches to issues such as the concentration of ownership or the activities of media owners' other business interests. Curran argues that in this economic environment, the free market has in fact often compromised rather than guaranteed editorial integrity. The watchdog role must also face scrutiny, given the ability of such corporate entities to strategically support certain governments in order to further their corporate interests. Media corporations are not independent of the interests of power, but rather have extensive and vested interests in the support of market logic over other democratic values. Consequently, journalistic independence may be compromised by these factors and pressures. Curran concludes that the watchdog role may in fact be undermined, rather than enhanced, by a completely deregulated media sector.

**News Media as ‘Consumer Representative’**

The role of the news media is also viewed in traditional liberal thought as representing the wishes of the consumer. This consumer representation or consumer sovereignty thesis, claims that the basic content of the press is shaped primarily by the public through what people choose to read, listen to, or watch. If the media are too sensationalistic or trivial, the argument insists, it is because this is what media audiences want. When governed by market forces, media must reflect the views, values and wishes of the public; if they do not, they will be out of business. This way, the "invisible hand" of the free market ensures the citizen is well represented. Studies have found that this is a popular view of the media within media organizations themselves. For example, in a study of the shifting marketing and managing priorities in the press, Doug Underwood (1993) concluded that today's market-savvy newspapers are planned and packaged to give readers what they want, linking the changes to readership surveys and as a response to dropping readership. This "reader-driven" fixation is the centerpiece of
new marketing techniques. Yet, Underwood argues that there is little evidence that the focus on reader's preferences has improved readership. At the same time the standards and the ethics of the reporting has decreased. As well, the "consumer representative" theory of the news media ignores the fact that there are few choices available to the audience due to corporate concentration and monopolized market places. Some have noted how concentration of ownership forces media organizations to look for the common denominator in audience response driving them towards more entertainment-oriented information with simplified and decontextualized stories (Curran, 1996a).

As with the watchdog role, Curran (and others) have critiqued the assumptions of the consumer sovereignty perspective on the media. Notably, the extreme reduction in media diversity, audience choice and public control of the media content is a result of the rapid acceleration of corporate mergers and acquisitions since the 1960s, leading to an increase in local monopolies and chain ownership. This has "undermined the functioning of the market as a free and open contest, a level playing field in which all participants have an equal chance of success" (1996a, 93). Not only is there less diversity from which consumers may choose, but the high entry level costs to media production constrain the emergence of alternative choices. Further, critics claim, the consumer sovereignty position ignores how media content is shaped by numerous influences including advertisers, owners and the routines and structures of media organizations, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

**News Media as 'Educator'**

Another liberal perspective on the role of media in democracies sees the news media as a source of public information. The fact that so many voters look to the media for information about the election, the candidates, and to help them make their voting decisions, indicates that news media have substantial opportunity to educate the public and illuminate the political process. The news media, in this role, provide a forum for the dissemination of information, debate and self-expression in order to facilitate the formation of public opinion and the exercise of democratic speech. How successful the media are at accomplishing this important task is a point of departure between media scholars and media organizations. Theoretically, anyone who wishes to publish an opinion may do so, and all significant points of view are available through the "free market of ideas" provided by the various media organizations and products.
In reality, there are constant debates among media researchers, critics and journalists about the barriers to publishing diverse views on politics. The massive capital overhead of undertaking a publication or broadcast is prohibitive, and the "right of response" a reader/viewer has to news coverage is usually limited to trying to get onto the letters page. Thus, the educator role of media as it is presented by liberal pluralism does not distinguish between the legal right to voice an opinion and the economic opportunity to do so. Economic pressures, states Curran (1996b), degrade the information role of the media by forcing news organizations to seek the lowest common denominator for information, in order to reach the largest possible audience – a practice that underestimates the viewer and results in media products which are (among other characteristics) simplified, condensed, and decontextualized. It may be what the audience watches, but is it always what they (we) want?

**Emerging Liberal Views**

According to liberal pluralism one of the prerequisites for media to exercise all three of these roles is independence from the state. Indeed, winning this independence is globally accepted as a necessary step towards establishing democracy in formerly authoritarian countries. The transformation from political control of the press to a free market commercial system is heralded as implying more political independence and consumer control and should lead the news media to a higher degree of professionalism and internal pluralism. Liberal pluralism would argue that this shift invigorates the watchdog function of the media and establishes the media as a more credible source of information and public debate. However, critics of the liberal pluralist tradition argue that independence from the state does not necessarily translate into genuine independence, and the myth of a free press can obscure other forms of power and influence, such as the economic pressures on media organizations.

One important variant in the liberal tradition is what is commonly referred to as neo-liberalism, but what others have also called market-liberalism, neo-conservatism, or the "new-right". This extreme right-wing version of contemporary liberalism, which is characterized by a faith in markets and economic individualism over other classical liberal democratic traditions, has ascended to prominence since the ideological shifts of the 1980s. Its proponents believe that:
...liberalism has drifted too far left, that democracy has given too much power to bureaucrats and cultural elites, and that the state has intervened too much in promoting the social and economic equality and protecting the poor and the weak at the expense of the upper middle class. (Hackett and Zhao, 1998, p. 151)

The conservative shift in liberalism has informed much of the recent policy debates about media systems by advocating aggressive privatization and deregulation. Thus, the media pose a potential paradox for liberal thought, since they are both a business and, normatively, a public good. Indeed, liberal pluralism's assumptions about value consensus, its unwillingness to acknowledge that liberal democracies may contain fundamental power imbalances or group conflicts, and the way that it actively reinforces dominant political values, are the starting points for critical perspectives on the role of media.

**Critical Perspectives**

Contemporary critical perspectives are distinguished from liberal pluralism primarily by their view of power and the relations resulting from this view. Whereas liberal pluralists see power as observable, shared, and held in check through elite competition, critical theorists see power as hidden, concentrated, and dominating. The shift of media control from political to economic power is seen as merely a reconstitution of power, bringing with it a real risk to censorship or narrowing of democratic speech if market forces alone are left to govern the public good. Three of the roles assigned to the news media by critical perspectives have developed from this view of power. They are instrumentalism, structural determinism, and hegemony.

To understand the critical perspective, however, we must first understand the concept of ideology. Although the term "ideology" has often been used to represent a "world view" or a frame of reference through which we understand society around us, critical perspectives adopt a broader usage of the term, one that is fundamentally interested in relations of power. Ideology implies a relationship between *signification* (the production of meanings and symbolic representation) and power in societies where structural inequities exist (Hackett 1991, p. 75). The kind of meaning produced by ideology is illusory and represents "meaning in the service of power" (Thompson, 1990, p. 7). If we acknowledge, for example, that there is no "natural" meaning to an event but only different interpretations of its significance, ideology would be the practice of
constructing that interpretation so that it benefits those who are already the most powerful. To consider ideology in media studies, then, is to ask "to what extent media’s symbolic content systematically serves to further the interest and power of certain [dominant] groups" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 228). The perpetuation of a dominant ideology is a common concern in the following three critical perspectives on the role of the media.

**News as 'Instruments Of Power'**

*Instrumentalism* sees the media as more or less *instruments of the state* or of capital. With variations known as the *propaganda model* or the *ownership model*, this view looks at the way capitalists or the state use various forms of political and economic power to ensure that the content of media is consistent with class or dominant interests. A classic example is Herman and Chomsky’s "propaganda model" of American news which argues that the powerful are able to “fix” the discourse in order to manage public opinion (1988). In this view, the media are servants of the powerful, subordinated to the interests of dominant classes and acting as instruments of propaganda machines over the public. They “serve to mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity” (Herman & Chomsky 1988, p. 1) and thereby "manufacture consent." A “softer” version of instrumentalism sees the media as having “relative autonomy” from dominant interests; however, the elite still function as the primary definers of public discourse—setting the terms of public debate (Hall et al., 1978).

Instrumentalists warn against both elite-controlled governments and the increasing concentration of ownership and conglomeration, seeing these as a threat to diversity of cultural and political expression in the media.

Instrumentalism, especially in its more radical form, contains problematic assumptions about the amount of direct control exercised by owners over editors. The instrumentalists may be partly right. Government and business elites have a privileged access to the news, and the advertisers operate almost as licensers (if not censors) by supporting some media organizations and not others with advertising revenue. But the “elites” also operate within a contested terrain which, as Golding and Murdock state, “constrain as well as facilitate, imposing limits as well as offering opportunities” (1996, p. 15). There are a number of other problems with instrumentalism, two of which will be reviewed here (from Hackett, 1988). First, it assumes that the “media elite exercise real
discretionary control over media content” and that they use it deliberately to shape the news in accordance with the owner’s interests (Hackett, 1988, p. 85). However, studies have shown that direct editorial intervention by owners is uncommon (though not unheard of) and this approach does not adequately account for the existence of stories that are sometimes embarrassing to the business elite. Secondly, instrumentalism tends to view the audience as a “collection of dupes passively swallowing propaganda” without any recourse but to accept this media manipulation (Hackett, 1988, p. 87). Certainly, audiences who lack alternative sources and independent knowledge of a particular issue may indeed be pressured to adopt a certain political view; marketing is a profession based on the fundamental premise that media content influences people’s views and behaviours. But not all attempts at such manipulation are successful, nor is the audience incapable of oppositional readings or independent thought. A theory of the role of media must take these exceptions into account.

**News as ‘Structurally Limiting’**

*Structural determinism* goes beyond the rigidity of instrumentalism and looks at how media content is structurally determined through relatively impersonal influences such as economic constraints, market imperatives, the escalation of production costs, high levels of capitalization, high entry barriers, shifts towards corporate industrial control of media, and oligopolistic market dominance. Thus, the very logic of the market system and commercialization is analyzed as to its structural effect on media content and public discourse. As stated elsewhere,

...to focus on the commercial nature of the mass media draws our attention to the structural imperatives according to which they operate, rather than the (marginal) discretionary control over them which may be exercised by the media elite. (Hackett, 1988, p. 89)

Institutional structures have their own internal logic which participating actors themselves may not be fully aware. This logic is established through various and numerous routines, daily social relations, and interactions between the institutions and dominant conditions. Importantly, it is necessary to avoid a rigid form of *structural determinism* which views the structures of ownership and commercialization as permanent and immovable constraints. Rather, these structures need to be conceptualized as “dynamic forces” which are constantly being renegotiated and reproduced or altered through practical action (Golding & Murdock, 1996, p. 15). It is more useful to see these
structures as "mutually constituting," rather than as causal conspiracies of domination (Mosco, 1996). When seen in this less rigid way, structural determinism can provide a framework for viewing the impact of economic structural pressures on the political content of news discourse in ways that focus on the complex intersections, alliances and affinities among multiple sites of power.

**News as a ‘Hegemonic Institution’**

As noted above, structuralism and semiotics suggest that cultural meanings are socially produced, and therefore that these meanings are, to some extent, negotiated. The act of negotiation is also central to the concept of *hegemony*. This concept was developed by the Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci in the 1930s to describe the process by which dominant groups seek to "win consent" to continue to hold power by presenting dominant interests and ideology as universal or "common sense". This concept was intended to explain the way capitalist societies within liberal-democratic political systems maintain political stability, even though they are characterized by substantial inequalities and conflicting interests. Gramsci noted that no ruling class can establish stable long-term dominance through physical coercion alone; it must seek the consent to rule. This is done, he theorized, by translating dominant interests into universal ones; it entails the permeation, through society, of an entire system of values, attitudes and beliefs which in one way or another support the established order. Such permeation is never total and is not achieved through propaganda or falsehood; rather, it works by defining the ways we already live and view the world in a context that supports the dominant order, and marginalizes alternative views. In this perspective, neither the media nor the political system are closed – both are sites where meanings are contested in a struggle among classes to shape public consciousness. Through this struggle, power is translated into authority, an authority that appears to be exercised in the "general interest" by "neutral" agencies such as the state, the courts and the media. This way, the dominant interests become “naturalized” — regarded as natural and inevitable, and beyond history and politics.

There are advantages for using the concept of hegemonic ideology to analyze the news media and its relationship to political communication. First, this approach

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20 For more discussion on Gramsci and hegemony see Curran, Gurevitch & Woollacott, 1982; Eagleton, 1991; Gitlin, 1982; Hackett, 1991a; Hall, Lumley & McLennan, 1977; Sumner, 1979, and Thompson, 1990.
recognizes the power of symbolic content and the pivotal role of media in political life without subscribing to a propaganda model that sees the audience as passive. The audience in fact, may withhold consent by refusing to accept the preferred perspective being offered by the media. Thus, the concept of hegemony takes into account both consent and dissent. It recognizes the media as sites of struggle, which assists us in analyzing both media influences and media effects. Indeed, media discourse can be seen as neither neutral nor passive, but constructed by the influences of dominant power struggling to retain prominence. The concept of hegemony also recognizes that this struggle is not between equals, but between a dominant “power block” and the rest of the population. Importantly, it recognizes that not only do the elite have more power than the dominated classes/groups in a society, but also that the elite themselves are not a monolithic undifferentiated group. Hegemony implies not only ideological domination but also the creation of alliances between classes and fractions of classes to maintain a particular social strata. It implies the differentiation and negotiation within elites as well as the domination of elites over the dominated.

Finally, hegemony is never total or uncontested, nor is it deliberately produced by a conspiracy of the elites. Rather it is the result of a process engaged in by all cultural producers. From this perspective, then, the media in general, and political communication in particular, are seen as hegemonic institutions, primary sites of this struggle where the symbolic content of media is part of invisible—and usually successful—attempts to gain consent for domination. While the owners, editors, advertisers and politicians, may not have absolute control, they all are part of the negotiation for control of media, and in this process support the political and economic systems which sustain them.

Convergences and Areas of Agreement

Although liberal and critical traditions have been juxtaposed in this review, there have been areas of increasing convergence and agreement between the two perspectives. The rise of neo-liberalism since 1979 has inspired a reaction on the part of those liberals who are concerned with social well-being and humanistic individualism rather than property rights in the marketplace.21 In short, there has been a split within

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21 1979 is often seen as marking the beginning of the swing towards market-liberalism and away from reform or welfare due to Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party first coming to power in the UK.
the liberal tradition: social, humanistic and progressive liberals are warning of the dangers of excessive, unregulated capitalism—a task previously left to the critical perspective. Likewise, the increase in tabloidism, spectacle and popular forms of news media coverage have led to normative refinements within parts of the liberal tradition. Such concerns about media’s content and its effect on democracy have invited more subtle analyses of influences on the news and on the characterization of news discourse. The resulting focus on organizational routines and news values as “skewed toward powerful interests” (Curran, 1996b, p. 262) has replaced the emphasis on journalists’ individual autonomy in Liberal research. Similarly, there has been a “steady advance of pluralist themes” within the critical tradition, including a retreat from overly speculative meta-theories of society, the reconceptualizing of the audience as creative (rather than as easily manipulated) and a shift from a rigid concept of ideology to a “negotiated” model (Curran, 1996b). Cultural studies has succeeded, to some extent, in shifting the critical debate from one which was focused on the dominance of a ruling class to

...an alternative model which stresses the fissures and tensions within the dominant power bloc, and the wider context of ideological competition and resistance from below. (Curran, 1996b, p. 262)

Thus, as the logic of neo-liberalism filters into all aspects of the relationship between media and society, more progressive liberals and many critical theorists find themselves backed into a similar corner expressing concern for democratic principles. One notable example is the work on media effects and in particular the concepts of agenda setting and priming (outlined above). Originating in the US liberal tradition, these advancements have helped to recognize the media’s political significance and their methods have been used by both traditions of inquiry.

**News And ‘Bias’**

On another level, the debate about the role of the media has extended to the very question of “bias” itself. To make claims of bias is to also make assumptions about what is meant by both the concepts of bias, and its’ supposed opposite, objectivity. But both of these terms are problematic in media studies. The term “media bias” is most commonly used to refer to distortions in media representation which result from either a “deliberate prejudice” or an “unwitting neglect” of an issue or party (O’Sullivan et al., 1994, p. 29). In this view, bias is seen as the lack of balance or accuracy in news media
as the result of an individual journalist's political views, or as the result of a failure of the news product to accurately reflect the reality it seeks to represent. Some theorists define bias as a "consistent tendency to depart from the straight path of objectivity by deviating to the left or the right" - to favour one side or position over the other (Shoemaker & Reese, 1995, p. 42).

This notion has been extremely influential in public debates about the news media since it challenges the journalistic sense of professionalism and ethics. Allegations of media bias criticize reporting practices that proponents consider inaccurate, unbalanced, or unfair. The right-wing Fraser Institute, for example, published a monthly newsletter for a number of years that conducted content analysis research with the express purpose of exposing and influencing "left-leaning" media practices. Similar, albeit more sophisticated, research from the political left has concluded that media have a role in re-producing conservative views at the expense of alternative or progressive ones. For example, the Glasgow University Media Group critiqued the British media's coverage of labour news in the 1970s and 1980s and concluded that news reporting is organized to present the views of dominant group (Philo et al., 1976, 1980, and 1982). Media organizations and journalists note that since the criticism of bias originates from both conservative and progressive perspectives they must be achieving a form of balance. If "both sides are mad" then the media must have somehow found the middle ground. An absurd example of this journalistic defence can be found in Pedelty's account of a reporter who blatantly fabricated a story about El Salvadorian guerrillas (1995). "I suppose I did the right thing" the reporter is quoted as saying. "I received a huge number of letters from both sides that said I didn't have a clue what I was talking about" (p. 145). This is, of course, a patently ridiculous example of the otherwise common defence that criticisms "cancel each other out". Yet, as Karlberg and Hackett (1996) demonstrated the criticisms from different groups are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, the authors found that groups from all political perspectives shared criticisms of the news that were not found to be contradictory. Similarly, the criticisms from "both sides" may not have the same or as valid evidence or value. Nonetheless, journalists insist that bias is "in the eye of the beholder" and deem it to be a "psychological and cognitive state of the audience" rather than a valid evaluation of news content (Hackett & Zhao 1998, p. 89).
To avoid "bias calls", as Pinet (1987) calls them, news media have applied concepts such as objectivity, balance, fairness and accuracy through certain practices and techniques. The concept of "balance" is employed through the reportorial practices of quoting sources first from "one side" of the debate and then from the "other" and ostensibly giving each view equal weight. This practice rarely accommodates the multi-sided complexity of any debate, or analyzes the evidence of the various 'sides" for truth claims. Rather, the practice of 'balance' merely results in journalists repeating the claims of two polarized extremes. Giving equal balance to both sides without considering the veracity of either may meet the requirements of balance and objectivity, but is it accurate?

So far, this discussion of bias has been limited to what we can recognize as intentional acts. However, there is also another way to look at bias. In its most neutral term "bias' can merely mean an unintended but nonetheless built-in tendency towards certain results. For example, Harold Innis (1991) in his book The Bias of Communication (first published in 1957) looked at the effects of communication technologies, regardless of the intentions of its makers. Innis argued that empires were dominant either through space (such as Rome's expansive military reach) or through time (such as ancient Egypt's persistence over time) depending on their modes of communication. For example, writing favours time in that it can last over a number of years, while electronic communications favours space since it can be distributed over large areas but will not leave a lingering record. Thus, through their built-in biases toward time or space, new communications technologies could undermine existing power bases and support new ones. This view of the unintentional bias of technology concentrates on "the potential for (or bias towards) social change of a particular communication technology and to subordinate other variables" (McQuail, 1994, p. 85). Arguments regarding the inherent biases of certain technologies have inspired provocative polemics on the effects of television on political, cultural and social life. For example, Jerry Mander argues that "most mass media pre-determine their own ultimate use and effect" (1978, p. 13) and that one of television's pre-determining effect is that it diminishes the information people receive, encourages mass passivity, and is inherently anti-democratic. These effects, Mander argues, are not the result of the uses or commercialization of television, but are built into the very technology. Some have viewed this attention to media technology and its effects on content and audiences as
"media-centric" while others have more harshly referred to it as "technological
determinism".

How much unintended "bias" is in the technology and how much is in the use to
which the media technology is put? From the earliest moments of television, for
example, the medium has been utilized for commercial and marketing purposes. Thus,
some of what may be seen as being determined by technology may in fact be the results
of a commercial imperative on media organizations. What has become the conventional
formats and requirements of commercial media has been called "media logic" (Altheide
& Snow, 1979). This concept refers to the "influence of media ... on 'real world' events
themselves, as well as on their portrayal and constitution" (McQuail, 1994, p. 109). For
example, the formats used by media—such as organization, style and emphasis—have
a certain requirement for them to "work". This is reflected in the oft-used term by
journalists that a story "just makes good TV." Media logic also influences what political
parties do in order to "reach the people" and get media coverage during elections. They
package leaders and stage "media events" in order to "conform to the needs and
routines of mass media" (McQuail, 1994, p. 109). Thus, as well as some influence of
 technological biases (for time or space) we can also identify certain structural biases that
have constraining or enabling influences on content, if not implications for relations of
power.

Whether intentional or unintentional, there are a number of theoretical problems
with using the term "bias" when discussing media representations. First, concepts such
as bias, objectivity and balance can themselves be seen as "sites for struggle over
meaning and representational power" (McQuail, 1994, p. 405; see also, Hackett 1984;
Hall 1982). Ian Connell (1980) pointed this out in his review of the work of the Glasgow
University Media Group (GUMG) cited above. He argues that while the GUMG finds
examples of media bias against labour issues, this in no way substantiates there is a
lack of balance or impartiality. In fact, Connell says, the very fact of bias proves that a
particular world view has been successfully implanted as the basis of reality. Rather
than representing the dominant political group, it is the "very hegemonic process" which
perpetuates a particular view as one of "common sense" to both dominant and
subordinate groups, and this view is then accurately portrayed in the media. Due
impartiality, says Connell, is not absent, but present in the reporting, and indeed is the
very reason that hegemonic ideology is being perpetuated - the very practices through
which common sense notions are reproduced, rather than questioned. Consequently, rather than defining the agenda, Connell argues that TV news accurately reproduces the real political and ideological agenda already held in dominant discourse.

Connell's view is compelling. This dismissal of "due impartially" or objectivity as a worthy testing ground for uncovering bias or ideology is an important critique. Hackett and Zhao (1998) expand upon this view. The authors identify five different sites for what they theorize as the "regime of objectivity" (pp. 82 - 87). The first is a normative site of objectivity, that has both a cognitive dimension - which is concerned with accuracy, factualness and completeness - and an evaluative dimension which represents the detached, neutral and dispassionate notions of objectivity. The second, epistemological site, contains a set of assumptions about knowledge and reality that suggests media can reflect or mirror the real world. The third site for the regime of objectivity is based on certain practices, including reportorial, editorial and methodological practices which structure the news work. Fourthly, the authors identify objectivity as institutionalized in concrete social frameworks. And finally, objectivity is recognized as an ingredient in public discourse, one where audience criticisms of "bias" are "actually reinforcing objectivity as a benchmark against which news should be evaluated" (p. 86). Objectivity, and its opposite, "bias", can therefore be seen as polysemic – carrying multiple meanings and articulations across the news discourse. As its meanings and applications can shift, it can also expand to accommodate various contradictory notions and practices.

Indeed, the concept of bias itself assumes a basic positivist position by implying that representations reflect a pre-given "real world"- that there is some essential truth that can be reflected without bias. But the representation of an event is never the same as the event itself. There are discriminating decisions that are made every step of the way in constructing that representation, and for numerous reasons. In this view then, media representations cannot be without influence – are never without some kind of bias. There is no single universalizing neutral "truth", nor a purely accurate and unconstructed representation. As critical theorists argue, the practices, frameworks and assumptions – indeed the very epistemology of news work – is potentially constructed and structured in relations of power and ideology. "Simply by doing their jobs, journalists tend to serve the political and economic elite definitions of reality" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 12). To recognize this, however, is not necessarily to abandon the objective of truth-telling,
as some post-modernists have argued. 22 We may recognize bias as an inadequate, or rather an *incomplete* notion from which to judge media representations since it is constructed within a concept of objectivity that relies on a narrow positivist version of truth. Yet, I am not prepared to abandon a commitment to truth, or even a semblance of *objectivity*, as a worthy goal.

Hackett and Zhao (1994) suggest a solution to this modernist quandary, through the adoption of "critical realism" as a way to reject the either/or box of "objectivist journalism" vs. postmodernism. *Critical realism* affirms the existence of a real world that is both accessible and understandable while acknowledging that knowledge is socially constructed (p. 129). In this view, knowledge emerges as a result of the dialectic between subject and object, concept and reality. "Knowing" then is neither pure fact (positivist) nor pure concept (conventionalist). Critical realism provides an opening for a *valuation* of knowledge by suggesting that some socially produced knowledge is simply *better* than other socially produced knowledge (i.e., containing more evidence, better logical connections, deeper research, etc.) and that it is *self-reflexivity* that provides the basis for evaluating truth-claims.

This approach, according to Hackett and Zhao (1998), upholds the journalistic vocation of truth-telling while rejecting the surface notion of "objectivity" as exercised and conceptualized in the profession. It retains the "good impulse" of objectivity (p. 134). From this perspective, then, "truth" emerges in journalism by digging deeper and looking beyond appearances to causes and structures. It introduces a concept of objectivity which has an emphasis on self-reflexivity, investigative practices and the broadening of skepticism to challenge dominant values and power relations. From this view, then, the opposite of objectivity may not be 'intended bias' but rather a criticism of "shallowness" on the part of news media. It may even be a criticism which journalists themselves, faced with diminishing resources, may make. Similarly, one can use a concept of a "continuum of objectivity" (Lichtenberg, 1996, p. 235).

To accept the dominant view of *objectivity* as merely "balance" has had political consequences. But, so has rejection of objectivity altogether, as noted above. I agree

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22 Postmodernism has perhaps best been described as the "enlightenment's reflexive encounter with itself" (Dahlgren, 1995, p. 73) and, similarly, the logical result of a modernist critique of a rigid form of "high-modernism" (Harvey, 1990). While some postmodern theorists (e.g. Beauvirillard, 1995) abandon 'reality' for the 'virtual', it is only when postmodernism is primarily seen as a critique of modernism, rather than as a theory of its own, that it can provide important corrections and explorations into the concepts of truth and objectivity.
with retaining a revised, reconceptualized version of objectivity: one that is self-reflexive and critical. I would also argue for retaining a newly conceptualized version of bias as well. If we can divorce objectivity from its epistemological roots, create new practices and identify 'more truthful' versions of events, then perhaps we can create a new definition of bias as an intentional and unintentional failure to create "more truthful" versions of events. In this way, for example, shallowness of reporting may be theorized as the result of a structural commercial bias, more similar to the concepts introduced by Innis. Structural biases may indeed be theorized as ideological ones, when you consider their role in developing or maintaining unequal positions of power. But what I am most interested in here is how these various pressures and constraints result in a conventionalized form of content about political campaigns. Therefore, while I do not use the term bias often throughout this thesis, I have refused to abandon it altogether. I find it both useful in the positivist sense of checking for empirical differences, and in the more nuanced sense of noting the effects of structural frameworks and other factors on election news reporting.
CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXTUALIZING NEWS CONTENT

It has commonly been said that there are three ‘moments’ in a communication: the construction of the message, the content or message itself, and the reception of the message. Any content analysis study, such as this, runs the risk of looking at the manifest content of news in isolation of the construction of the message, or its potential reception. Chapter One provided some of the competing theoretical perspectives on the role of news in industrial societies, and reviewed the tradition of election research in Canada. Chapters Three, Four and Five and Six will offer an analysis of the patterns of news content in this case study. However, this analysis must be situated within the overall theoretical traditions of media research.

Thus, this chapter will review and analyze the overall context of news construction and reception. First, I will summarize the research on news determinants: What are the potential influences that create the content within which this study is based? What factors might have shaped these patterns in the first place? I will then review the potential impacts of news content and explore the following issues. Does it matter what the news tells us? Does the news effect voters? Does it impact political institutions? In order to grasp the impacts of news content, I will provide a historical and theoretical review of the research into media effects, finishing with the most recent and salient evidence regarding the effect of the news media on politics. This chapter will, ultimately, provide a context within which to view the empirically based results of the content and discourse analysis that follows.

**Constructed Content: Influences On The News**

How is the news constructed? What influences help to shape the focus and content of the information we rely on for our democratic decision-making? How do the news determinants help explain or situate the content patterns reported in the next four

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23 This section draws substantially from material I had previously written as a monograph for a University course in Political Communications designed for university students in Ukraine. See Cross and Hackett, 1999.
chapters? This section gives a summary of two ways to answer these questions. The first section looks at the traditions of intellectual inquiry into media determinants, and the second section reviews a useful model for analyzing the various levels of influences on the news content.

**Traditions Of Inquiry Into Influence**

To what extent do the media shape the messages they carry? The *passive transmitter* theory implies the media are a neutral "mirror of reality", merely reflecting the information that is presented with "objectivity" and "impartiality". Given the inherently selective nature of news selection and production, this view has been largely discredited. An alternative view sees the media as "active interveners" in the creation of content, moulding social reality as influenced by a number of factors. Although virtually all media theorists from both liberal and critical perspectives recognize that there are a number of influences on media content, the perceived level of intervention or construction varies among theorists and theoretical frameworks.

As outlined in Chapter One, a classic liberal pluralist view of the media sees it as autonomous from other institutional sources or power, able to pursue an "independent watchdog" role, and accountable to its audiences through the mechanisms of the market, the legal and regulatory frameworks, and journalists' own professionally held beliefs about their social responsibilities. As an autonomous system it is open to diverse viewpoints and, to some extent, reflects a public consensus. A conservative variation within this pluralist tradition sees the media themselves as one of the institutions of power, members of the pluralist elite, who adopt cynical and unnecessarily adversarial stances against other institutions of power such as government and business. Influences in news content, from a pluralist view, either result from legitimate consensus within society or from the biases of newswriters. The system works, although individuals within the system may not always live up to their professional responsibilities. Thus, liberalism adopts a view towards media influence that tends to de-emphasize structural issues in favour of individual influences. If some perspectives are not included in news content it is either because they are beyond society's consensus and do not require attention, or because they are the result of individual failures in the systems.

The dominant critique of biased content in the 1980s comes from a right-wing perception of "left-liberal bias", or an "adversarial culture" on the part of journalists. This
theme remains current in popular conceptions of the media, especially with the rise of market liberalism as a dominant ideology (see Chapter One). Few actual academic studies supported the theory that journalists' personal and political views affected the nature of the coverage, (though for exceptions see Lichter, Rothman & Lichter, 1986) and they were critiqued for certain unsupported assumptions -- that journalists have coherent political views, that they have personal control over the content of the news product, and that they use that content to present their own views, regardless of the countervailing pressure of professional responsibility (Epstein, 1974; Gans, 1985). Other studies, in fact, showed otherwise. For example, a cluster of respected studies in the late 1970s and early 1980s looked at the effects of professional, organizational and structural codes of newswork and conclude that the personal and political beliefs of journalists were virtually irrelevant to content (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1980; Fishman, 1980). As the research began to shift away from issues of individual influence and towards the structures of media systems, critical academic perspectives began to see the mass media not as merely reinforcing the dominant consensus, but having an active part in uniting and maintaining societal consent to the existing order.

The view of news as structurally determined inspired further research on the organizations which influence the news. Within the organizational model, participant observation studies of newsworkers were conducted to determine the effect of their routines and practices (Altheide, 1976; Epstein, 1974). As well, other studies focused on the technological, economic and political structures. Technology was viewed as a key influence of the news content by nature of its inherent biases towards certain kinds of content. For example, research on the visual bias of television suggesting that what makes “good TV” is often based on its narrative values and visual emphasis rather than its relative importance to society (Weaver, 1972). Arguably, although both organizational and technological explanations of news content provided important insights, neither of these two approaches adequately considered political economic discussions of television as a mass product, and the ideological and political influences on organizations themselves.

Consequently, another stream of research in the critical tradition – that of political economy – contextualizes the structural influences of media content by looking at issues of the concentration of ownership, the impact of most media's profit orientation, and the commercial imperative of attracting audiences whose attention is then sold to
advertisers. Some of the research in this stream, for example, has considered the effect ownership has on media content. It looks at the "media elite" -- the owners and senior managers -- as members of a class who have ideological affinity to the existing arrangements of power. Press barons (such as Rupert Murdoch in Britain and Conrad Black in Canada) are seen as exercising control over content and presenting mainly conservative views in their papers. Although this approach may be seen as a focus on individuals, it conceptualizes the media elite as individuals only within a structured system of domination and class interest. (See for example, Clement, 1975; Clement & Williams, 1989; Winter, 1997; Parenti, 1986).

Other work has looked at the general impact of commercialization on news content. Dallas Smythe (1981) argues that since the commercial orientation of news media is to produce audiences for advertisers, then the content itself is little more than a "free lunch" used to fill in the spaces between the advertisements. Further, this content has to be constructed in such a way as to attract the kind of audience the advertiser prefers. Generally, advertisers are interested in two different kinds of audiences: a large mass audience whose purchasing power may be individually small but combined represents a substantial market, and affluent audiences who can be smaller in number since their purchasing power is greater. A resulting two-tiered approach to media content divides the "popular" and "serious" media content. Consequently, news may be reluctant to introduce truly controversial topics which may alienate groups within a mass audience, or to offend the generally politically conservative affluent audience.

These commercial constraints suggest that the market can act as a form of unwitting but nevertheless effective structural censorship. The market imperative denies access to certain views and privileges others, resulting in a systemic pressure against political or economic diversity in the media systems. Consequently the commercial media system has structural barriers to radical or progressive views making up the content (McChesney, 1999). The media defenders sometimes suggest that the commercial imperative ensures that audiences get what they want, as the "consumer sovereignty" position outlined in Chapter One above. However, research has shown that media content is clearly influenced by economic realities other than audience preferences, including oligopoly in media industries, conglomerate ownership, and the influence of advertising on content (Curran, 1996a).
Another critical tradition and "structural" explanation of news content is less concerned with economic constraints and more with other institutions of power. This stream suggests that rather than reflecting a variety of perspectives, the media reflect the world views of "primary definers", those of institutional authority such as politicians, bureaucrats, economic leaders, and others linked to institutional power. This theory does not hold that the media offer only a single opinion on public issues; to the contrary, debate and controversy fill the news. Rather, the theory argues that institutional elites define the nature of the issue, the definitions of reality, and the range of acceptable options which together establish the terms of the debate. For example, the American debates as to whether or not to intervene during the Viet Nam war were characterized by "hawks" (those who were aggressive) and "doves" (those who were less so). Although a vigorous debate ensued over the costs and benefits of intervention both camps shared assumptions that communism was always "bad" and that American motives were always "well intended". Likewise, the terms of most political debates are mapped and the issues are framed in ways that broadly share the assumptions of elite groups. The example of the limits to the media discourse about tax cuts in this election news, as will be outlined in Chapter Six, is another example of where the interests of the wealthy and business elite were preferred. This hierarchy of credibility offers certain definitions of social reality which originate from political and institutional elites. In this view, then, the media act as 'secondary definers", translating the discourse of such elites into a popular idiom (Hall et al., 1978).

Another important stream of research and theory in the critical tradition looks at news as an ideological discourse. In this view ideology is embedded in the very standards and practices of news – in notions of professionalism, news values and "objectivity". As outlined briefly in Chapter One, the concept of ideology implies a relationship between signification (representation, the production of meaning) and power. The term is used here not to simply represent a "world view" but rather to recognize how media help to establish and maintain relations of power. As John Thompson (1990) states:

Ideology, broadly speaking, is meaning in the service of power. Hence the study of ideology requires us to investigate the ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms of various kinds.... to investigate the social contexts within which symbolic forms are employed. (p. 7)
The concept of a discourse entails that news content has a set of codes and practices, categories and concepts, that are not merely neutral or descriptive in nature but imply certain evaluative meanings. Discourses contain their own "preferred meanings" and cultural references; they assume a particular audience, and maintain an internal logic within a political and economic context. The internal logic of news discourse suggests that news cannot merely be manipulated by owners or journalists or powerful sources, but has developed its own structural logic, institutional traditions and routine professional practices. Suggesting that news is an ideological discourse is to suggest that news discourse tends to legitimate or reproduce unequal power relations in liberal democracies – but that it does so through its own routine and conventions, more than as a product of explicit intervention from media owners or other elites.

Two prominent lines of research in this area have looked at news values as ideological codes, and the concepts of objectivity as ideological practice. Hartley (1982), for example, considered how the criteria of news values, which guide the selection and construction of news content, are embedded with ideological assumptions about what is important, who is a legitimate source, and how the social world operates (pp. 81-83). The news works to maintain these assumptions, to act as hegemonic institutions. Importantly, the criteria of newsworthiness results not from the political or personal biases of journalists, but from the very professional standards of objectivity and professionalism by which the media judge themselves. Nonetheless, these news values have inscribed certain social relations of power and inequality, emphasize celebrations of and threats to dominant values and institutions, prefer the actions and statements of dominant leaders, and routinely marginalize less powerful groups and viewpoints. Thus, news values can be considered part of the ideological code.

Similarly, the concept of objectivity has been the focus of critical inquiry (Hackett & Zhao, 1998). Objectivity, as practised in news media, follows standardized news-gathering routines and forms of presentations such as a politically neutral stance, a requirement for balance (often represented by quotes from "both sides" of an issues), the use of appropriate sources (the official spokespersons of institutions, or an eyewitness), and the requirement to cover only what can be observed (Bennett, 1988). However, it is argued, these practices themselves are constructed to meet certain ideological and practical requirements of the news organization. News, for example, situates its audience as consumers, taxpayers, and political spectators, rather than
citizens. It assumes audiences are passive, if not detached, from political activities. The ideological practices of objectivity as well as impartiality, helps to shape the content of news, which in turn accomplish this positioning. This research tradition suggests that ideology is an overarching influence on news content and, at the same time that news content works to maintain that ideology.

Levels of Influence

Another way of viewing news content is to consider the different levels of potential influence. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) suggest a useful model of five concentric circles of influence from which to analyze news content; 1) Individual, 2) media routines, 3) organizational, 4) extra-media, and 5) ideological. By beginning with influences at the most individual, direct and observable level and scanning outward towards the more general, indirect and hidden levels, this model allows us to review both the overlaps between these levels and, more importantly, the way in which each level of influence is affected by those that surround it. Although these levels are reviewed as discreet and separate influences for the purposes of this analysis, it is clear that the reality is far more complex than this, with aspects of a number of influences crossing these categories or defying simple explanations. Nonetheless, this is valuable tool for delineating the various levels of influence on media content.

As well as providing a way of recognizing the different levels affecting media content an analysis of these influences also brings into the spotlight issues of power relations. Not all of these influences have equal weight on news content, as the review above has indicated-- some are contested and others are clearly dominant. It is important in this analysis to consider the relations of power between the levels of influence and consider which ones are more effective or dominant.

Individual level

The first level of influence focuses on the thousands of reporters, writers, editors and newscasters who actually deliver or write media news content. This level of analysis looks at the intrinsic characteristics of media workers, such as their race, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status. As well, it can include influences related to their acquired values and beliefs, such as their educational level, political and religious views, and their journalistic training and role conceptions. As noted above, some media
researchers have studied the attitudes, values and belief systems of reporters or journalists and considered what impact this may have on content. In their book *The Media Elite*, Lichter et al. (1986) surveyed American journalists in the 1970s and found them, on the whole, to have "liberal" (rather than "conservative") views. The authors' conclusion (that the result was media had a left-liberal bias) encouraged conservatives to create pressure groups to alter this bias. Contrariwise, liberal and left-wing groups have accused the media, as part of the power elite, of subscribing to the conservative views of the dominant political and economic interests. Many of these complaints are directed at the beleaguered media worker.

As noted above, however, studies have shown that although the individual views of journalists may affect some stories, on the whole, journalists' impact is restricted by other pressures. Most prominent of these other pressures are the "professional roles" and ethical frameworks of media workers. These characteristics of journalists are shaped on the job, and as such are internalized socialization of journalists primarily learned by observation and on the job recognition of what is expected (Breed, 1960; Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987). Shoemaker and Reese conclude in their review that there is "no direct influence of communicators' characteristics, background, and experiences on media content, but that content may be affected to the extent that such factors influences both personal and professional attitudes and roles" (1996, p. 102).

**Media routine level**

Research on news organizations suggests that the influence of journalists as individuals is largely contained by the *news gathering practices* that they routinely employ to produce news. News gathering routines can be viewed as a set of organizational maps as to what constitutes a good journalistic practice. These are occupational limits, based on both professional codes, as noted above, and the organizational needs of a commercial media system with deadlines, limited resources, and sets of practices which allow a reporter to maintain a certain degree of autonomy while working within accepted standards.

One example of a news routine is the regular deployment of reporters to certain institutions or themes, called "beats". Gaye Tuchman (1978) referred to this deployment as a "news net" to metaphorically represent the way in which news organizations send out reporters to gather certain kinds of information from some kinds of sources and not others, thereby creating a particular collection of stories. For example, most large
newspapers in North America have a political reporter, a crime reporter and a business reporter. However, few these days have a labour reporter. Even at this initial stage of news selection, the deployment of a limited resource (reporters) creates a hierarchy of potential news stories; the "news net" is much more likely to "capture" some kinds of stories that others. In an election, having reporters who are familiar with the strategic "cut and thrust" of a campaign tour, but not with policy issues or governing debates, is an example of the limits placed on news content by journalistic routines.

Similarly the use of certain institutional sources over others is another aspect of the media routine. These external sources can be seen to dictate routines for media organizations (Shoemaker & Reese 1996, p. 127). For example, organizations which can afford to hire public relations professionals as convenient and articulate spokespeople (demonstrated in this case study by the Fraser Institute or labour organizations) will generally have an advantage in media access. The use of government sources, police, the courts, political parties and other "official sources" results in news content consisting largely of statement from these official sources, and in some cases replies from equally official oppositional sources. Experts are another increasingly important component of the news source routine. Research has studied how the choice of expert featured on television news casts act as "news shapers", are presented as objective and non-partisan, and yet have largely conservative views representing a narrow elite groups (Soley, 1992). More relevant for this study was the choice of experts whose expertise was on the campaign strategy and advertisements, rather than the election issues.

In addition to experts, officials and institutions, the news media also routinely rely on each other for material, content and sources. In a process known as "pack journalism", and indicating the competitive market environment of news organizations, media carefully monitor each others' coverage, looking for consistency with other news organizations, ensuring that they are not substantially out of step, explaining, to some extent, the similarity in both language and framing from the four television stations in this case.

Indeed, news values themselves, are a routine process in media selection and representation (Galtung & Ruge, 1981). A news value can be understood as the criterion by which decisions are made that something is newsworthy. News values are crucial to understanding both how events are selected to be covered, and the way in
which these events are reported on. In other words, news values influence both the selection and the construction of a story. Importantly, however, the concept of news values are merely descriptive of these criterion; they do not explain why they exist. For such an analysis we need to consider the broader levels of influence on news content, since news values themselves are products of such influences. As well, it is important to note that different news media emphasize different news values, with distinctions made between popular or tabloid media and “serious” news products, or between popular and business news, or televisions newscasts and current affairs talk shows.

All of these routines help to create a hierarchy of criteria for what “makes” a news story, and effect the “production of symbolic content” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 137). They help news organizations to function smoothly in a potentially chaotic environment of unpredictable and infinitely numbered. They categorize, organize and limit the production of news, act as a gatekeeper to the plethora of information, and allow reporters and editors to meet publishing or broadcast deadlines and economic constraints.

Organizational level

News is also the product of organizations which have institutional imperatives and structures. The range of organizational influences may include elements such as the organizational practices indicated by the concept of professionalism, to the more apparent effect of certain ownership structures. At this level of analysis researchers ask questions such as “How are organizations structured, how do they differ? How is authority exercised within this, and what difference does it make to media content?” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 134). Here we can look at internal structures, markets, ownership and policies. Professionalism, for example, serves the organizational interests by reaffirming the institutional processes in which newswork is embedded. The increasing concentration of ownership in media organizations, has influenced the organizational structure of many media organizations through changes such as smaller newsrooms, an emphasis on a commercial or business focus, and less local news. Organizational issues are those that cannot be explained by media routines, and in some cases may run counter to news values and media routines.

This level of analysis broadens the focus from daily routines to the hierarchies and decision making flows in news organizations, the different (and sometimes conflicting) roles of media workers, and the explicit and implicit policies accompanying
this division of labour. It may also consider certain labour practices, for if journalists are increasingly overburdened and under-resourced (as is the case in many countries) than the news relies more on wire services, syndicated columns and institutional sources and less on investigative journalism and local contacts.

Research into the effect of the concentration of ownership and monopolies for example have been a focus of this level of influence. Major media barons such as Rupert Murdoch in the UK and Conrad Black in Canada have come under scrutiny, and have explicitly indicated at times their intent to influence the content of the newspapers they own by providing more conservative views. Research on media organizations owner by corporate conglomerates suggests that the news is unlikely to be critical of parent or sister companies; moreover, conglomerates tend to cross-promote their own products in different parts of their media empires (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 145; see also Bagdikian, 1990). But even where not directly linked to other companies, researchers have noted that media companies are inextricably bound to local economies and therefore tend to promote growth (Molotoch, 1976; Underwood, 1993). Their own business orientation and reliance on advertising income has also affected their content, as noted above. By appealing to the broadest possible audience for the sake of advertising revenue they set an organizational structure in place that constrains content. These and other economic constraints have been the subject of much of the political economy research as outlined above.

Extra-media level

Media organizations themselves do not simply invent the news as a result of routines and structural imperatives. Rather, they act within the social fabric of shared contexts and meaning. One of the most obvious influences from outside of the media organization itself is that of political parties and governments. In addition to the extensive use of government and elite party representatives as sources for the news, political agencies engage in conscious attempts to influence the news agenda. Indeed, since politicians have few unmediated channels of political communications open to them, political parties and governments sink enormous resources into communicating their messages through the use of both “bought” media (advertising, pamphlets, etc.) and “earned” media (news stories and editorials). All major political parties and governments are involved in active campaigns to manage the media, including the
extensive use of public opinion polling and communications professionals who advise on
everything from the development of "messaging" to appearance on television.

Governments and political parties considered these activities justified for various
reasons. They may consider the media environment as one which they have inherited
and must work within the news values identified above in order to successfully deliver
information or their message to the general public. Some consider the media too
adversarial to government generally or their party in particular. By contrast, others
charge that media are too close to corporate culture, or that because they are a
business, they are far more interested in sensational news and scandals than in policy
issues. Regardless, it is clear that all governments consider some form of media
relations or management a necessary requirement of politics in order to have some
influence on the content of new stories -- a reality which at least qualifies their role as
"primary definer" discussed above. As will be noted in Chapter Four, the period of an
election campaign may qualify this role even more.

Another major extra-media influence is that of advertisers, as described above.
Since they are the primary source of profit for commercial media, they often exercise
influence over content, if not directly, then through a kind of market censorship by buying
advertising in some media organizations and not others. Other extra-media influences
include the legal and legislative context within which media organizations function, the
impacts of technological advances, and the role of non-government lobby groups and
organizations, from corporate public relations firms to non-profit citizens groups. All of
these areas have been fertile ground for media studies.

Idealistical level

From the review of influences thus far we can see that the act of making news is
the act of constructing a symbolic reality, rather than reflecting a pre-existing reality.
This constructed reality exhibits certain assumptions about the world-- about what exists,
what is important, what is good or bad, what is related to what, what is a threat or a
problem. These assumptions are not neutral, but rather are related to cultural power
which is unevenly distributed. That is why research into this level of influence has
resulted in work on ideological concepts such as objectivity, professionalism and
impartiality (Hackett & Zhao 1998; Hallin, 1996). Such interests have resulted in
semiotic readings of how the news "interpellates" or addresses its assumed audience
(Hartley, 1982) and how it structures "preferred readings" (Hall, 1977). Research has
argued that one of the ideological roles of media is to show what is “deviant”, to map the limits of acceptability (Ericson et al., 1987). And some media theorists have suggested that the media serve as a method of “social control” (Hall et al. 1978).

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) note that moving to an examination of this level of influence necessarily requires a shift from a liberal to a critical perspective (p. 223). By focusing on the larger culture rather than discreet components, theories of ideological influence are thus implicated with theories of society as a whole. The media's ability to “define” a situation, to provide frames of reference, to map the possible interpretations, are all linked to its symbolic and discursive power to hold some views and values within the sphere of acceptability and others outside. Certainly the work from critical perspectives looking at all levels of influence include ideology as a component. In particular, and as reviewed in Chapter One, it is the concept of hegemony which often forms the basis of news media's ideological power in these studies. Ideology is not imposed deliberately or directly as an alien imposition on an unwitting audience. Rather, ideology works through the hegemonic process of winning consent for particular definitions of social reality, which then become part of shared “common sense”.

**Summary**

This very brief review of the research into influences on news content has demonstrated that a number of interconnecting and mutually constituting pressures come to bear on the practices of political journalism. The research has indicated that of the various influences, however, some levels of influence are more influential than others. For example, influences on journalistic routines, such as professional norms, source strategies, "entertainment" values, and the "regime of objectivity" all effect how the reporter practices his or her occupation. In addition, larger structural limitations, such commercial pressures, advertiser preferences, and the dominance of market liberalism provide compelling broader explanations for news content.

**Media Effects and Media ‘Effectivity’**

But why does media content matter? What effect could it have for the functioning of democratic elections. In short, there are two major reasons to care about the findings in this study. The first is because there is credible evidence that a large number of voters increasingly make their electoral decision during election campaigns. Thus, there
is a potential for the campaign itself to affect the voting decisions. But that is only if the media have any effect on voters. This is the second reason to care about these findings. News media can and does have an influence on audiences in general, and thus has political significance for voters. To understand the nature of the media effect requires a review of media effects research.

A Short History of Media Effects Research

During elections, a large amount of attention is focused on the news media, possibly more than at any other time except that of disasters. A 1977 study found that two-thirds of the voters turned to media to find out the main issues in the campaign, and 88% said they looked to media coverage to evaluate the leaders (Fletcher & Everett, 1991). A 1988 Decima poll found that 51% of voters contend that the news media coverage is helpful in their vote decisions. More recently, studies have demonstrated how the news media have become the primary source of information about politics, and television has become the primary media source for elections. Elections “draw viewers like a magnet”, increase advertising revenue, and create an aura of respectability and importance for the news organization that it then uses to market its news products (Attallah, 2004, p. 286). For example, Attallah (2004) reported that the CBC’s coverage of the 2004 election drew so many viewers that it was second only to the popular talent show “Canadian Idol”. The fact that elections are a time when citizens turn to the news media for information is without debate.

How television covers elections, therefore, could theoretically have an influence on the public. But does it? Decades of media effects research and theories have examined this question. Blumler and Gurevitch (1982) identified three phases to the historical development of research into media effects. In the first phase, roughly estimated to take place between 1920 and 1940, the research was dominated by the belief that the media had the power to shape and manipulate mass society through propaganda. The second phase, from approximately 1940 to 1960, can be characterized by the predominant view that the mass media had minimal effects on the political subject, except perhaps to reinforce existing beliefs. The third phase began in the 1960s when media research began to reconsider the minimal effects theory based on changes in the political, media and academic environments. Importantly, each model of media effects was accompanied by a specific model of the political subject. For example, before the work on media effects became a central point of study, political theorists
conceptualized the role and actions of the political subject in a democracy as that of a rational citizen. However, this concept underwent shifts and changes, which I have outlined below, as moving from a rational citizen model, to an irrational citizen model, to various reasoning citizen models. The final shift outlined below moves the debate from one of media effects per se, to one of media effectivity. I will review each of these phases of research in turn.

The ‘Rational Citizen’ Model

According to early 19th century democratic theory, democracy could only be successful if voting citizens acquired sufficient information and sophistication to exercise the responsibilities of citizenship and withstand manipulation. The concept of a “rational citizen” deeply committed to the ideals of democracy was used as both a reason for the extension of the franchise and a reason to restrict it. Alexis de Tocqueville, for example, promoted the “supercitizen model” of the rational voter as embodied in the community town hall meetings and civic spirit of 19th century America (Dalton, 1996, p. 15). However, other elites in Europe, pointing to the French Revolution and the success of authoritarian governments in Germany, expressed skepticism as to the “rational” capabilities of the “common man”. Thus, as Quaitor (1985) notes, the growth of support for liberal democracy inspired two competing concerns: the first was how to make governments express the will of the people; the second was how to prevent the will of the people from subverting government. As the normative concept of the rational citizen gained prominence, the concerns of those who feared the “mass mob” were, to some extent, quelled by movements towards public education.

“Rationality” as a normative principle had other effects on the concept of the political subject as well. Herbst (1993) argues that the increasing reliance on the concept of rationality is linked to the authority of instrumental reason as both a way to improve the overall state of the nation and to quantify and consequently manage public opinion (p. 9). She uses Max Weber’s work on rationality to show the emergence of positivist methodology in sociology in the 19th century and the subsequent stifling of aspects of the political subject which were not quantifiable. Thus, we can see the application of the concept of rationality shift from the individual’s responsibility to the responsibility of institutions for the purpose of social control. However, this new form of
rationality and positivism did not take firm hold until the second phase of the media effects research outlined below. The first phase was dominated by the propaganda model.

The 'Propaganda Model' and the 'Irrational Citizen'

From roughly 1900 to 1940, research was focused on the propaganda role of the mass media (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1982). This, the authors outline, was due to a variety of reasons. Theorists were concerned that war propaganda and the spectacle of fascism appeared to have had massive effects on the attitudes and behaviours of large populations in Europe. Additionally, this concern coincided with decades of speculation about the impacts of industrialization on community and social cohesion leaving mass society vulnerable to manipulation by the growing mass media. Stuart Hall (1982) describes how Marxist theorists in the Frankfurt school represented the culmination of mass society theory pessimism during this phase of media effects research. The methodology of these theorists was primarily philosophical and speculative, and was focused on how the media had the potential to manipulate citizens.

Liberal theorists, such as Walter Lippmann (1949) echoed this pessimistic view of the political subject's ability for rational thought, albeit without the critical analysis of capitalism or concern for dominance. Lippmann argued that people were ill-equipped to make crucial decisions and thus had to be managed by rational “elites” who had superior access to information and superior reasoning ability. While the mass media were largely responsible for the “pictures in our heads” – helped along by our own narrow self-interests and stereotypes – Lippmann argued they should not be blamed for this manipulation. In his view, the media should not be expected to supply truth since they rely on non-scientific selection and reporting methods (p. 216). This pessimistic view of the political subject was reinforced by positivist research into public opinion, culminating in a landmark study by Campbell, Converse, Stokes and Miller (1960) entitled The American Voter, which noted that the electorate was stunningly uninformed about the most basic political information and was unable to make even the simplest of rational judgements (Dalton 1996, p. 18). Thus, even though the media did not overtly manipulate citizens, they did provide the dominant “pictures in our heads” and citizens

24 First published in 1922.
were too irrational to negotiate the validity of these pictures, and thus could not be relied on to make informed decisions.

'Minimal Effects Model' and the 'Reasoning Voter'

The years from 1940 to approximately 1960 mark the prominence of the minimal effects theory of media. This period of research was characterized by the theoretical dominance of liberal pluralism and a "consensus model" of society, as well as increased sophistication in the empirical and positivist methodology of sociological opinion surveys. It was also accompanied by the emergence of a new concept of the political subject – that of a voter who was able to negotiate between competing information, however limited, and make a reasoned decision.

The shift in the model of media effects was instigated by the increased use of public opinion surveys, beginning in the 1940s. For example, Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, in their groundbreaking work *The People's Choice* (1948) used surveys of voters and found that voter preference changed very little as a result of election campaigns and the media. Moreover, they found that party preference was one of the more stable reasons for this minimal effect, and that media messages were attended to selectively by respondents. Another major study, done by Klapper (1960) of the Columbia School, culminated years of research into the effects of "media bias" on people's political preferences and concluded that: 1) citizens are not sufficiently attentive to be affected, 2) conflicting and intermittent messages tend to cancel out one another, 3) individual level processes - selective attention and retention based on pre-existing political predispositions - tend to distort media messages and hence nullify their effects, and, 4) any message that does leak through to the individual has been processed through patterns of social interaction and communication. In other words, voters generally didn't pay attention. When they *did* pay attention they received conflicting messages that tended to cancel each other out. If messages were *not* cancelled out, they were filtered through pre-existing party preferences and social interactions to primarily reinforce existing preferences. Within this view, then, most voters were seen as typically partisan, with stable political preferences over their lifetimes that were generally consistent with their social and familial circles. Thus, the prevailing belief was that most

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25 As summarized in Goodin and Klingemann, 1999, p. 239.
voters’ minds were “closed” prior to elections and that election campaigns were primarily about activating partisan loyalties, not persuading voters to change their preferences. Although researchers did recognize that some voters were “floaters”, not particularly attached or loyal to a partisan preference, these voters tended to have less political information and less interest in seeking out political information, and thus remained relatively immune to persuasion campaigns in the media (Blumler & Gurevitch 1982, p. 245).

Moreover, this research suggested that voters were not irrational, as earlier research had suggested, but used what resources they had available to make their electoral choices. Even if they were handicapped by lack of knowledge and political sophistication, voters drew on various ways of “reasoning”, such as party affiliation, in order to make their political decisions. Other research into the “reasoning voter” drew on the work of Anthony Downs who suggested an essentially economic cost/benefits model of political behaviour (Goodin & Klingemann, 1999, pp. 225-253; also see Popkin, 1991, pp. 13-15). Named the “political economy model” in political science texts, this model suggested that since the costs associated with collecting political information were far higher than the potential “benefits” expected from the act of voting (measured primarily in terms of direct self-interest) the most rational choice for a voter to make would be to abstain. In order to explain why “rational abstention” was not the common behaviour, various studies in social psychology examined at the heuristic shortcuts voters take to lessen the ‘expense’ of political information gathering, and the various methods voters use to make ‘reasonable’ (vs. ‘rational’) deductions about their preferences (Dalton, 1993; Goodin & Klingemann, 1999; Popkin, 1991). For example, Popkin (1991) uses the term “low-information rationality” to describe the way voters make “reasoning” choices without acquiring information about the issues. He discusses the value and importance of these shortcuts as “gut rationality” and argues that the lack of media discussion about issues in elections is not, in itself, a problem for democracy, since voters “neither have nor desire” more “textbook” information about their candidates or societal issues (p. 219). Such a view was recently echoed by Pippa Norris (2000) who argued that people’s information needs should be evaluated not in terms of abstract political information, but in a contextual relation to the issues at hand.
The results of this “reasoning voter” concept, still prevalent in political science research today, left liberal researchers comfortable in the knowledge that to a large extent voters made political decisions relatively free from overt media manipulation and that elections reflected the “will of the people”. The minimal effects model of media’s influence on the voter has been dominant in many of the Canadian election studies as well (see, for example, Attallah, 2004; Frizzell & Pammett, 1994, 1997; Frizzell & Westall, 1985, 1989; Pammett & Dornan, 2001, 2004). Comments from a study of the 1984 Canadian federal election are typical:

During a national election, relatively few Canadians are actively engaged in the campaign and thereby have firsthand information about candidates and politics. The vast majority rely on the news media for facts and opinions, and even when they receive information from family or friends, the original source may well have been the media. It is reasonable to assume therefore that the way in which the media report an election campaign will have some influence on people’s voting decisions and thus on the result. But the key phrase here is “some influence”. Voters may also be influenced by family tradition, regional preferences, group loyalties, political advertising, direct mail propaganda and other factors. The impact of media coverage on a campaign must vary from voter to voter and in many cases it may be filtered and used to confirm prior judgement; in other words, contrary evidence is reinterpreted or simply ignored by the voter. (Frizzell & Westell, 1985, p. 55)

Consequently, this view suggests, the media have some, but relatively minimal, influence on voters:

**Agenda-setting, Priming and Framing.**

A split occurred in media research in the 1960s when challenges to minimal effects theory came from both within the positivist tradition and from critical perspectives. Blumler and Gurevitch (1982) define this as the third phase of media effects research and suggest this “new mood” was reflected in changes in the political, media and academic environments. The political environment of the era was characterized by shifting party loyalties, the rise of “independents” lacking in any party loyalties, and the emergence of grassroots social movements and issue politics. The media environment was affected by the growing concentration of media ownership and the prominence of television as the prime source of information about politics and elections. Indeed, the authors suggest that television had helped “to restructure the audience for political communications in ways that are at odds with the reinforcement thesis” (p. 247).
Within the academic environment a number of changes were occurring. For example, experimental methods, more sophisticated statistical applications, and qualitative ethnomethodology approaches shifted the focus of research within the positivist stream. Gamson (1992) for example, used a series of focus group and in-depth interviews to ascertain how people reach the opinions they do and the role of the media in their deliberations. As a consequence, he rejected both the minimal effects model and Lippmann's pessimism about public opinion and suggested that "a) people are not so passive, b) people are not so dumb, and c) people negotiate with media messages in complicated ways that vary from issues to issue" (Gamson, 1992, p. 4).

Gamson found that the media effect on opinions depended on the personal and experiential knowledge the individual had on the topic. If participants had little direct knowledge, the media effects were more likely to be "substantial" and media frames dramatically influenced the way participants discussed an issue. If they had extensive personal experiences, the respondents were relatively immune to media effects, although they did use information from media to elaborate on their views.

While positivist media studies developed more accurate instruments for studying media effects, academics were also becoming less interested with the persuasion potential of the media and more interested in the cognitions of the audience -- the creation of meaning suggested by social-constructionist theories. Thus, because quantitative research of the time was primarily concerned with measuring short term changes in political preferences during election campaigns, most quantitative research was criticized as ignoring long-term constructions of political beliefs and attitudes, and the overall definition of political issues themselves.

One of the most important streams of contemporary work on media effects within the positivist tradition originated with a study by McCombs and Shaw in 1972 on the media's role in agenda setting (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Iyengar & Reeves, 1997; McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 1993). This study on the United States' 1968 election set the stage for a series of studies conducted on media effects on "setting the agenda" in voter's minds and other indirect and subtle media effects. Agenda setting, is a "theory about the transference of salience, both the salience of objects and the salience of attributes" (McCombs & Shaw 1993, p. 62), and salience is the "degree to which an issue on the agenda is perceived as relatively important" by the audience (Iyengar &
Reeves, 1997, 228). Using content analysis, surveys and qualitative interviews, the authors found that the frequency with which an issue was covered in the media affected the importance the audience attached to this issue. Thus, the media agenda influenced the priorities of the public. Similarly designed studies in Canada have found similar results. (Others have been more cautious about such causal links. See McQuail, 1994). A review of 1974, 1979 and 1980 elections in Canada found that the “public perceptions of the most important issues in election campaigns are closely related to the agenda of discussion set by the news media (Clarke et al. 1984, p. 84). 26

Iyengar and Kinder took the findings on agenda setting one step further in their 1987 book News that Matters, which introduced the concept of priming. The authors conducted studies that correlated major media coverage of issues with general surveys of what Americans considered the most important issues facing the country. When television repeatedly reported on one issue over a period of weeks, voters considered that issue one of the most important, regardless of where the issue was on the “importance” scale prior to the news reports. They showed that “even modest amounts” of television news coverage elevated the salience of an issue in the minds of the voters. Moreover, they found that the media attention had the effect of “priming” citizens to make evaluative decisions about their political leaders. The themes most frequently highlighted by the television news casts (e.g: leadership, fiscal responsibility) were adopted by the audience as the criteria by which they judged political candidates when making political decisions, such as voting. The authors concluded that while the news media may not directly tell voters who to vote for, through direct and persuasive methods, they do have a substantial influence on what problems are considered the most serious by focusing attention on some issues and not others. Similar findings were found over a number of studies conducted by the authors and their researchers. Importantly, this finding was also still statistically relevant even when respondents had not viewed the actual television news casts, but had heard about them through colleagues and family members. The researchers concluded that the news media set the agenda of political discourse.

Canadian election studies have also supported these findings. One of the most thorough study of media effects in a Canadian election was done by Johnston et al.

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26 Although, to be fair, the authors then went on to argue that it was the politicians who set the media agenda, a contention that did not hold true in this case study.
(1992) on the 1988 federal election. Using a sophisticated method of media effects analysis, they concluded:

What we know at this point is that an instrument designed specifically to be sensitive to campaign effects found them. This naturally raises the question: to what extent is this discipline’s slighting of campaign effects mainly the result of failure to look for them? (Johnston et al. 1993, p. 253)

Lyengar and his colleagues continued their substantial work by conducting a series of experiments and surveys to look at the effect of *news framing* on audiences (Lyengar, 1991). As opposed to agenda setting and priming concepts, both of which are based on the measurement of indirect effects based on the frequency of an issue in the news, framing studies examine the “type” of coverage an issue receives. A frame is defined as a “question of slant, structure, emphasis, selection, word choice and context” which draws upon a pattern of association and cognitive activation which already exists in the viewer’s/reader’s habitual way of thinking (Capella & Jamieson, 1997, p. 57).

Lyengar and Reeves (1997) make the distinction between “episodic” and “thematic” frames and notes that the way the media frames a policy issue affects the attributions of responsibility for these problems. For example, episodic frames of poverty (i.e. those depicting illustrations of specific instances) resulted in viewer’s finding the individual at fault, while thematic frames (i.e., those which provide essentially a background report on the issues) result in the viewer more likely to find larger societal factors responsible for poverty (Lyengar & Reeves, 1997, p. 214). Another framing study by Cappella and Jamieson (1997) supported the work of Lyengar and suggested that *strategic frames* in the news resulted in an increase of cynicism and a demobilizing of citizens. Strategic frames included media coverage on the “horse-race” aspect of an election where politicians’ actions are seen only as self-interested and conflict is emphasized (1997, p. 4).

Numerous other studies have been conducted into media framing, priming and agenda-setting, and most communications and media scholars accept the results as evidence of media effects. Consequently, evidence from the positivist tradition of media effects research has yielded important and credible findings as the research questions broadened beyond direct effects on voter decisions, and the measuring instruments became more sophisticated.

27 See for example McCombs, Shaw and Weaver, 1997; Mendelson, 1993; and Soroka, 2002.
Media Effectivity and the 'Political Public'

The third phase of media studies was also characterized by challenges from outside the positivist tradition. Stuart Hall (1982) defines this period as a return of the "critical paradigm" primarily based in Europe and emerging from both the political unrest of the 1960s and the internal contradiction of liberal pluralism. As noted in Chapter One, critical perspectives challenged media effects research on both theoretical and methodological grounds. For example, while liberal pluralism considered elections a "meaningful contest between genuine alternatives" and therefore a legitimate focus of study, critical theorists from the Marxist traditions saw elections as predominantly meaningless exercises between dominant groups (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1982, p. 238). Further, focusing on the "individual" as the unit of study was criticized as resulting in research which ignored the structural components of domination and the larger ideological role of news media in maintaining existing relations of power. And issues such as ownership and the political economy of media structures were ignored altogether.

Hall (1982) outlines how this third phase drew on the theoretical traditions of structuralism, the Gramscian notion of hegemony, and the shift from the concept of "consensus" to "consent" in order to explain how the media reproduce dominant ideologies. Some of the most influential work in this field came from or was strongly influenced by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham headed by Hall. It includes Stuart Hall’s important and influential essay on developing an audience reception theory, "Encoding/Decoding" (1980), which introduced at least two important notions for this discussion of media’s influence. The first was the concept of how a range of social meaning and power relations is encoded into the media text and subsequently decoded by the audience. And secondly, that there were at least three ways that these codes could be "read" or decoded by the audience: 1) they may accept the dominant meaning as "written into" the text, 2) they may negotiate meaning by accepting the majority of the dominant code but quibble with the details or specifics of this text, or 3) they may adopt a globally oppositional reading of the text based on alternative information or position in society. Thus, while a ‘preferred meaning might be

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embedded in a text, and indeed be the dominant interpretation by most in the audience, what was encoded was not necessarily decoded.

Another important concept from this period was the preference for the term *media effectivity* to replace the more narrow concept of *media effects*, and as a way to broaden the role and influence of media beyond what was direct and measurable causality. As Fiske put it:

Television does not "cause" identifiable effects in individuals; it does, however, work ideologically to promote and prefer certain meanings of the world, to circulate some meanings rather than others, and to serve some social interests better than others. This ideological work may be more or less effective, according to many social factors, but it is always there, and we need to think of it in terms of its effectivity in society at large, not of its effects upon specific individuals or groups. "Effectivity" is a socio-ideological term, "effect" an individual-behavioristic one. (Fiske 1987, p. 20)

Indeed, the concept of *effectivity* has had lasting appeal in studies of political communications. For example, Hackett (1991a) applied the concept for his work on media and the peace movement in Canada and Gertrude Robinson (1998) adopted the term in her book about the Quebec Referendum and the media in order to “explore the political power of the media” without assuming that “the relationships being considered are linear and immediate and that they refer only to directly observable and measurable relationships” (p. 4).

Interestingly, the shift away from looking for direct short-term and measurable effects, and towards broader and longer term *effectivity* also paved the way for the emergence of reception studies in cultural theory, demonstrated by the empirical work of David Morley (1980, 1992) and the more theoretical work of John Fiske (1987). As Dahlgren (1988) notes, these studies have suggested that: 1) reception makes a difference -- people do make different sense of the same media text/television program; 2) that interpretations are socially patterned, and do not merely express individual differences; 3) the sense people make of TV news is socially bound, based in ‘sub-cultures’ rather than purely in class; 4) reception is an ongoing process of negotiating because meaning never achieves final stability (p. 290). However, while active audience theories were a welcome advance on how we respond to media texts, some overly ambitious attempts to "rehabilitate" the audience have also been met with criticism from within the critical stream. Seaman (1992), for example, criticizes Fiske and
Morely's search for "oppositional" readings in mainstream cultural texts as ignoring whether in fact such definitions transform (or have the potential to transform) oppressive relationships. In their attempt to rehabilitate the audience as actively involved in the construction of meaning, Seaman argues, they have reverted to "pointless populism" which rationalizes rather than explains audience practices.

Outside of the focus on the ideological function of media, other critiques of media effects research from critical perspectives questioned the positivist methods and the assumptions inherent within them, not the least of which was the use of quantitative rationality as a method of control and power. As noted above, Herbst (1993) outlined how the concept of public opinion is a social construction, and the history of the definition of what constitutes public opinion has shifted from being relatively unstructured and public to one that is increasingly structured and private in nature (p. 61). She has argued that the more structure that is imposed on what defines "public opinion", the more public expression is inhibited. Public opinion, presently defined as an aggregate of private views, is not necessarily the best or most accurate record of public views. And to some extent, researchers from liberal pluralist traditions have agreed. For example, Elkins (1993) and Gamson (1992) have both noted that while public opinion surveys may indicate low levels of political understanding, other research methods have shown otherwise, indicating that the method of inferring "public opinion" from the sum of individual opinions is not the most accurate or even the most ethical form of measurement.

Summary

Importantly, explorations into the theories of media impacts recognize that media effects are complex and contradictory. As noted in the previous section, this complexity may arise due to varying influences on media content, for example the tension between media as "entertainment" and media as a source of information, or it may be, as noted above, as a result of different audience receptions. Nevertheless, what this survey of media effects research suggests for this case study is that while conclusions about the political effects of media on voters are complex, they are not insignificant. Few contemporary media researchers from the positivist or cognitive streams of academics believe the media have "minimal effects" anymore, largely because of the work of Iyengar and Kinder (1987) and subsequent research on agenda setting, priming and
framing effects. The questions to be answered must focus, then, are not if the news media has an effect, but what effects, when, and under what conditions. While this dissertation does not provide empirical evidence of the effect of this specific media content, nor the influences on the construction of content, the next four chapters provides a detailed analysis of the actual content found in this case study of election news.
CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS – ELECTION TOPICS

In this chapter, the first of the chapters to review the findings of a content analysis of election news, I analyze the amount of election coverage, and the topics that dominated the election stories in the case study. Thus, the beginning of this content analysis was designed to answer the following questions: 1) How much attention did the provincial election generate in British Columbia television news? and 2) What were the election stories about?

Using the method of content analysis to review the amount of news and news topics in the election reports allows this case study to add to the previous content analysis research on Canadian elections. In order to facilitate a comparative analysis, the method and categories were, to some extent, conducted to parallel previous election studies in Canada. Unfortunately, because no systematic and academic study that reviews the news coverage of a previous BC provincial election has been published, comparisons can be made only with national election coverage. In fact, the research published in English that has analysed the media coverage of any provincial election campaign consists of one from the 1962 Ontario election (Qualtor & Mackirdy, 1964), and a review of the relationship between the media and political parties during Quebec elections from 1945-1990 (Charron, 1991). Consequently, this study not only provides the first systematic and comprehensive data on television news coverage of a British Columbian election, it also offers much needed communications research about any provincial election, both within BC and in other provinces in Canada.

The data used for this case study came from four television networks airing regular provincial news reports in British Columbia at the time of the 2001 election (April 17 – May 16, 2001): BCTV, CBC, Global, and VTV. The 6 o'clock p.m. news hour program of all four networks was video-taped from the day before the election call until
the final campaign day of the election -- for a total of 29 days of newscasts. In total, 102 broadcasts were video-taped in the 29 day period, 27 from BCTV, 28 from Global, 29 from VTV and 18 from CBC. There were 341 election stories or "units" in the 102 broadcasts used in the corpus. The lengths of newscasts were timed, and coders determined the primary and secondary topics for each story unit with the help of a coding protocol and training sessions. Inter-coder reliability for topics was 92%. (See Appendix A for more detail on methodology).

Amount of Coverage

Previous election-news studies have used a calculation of the amount of time and/or space spent on a news topic as an indication of the depth, and to some extent the quality of the news coverage (Clarke et al., 1979, 1984; Dornan, 1997; Fletcher, 1975, 1984, 1991a; Fletcher & Everett 1991: Graber, 1991; Johnston et al., 1992; Pammett & Dornan, 2001; Semetko, 1991). This is based on the assumption that the greater the amount of coverage allotted to the election campaign, the more thorough the information disseminated to voters. I have adopted this assumption in this study and calculated the amount of news coverage in the television reports in two ways. First, the length of each story unit was measured, and second, the number of stories was calculated.

Length of Stories

The first measurement conducted to determine the amount of attention devoted to the election was one of length. The question posed here is: How long were the election stories and how much time in total was spent covering the election? For the purposes of this study I have adopted the assumption of previous election researchers, that "the amount of time accorded to a news story is a reflection of the importance of that story in the opinion of those who put together newscasts" (Soderlund, Romanow, Briggs & Wagenberg, 1984, p. 63).

29 Technical difficulties resulted in some data being unavailable for this study. One broadcast was unavailable from Global (April 17), and two from BCTV (May 9 & May 15). Of the 22 potential broadcasts from CBC (they did not run 6 p.m. newscasts on weekends) three were unavailable. Thus, the total number of CBC broadcasts used for this data was nineteen. And finally, technical difficulty also resulted in taping of the 11 p.m. newscast rather than the 6 p.m. broadcast on VTV (May 9). The data in this study, then, represents most, but not all of the television news casts during the election. Because of this, care was taken in making overall volume assumptions and per-station conclusions.
Background

Print news is limited by space. In other words, the amount of space available for the news is often based on the number and size of advertisements that have been sold, in that as advertising increases the length of a newspaper, so does the ratio of news stories. Early content analysis studies of Canadian federal elections indicated that the amount of coverage in the major print dailies devoted to the election ranged from 7-9% of the “news hole” (Frizzell & Westall 1985, 1989). Further, a comparison of the number of newspaper stories for four federal elections (1984, 1988, 1993 and 2000) found that the quantity of election coverage had dropped steadily over the years, with one noted exception. The 2000 federal election was the first federal election where the trend of decreasing number of election stories was reversed. The authors suggested that this reversal was due to the introduction of a new national newspaper competing with the long standing Globe and Mail (the National Post). In 2000, the amount of coverage of the election in both the Post and the Globe was significantly greater than that in any newspaper during the previous election. The researchers suggested that this anomaly was due to the increased competition in national news. The “federal election became an occasion for both the Post and the Globe to showcase their attention to national affairs” (Dornan & Pyman, 2001, p. 203). Prior to this increased competition, however, the Globe’s number of election stories had dropped from 812 in 1984 to 484 in 1993, and the authors found this trend across the board.

To state the obvious, while print media stories are limited by space, television news is limited by time. Within a one hour newscast a network provides not only news stories but must make time for advertisements, sports, weather, and often lighter profiles near the end of the newscast. Television is often referred to as “headline news” only, since the small amount of information that can be squeezed in the television “news hole” restricts the length of stories. Graber’s (1991) summary of studies of US election reporting on television found that the usual election story was 60 – 120 seconds in length. In addition, Graber found that in an election year the major US television networks (ABC, NBC, CBS) devoted about 15% of their news time to election stories, similar to the 13% of election news stories in the “elite” print media, such as the New

30 In these studies British Columbia was concluded to have less overall coverage of news of the election in the print media compared to other provinces, using data from the Vancouver Sun in the 1980s. Indeed, one study supported the “western alienation” narrative by suggesting that “British Columbia (like Quebec) is often thought of as a far-away land wrapped up in its own concerns, and this finds support in the data”. (Frizzell & Westall, 1985, p. 59).
York Times. The percentage of overall news reports about elections was also about the same as that devoted to crime stories.

More recently, the 2005 Annual Report on the State of Media, published by the American Journalism Association (AJA), noted that the amount of election coverage in television news is about 9% of the overall time devoted to news in a newscast (AJA, 2005). The front page of newspapers also devoted the same amount (9%) to election news, commented the authors, however newspapers provided a higher proportion of election coverage within their inside pages. In addition, the AJA noted that the very length of the total television “news hole” in a thirty minute local evening newscast had dropped from an average of 21 minutes in 1988 to 18.6 minutes in 2004. The reduction in the television news hole was due to the increase in the broadcast time devoted to advertisements. In Canadian studies, the results are similar. A study of the 1993 Canadian election found that CTV’s evening news slot, after commercials, was about 24 minutes out of the hour (Frizzell, Pammet & Westall, 1994). Consequently, even if the percentage of election coverage has remained constant in Canada over those years, the actual amount of real time devoted to any election has reduced due to the shrinking television news hole. In addition, the overall length of news stories has dropped. “Quick and dirty in a minute thirty” is an oft repeated refrain among television news journalists, reports media researcher David Taras, who notes anecdotally that the average 90 second story amounts to about 150 to 250 words if translated into a print story (1990, p. 102). More empirically based data from the AJA study reports that the average story is now 2:18 minutes, significantly shorter than it has been in the past (2005). Clearly, the amount of information that can be shared in that short of a time is limited. But how do the data of this case study of the BC election of 2001 compare with the previous research?

Results

My research on the 2001 B.C. election indicates that the average length of a story about the election was 151 seconds long (2 minutes and 31 seconds) with a standard deviation of 81, indicating that the typical story was between 70 seconds and 232 seconds long (1 minute 10 seconds and 3 minutes 52 seconds – or approximately between 1 and 4 minutes). There was a greater frequency of stories under one minute than stories over four minutes. Figure 3-1, below, shows the shape of the data set, with the number of stories shown on the y axis and the length of stories, in seconds, on the x
axis. In addition, Figure 3-2 below, offers a visual indication of the differences in the length of each election story unit by each television station.
Figure 3-1: Length of News Stories (in seconds)

Mean = 151.13
Std. Dev. = 80.999
N = 341

Figure 3-2: Election story lengths (scatter chart)

Length of Stories by Station

Station Key: 1 = BCTV, 2 = CBC, 3 = Global, 4 = VTV
The scatter chart (Figure 3-2) indicates the occurrence of a story length in seconds by representing it with a small square. The more concentrated the occurrences in a story length the darker the visual representation. It is possible to see both the general concentration of lengths of stories on the four networks, as well as the occurrence of lengths of stories for each station. For example, BCTV had the highest frequency of stories within the 115 to 300 second lengths, but only two stories over 300 seconds (or 5 minutes). In contrast, CBC had a higher overall range of story lengths, and more stories longer than 5 minutes.

The total time from all stations devoted to the election, once it was called (i.e.: not including the coded newscasts for the day before the election call), was 14 hours, 32 minutes and 33 seconds (or 51,536 seconds). This number was then broken down by station and by week. The totals are provided in the following Table 3-1. For the CBC, data were collected for only 17 days of the potential 20 days of their broadcasts (there was no weekend 6 p.m. news show). The total amount of time devoted to the election in these broadcasts was almost 4 hours (3:56:19) but when divided by the overall number of days CBC provided almost 14 minutes of election news per broadcast (13 minutes and 54 seconds on average). This was a significantly larger amount of time, on average, than BCTV, VTV or Global. For BCTV, data was collected for 26 of the 28 potential days, totaling 4 hours, 17 minutes and 51 seconds of news time devoted to the election, or an average of almost 10 minutes (9:55 minutes) of election news items for every day of broadcast. VTV was the second to lowest in amount of time per broadcast with an average of 7 minutes and 35 seconds per broadcast devoted to the election and Global was far behind the rest with an average of only four and a half minutes (4:38) devoted to the election. Consequently, while the overall average of time devoted to the election news stories between all four stations was just over 9 minutes (9:02) the range between the stations ranged widely from a low of 4:38 minutes (VTV) to a high of 13:54 minutes (CBC).
Table 3-1: Total Election News Stories & Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BCTV</th>
<th>CBC</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>VTV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Days</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Stories</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (min)</td>
<td>89:17</td>
<td>80:09</td>
<td>39:04</td>
<td>62:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Time per day</td>
<td>12:45</td>
<td>16:02</td>
<td>5:35</td>
<td>8:51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Days</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Stories</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (min)</td>
<td>61:47</td>
<td>69:51</td>
<td>30:34</td>
<td>46:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Time per day</td>
<td>8:50</td>
<td>13:58</td>
<td>4:22</td>
<td>6:34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Days</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Stories</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (min)</td>
<td>67:13</td>
<td>46:17</td>
<td>25:49</td>
<td>51:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Time per day</td>
<td>9:36</td>
<td>11:34</td>
<td>3:41</td>
<td>7:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Days</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Stories</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (min)</td>
<td>39:34</td>
<td>40:02</td>
<td>34:10</td>
<td>54:41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Time per day</td>
<td>7:55</td>
<td>13:21</td>
<td>4:53</td>
<td>7:49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Days</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Stories</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (min)</td>
<td>4:17:51</td>
<td>3:56:19</td>
<td>2:09:37</td>
<td>3:34:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. Time per day</td>
<td>9:55</td>
<td>13:54</td>
<td>4:38</td>
<td>7:39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: In the above chart, "Days" refers to the number of days of broadcast data available for each network. "Stories" refers to the number of stories by the network. "Time" refers to the total amount of time of every story coded, and "Av. Time" refers to the average amount of time (in minutes) given to each story, calculated by dividing the total time by the number of days of newscast data.

In addition, Figure 3-3 plots the data onto a daily graph showing the amount in minutes of coverage each station devoted to the election. 31

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31 Only those days were data from all four stations was included in this graph. Weekends (April 21, & 22, 28 & 29, May 5 & 6 and 12 & 13) were excluded from the graph since the CBC did not broadcast a 6p.m. news show on weekends. In addition, days where data was missing (CBC - May 4, 9 & 15 and BCTV May 9 and 15) were also excluded.
The amount of time devoted to the election during the week can be compared amongst the networks, with the CBC most often providing the longest amount of election coverage, and Global's news consistently devoting the lowest amount of time in their broadcast to the election.

**Election Topics**

**Background**

A summary of studies of election news coverage in Canadian elections of 1979, 1980 and 1984 found a significant trend over the years towards stories that represented the horse race or process of election campaigns rather than party policies, platforms, or straightforward reporting about the issues of concern to the public (Soderlund et al., 1984). This trend was found in television news even more than in print or even radio news.

In the electronic media, where news reporting tends to be very limited in length, reporters and editors are more likely to respond to the dramatic elements of the electoral process than to the "humdrum" of fact-oriented debate. (Soderlund et al., 1984, p. 31).

Another study of Canadian newspapers’ coverage of the federal elections from 1984 to 2000 found that while the campaign/process stories were as high as 74% in 1984, they had dropped to 49% in the 2000 federal election (Dornan & Pyman, 2001).
of the different elections was used by the authors to partially explain the changes in the type of coverage. 32

Nonetheless, as the following table from that study shows, the newspaper data indicated a trend away from process/campaign stories over the years and towards more emphasis on stories about policy issues.

Table 3-2: Election Coverage Story Type (Newspapers- 1984-2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issues</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Of the studies on television news, content analysis data was available for only three elections (1979, 1980, 1988) and Table 3-3 indicates the results of those studies.

Table 3-3: Story Type in National Election Coverage (Television)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1979 (1)</th>
<th>1979 (2)</th>
<th>1980 (1)</th>
<th>1988 (3)</th>
<th>1988 (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issues</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Soderlund et al., 1984. Study included CBC French and English, Global, and CTV. Percentages are based on averages of all stations. Campaign stories included leaders evaluations, strategies and activities, television debates, polls.
2. Wilson 1980. Based on average of CBC and CTV. Issue based stories include all issue analysis, including editorials on issues, and any descriptive reports of statements and attacks. Campaign stories included horserace stories, descriptive stories on campaign activities, and miscellaneous descriptive stories.
4. Johnson et al., 1989, CBC only.

While the Soderlund et al. (1984) study showed that issue stories dominated the election news in 1979 (68% of the stories), the results of the Wilson (1980) study of the same election were almost reversed, with almost 40% of the stories about the issues, and 60% about the campaign. The apparent contradiction between the findings of these two studies of the same election obviously indicates differences in the methodology, coding process, or categorization of issues stories between the two studies, and therefore illustrates the "subjectivity" inherent in content analysis design, as discussed in Chapter

32 In 1984 a major campaign topic was "leadership" due to Liberal challenger John Turner's perceived problems within the Liberal party. In contrast, a dominant story in 2000 was the alleged plans on the part of conservative Alliance leader Stockwell Day's to "Americanize" Canadian health and economic systems.
One. Wilson's study, for example, undertook a much more detailed textual analysis of the content than did Soderlund and his colleagues, and found far fewer stories that discussed issues than did the latter. Wilson showed that stories that provided any type of analytical or editorial discussion of policy issues, compared party policies, examined their records, gave the reaction of experts, considered implications of issues or outlined experiences with policy issues in other jurisdictions accounted for only 6.1% of the number of stories. All other stories included in the category of "issues" in Table 3-2 were descriptive reports of statements by politicians, which could be coded as additional issue stories. Thus, content analysis studies of news media are clearly dependent on the initial categories developed and the methods used. Comparisons between studies, then, are most meaningful when they are between studies with the same methodology.

Nonetheless, even Soderlund and his colleagues noted that the percentage of issue stories dropped from a high of 68% in their study to 47% in the 1988 election. Stories that were coded about the campaign by Soderlund et al. included ones on the political process, polls, leader's tours and debates within the party. Stories that were coded about the campaign in the Wilson study included descriptive reports on campaign activity, horserace stories, and "miscellaneous descriptive stories". Another content analysis of the same election found that the CBC campaign coverage had a higher number of policy issues than the network average, at 54% (Johnston et al., 1992).

In addition to the Canadian research, studies on international news reports of elections have found some differences between countries. In a comparison of the 1983 British federal election with the 1984 US presidential election, researchers found that the US major television networks (ABC, CBS and NBC) focused only 20% of their stories on substantive or policy issues, while the British television networks offered 32 – 35% (Semetko, 1991). The study further concluded that British television news on the election was "more ample, more varied, more substantive... and more respectful" than its US counterparts, who were "more terse and concentrated", more "concerned with standing in the opinion polls" and more likely to be disrespectful (pp. 49-50). A later study into US election reports on the major US networks found that, on average, television devoted about 40% of its stories on issues, vs. 60% on campaign stories (Graber, 1991). Clearly these studies are hampered by inconsistent definitions of issue type and campaign type stories. Still, most researchers have agreed that television coverage of policy issues is "spotty" and many issues are neglected altogether.
Of the campaign topics, Canadian studies have consistently found that the majority of campaign related stories focus on the leader and his or her activities, often structured around daily "pseudo events". A 1991 survey of all Canadian election studies found that the "lead items on television newscasts... generally derive from leadership tours" (Fletcher & Everett, 1991, p. 199). Similarly, Fletcher and Everett noted how horse-race coverage dominated campaign stories, focusing on the party standings in polling results, as did the "trivial incidents and colourful spectacles served up along the trail" (p. 199). In particular, the authors found that news reports on public opinion polls had increased over the previous two decades, as had the number of polls conducted by the media themselves over the course of an election campaign. For example, the authors noted that in 1979, there were 8 national polls conducted, but this steadily climbed to 22 by the time of the 1988 Canadian national election. More importantly, however, was the fact that these poll results "leak into other forms of coverage" and frame much of both the campaign-related and issue-related stories (p. 203). Finally, the study found that during the 1980s, increased media attention had been paid to political advertisements (by replaying and analysing them on news casts) and "behind the scenes" stories about campaign strategies.

Of the policy issue topics reported on in these studies, economic issues were consistently ranked at the top of the list in Canadian studies, except in election years when a Quebec referendum was imminent (in that situation National Unity was ranked highest). Economic issues included stories about budget deficits, tax policy, party proposals to ameliorate economic problems, and employment. For example, in the 1988 national campaign, the economy was by far the biggest issue in newspapers, and when combined with free trade, the total of the two dominated 70% of the issue stories. (Frizzell & Westell, 1989). The number of issues included in election reports appears to be small. A study of US election news found that, on average, television reports examined approximately 20 issues altogether during an election campaign, and only half of these were given "extensive" coverage (Graber, 1991). Television news consistently fared worse than print media in this regard.

Method

As noted in the previous section, the amount of time all four networks dedicated to election coverage represents a significant commitment to the election, but what was the content of these election stories? To determine the topics in the television news, all
election stories in the data set were coded to identify the primary topic of the story and any other major topic mentioned. Initially stories were “open coded”, based on what the reader/coder thought the story was about. Next, the coders were asked to indicate where the topic fit within a pre-designed list of categories provided by the researcher. (This list was based on previous news content analysis studies.) If the story did not fit within the categories provided, coders were instructed to create new ones. Many of the topics identified in the first step did indeed not fit the pre-coded categories, and thus many of the topic categories were created during the coding. This allowed the research to address, at least in part, one of the drawbacks with content analysis methodology: the phenomena of forcing variables to fit within pre-designed categories. Instead, the categories were allowed to be developed from the data. This produced a large number of categories that could later be collapsed into broader topics. (See Appendix A for more detail.)

**Topic Types: ‘Issue’ vs. ‘Campaign’ Topics**

The list and frequencies of all of the primary topics is indicated in Table 3-4. All of the topics are identified here in their totality. The highest percentage of stories at almost 20% was about aspects of the New Democrat campaign, with the second highest number of stories about aspects of the Liberal campaign (15%). Indeed, the stories about the campaign itself, rather than issues within the campaign, were by far the dominant topics. In the ten most common topics only two of them, health and taxes, were about something other than an aspect of the campaign itself. The rest of the stories focused on the various party campaigns, the actions of the leaders, poll results, and scandals or gaffes.

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33 Initially stories were coded for “primary”, “secondary” and “other” topics, however the latter two categories were later collapsed into a single category of “other topics” in order to simplify the analysis.

34 See the methodology appendix (A) for more detail on the coding process for “issue” and “campaign” stories. A story was coded as an “issue” story if the primary, or most dominant topic was an issue of interest in the campaign, such as forestry or health care. However, if an issue was merely mentioned as part of the coverage of the campaign, such as a reference to a campaign promise in the midst of a story about a leader’s activities that day, it was coded as a “campaign” story.
Table 3–4: Primary Topic Frequencies – All Occurrences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Topics - % of all Topics (n = 341)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NDP campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaffe/Scandal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib &amp; NDP campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader’s Debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP &amp; Green Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov’t Spending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (all topics)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = total story units

The dominance of campaign stories in these election data prompted further exploration. The stories were divided into two types: those that were “primarily campaign stories” and those that were “primarily issue stories” (sometimes referred to as policy stories or substantive stories). Coders were initially instructed to first describe the story in their own words before identifying the topic category, which allowed for an accurate assessment of the primary topic of each story. For example, if a story was about taxation, and reviewed what one or more party was promising, it was coded as an issue story. However, another story that included a “round-up” of the activities of the leaders with a quick reference to an announcement about taxation would have been coded as “about the campaign”. Taxation was included as a secondary topic only if it was accompanied by a substantive comment about the issue itself. (Inter-coder reliability was in the 94 – 96% range.) The following table shows the results of this survey (and a break-down by network) indicating the percentages of each. The stories were coded as an issue or campaign story based only on the primary topic category.
Overall, 78.3% (or 267 stories) of all of the stories were coded as being about the campaign. This number can be compared to the 21.7% (or 74 stories) that were coded as being primarily about election issues (health care, forestry, taxes, etc). Among the four stations, BCTV offered the highest percentage of stories about issues (30.3%) while VTV provided the least number of stories about issues (15.8%). Looking at a weekly summary of the type of stories Table 3-6 shows that the coverage of the election focused on campaign related stories through-out the four weeks, and culminated in a total of 84% in the final week.

Admittedly, this calculation is based on the number of stories and the occurrences of topic types, and not the length of time spent on each of the types of stories. Indeed, there may be fewer numbers of stories about topics of interest, but they may have been given in-depth coverage, possibly represented by the length of the unit. If this is the case it should be reflected in overall length of each type of story. However, when the two types of stories were measured for the overall length applied to them on the air, the results were similar to the amount of topic coverage.

Table 3-5: Story Type by Station

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Story</th>
<th>BCTV n=89</th>
<th>CBC n=85</th>
<th>Global n=66</th>
<th>VTV n=101</th>
<th>Total n=341</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue Story</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign Story</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-6: Story Type by Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Campaign Stories</th>
<th>Issue Stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3-7: Story Type by Length

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Story</th>
<th>Total length (in seconds)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue Story</td>
<td>12,584</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign Story</td>
<td>38,952</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51,536</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, it is clear that at the most, about one quarter of the news attention on the election was devoted to issues, while over three quarters was devoted to stories about the campaign.

**Campaign Topics**

More specifically, if the campaign stories dominated the television news reports about the campaign, what topics did they cover? Initially, categories were created, based on previous election studies, to capture the campaign topics. These were: stories about the campaign-in general, poll results, leadership, government record, and the opposition or Liberal record. It became clear very quickly that this list was inadequate to represent the full range and focus of the story topics. Thus, the following categories were created throughout the process (or “post coded”) to more thoroughly represent the campaign topics. All topics were reviewed to ensure the earliest coded items were not mis-coded due to the introduction of new categories. Post coding allowed the analysis to follow the data, rather than attempt to make a story “fit” into an already created category. The following summary of the categories used is discussed in more detail in Appendix A.

**Party Campaign Stories:** Stories primarily about a party, its candidates and leader, and the overall strategy or “performance” of that party in the campaign (such as its standings in the polls), were coded as: NDP campaign, Liberal campaign, Green campaign, Unity campaign, Marijuana campaign, and “Other party” campaign. In addition, two categories were created to accommodate the dominance of stories that focused on the Liberal and NDP campaigns combined, and the NDP and Green campaigns combined. Similarly, stories about the NDP and the Green Party became a focus of news stories later on in the campaign, concentrating on the effect the Green Party’s popularity would have on the NDP’s success or failure, or “the split on the left”. As for stories that focused on the Green campaign alone, initially these were few, but
that party's increasing popularity in the polls, combined with the Unity Party’s collapse, spurred more stories about the Greens and profiles of their leader later into the campaign. The Unity party was initially treated by the news media as the “third party” in this election, however its low popularity in opinion polls relegated it to a distant “other” early into the campaign. The “other” or minor parties were accorded very little coverage, but this coverage included a few stories about the Reform party, a couple of minor stories on independents, and one humorous story about a fringe candidate named “Boris the Bear”.

General Campaign stories: There were two types of stories that could be identified as being about the campaign in general. These were the stories coded as poll-results, and stories coded as campaign-general. A story was coded as being about poll-results if it was primarily reporting on the results of a public opinion poll, including a number of professional polls conducted by various news outlets, and any independent polls by the polling companies themselves. It also included “unofficial” polls such as the New Westminster’s Burger Haven “burger poll”, which kept a tally of the sales of burger named after the competing parties. If a story only mentioned poll results as part of the overall discussion it was not considered a story about a poll result. All other stories about the campaign were coded as general campaign stories. This included, for example, profiles of a specific riding and its candidates, or about political donations.

Specific Campaign Stories: Two types of stories were found to be related to specific campaign events. The first was the candidate scandal or gaffe. These were stories about a candidate’s gaffe or strategic error, or a scandal regarding a specific candidate. The two predominant gaffe stories throughout the campaign were about Liberal candidate Daniel Lee (for alleged inappropriate behaviour as a Vancouver City Councillor, being absent from campaign debates and events in the riding, and contradicting party policy) and NDP Forest Minister Gordon Wilson (for alleged inappropriate behaviour concerning a timber license sale). The second type of specific campaign story was about leader’s debates. There were two leader’s debates in the campaign. The first was a BCTV television debate between four leaders: the Liberal, the New Democrat, Green Party and Unity Party leaders. The second was a CKNW radio debate on the Rafe Mair show, and only included the Liberal and the NDP leader.

Government & Party Records: Another type of campaign story focused on the government and party records. If a story focused on the government record or policies v
as part of a review of an issue, it would have been included as an "issue" story. However, all of these stories focused on the list of "scandals" (such as the fast ferries, the "fudget budgets" and the Premier's resignation) and did no offer any substantive or evaluative analysis of the issues that led to the scandal, nor explored the scandal itself in any detail. Rather, these stories were mostly a summary of the list of scandals about the government, and representing the "record of incompetence and scandal". In every single case where the government record was a primary topic, these were campaign stories. For the purpose of symmetry, I included a category for the Liberal record, however this was not a primary issue in any story. Table 3-8 shows the campaign topics and percentages.

Table 3-8: Campaign Topics - Primary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Topic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NDP Campaign</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Campaign</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign - General</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaffe/Scandal</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poll Results</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal &amp; NDP campaign</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Campaign</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders Debates</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP &amp; Green Campaigns</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana Campaign</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity Campaign</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Other&quot; Campaign</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government (NDP) Record</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Record</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 100.0

Note: 'n' is the total number of story items about the campaign.

In addition to coding the primary topics of a campaign, information was also collected about secondary topics in a story. Up to two additional topics were coded if the story had more than one focus. If a topic was merely mentioned, however, it was not included. The topic had to be a significant focus in the story. No additional topics, other than the primary and potentially two secondary topics were included in the coding. This method was employed to ensure that the research could catch any stories that were, for example, primarily about the campaign, but included an issue as a major theme. The result of this calculation is found in the following table (Table 3-9). Note that this
includes all stories in the data set, including stories whose primary coding was as an issue story, but had a campaign topic as a “secondary” topic.

Table 3-9 - Campaign Topics – Primary and Secondary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign Topics</th>
<th>Primary Topic</th>
<th>Other Topics</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NDP campaign</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal campaign</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign – General</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Gaffe/Scandal</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poll results</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib &amp; NDP campaigns</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Campaign</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP &amp; Green Campaigns</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader Debates</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov’t (NDP) Record (Campaign)</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana Campaign</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity Campaign</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Party Campaigns</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Record</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>100.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Totals may not add up to 100 because of rounding.
*There were 266 stories that had a campaign topic as a primary topic, and 135 stories that had a campaign topic coded as a secondary topic. Up to two secondary topics could be coded for each story item. Thus, the total of 401 represents the total number of times a campaign topic was coded as a primary or secondary topic, and not the number of stories.

It is interesting to note that the NDP campaign was most often the primary topic of the campaign stories, at 25.6% of all campaign stories, compared to 19% for the Liberals. However, when secondary topics are taken into consideration, both the Liberals and NDP campaign topics had similar occurrences, at about 22% of the overall topics mentioned as either a primary or secondary topic. This calculation demonstrates that when secondary topics for a story were coded, rather than just the primary one, both of the two leading parties’ campaigns had relatively equal amounts of attention. Nonetheless, the fact that the NDP campaign was the primary focus in more stories is significant, and will be discussed in later chapters. The Green campaign, by comparison, was a topic in less than a quarter of the stories. Also interesting is the fact that while both the topic of “NDP & Green Campaign” and “Government record” where not major primary topics, their appearance as a secondary topic was significant by comparison.
Issue Topics

Any story unit that focused on a particular election issue—looking at problems or solutions offered by the parties—was coded as an issue story. The following table (Table 3-10) shows the results of this tabulation and is followed by a summary of all of the topics that were used in this analysis. Importantly, as with the campaign stories, about half of these categories were created before the coding began, and the rest were created by post-coding in order to decrease the number included in the “other” category.

Table 3-10: Issue Topics - All Mentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue Topics</th>
<th>Primary Topic (n=75)</th>
<th>Other Mentions (n=89*)</th>
<th>Total (n=164*)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>32.0% (24)</td>
<td>13.5% (12)</td>
<td>22.1% (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>16.0 (12)</td>
<td>16.9 (15)</td>
<td>16.5 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>9.3 (7)</td>
<td>6.7 (6)</td>
<td>7.9 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4.0 (3)</td>
<td>10.1 (9)</td>
<td>7.3 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy -general</td>
<td>4.0 (3)</td>
<td>10.1 (9)</td>
<td>7.3 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Concerns</td>
<td>8.0 (6)</td>
<td>4.5 (4)</td>
<td>6.1 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydro</td>
<td>2.7 (2)</td>
<td>6.7 (6)</td>
<td>4.9 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt spending</td>
<td>5.3 (4)</td>
<td>4.5 (4)</td>
<td>4.8 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>1.3 (1)</td>
<td>6.7 (6)</td>
<td>4.3 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICBC</td>
<td>5.3 (4)</td>
<td>2.2 (2)</td>
<td>3.7 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.5 (4)</td>
<td>2.4 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>2.6 (2)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>2.6 (2)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaky Condos</td>
<td>1.3 (1)</td>
<td>1.1 (1)</td>
<td>1.2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil &amp; gas</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.2 (2)</td>
<td>1.2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law &amp; Order</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.2 (2)</td>
<td>1.2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt's Record</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.2 (2)</td>
<td>1.2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Process</td>
<td>1.3 (1)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.6 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>1.3 (1)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.6 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real estate</td>
<td>1.3 (1)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.6 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>1.3 (1)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.6 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt's Integrity</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.1 (1)</td>
<td>0.6 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.1 (1)</td>
<td>0.6 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferries</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.1 (1)</td>
<td>0.6 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.1 (1)</td>
<td>0.6 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.1 (1)</td>
<td>0.6 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>99.6%</td>
<td>99.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Frequencies are in parenthesis. Percentage totals may not add up to 100 because of rounding. Topics ordered by ascending frequencies, and counts in parentheses. *n counts are the total number of topics coded, not the number of stories. Up to three major topics could be coded for any one story.

Health was by far the most prevalent issue topic during this election, with twenty four stories focusing on health as the primary topic. Stories that focused on health issues
included anything to do with the health care system in BC, and what parties promised to do about it. During the election period there was a breakdown in contract negotiations between the hospitals and the nurses union, resulting in demonstrations and job action on the part of the nurses. Often this was the first topic of the evening news, and would have been coded as a labour topic if it had been included in the election news. However, in most cases, the labour dispute was a separate story from election stories. Only stories that were specifically about the election in relation to health issues were included. As the nursing controversy progressed the Premier or the Leader of the opposition made comments about the situation in relation to their overall health care plans and these stories were included as election stories about health.

Taxes, tax policy and tax cuts was the next most frequent primary topic that focused on a policy issue, totalling twelve stories. The BC Liberals, under leader Gordon Campbell, had made tax cuts a major campaign plank, following in the footsteps of the Ontario Reform and federal Alliance policies, and the NDP responded by criticising the plan. It could be argued that this topic had been “primed” for a number of months before the campaign, since it had been the topic of numerous media reports, (both print and broadcast) and had successfully surpassed all other issues in unprompted polling results by the time the election was called. (See the Chapter Two for a discussion of “priming” and priming effects.)

After taxes, forestry and aboriginal issues were the focus of seven and six stories respectively. As the largest industry in the province, and the source of many contentious public debates the last three provincial elections, there was an assumption that there would be a number of issue stories about the forestry industry. With regard to aboriginal issues, the NDP had a record of attempting to solve land claims and treaty issues, but there was concern from some First Nations that it was too little and too slow. On the other hand, the Liberals had promised a public referendum on treaty negotiation principles that had angered aboriginal people and human rights experts alike. Thus, there was a possibility that aboriginal treaties would play a role in the campaign.

Apart from these topics, there were comparably few issues stories. Later in the campaign, the NDP made ICBC an issue by claiming the provincial Liberals would privatize auto insurance. The category of government spending was used to catch stories that looked at the issues related to how the provincial government spends its money. In particular, the money the incumbent spent on a project to build fast ferries in
the province became a public scandal that had been in the public discourse for over a year before the election, and warranted its own category. As a controversial subject, it was expected that the media and the opposition party would spend some time on this issue as either a review of the scandal’s particulars, or creating solutions to the ferry problem (the need for more boats) as a discussion or campaign issue. However, while it was mentioned or alluded to in numerous campaign stories, it was never the direct focus of an issue story. The topic coded as government integrity alternatively referred to in some election studies as “honesty in government”, was a secondary topic in a number of stories, but not a primary topic in any. However, as mentioned above, the topic of the government record did appear a number of times as the primary topic in a campaign issue. Related to governing, the electoral process occurred as the primary topic in one story, due in part to the increasing prominence of the Green party and one of their key campaign promises to reform the electoral process.

Resource industries other than forestry received little or no attention. Fishing, the third largest industry in BC and a pivotal one for coastal communities, had been the focus of federal/provincial disputes, land claims disputes, and was a central campaign issue for the coastal regions. It was not focused on once in an issue story. Agriculture is BC’s fourth industry in terms of gross product and sales, and part of provincial public debate primarily related to urban encroachment, environmental concerns, and marketing. Nonetheless it received very little attention in the election news. Mining and exploration, which while not as big an industry as forestry, had been an environmental and economic issue for some time, received attention in two stories, both about the economy of the interior of the province. Tourism, BC’s second largest industry, was discussed in one of the stories about the economy in general, as was a story on oil and gas exploration. The former story consisted of a series of interviews with hotel workers in downtown Vancouver talking about the economy in general, tax cuts, and the promise of the construction of a new convention centre in the city. The latter story focused on the general economy of the north coast region since the NDP had placed a moratorium on oil and gas exploration in the early 1990s for environmental reasons and it had yet to be lifted. The oil and gas industry, and some people in the region, had been pressuring the New Democratic government to remove the moratorium.

There was one story focused on the real estate business, overtly suggesting that a potential real estate boom was likely once a “change in government’ created more
economic optimism. Two stories talked about the provincial hydro company (BC Hydro) after the NDP accused the Liberals of planning to privatise it. Not a single story focused on employment as a primary topic; however it was alluded to in a number of stories. While the issue of the state of the roads and other transportation structures also did not appear as a primary topic, it did appear as a secondary topic in one story. Education as an election topic included all aspects of education, from public school to post secondary, showed up three times as the focus of a story. Only one story was coded as primarily about issues regarding the environment. As with forestry issues, the environment had been a dominant issue in the politics of the province and in previous elections, and was expected to play a part in this election as well. This is especially so given the entrance of a stronger Green party in this election – a party whose platform and origins centred around environmental issues. However, this did not occur. Even the profiles of the Green party, while mentioning their roots in the environmental movement, did not discuss their environment platform or environmental issues facing the province. Indeed, if the news topics about the election could be seen as a litmus test for the prevalent issues of the province, it would seem that the “war in the woods” had been solved. More likely, however, the appearance of the Green party as a viable competitor in the election contest was most ‘newsworthy’ because of the potential impact their support would have on the ‘horse-race’ standings than on environmental issues. (The type of coverage the Greens received will be discussed further in later chapters.)

Other social issues that were the primary topic of story units included poverty, which had recently been a major issue in the Vancouver municipal campaign and occurred as a focus of two stories. Gambling was raised as the focus of an election story once, and had been a controversial issue during the NDP’s reign. And, while not a major election issue, the misfortunes of condo-owners in Vancouver and Victoria because of poor construction was raised by advocates a few times during the election (coded as “leaky condos”). Interestingly, crime topics, sometimes referred to as law and order issues, is a common category used for research into election topics. However in this case there were no stories where this was the primary topic. The issues of service to the disabled appeared as a secondary topic brought up by a member of the public, and funding for the arts was discussed only as a secondary topic, and again, only in relation to a question by a citizen about government spending in the arts. Any topics that did not fit into the categories were coded as “other".
While the above results outline the primary issue topics in the election news, it is also instructive to look at the total topic mentions to see if these topics occurrences remain consistent. Again, Table 3-10 calculates the totals of all major topic mentions, adding all of the primary and secondary topics for the issue stories. Coders recorded up to two secondary topic per story, for a total potential of three topics per story. Although most stories had only one topic, some had two or three major topics. Some of the results from this additional calculation are similar to the primary topic results. For example, health, taxes and forestry remain the top three issue topics in this expanded analysis, with health and taxes commanding by far the highest attention of the media. However, other topics, such as education, the economy in general, and hydro moved up in the frequency occurrence when secondary major story topics were added to the analysis. The environment also increased in media attention when secondary topics were calculated, although it still represents only 4.3% of all the issue topics coded, with seven stories in total.

Table 3-10 also illustrates that there were four general 'clusters' of the total frequency of all major issue topics. The first cluster, represented by shading on the chart, was health and taxes, each higher than 15% frequency of all topic mentions, and remaining the two most frequent issue topics. The next cluster, representing between 5 and 10% of occurrences, includes forestry, education, the economy (in general), and aboriginal concerns. As noted previously, forestry stories were mostly related to two events that happened during the campaign: the first was the action by Interfor Forest Products to close down a mill in the interior due to a land use decision by the government to protect land. The second was a scandal involving Forestry Minister Gordon Wilson and promises made to Doman Forest Products company without approval from Cabinet. Aboriginal concerns were mostly related to the Liberal's election promise to hold a referendum on treaty negotiation principles and First Nations', academics', pollsters' and pundits' reactions to this plan. Interestingly, it was the one area of the Liberal platform that received more than a passing scrutiny by the media and their sources, and the only one that appeared to be roundly criticised.

The third cluster of topics was in the 3-5% range of occurrences, also indicated in Table 3-10 by shading. These topics included hydro, government spending, environment, ICBC and employment. All of these topics, except employment, were discussed under primary topics above. Employment occurred only as a secondary topic,
either mentioned in a discussion about the economy in general, in discussions about
taxes, or brought up by people on the street as an issue. Finally, the remaining cluster
indicates topics that were counted only once or twice in the coding process. These
topics include some which appeared only as a secondary topic: oil and gas exploration
(in relation to a story about the economy of Prince Rupert), law and order (crime),
government integrity, the arts (a question asked by vox pop), ferries, other transportation
issues (roads), and agriculture. In addition, while the government record had occurred
as a 'campaign' primary topic, it occurred twice as a secondary 'issue' topic.

Further Discussion: ‘News Holes’ & Horse Races

If the length of a news story can be seen as one indication of the thoroughness or
depth of a story the data here indicates that the overall length of news stories of the BC
election were, at about 2½ minutes, slightly longer than other news stories, as indicated
by previous research. In addition, while the overall average of the time devoted to the
election news stories between all four stations was just over 9 minutes per broadcast
(9:02) the amount of coverage between the stations ranged widely from a low of 4:38
minutes (VTV) to a high of 13:54 minutes (CBC). Most of the time devoted to the
election was in the first 20 minutes of the broadcast. In the television news genre this is
a significant amount of the “news hole” devoted to the election. Using a method derived
from the American Journalism Association (2005) for calculating the ‘news hole’ for a
one hour news show (in order to account for profiles in the second half of the news
hour), the total time devoted to the election represents over 20% of the overall news
hole. Hence, while the amount of television coverage of the election can still be seen as
small, compared to print media, it appears the proportion of coverage compared to the
time available on television was larger than the research on national elections in both
Canada and the United States.

Notably, the public broadcaster (the CBC) provided the longest amount of
average time per broadcast devoted to the election (almost 14 minutes), and longer
stories (some over four minutes) than any of the private broadcasters. This is consistent
with an earlier study that found that that the CBC television station ran a higher
percentage of stories over 3 minutes long in 1980 (Soderlund et al., 1984). The authors
argued that this was significant because “it is indisputable” that devoting over three
minutes to a particular item was an important “gateway” decision. Of the private
broadcasters, BCTV had the highest amount of time per broadcast devoted to the election at an average of almost 10 minutes, while Global was the lowest at less than 5 minutes on average per broadcast devoted to election stories. Still, while the average election story was longer than the average story, and CBC provided a higher number of “in depth” stories, almost all of the news stories fit within a 1 – 4 minute range. The fact that a news item must generally be edited to be, on average, 2 and a half minutes in length before being aired continues to raise questions about the capacity of television to be the sole provider of election information for voters. The amount of information that can be imparted in a television news story is limited and indeed represents, as some have suggested, a “headline” approach to news rather than an adequate source of information about the election.

The data discussed in this chapter – on the amount of and topics involved in election coverage – offers some interesting observations. The first one concerns the calculations needed to make accurate conclusions about the depth of television stories. To explain further, the calculations on the number of stories in this case study shows there were typically from three to six stories about the election on any one broadcast, usually clustered together. For example, for the first two days of the election BCTV ran 8 stories (April 18) and 6 stories (April 19), adding up to 21:37 minutes and 14.55 minutes respectively. Similarly, CBC ran 5 stories on both April 18 and 19, to a total time of 24:06 and 11:08 respectively. Of the four stations, VTV had the highest number of stories (99 for the 28 day campaign itself), and Global had the lowest at 66. The full corpus of election broadcasts were available for both of these stations, thus indicating this as an accurate representative range between the four stations. Based only on the number of stories, then, we could hypothesise that VTV’s coverage was actually the most thorough compared to the other stations, since it offered the largest number of stories. However, the length of the election stories in each station does not support that hypothesis. Both BCTV and CBC devoted more real time to the election even in the face of missing data, and both provided significantly longer stories, on average, potentially indicating a higher overall depth of coverage than the other stations. In addition, CBC, had the longest stories and a higher volume of longer stories than all other stations. By contrast, Global had a more concentrated collection of shorter stories than all other stations. Consequently, calculating both the time devoted to the election and the number of stories results offers a better analysis of the thoroughness of media coverage. One cannot equate a one minute story that gives a summary of the activities
of the party leaders on their election tour and a four minute story about the health care problems in the BC interior and what the different parties are promising to do about it.

Differences in the amount of network coverage about the election, to some extent, can be explained by the editorial, economic and management situations of the different networks. In particular Global had recently been bought by CanWest Inc. who also owned BCTV. However, the CRTC had concerns about concentration of ownership in British Columbia and the actual change of ownership was still in limbo awaiting a Commission decision. Thus, while CanWest owned both BCTV and the Global at the time, the Global News Hour was required to be managed differently and the concurrent lack of resources to the station during this time provided for a less than robust newscast.

While there are some notable differences among the networks, it is also clear that every network, with the possible exception of Global, dedicated significant amounts of their newscast to the election campaign as well as a substantial use of resources on the part of the media organization. In addition, if length of story and amount of time spent on the election is an indication of the breadth and thoroughness of the coverage, then the CBC offered by far the most in-depth reporting, both in terms of length of stories and percentage of election coverage in each broadcast, even though it was hampered by the lack of weekend news shows. Such differences between the public and private broadcaster could potentially be the result of different ownership structures, or a result of the unique mandate of a public broadcaster.

The results of the election topics reported on during this case study also offer some important observations. The assumption in considering election topics is that the greater the number of stories on policy issue topics (as opposed to the “horserace” or “campaign stories” of the election) the higher the quality of information available to voters in order to assist in their electoral decision making. Approximately three quarters of the television time devoted to the election, and even more of the number of stories about the election, were focused on aspects of the campaign, and only one quarter on the policy issues. As well, the overwhelming emphasis on stories about the campaign was consistent in each week of the election. Television news about the election during the first and second weeks focused on the campaign in about 78% of the stories. During the third week it was slightly less at 72%, and in the final week of the campaign it reached a high of 83%. When taking into consideration the secondary focus of the full
corpus of stories, there were still twice as many campaign topics as issue topics. Thus, the primary narrative about the election was about the leader's activities, party strategies, campaign gaffes and standings in the polls.

While campaign topics clearly dominated, some issues receive some attention, while others were completely absent. Health care was the most frequent topic covered in the news, with taxes a close second. These two topics are interesting in that each had an attachment to the two leading parties respectively. Health care has been a primary issue in most public opinion surveys in Canada for almost ten years, so its presence as the top election topic is no surprise. However, at the same time as the election campaign there was a crisis in health care that helped to highlight the issue. As mentioned previously, the collective bargaining between the hospital employers and the nurses union in BC had broken down and nurses had introduced job action that resulted in nurses refusing to work overtime. The result of this "job action" had negative consequences for surgery waiting lists and hospital care. Consequently, the sub-text of many of the health care stories was the nurses "strike" and the effects on the health care system. Since the New Democrats were closely affiliated with organized labour, stories about the worsening state of health care carried the added subtext that the New Democrats were too soft on labour.

The topic of tax cuts also carried a subtext. In the 1996 BC election, the top economic criticism of the incumbent New Democrats was the state of the province's deficit. However, by the time of the 2001 election, the fear of deficits disappeared from the media discourse as the Liberals successfully made their major campaign promise of tax cuts the top economic story in the election. This was the case even though the tax cuts would likely result in increased deficits. Thus, the high profile issue of health care implied a negative evaluation for the New Democrats while the high profile issue of tax cuts implied a positive evaluation of the Liberals.

In other issue topics, forestry, the economy, aboriginal issues and education were mentioned in a smaller number of stories in some weeks. Many of the issues identified in this case study were unique to the provincial election, and many of the issue topics that dominated the national elections were absent in the provincial election coverage. This indicates that content analysis categories for issue variables cannot

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35 The term "horse race" has been described as "a fascination with the final electoral outcome and the jockeying done by parties leading up to polling day" (Fletcher and Everett, 1991, p. 199).
easily be shared between national and provincial studies. Finally, some issues were invisible or nearly invisible in the news discourse. Few stories mentioned employment or poverty, and none considered issues that involved women, children, or the increasing issues of race relations in a city highly impacted by immigration. The lack of a discussion of the latter issues was especially surprising given the fact that the NDP leader was Indo-Canadian and had a high profile in the South Asian community in Vancouver. Not a single story discussed his origins as a factor in the election, although the major print daily, the Vancouver Sun, ran a profile of Dosanjh that printed pictures of him as a young man in a turban. Indeed, one of the unfortunate drawbacks of content analysis as a method is that the very invisibility of these topics in the news discourse is repeated in the content analysis.

Generally, the findings of the breakdown of topic types were consistent with previously recognised trends in news reports about elections in the US, but less consistently so in Canada. Indeed, the data from this case study differs significantly from the majority of data on federal election coverage in Canada. As noted in Tables 2-2 and 2-3 indicated (above) almost no other Canadian election study found a similar breakdown of over three quarters of the coverage about the campaign or process topics, (with the one exception being the 1984 newspaper data). This case study shows that the British Columbia television stations placed more emphasis on campaign and process stories than any of their national counterparts in either print or television in the last 15 years. Is this an indication of differences in the provincial television media, or an anomaly of this election? Without additional data from other BC elections to compare, it is difficult to determine.

The dominance of campaign stories in this case study is a significant finding for two reasons. First, while it is not unusual for media reports to pay a high level of attention to the "horse race" aspect of the campaign than the public policy issues at stake, the amount of difference in this case study appears to be unique compared to national Canadian elections. In addition, while the lack of issue stories is significant, it is also not changing for the better, even after twenty-five years of election studies in Canada, and one Royal Commission found that election news is lacking in substance. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the predominance of news stories about the campaign at the expense of stories about party policies or policy issues is one that questions the very role the news media have claimed in informing voters during
elections. The implications of this second comment are discussed in more depth in the conclusion of this thesis.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS – NEWS SOURCES

In this Chapter I explore the frequency and use of news sources in the television reports about the BC election of 2001. To do so, I asked the following questions: Who was quoted? Who did the news sources ‘represent’? What were the topics about which they were quoted? How long were their quotes? And, how much overall amount of time did the television election news items spend on source quotes?

Journalistic accounts of events are often told through quotes and by references to people and institutions representing the event. Indeed, to produce good television stories, journalism students are urged to tell the story through people (Shook, 1996, p. 8). Crime stories, for example, routinely quote police and victim statements, political or government spokespersons, lawyers, and others involved in the institutional handling of crime (Ericson et al., 1989; Hall et al., 1978). Political stories often include quotes from elected officials, opposition parties, lobby groups and “people on the street”. In media studies, as well as in newsrooms, the people who supply the content for news reports are referred to as news sources. Herbert Gans (1979) defined news sources this way:

By “sources” I mean the actors whom journalists observe or interview, including interviewees who appear on the air or who are quoted in magazine articles, and those who only supply background information or story suggestions. (Gans, 1979, p. 80)

Research on the social production of news, journalistic practices, and influences on news content has contributed to an understanding of the use of news sources, the journalist-source relationship, and the potential effect selective source use has on the framing of news stories. This chapter first looks at the data arising from a content analysis of the election news reports, and then considers the findings within the context of the broader studies on the significance and role of sources in the news.
Who Was Quoted?

Background

The Canadian literature on research regarding the use and frequency of television news sources during election campaigns is sparse. Most of the research has been conducted by political scientists who have tended to focus on party leaders at the expense of other types of sources. Only one of the research studies surveyed looked at source quotes per se – Charron (1991) considered the role of sources as elites in the Quebec elections of 1984 and 1988. However, most of the other studies of the Canadian federal elections from 1979 that have conducted content analysis of newspapers or television coverage have focused on the amount of news space occupied by the party leaders, or the amount of coverage where the party leaders were “principal actors”, rather than their actual quotes as sources (Crete, 1991; Frizzell, Pammet & Westell, 1989; Johnston et al., 1992; Soderlund et al., 1984). All of these studies found that party leaders were the primary focus of news reports about the elections, and accounted for the majority amount of news space – i.e., not their quotes per se, but news about them – hovering around 60% of the television or print coverage. One study noted that in total, political actors (leaders, other candidates and party spokespersons) accounted for 83% of the news focus (Crete, 1991) while another commented that regardless of the actual numbers, the most prominent news stories, and the lead items on television newscasts, are generated by the leader’s tour at the expense of all other potential sources.

For the most part, other actors are quoted in reaction to the statements of the party leaders... [and] local candidates and interest group leaders tend to be virtually absent from high-profile coverage. (Fletcher & Everett 1991, pp. 199-200)

The focus on news about the political actors, however, has not extended to research into the actual quotes from news sources, political actors or otherwise.

Indeed, recent Canadian election studies have generally suffered from a lack of content analysis of print or television coverage altogether. However, one study on print coverage of the 2000 federal election supported earlier findings noted above (Dornan & Pyman, 2001). The authors stated that 60% of the coverage had the leaders as the principal actor while the remaining 40% had “other” or “no” principal actor. While their literature did not examine source quotes in particular, it is reasonable to expect that if the
leaders' tours dominate so much of the election news, the frequency of quotes from the leaders would mirror these numbers.

There is some evidence in the literature, however, of an increased use of quotes from "ordinary people" in election news in Canada from the 1980s to the 1990s. In particular, Lumb (1994) noted a change in the news media's use of ordinary voters in the 1993 federal election. In that election, he found that the print media used "voters' panels", interviews with voters on the street, and other methods in order to represent the average person in the news.36 Television was equally interested in incorporating the people's voices, and introduced various opportunities for voters to ask the leaders and the candidates questions about issues that were important to them. CBC-TV, in particular, operationalized this trend by running a series of "town halls" where party leaders (and other candidates) were asked questions by a collection of "ordinary Canadians". Both CBC and CTV increased the use of "average Canadians" in their regular news shows as well, utilizing citizen focus groups, and "close encounters with voters" by major news personalities. All of this, says the author, was an attempt on the part of news media to regain the public's confidence and input after the media failed to recognize, or reflect, the public's views during debates around national referendums in the late 1980s and early 1990s — when the news media misread the public sentiment on the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords. This deficiency resulted in criticism that, not only were journalists more in line with the 'political elites' of the country than they were representatives of the ordinary people, but they were also "poor readers of the public mood" (Lumb, 1994, p. 107). The news media's experiments in increased voter involvement were simultaneously applauded by some as an indication of increased democratic representation and a "deference to people power", while others (especially journalists) were concerned that this trend was an insult to voter's intelligence (pp. 107-8). Nonetheless, Lumb predicted that the trend to involve the public directly in the political journalism would continue.

The prediction of an increasing role for ordinary voters in election news is contrary to earlier studies on the role of elites (i.e., those with institutional credentials and power), both in election news and in Canadian television news in general. A survey of studies about the news media in Quebec during elections found that "most journalists'
sources were agents of the economic, political or social establishments” in the 1980 and 1984 federal elections (Charron, 1991, p. 130). Further, the researcher concluded that:

...collective, non-institutional entities (nation, people, society, citizens) were less represented in stories than institutional collectives, such as countries, regions, provinces and institutions... [thus]... the national question, in this kind of discourse, is more the business of the official political institutions than the people of Quebec. (p. 130)

Similarly, Gans found that the “unknowns” (protestors, victims, voters, participants in events) appeared in the American television news only about one-fifth of the available news time, while “knowns” (the elites, such as politicians and government or institutional officials) made up the remaining four-fifths (Gans, 1980, p. 13). This “hierarchy of access” was supported five years later by a published study on Canadian television news, indicating that those who are interviewed most often are male politicians, business leaders and group spokespeople (Hackett, 1985). However, while a 1991 study of local television coverage (vs. national coverage) upheld the findings that group spokespeople and politicians received the bulk of television coverage (about 45% altogether), ordinary people were still quoted almost 25% of the time (Papas, 1991). The author of this latter study further suggested that the slightly higher number of public voices indicated that, contrary to previous studies, the news is indeed “accessible” to the average person and that such access bodes well for democratic society.

Importantly, while little literature exists on the use of sources in Canadian election news, there is an extensive body of research, spanning the last twenty-five years, about the role and significance of news sources in general. The implications of this research will be discussed in the final section of this chapter. Nonetheless, it is fair to conclude that the use of sources has been under-researched in Canadian election studies, something this case study can at least begin to address. Still, there is sufficient evidence found in the existing media research to suggest that sources are important to news content and discourse. The surveyed research on Canadian elections has suggested that at least two trends could be explored in this study: 1) that the majority of quotes come from political leaders, and 2) that other elites also dominate the news. Since the research on the use of vox pop and individuals in television news stories was contradictory, this offered a particularly interesting area to explore in the data. The next two sections outline the methods used and the findings of ‘who was quoted’ in this case study.
Method

For this study, a person was considered a source if they were directly shown and heard making a statement – or directly seen and heard on air, sometimes referred to as an “actuality” clip. The data on who was quoted were collected through a number of methods. First, every time sources were quoted in any of the television stories, their name (if available), and their affiliation was noted. In addition, each source was labelled as a source type – a descriptor that reflected how the media identified and used the source, such as student, Liberal candidate, or hospital representative. After all of the sources were recorded, a post-coding review of the sources further grouped them into source categories – a broader descriptor of the sources drawn from the data – and resulting in categories such as political actors, experts, representatives, individuals, and other. As noted above, for the purposes of this study, the collection of source data focused on only those sources actually quoted on camera in the election news stories. While recognizing that much source use in the construction of a news story is paraphrased and/or unattributed, accounting for these non-quoted sources was outside the scope of this content analysis. However, in cases where a report or publication from a non-quoted source formed the basis of the story, the source was noted as a "non-quoted reference", as a matter of interest.

Importantly, all persons or “actors” quoted in a story were coded in the order they first appeared in that news item, and were counted as one source, regardless of how many times they were quoted in that news item. Thus, the source counts represent each separate person quoted in each news item, not the number of quotes themselves, and only refers to the sources actually quoted, not those paraphrased by reporters. A later calculation was done to determine how many times each source was quoted, but for this aspect of the analysis I was mostly interested in who was quoted in each story. The following two sections outline the findings for the types and categories of sources, and the differences of source-use by television station.

Types and Categories of Sources.

Overall, there were 1,087 people directly quoted as sources in the 300 story units that used sources (42 stories did not quote sources). The stories that used quotes had
anywhere from 1 to 15 different people quoted. The larger number of quotes usually represented stories that entailed extensive use of "vox pop" or "streeters" in short sound bites. As noted above, initially the sources were identified by their affiliation or title as identified by the news account ("florist", "BCTA president", etc) and then further categorized (through both pre- and post-coding methods) into source "types", such as "business person", "union representative", etc. Finally, these types were grouped into five broader source categories of political actor, expert, representative, individual and 'other'. The results are illustrated in Table 4-1 below.

Of the five categories of sources, 'political actors' were the most common people used in a news story, at 58.6% or over half of all sources used. In addition, over a quarter of all sources used fit within the category of 'individuals'. From there, the next two categories of sources, the 'representatives' and the 'experts', were quoted only about 7% each. Each of the resulting categories is outlined in more detail below.39

Table 4-1: Categories of Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Category</th>
<th>Source Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Actor</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Political actors

The category of political actor included all candidates and leaders, ex-candidates and ex-leaders, sitting political representatives at any level of government (civic, provincial or federal), and political workers. Supporters of a particular party were also included, but only if they were in a political rally or similar situation indicating they had been identified by the party itself as a supporter. It did not include "people on the street" or "vox pop" quotes who indicated support for one party or another, since these were

37 See Appendix D for total list of source "types" and their categories. Briefly, all sources were coded as a "source type" that indicated their identification by the news cast, such as "Liberal candidate" or "wife/mother" and then these types were further compiled into the broader categories.

38 The 'other' source category was used only if someone did not fit within the above categories. Two examples included a moderator at a debate or a historical quote of a journalist from another election.

39 For a complete list of all types of sources who were included in each "source type" and "source category" see Appendix D.
random sources and thus were coded in the “individual” category as vox pop or “person on the street” quotes.

Table 4-2, below indicates the type and number of political actors found in the data. It is clear from this calculation that since over half of all political sources used in news stories were the party leaders, the media focus during election campaigns remains on the leaders’ tours, and the leader is the primary representative of the party. While other candidates represented 32% of political actors, only one or two candidates from each party were the primary focus. It is common for party leaders to assign the role of back-up media spokesperson to one of their senior candidates if the leader is not available, and this was apparent in this election. For example, the most quoted Liberal candidate, other than the Liberal leader, was the experienced MLA and Liberal finance critic, Gary Farrell-Collins. In addition, the media showed interest in party candidates if there were scandals associated with them (indicating that media attention is not necessarily a positive thing for a party). For example, Liberal candidate Daniel Lee was the focus of media attention due to a number of campaign ‘gaffes’ early in the campaign, and his invisibility later in the campaign. In result, he also garnered a significant number of quotes.

Similarly for the New Democrats, source quotes from non-leader candidates came primarily from veteran MLA Joy MacPhail, who was a major spokesperson for the party and the campaign co-chair, and from forestry minister Gordon Wilson, who was the focus of numerous stories about a forestry-related scandal. Importantly, then, the number of candidate sources’ does not indicate a wide range of party candidates.
Table 4-2: Political Actors as Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Worker/ Supporter</th>
<th>Party Ads</th>
<th>‘Elite’ Supporter¹</th>
<th>Total ( % of total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>240 (37.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>272 (42.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80 (12.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others²</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10 (1.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>637 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ ‘Elite Supporter’ category represents ex-candidates, ex-leaders and existing municipal and federal politicians, included in the party category they now support, not necessarily the party they have represented in the past.

² The “Others” category refers to a source from any other party, or a source who was a political actor but whose party preference was not apparent.

**Individuals**

The second most common type of source used by the news media for the election stories was that of *individuals*, who were used approximately 26% of the time. This category included: employees, business owners and managers who were speaking for themselves and their business only, landlords, tenants, unaffiliated protesters, nurses, doctors, patients and their families, students, mothers and fathers, wives and husbands, unaffiliated aboriginal people, and members of an audience or people on the street (commonly referred to as *vox pop*). Regardless of whether or not these sources were identified by name, they were not identified as having any affiliation to an organization or institution, and were not used to provide specific expertise. As Table 4-3 shows, almost two thirds of the individual sources were *streeters* or *vox pop*, where the individuals were flagged down in a public place (on the street, in a shopping mall) for an off-the-cuff candid reaction to a question asked by the reporter.
Table 4-3: Individuals as Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Source Type</th>
<th>n=285</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vox Pop/Audience</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients &amp; Family</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Person</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landlord</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother/Wife</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father/Husband</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Includes employees of forestry operations and employees on strike. (2) Includes Manager/owner of forestry business.

In addition, the data indicate that there were twice as many male vox pop as there were female (66% male to 34% female). Thus the old adage of the "man on the street" is, on average, still literally true.

**Representatives and experts**

Sources were coded as representatives if they were identified by the news story as affiliated with an organization or institution, and thus appeared to be speaking as representatives of that organization. Examples of representatives included First Nations leaders, a nurse speaking on behalf of the union, an affiliated member of a lobby group, a community organization (like a residents group) and other non-government organisations (NGO's). Other examples included an organization to limit gambling expansion (Citizens Against Gambling), one to reform the electoral process, and another seeking compensation for "leaky condos". The representative category also included an "institutional representative" that included provincial government and city officials, and school officials, and public health authorities. The distinction between institutional and non-institutional representatives in order to indicate interests that were attached to public or government organizations, as opposed to those organizations that were non-governmental.

Sources were coded as experts if they were used by the media as knowledgeable about an issue due to their institutional affiliation or their experience. For
example, researchers, university professors and political commentators were all used by
the media as "experts" on a topic. In some cases these experts were presented as
'-independent' (as in the case of university professors or pollsters) while in other cases
their expertise was as partisan political commentator. In the latter case, these "party
pundits" were used as experts about the political parties and their strategies. In addition,
the news media used research institutes ("think tanks") as experts, even though they
often have a socio-economic and political orientation. Two examples of research
institutes included in the category of experts in this case study were the Fraser Institute,
which was coded as a "right-wing think tank", and the Canadian Centre for Policy
Alternatives (CCPA) which was coded as a "left-wing think tank". Thus, the difference
between sources who were coded as experts and those coded as representatives lies in
the type of affiliation. Approximately 7% of all sources used were representatives and
another 7% were experts. Table 4-4 indicates the breakdown in the types of sources for
both representatives and experts.

Table 4-4: Representatives and Experts as Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representatives</th>
<th>n=78</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Union Rep</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Official*</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Nations/Aboriginal Rep</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor Rep</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Rep</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Rep</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Rep</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experts</th>
<th>n=74</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party Pundit</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Professor</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Pundit</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollster</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist*</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think Tank (right wing)</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other expert</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher (unaffiliated)</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think Tank (left wing)</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Public official includes school officials (9%), hospital representative (6.4%), city officials (3.8%), provincial government official (2.6%), and public health authority (1.3%).

*Journalists were included here only if they were interviewed in the story as an "expert" source or political analyst. Otherwise they were left out.

Note: Totals on both tables do not add to 100 due to rounding.

The largest type of representative used as a source, at almost 27%, were from
unions. Since at the time of the election there were two major labour actions, one an
overtime ban by nurses due to stalled contract negotiation, and the second a strike by
bus drivers', union issues were in the news in general. But this data set only included
election stories, not the stories about the labour disputes. Thus, this is an indication that
labour issues were informing the election discourse even if the current disputes were not
the primary topic of the story. In addition, other studies on media coverage of labour
disputes have noted that there is an 'over-representation' of union sources compared to management sources, during such disruptions (Beharrell & Philo 1977; Hartley, 1982; Hackett, 1983; Silva, 1995; Walton & Davis, 1977; Davis & Walton, 1983). This over-representation has been linked to the framing of labour disputes as 'caused' primarily by the unions, leaving the employers to 'manage' the disruption. Given this, it is not surprising that union representatives received more than a quarter of the quotes from representatives, even during election stories.

The second most common sources quoted in the election stories were public officials, representing just over 23% of the total sources used. The next most frequent sources used in the election news were a series of non-governmental interest groups including general NGO's such as the leaky condo association (at 10.3%), First Nations representatives (10.3%), representatives of doctors organizations and of business organizations (at 9% each), environmental representatives (5.1%) and community or neighbourhood representatives (3.8%).

Together, all non-governmental interest groups, outside of union representatives, totaled 47.5% of the representatives used as sources. If union spokespersons are included, the total NGO count is 74.4%. However, the total count for NGO's, (at 60 out of 1087 sources), accounts for only 5.5% of the total number of all sources quoted. Thus, it cannot be said that the news favoured interest groups as sources when reporting on the election. 40

As for the experts, almost 42% of all experts used as sources were political pundits affiliated with their parties. Every station had its political panel or group of analysts comprised of two or three commentators associated with political parties. Less common as an expert source was the "neutral pundit", such as an historian, who commented on the campaign. University professors were used about 18% of the time as experts, and pollsters were used 8% of the time allotted to experts, and represented less than 1% of the total sources quoted (although the results of their polls were included news reports far more often). Indeed, experts outside of partisan politics were used as sources only 43 times, representing more than half of the experts quoted, but only 4% of all the sources quoted in the election news.

40 It is worth noting that the effect of the nurses’ labour dispute and the resulting attention and pressures on the health care system, as well as health care’s status as a high profile election issue, would also have contributed to the number of doctors representatives used as sources (9%), as well as hospital representatives and Public Health Authorities (together 7.7%).
Therefore, it can be safely concluded that neither experts, nor representatives of organizations or public institutions were a high priority for the news media to talk to during an election. What is interesting, then, is when, and under what conditions did they use these two categories as sources, which is considered in a later section.

Sources by Station

Among the four stations there were some differences in types of sources used, particularly when comparing the public and private broadcasters. In every network, the political actor was the most frequent source. However, as Table 4-5 shows, BCTV, Global and VTV all used political actors as sources approximately 57% of the time, however the CBC used political actors 64% of the time.

Table 4-5: Sources by Station

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BCTV (n=335)</th>
<th>CBC (n=291)</th>
<th>Global (n=168)</th>
<th>VTV (n=293)</th>
<th>Total (n=1087)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Actor</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages are calculated based on the total amount for each station, not the total amount of sources. Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Regarding the use of individuals, (most often found as vox pop or streeters) it was again the public broadcaster that was distinct. CBC used individuals for only approximately 17% of their sources, while BCTV used them for approximately 26% of the time, and Global and VTV 31.5% and 32.8% respectively. This differential between private and public broadcasters was also found in the use of "experts" as sources. While Global, VTV and BCTV used experts as sources only about 5-6% of the time, CBC used experts almost twice as much at 10.7%. In contrast, the CBC was in the middle of the pack when in came to the use of representatives. BCTV quoted institutional and interest group representatives the most at 9.6%, CBC the next at 7.6%, Global at 6.5%. VTV used representatives less than half as much as BCTV did, at 4.4%. The implications of the differences in source use by television station are discussed in the next section.
Discussion

The use of political actors as the majority of quoted sources in an election campaign is not altogether surprising given the previous research. Nor is it unexpected, given the nature of an election campaign and the standard practices and routines of news organizations in reporting on elections. Political parties vie for media attention and develop extensive public relations strategies to get their message out to the public through the mass media, especially through the use of leaders' tours, news announcements and news releases. While sometimes the party leading in support may limit the media exposure of its leader as a political strategy to control momentum, all parties still provide daily opportunities for the media to report on their campaigns. Moreover, the CRTC requires the media to provide "balance" to their coverage, at least nominally, and the news media do this by attempting to cover all of the major parties 'equitably' and by providing a relatively equal number of quotes from "both" of the leading parties. (In recent federal elections this has been expressed by providing 'equitable' amounts of time to Liberal and Conservative politicians. Provincially, the two leading parties in the 1996 and 2001 elections were the NDP and the BC Liberals). Consequently, the practices of both the media and the political parties result in routine media exposure of the major political parties and especially of their leaders.

More surprising in this case study is finding that party leaders accounted for only about half of the quotes from political actors and only about 30% of quotes from the total number of sources. The previous studies had found that as a representation of news space and focus the leaders accounted for about 60% of all coverage (see for example Crete, 1991; Frizzell et al., 1989; Johnston et al., 1992; Soderlund et al., 1984). The dominance of news focus on the leaders certainly remains true of this data (and party and leader focus will be examined in the next chapter). Yet, while party leaders were the majority focus of the news accounts, they were not the majority of quoted sources, representing only about a third of the total source quotes in the election stories. Instead, it is the combined quotes of all 'political actors', rather than just the leaders, that accounts for approximately 60% of the source quotes in the coverage. Almost a third of the quotes from political actors came from other candidates, although only a small number of candidates were repeatedly used by the news media for comments. Thus, while previous research on news focus might suggest leaders are the primary focus, a more precise methodology that takes into account the actual quotes from leaders, as
Another intriguing finding is televisions news' use of *individuals* in their reports, representing over 25% of the total sources quoted (see Table 4-3) in the election reports, almost as much as the political *leaders*. While early studies on the sources in the media noted the lack of access of the ordinary or average person (Gans, 1980; Tuchman, 1978), this research suggests that individuals who are unaffiliated with institutional power have significant access to the news through their use as news sources. How significant this access is can be at least partially determined by examining about what they were quoted, and for how long. These findings will be discussed in the following sections. Importantly, this category of *individuals* is often easily accessed by the media, and is often popular since it conveys a populist image. It has the added bonus of being inexpensive to produce. While political actors are often eager to talk to the media, or at least get their message out, the reporter has to travel to where the politician is speaking, or to where a press conference or rally is taking place. It could involve days on a leader's tour travelling by bus or airplane at the media organization's expense. The use of individuals as sources, however, often only requires that the reporter walk out onto a street or into a restaurant to mingle with the public. Indeed, the number of "vox pop" sources far outstrips all other types of individual sources put together.

As Table 4-3 illustrated, fully 65% of the quotes from individuals came from (primarily) unnamed people on the street or in other public places responding to reporters' questions (the rest were named, and identified as, for example, a tenant/landlord, an employee/employer, a mother/father, etc). This inclusion of so many individual sources could be interpreted in a number of ways. As noted above, it could be seen as an inexpensive approach to getting quotes to fill in the news report and *tell the story through people*. Or it could be a genuine attempt on the part of the news organization to ascertain the public mood. Or, it could be that the quotes from ordinary people are used to represent what the reporter wants said. Regardless of the reason for the use, *vox pop* has clearly become a common tactic of constructing a news story about elections.

The appearance of elites who were not politicians is identified in this study by the two categories of *representatives* and *experts*. The relatively small number in each of these groups may be the result of distinguishing them from each and from the *political*
actors in the coding process. In fact, the combined totals of all elites (party leaders, candidates and 'elite supporters' from the political actors category, as well as representatives and experts) is high -- two thirds, or 66.3% of all sources -- compared to individuals not affiliated with organizations or credited with expertise. Both the representatives and the experts received approximately the same amount of air-time, although, as will be noted in the next section, they tended to be used in discussions of different topics.

There is another aspect of source use that is not explored in this data, and yet needs to be identified. Sources are also used in the news accounts without actually being quoted. These non-quoted references were not included in the overall discussion on sources above; however, their use should be noted. In some cases the source was an official one, such as statistics provided by BC Elections, the organization responsible for running elections in British Columbia, or, in one case, references from a court document in a story about a lawsuit. However, some use of non-quoted sources was referenced by television media in a way that implied they were official sources, yet warrant further exploration. The first non-quoted source is BC’s right-leaning think-tank, the Fraser Institute (FI). While throughout the campaign, representatives of the FI were quoted, primarily for perspectives on stories about economic issues in general and the need for tax cuts in particular, BCTV also used reports and statistics from the Fraser Institute to frame some of their stories. For example, on April 24 BCTV aired a graphic of statistics from the FI indicating its analysis on how large Gordon Campbell’s promised tax cuts would need to be to make BC have the lowest tax cuts in the country. This visual was shown on air for a full 33 seconds and was used as an assumed independent and neutral source. On the same day but in different story, BCTV used the FI’s controversial claims of “Tax Freedom Day” as the opening frame for a story about the need for tax cuts. In both cases, the Fraser Institute’s data was unquestioned and adopted by BCTV as the basis for the story.

In another example, all three of the private television stations unquestioningly used data from the anti-tax lobby group, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF), to compare the cost of promises from the three leading parties. In the first week of the campaign (April 20), BCTV claimed it was “keeping tabs on just how profligate they are with your tax dollars” and used the CTF’s calculations of the cost of promises. Global and VTV followed suit (Global on April 27 and May 14, and VTV on May 14), each using
a visual chart to "keep track" of the party promises. The totals indicated that the NDP's promises would cost "you, the taxpayer" the most (outlined as a per-person cost), the Greens would cost less, and the Liberals would be the cheapest government. It is clear that all of the stories were generated by press releases by the CTF; however, aspects of its unquestioned use are interesting. First, since none of the political parties had themselves costed their promises, it was unclear how the CTF's calculations were made, and none of the private stations provided information, or even questioned, that this may have a political (if not partisan) purpose. This also indicates that, while the CTF is known in Canada as a fiscally conservative right-wing interest group with a political agenda, their press release information was adopted by the news organization as if it constituted credible statistics from an independent expert, if not an official source. While further exploration of the content, form and framing use of non-quoted references (as well as quoted sources) necessitates a more qualitative look at the news discourse than this chapter undertakes, it does indicate that the use of non-quoted sources in election news is an area worthy of further research. 41

As a final comment on the findings about source-use in this case study, a few tentative conclusions can be made about the differences in frequency of the categories of sources used by the different television stations in their election news. On the one hand, the higher use of political actors by the CBC could be interpreted as the public network relying more on the easily accessible political actors for their news sources. On the other hand, it could be argued that the public broadcaster gave more attention to allowing the candidates to speak for themselves, rather than being paraphrased or interpreted by reporters. Of course, it would require far more in-depth research to determine if this was the case. However, there is also a noticeable trend of the CBC making significantly less use of the vox pop approach to news sources than the private stations, as well as their significantly higher percentage use of experts compared to all other networks (twice as much). This could reflect the editorial decision on the part of the CBC to provide more in-depth news stories. But it also demonstrates a larger reliance by the private stations on quotes from the street, indicating a greater populist orientation.

41 Chapter Six explores some implications of discourse analysis of this election news case study.
What Were They Quoted About? Sources & Topics

Background

In his notable work on television news production over twenty-five years ago, Herbert Gans made the following comment about news sources:

For my purpose... the most salient characteristic of sources is that they provide information as members of representatives of organized and unorganized interest groups.... (Gans, 1979; p. 80. Emphasis added)

This section explores the question: about which topics do the different categories of news sources provide information? Numerous studies on the role of news sources have suggested that news topics and sources have a mutually constitutive nature. For example, sources may act as “primary definers” of the meanings of events and issues (Hall et al., 1978), or may be understood as functioning as a “filter” in the process of news selection and production (see Herman & Chomsky, 1988). These and other studies argue that official and elite sources help to define what is credible, authoritative and objective information in the news, and how this hierarchy of accredited sources thus impacts content. This section provides some empirical data for exploring the relationship between sources and news topics in election stories.

Since there is a paucity of literature on the use of news sources in Canadian elections, there is a lack of empirical data on the interaction between sources and topics. One study found that during the Canadian federal election of 1988, not only were certain minority groups systematically excluded from the election discussions, but this tendency persisted even when the minority groups themselves were the focus of an important election issue (Saunders, 1991). For example, the author noted that 58% of the stories about ethnic issues cited no ethnic organizations, and the situation was even worse for disability groups. To further explore the interaction between source-use and news topics, a calculation was done, using the empirical data collected in this study, to determine in which types of stories the different categories of sources were quoted.

Findings

As previously noted fully 75% of the topics of news stories about this election were about the campaign itself, and only about 25% of the stories were devoted to election issues or policy topics. Consequently, it is not surprising to find that most of the sources were quoted in stories primarily about the campaign and not about issues. For
example, in stories where the primary topic was coded as an issue, political actors were used as sources almost 18% of the time (114 occurrences), compared to 82% (523 occurrences) that they were used as sources in campaign stories (see table 4-6 below). Political actors and their actions were themselves the focus of most of the election stories, and most political actors were used to represent this action, rather than to make substantive quotes about the election issues.

As well, both individuals and experts used as sources were quoted mostly for campaign stories as compared to issue stories. The only kind of source used more in issue stories than in campaign stories was the source coded as a “representative” of an organization, which included non-government advocacy groups, business or labour representatives, or institutional officials.

Table 4-6: Source Type by Topic Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Type</th>
<th>Political Actor n = 637</th>
<th>Individual n = 285</th>
<th>Expert n = 74</th>
<th>Representative n = 78</th>
<th>Other n = 13</th>
<th>Total n = 1087</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue Story</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign Story</td>
<td>82.1%</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: All stories had at least one topic type coded. Of the 341 total stories 300 used sources, and many stories had multiple sources (on average about 3.6 source per story). Thus, these numbers represent the total number of sources coded for every story. Note this count is for the number of sources, not the number of quotes. Each source may have had multiple quotes in a story, but is counted only once. Primary Topic Type refers to the dominant topic of all stories that used sources, i.e.: 300 stories.

Experts were mostly quoted in stories about the campaign as well. For example, experts were used as sources only 17.6% in stories coded as primarily about an issue, compared to more than 82.4% in stories about the campaign. This indicates that the vast majority of experts used as sources by the media were experts on election campaigns. Reviewing examples of the use of experts supports this suggestion. The experts used by the media were primarily political pundits. Other experts included pollsters, marketing professors, political science professors, and advertising professionals, who were asked to comment on various aspects of the campaign. For example, political analysts or “pundits” were repeatedly interviewed to explain the latest
poll findings and make predictions about the election results. Advertising professionals were asked their opinion about the parties' political advertising. A political science professor was asked to compare the party campaign strategies between the leading parties, and between elections. Hence, the dominant use of "expertise" was not to discuss the issues, but to discuss the campaign itself.

**Discussion**

These findings suggest particularly interesting implications about both the role of experts and the role of representatives in election news. Gans (1980) suggested that the "experts" in the news were not there as members of organized and unorganized groups, but as the most informed in a field of study or activity and therefore able to provide insight to the journalist and the audience. He outlined how their function in the news report, then, is to put events in a context, tell the audience what it "really means", or predict what will happen, while at the same time claiming neutrality and dispassion. Yet, in this case study, the overwhelming use of experts was to comment on political campaigning as opposed to issues.

While some commentary about the campaign from political "experts" can be expected (after all, the strategic process of electioneering is fascinating to many people, including journalists), what is surprising is that very few experts were used to discuss policy issues or topics. For example, the highest ranked issue topic for this election was health care. Yet, of the first three sources used in all of the stories that were primarily about health care, 51 sources in total, only two were coded as "experts". To be fair, there were also a small number of sources from the health profession: doctors', nurses', and unions' representatives were coded in these stories. However, due to the fact that the nurses were conducting job action at the time due to a break-down in collective bargaining, these quotes were primarily the result of the labour dispute making it into the election discourse, and consisted on comments about the effect of the nurse's job actions or the bargaining positions on the campaign, not on the issue of health care per se. In addition, within these health care stories, almost 60% of the quotes (30) were from political candidates, and a few (5) were from patients and their families. These data on source-use suggests that, while one of the most prominent issue topics in the election news was health, the content of health stories consisted of the political parties outlining their positions about health care, or their position on the nursing dispute, but
provided very little investigative research into the validity or implications of claims and comments.

Who was quoted more in stories about policy issues compared to stories about the campaign? As noted above, while both experts and representatives were used almost equally, the majority of representatives were used to comment in stories primarily about policy issues. Since most of this category was comprised of individuals who represented interest groups, one could presume that their views were representative of their interest group and could not be taken as an "independent" analysis of an issue. This is not to say that the views of interest groups are not valid, only that the news media appear to have relied primarily on "interested" representatives to provide information on issues – representatives who may have their own political agenda to discuss an issue – rather than independent experts. Indeed, the relative abandonment of issue discussions altogether, combined with the lack of expertise within the limited issue discussions, demonstrates how the television news media prefer to quote from organized interest groups when reporting on policy issues in an election, yet fails to provide information for voters to evaluate the various claims. Ironically, it is the news media who identify the experts as having some claim to greater knowledge of an issue, and less of a political or social agenda (except in the obvious case, here, of party pundits). Yet, while the claim of an expert's 'objectivity' may itself be suspect, it is noteworthy that the media does not use this expertise as much as they use representatives when exploring policy issues.

**Election 'Sound Bites': Quote Lengths & Amounts**

Who was quoted, and the topics about which they were quoted gives an impression of the dominant sources used in this television coverage of an election. However, it does not tell us if these quotes represented a small or large part of each story. Did the use of source quotes make substantive contributions to the story? Since television coverage is highly constrained by time, one indication of the importance of source-use is the amount of air-time devoted to source quotes, and the length of the quotes or "sound bites". This section asks the following questions: *How much time during the election stories was spend quoting sources? And how long were the quotes?*
Background

Studies have consistently shown that the length of the average sound bite on television news has been steadily shrinking for the last three decades. Drawing on 20 years of presidential elections in the US from 1968 to 1988, for example, Daniel Hallin (1992) found that the average sound bite had decreased from 43 seconds to less than 9 seconds. Writing in 1997, Hallin stated that:

"It has become common in recent years, as political commentators have discovered the sound bite, to hear people decry the 20-second sound bite. In fact, in 1988 only 4% of sound bites in the sample were that long. Twenty years before, nearly a quarter of all sound bites were a minute or longer, and it was not unusual to hear a major political figure speak for more than two minutes." (Hallin, 1997, p. 57)

The Canadian research on the shrinking length of election news sound bites supports the American findings. Gilsdorf and Bernier (1991) noted that the "30 second clip" of the 1979 Canadian federal election had been reduced to the "12 second sound bite" in 1988 in television coverage. Overall, studies have indicated that the length of all sound-bites in Canada fell from approximately 60 seconds in the 1960s to under 10 seconds in 1993 (Hackett & Hissey, 1996, p. 37). The implications of this reduction in quote lengths will be discussed in a later section. However, given the previous research, it was anticipated the length of sound bites in this case study would be consistent with previous findings and be less than 10 seconds in length.

Less researched is the overall length of time the television news relies on sources in their news stories. Indications from studies already mentioned above suggest that this reliance is significant (see for example Ericson et al., 1989; Hall et al., 1978; Manning, 2001). However, little empirical data were found on the overall length of time the news devoted to source quotes in general, and during election campaigns in particular, except in the case of quotes from political candidates. For example, one study looked at the overall amount of time devoted to quotes from politicians during elections, comparing the use of candidate "sound bites" in the UK and in the US over three campaigns in the 1980s (Semetko, 1991). The researchers used the definition of "actualities" to represent someone who is both seen on the news clip and heard speaking in a quote. They found that in Britain, over 33% of the time the main evening news devoted to the election was taken up by politicians actualities, or sound-bites, compared to an overage of only 11% of the election news time across all three of the US
networks studied (Semetko, 1991, p. 50). Although this study was done almost two decades ago, and considered the time devoted only to politician quotes (leaving out other types of sources completely), it demonstrated that British television news devoted more time to source quotes as a percentage of overall election news time than did its American television counterparts. Canadian studies have examined the amount of time political parties and their leaders were the focus of television time, but not the actual time devoted to their quotes. These studies will be reviewed in the next chapter. However, no Canadian studies of television election news coverage have calculated the overall length of time devoted to all sources quoted during newscasts. Thus, the data in this case study offer a benchmark for comparisons with future studies.

Method

Data were collected on the length of source-use by timing every quote and keeping track of each time every source was quoted in a news item. Thus, a total amount of time, and the average quote length was calculated for each source and each source category. In addition, since coders had indicated a distinction between news stories, analysis, and feature interviews when first coding the stories, it was possible to separate the time spent on quotes in the same way. For example, stories were coded as analysis if they were panel discussions by political pundits. Both panel discussions and feature interviews (primarily of the party leaders) rely on source quotes in a distinctly different way than the construction of the typical news story. By making this distinction between the types of stories, I was able to calculate the source-quote-times of all of the stories, as well as the source-quote-time of the news items only. The latter was done by removing the stories coded as analysis and feature interviews from the data set in order ascertain the length of source quotes found in the average news story. Thus, there were a number of options available when looking at the length of quotes.

Further, in counting and timing the quotes, a distinction was made between substantive and non-substantive quotes. This distinction was based on the manifest content of the quote. Sometimes an actor was used for an ambient or representative quote (e.g.: a politician waving to a crowd and saying “Hi everybody” is used as representation of the politician’s activities that day, and provides no manifest content).

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42 Note that all time calculations in this study are approximate only, since the taping equipment measured to the closest second, not to the more technically accurate tenth of a second. However, it remains a useful approximation of quote time, especially in relation to other variables, such as overall story time and percentages of time spent on topics.
and this was coded as a non-substantive quote. In most cases, however, sources were quoted making a comment about the election, their platform, an issue, etc (e.g.: a source shouting "BC Hydro is not for sale!") and this was coded as a substantive remark.

**Findings**

Table 4-7 below indicates the summary of data collected in this study regarding the number and length of quotes. These findings represent all sources that were used in the entire data set, i.e., from the day before the election call to the day before the election (April 17 to May 15, 2001). The total number of sources quoted was 1087, and each source was quoted anywhere from one to twenty-one times in the same story. This represents an average of 3.2 sources in each of the 341 story units. However, 41 stories used no sources at all, so that a total of 300 of the stories, representing 88% of the corpus, used sources. Thus, approximately 3.6 sources were used per story where source quotes were used.
Table 4-7: Data Summary for Source Calculations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data for All story types</th>
<th>April 17 – May 15, 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dates of corpus of study</td>
<td>April 17 – May 15, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Days in study</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of units in study</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of stories using source quotes</td>
<td>300 (88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of sources quoted</td>
<td>1,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of quotes (all story types)</td>
<td>1,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average # of sources per story using sources</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Corpus Time</td>
<td>51,536 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Source/Quote time</td>
<td>18,711 seconds (36.3% of total time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average time per source per story (multiple quotes)</td>
<td>17.2 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average substantive sound bite length per quote.</td>
<td>10.8 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average overall quote length (all story types &amp; quotes)</td>
<td>9.97 seconds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data for ‘News’ stories only

| Number of news stories                   | 314                     |
| Number of news stories using source quotes | 275                     |
| Total number of sources quoted in news stories | 1,017                  |
| Average # of sources per story using sources | 3.7                     |
| Total number of quotes                   | 1,688                   |
| Total Time for News Stories only         | 45,805 seconds          |
| News Story source/quote time             | 15,331 seconds (33.5% of total time) |
| Average time per source in news stories  | 15.07 seconds           |
| Average overall quote length in news stories | 9.08 seconds           |

Note: a specific source was not coded twice in the same story item, however the number of times they were quoted was recorded.

The total time sources were quoted in news stories was 18,711 seconds. This represents over one third (36.3%) of the total time of all election stories (51,536 seconds), and is illustrated in Figure 4-1 below. This total includes those stories that were feature interviews and/or panel interviews, which, as noted by Hallin (1992) have their own distinctive structure and thus do not apply to the notion of "sound bite". As noted above, a second calculation was done excluding these stories and is represented in Table 4-7 as the data for "news stories only". In the news stories the overall length of time quoting sources was 15,331 seconds of the total time devoted to news stories (45,805) representing almost one third of the news time at 32.8% (see Figure 4-2).
Figure 4-1: Amount of Source Time Compared to Total Air Time.

Figure 4-1 represents approximate total air time (in seconds) of the 29 days of newscasts, showing 36.3% devoted to source quotes.

Figure 4-2: Source Time x Total Time in "News" Items

Figure 4-2 represents the total air time (in seconds) of the units coded as "news stories", showing almost one third (32.8%) devoted to source quotes.

The quote lengths were also differentiated by quotes that were substantive in content and those that were merely representative or ambient, quotes. However, the amount of time spent on non-substantive quotes was less than 3%, indicating that these types of quotes were not plentiful.
By calculating both the number of times in a story unit a source was used, and the length of each quote, the average "sound bite" length was measured, as well as the break-down of substantive vs. non-substantive quotes. The average length of a quote was 9.97 seconds. However, this number includes all story types, including feature interviews, feature stories such as candidate profiles, and political panel discussions. When excluding feature and interview based stories the average length of quote used in a "news" story was only slightly less at 9.08 seconds.

The differences in length of quotes between the categories of sources can also indicate the relative importance attributed to source types. For example, Figure 4-3 (below) shows that the average length of a sound bite for the two most frequently quoted categories of sources was somewhat different. As noted previously (see table 4-1), political actors were quoted almost 60% of the time (58.6%), and had an average sound bite of 8.9 seconds. Individual voters were quoted about a quarter of the time (26%) but had an average sound bite of only 6.34 seconds, about two-thirds of that of political actors. The average length of sound bites for an expert was the longest at 13.4 seconds, and representatives were quoted on average for about 11.07 seconds. However, while their sound bites were longer, both experts and representatives were only used as sources in news stories at a frequency of about 7%. 
Discussion

The calculations from this case study show that fully one third of all election news was devoted to quotes from sources, and on average these quotes lasted less than 10 seconds. Thus, the expectation that the average sound bite would remain at less than 10 seconds is supported. However, it is interesting to note that the sound bites did not fall further below the 10-second mark, as the trajectory of previous studies of the 'shrinking sound bite' might have indicated. This finding suggests that there is a limit to the diminishing length of a quote as it is used in television news, possibly indicating the average length a quote needs to be in order for it to be comprehensible to a television audience. Perhaps the trend of the 'shrinking sound bite', at least in the Canadian news, has stalled.

Nevertheless, researchers have suggested that the emergence of the shorter sound bite has affected both the content and the tone of election news. Hallin (1992) has argued that television sound-bites have shifted the focus of news reports on election
campaigns from what the candidate is saying to what the journalist is saying about the candidate. Indeed, Hallin further argues that the shortened sound bite could be one of the key reasons for increased focus on political analysis and campaign stories and less media attention on the policy issues of an election. This strong connection between 'horse-race journalism' and 'sound bite journalism' is supported by his findings that "stories with high percentages of time devoted to horse-race themes tended to have short sound bites, while more issue-oriented stories tended to have longer ones" (Hallin 1992, p. 21).

Moreover, a shortened sound bite increases the discretionary role of the journalist in interpreting the quotes and campaign messages of candidates. A reporter's comments bracket a quote, surrounding the sound bite with interpretative explanations, thereby both wrapping around the quote and, eventually wrapping up the story. Thus,

...the modern news story is much more journalist-centered than its predecessor: the journalist, not the candidate or other "news-maker" (a term that seems increasingly inadequate as the making of news has become more interactive), is the primary communicator. (Hallin 1992, p. 11)

Other studies have supported this view. Semetko (1991) noted that, in comparison to British television coverage of elections, the US news reports emphasized "snappy and simplistic" quotes, shorter sound bites, less overall time devoted to source quotes than British television coverage, and more journalistic interpretation of what the source was saying (p. 50). In particular, she noted that journalists in the United States were more likely to make a comment in stories that either "reinforced" or "deflated" the message of the candidate. In her view, then, the shorter sound bite and fewer candidate quotes represents a style of journalism that undermines the substantive content of election stories.

In addition, there is evidence that "sound bite news" has affected the journalist-source relationship in election campaigns. The messages that a politician delivers to the public are covered in very short and simplified sound bites, sometimes consisting of only a single quoted sentence. This "message" is then used in television news to symbolically represent the whole campaign strategy or platform of the candidate. The reliance on sound bites reduces the ability of candidates to communicate any real policy content to voters and instead limits the impact or focus to one of image, rather than issues. In this way, reporter commentary and "wrap ups" of what was said have
replaced the political campaign messages and election news coverage has shifted to a more mediated, journalist-centred content. Some have suggested that this tendency has driven political candidates to seek other ways of communicating that allow them to speak directly to the voters (Hallin, 1994, p. 134). In particular, politicians and their advisors have had to adjust their campaign strategies to adopt shorter, snappier quotes that will be easier for the television to air, and have begun to rely more on web site and campaign material to publicize their policy platforms.

While the sound bite for political candidates and politicians has shrunk, it is important to note that there are differences between the length of a quote of an "elite" and the length of a quote from an ordinary person. For example, Hallin noted that:

In 1968, the average sound bite for candidates and other elites was 48.9 seconds; for ordinary voters it was 13.6. By 1988 the gap had narrowed to 8.9 seconds for elites and 4.2 for voters. Non-campaign coverage shows the same declining gap between elites and nonelites. (Hallin, 1992, p. 12).

The results from this study are similar. The average sound bite for elites (candidates and other institutionally attached sources including experts and representatives) in this study was 11.12 seconds while the sound bite for an individual voter was 6.34. Therefore, while the news media may be increasingly mediating the messages of politicians and candidates, and increasing the use of ordinary citizens in their coverage, this does not result in greater voter input into the news stories, as some journalists and researchers have suggested. This study demonstrates that while the amount of 'ordinary people' in the television news of the election represents about one quarter of all sources, most quotes from voters are relegated to mere representations of a viewpoint or an issue, primarily to reinforce a story-line, rather than being part of the actual debate on issues. Indeed, on average, they are not quoted long enough to provide any significant or useful comment on the election or the election issues. In this way, vox pop, or the 'voice of the people', appears to be used merely as "evidence of the public gaze" (Langer, 1998, p. 63).

Regardless of the implications of the shortened sound-bite, the findings of this and other studies of news quotes suggests a paradox. Source quotes account for a relatively large amount of television news time (fully one third of on-air time in this case study) which indicates that sources may exert significant influences on news content. Yet, the 'less than 10 second' sound bite, and its accompanying trend in journalistic
mediation of a source's comment, supports a conflicting conclusion -- that perhaps journalists rely on sources, at least in part, to symbolically (rather than substantively) represent the story they have already chosen to tell. The next section explores in more detail the contradictory evidence of the role of sources in news content.

Further Discussion: Sources, Content & Power

Does it really matter who is quoted in the news, about what, and for how long? After all, common sense would suggest that the news media have a story to tell, and they go to the sources who can give them the information they need to help them tell that story. On one level, who is in the news should be obvious: they are the newsmakers -- those people who, by their actions, positions, or perspectives, have useful information to give to the news media and through them, to the public. In elections, the main sources are the political leaders and candidates seeking office. Moreover, not only are politicians the ones most quoted, they are also the very focus of the election topics. They are the story. Others who are quoted -- the average voters, the experts and the elites -- are there primarily to give context to what is, arguably, the main focus of election news: the winning or losing of a government.

Yet, while it may appear self-evident who the newsmakers are, research has found that there is a discernible, if not problematic pattern to the use of news sources, and that this has an effect on both the content and the interpretation of news discourse. Studies into the practices of newswork, for example have suggested that the pattern of source-use in news is an indication that news is a conversation between the powerful with the rest of us merely observers (Fishman, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). Others have argued news is primarily a product of the interaction between reporters and their sources. For example, a group of Canadian sociologists extensively studied the use of sources in crime stories and concluded that:

The primary source of reality for news is not what is displayed or what happens in the real world. The reality of news is embedded in the nature and type of social and cultural relations that develop between journalists and their sources, and in the politics of knowledge that emerges on each specific news beat. (Ericson et al., 1989, p. 377. Emphasis added).

To be sure, Ericson et al.'s work (1987 and 1989) focused on crime stories, and while it does indeed provide evidence that sources control the news of deviance, as represented in crime stories, it is important to recognize that other types of stories may not access
the same sources in the same ways. Moreover, the above quote from the researchers doesn't address the importance of the economic realities and relations in both the news discourse and the journalist-source relationship. Nonetheless, the work of these researchers, and others, is representative of the view that there is a strong constructive relationship between news content and news sources.

Others have argued that not only does the journalist-source relationship affect news content, it also has a dominant influence on news frames. News media have been shown to have an orientation towards "primary definers" — those official sources associated with powerful positions or institutions, such as law enforcement, government, and representative interest groups. Hall et al. (1978) argued that the relationship between sources and journalists results in those with the most power in society setting the terms of the debate, or the "primary definition" of an issue or event, within which all other interpretations must conform. This view notes that the news media are grounded in "objective" statements, quoted from "authoritative" institutions represented by "accredited" sources. Later research confirms much of the original work. Hackett (1985), for example, found similar patterns in Canadian television news, and noted that not only do sources from powerful institutions define the terms of debate, they are also afforded "higher status modes" such as being filmed in offices. Thus, sources are not just the result of media routines, but also of power structures.

Within the above views of dominant source-use, the recurring theme is that the structured hierarchy of access by elite sources to news discourse results in the framing of news content that favours the powerful. As Curran (2000) has noted:

The media's role is never solely confined to imparting information, but necessarily involves arbitrating between the discursive frameworks of rival groups. Which frameworks are included or excluded matters, because over time it can affect collective opinion and indirectly, the allocation of social resources in society. (p. 138)

In this way, the news media's use of sources contributes to the media's ideological role in the power structures in our society.

Another example, though arguably cruder version of the primary definer thesis, can be found in Herman and Chomsky (1988). The authors described the media's use of elites as sources is one the five filters on news content, as outlined in their 'propaganda model' (p. 18). Herman and Chomsky noted that "expert" sources are created by various elites institutions (such as governments, corporations and "think
tanks') with the purpose of providing a steady flow of easily accessible material to the
news media and, as a result, influence news content (pp. 18-23). While there are useful
critiques of the propaganda model, examples abound of business and interest groups
successfully and unsuccessfully using the news media to "get their message out".

While the "primary definer" view of the role of sources has been a dominant one
in critical perspectives, it has not gone without challenges and corrections. Gans (1979)
suggested that rather than a linear process of journalists using information from sources
and transmitting it to audiences, the process is more circular. He outlined a "large
number of feedback loops" that inform the journalist-source relationship, including
journalists' choice of the sources they consider "suitable" for their news organization's
audiences, resulting in what Gans suggests is "closer to being a tug of war than a
functionally interrelated" system (p. 80).

Perhaps the most influential challenge to Hall et al.'s 1979 model was raised by
Phillip Schlesinger (1990). He argued that the "primary definer" view of news sources is
far too simplistic a model since it does not recognize, among other things, the conflicts
between competing elites, the role of "off the record" sources, the news media's
challenges to the primary definers, and news workers' role in creating their own stories
(albeit a small number of stories). In particular, two of Schlesinger's criticisms are
especially relevant to this discussion. He argued that the "primary definer" theory of
source-roles in news does not recognize the possibility that different "primary definers"
may enjoy a differential access to news media discourse. In addition, he criticized the
model for its a-temporal or a-historical perspective; in other words, one that assumes a
permanence of source roles; for example, it does not account for changes in source use
and credibility over time (p. 66). He noted how the major empirical studies on the
sociology of journalism – those researchers who have looked at the practices and
routines of newswork, such as Tuchman (1978) and Fishman (1980) – "shied away"
from the primary definer model and recognized that some groups have better access
than others (p. 76). Yet, Schlesinger argued that this differential access by sources, as
well as their motivation and actions, have been under-researched in communications
studies. He proposed a model for further research on news sources that is less "media-
centric" and instead looks at the strategic actions of sources (for example, how they
pressure journalists, when they are successful at wielding influence etc). He suggested
that news sources were not primary definers that were structurally determined. Rather,
he described news sources as *political entrepreneurs* who seek to achieve the position of defining the news frame for strategic purposes, but do not always succeed.

The existence of the manufacture of elite sources by some interest groups can be demonstrated in this case study by the media’s use of the Fraser Institute as an ‘expert’ source. Unlike other representative groups, such as the BC Federation of Labour or the environmental group the Suzuki Foundation, the Fraser Institute researchers and their work were presented as “experts” disseminating impartial information. Furthermore, while the Fraser Institute has been repeatedly criticized for its own massaging of the “facts” to meet its own political bias and economic fundamentalist agenda, it has devoted large resources and accumulated massive successes in influencing the nature of the debate on public policy issues in the mainstream news.

Other interests groups have also found some success. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, for example, the “new generation” of environmental campaigners such as Greenpeace International or the World Wildlife Fund, actively targeted the mass media as a method for increasing political activism and creating support, using highly sophisticated media-oriented campaigns, and a keen understanding of television’s news values (Manning, 2001, pp. 185-189). These “green spin doctors” used various methods of gaining news time, including creating visual political spectacles for television (media stunts, direct action, and public protests), providing credible and accessible environmental experts for media commentary, and developing permanent information-providing relationships with journalists. According to some studies, by the 1990s, many environmental organizations had achieved a position of mainstream authority as a source in the news media, allowing them a platform for their own research and interests (p. 194). To be sure, these positions of authority from outside the “official” institutional sources remain fragile, and can change over time. One media organizaiton’s environmentalist can be another’s eco-terrorist, depending on the interest group’s tactics, message, or the unique situation. Still, while their success is contingent on adopting a mainstream message and unoffending tactics, their shift from a purely marginalized group to one of intermittent credibility indicates that a source’s credibility can increase over time.

In contrast, others have noted that the role of trade unions as sources has shifted in the opposite direction. While Hall and his co-authors suggested that trade unions
were one of the elite "primary definers" in 1978, other more recent studies have shown that this capacity has been dramatically eroded, to a position where trade unions now operate within a hostile media environment and are rarely used to define the debate (Manning, 2001, pp. 171-180). Not only does this indicate the need to recognize the fluidity and shifting nature of the role of news sources, but also suggests a structural and cultural shifts in source credibility.

Moving to the research on election studies, for example, a study of the Canadian federal election of 1988 found that not only were certain minority groups systematically excluded from the election discussions, but that this tendency persisted even when the groups themselves were the focus of an important election issue (Saunders, 1991). The author noted that 58% of the stories about ethnic issues cited no ethnic organizations, and the situation was even worse for disability groups. The dominant tendency in news media, she concludes, is to subordinate already marginalized groups, and that this restriction of source representation narrows the debate, and therefore "one's view of the electoral landscape and of the participants and interest within it" (Saunders, 1991, p. 275). This absence of minority group representation in news content has persisted over time. Thus, while the credibility and frequency of news sources from some groups may change over time (as in the case of environmentalists and trade unions), that of other others may stay persistently marginal. Moreover, institutionalized sources may also remain dominant, albeit not completely unquestioned. Official sources, like those used in crime stories (police, courts) are rarely challenged as sources of information about crime. Political actors, especially elected politicians, are generally accredited higher status due to their position, unless it is during an election campaign, or they have become the focus of a political scandal. As well, most elite sources, be they official, political, expert or representative, employ media liaison methods (timely responses to media requests, press releases, 'flack' for negative stories), and/or professional spokespersons (communications and public relations officers) to represent their interests in the news. To be sure, the increased use of media strategies to 'market' politicians, in the last decade, is an oft-heard complaint by journalists who resent these attempts at manipulation and respond to them with counter-strategies.

Much of the recent literature on elections studies in Canada agrees with the view that, at least in the case of elections, the news media are secondary definers in setting

the election agenda compared to the political parties (see for example Attallah, 2004; Attallah & Burton, 2001; Dornan, 1997; Johnston et al., 1992). Rather than the media using political sources, it is argued that the political sources use the news media. Political journalists are both manipulated by political actors and simultaneously struggle against such manipulation in a negotiation of control that has been described as a "dance of the dialectic" between journalists and politicians (Gilsdorf & Brenier, 1991, p. 15). In this way, both the political actors and the political journalists each try to control the issue agenda and messages of the campaign news, with the political actors having the upper hand.

Election studies work in Canada has suffered from an unquestioned belief in the power of media sources, as suggested by Schlesinger (1990). It certainly is true that media strategists from all political parties use sophisticated media tactics in order to influence news content and "get their message out". Indeed, the importance of the mass media as the primary source of political information for voters requires nothing less. Yet some of these sources are successful in capturing the media agenda and some are not. Why is it that some powerful political sources fail to influence the media agenda altogether? In which situations are the messages of dominant political sources adopted by the news media and when are they not? Election studies in Canada have a tendency to conclude that the successful dominance of one political party's message in a medium, at the expense of a competing party's, is the result of a superior media strategy and nothing more. And too often, this primary definer model of the journalist-source relationship has not differentiated between the dominant sources, and considered which ones are used as sources, when, and under what circumstances. Thus, while election studies may have recognized, as Schlesinger did, that some sources are able to utilize the media to enhance their agenda, they have failed to examine the conditions when this is successful and when it is not, and what this means to democratic communications.

The questions regarding the role of sources in news remain. Do the news media employ authoritative sources to frame the parameters of a media debate? Are sources mere representations of an aspect of a story already selected by journalists? Or do various authoritative and powerful news sources employ various tactics, in order to influence and manipulate the news media to represent their views as dominant and/or newsworthy, with varying degrees of success? The answer is: it depends. It depends on the source, the topic and the type of story. Certainly, as the discussion above has
indicated, the journalistic-source relationship is a complex one, and likely even more so during elections. While political elites may indeed frame issue debates at times, during an election they appear to lose their 'official status' and are seen more as competitors (albeit elite ones) than authoritative voices in the political debate. Moreover, as noted above, they themselves are the topic of the story. Whether they are quoted discussing issues, or more often, quoted as representations of the campaign horse-race, their status is significantly different than either the primary definer, or media manipulator views can accommodate. A far more complex and situation-specific model of source use in election studies must be developed in order to explore these questions.

The manifest nature and discursive use of all types of sources is an integral part of understanding news reports about elections. Patterns of source use is a unique way to view both the state of public knowledge about parliamentary politics, and, ultimately, *power relations* in the public discourse about election campaigns and politics in general. It is clear that further research needs to more fully explore the complexities and various conditions of source-use in election news in Canada, and election studies could benefit from a perspectives that sees elections as much an exercise in communications as it is one of politics.
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS - POLITICAL PARTIES

This chapter explores the coverage of the political parties and their leaders in the television reports about the BC election of 2001. To do so, this chapter answers the following questions: How often were the various leaders and their parties the focus of the news stories? Were there differences among the four stations? And, were there discernible patterns of coverage connecting the parties with the story topics and the sources quoted in the news stories? The chapter also explores the news media's treatment of party leaders in the "feature interviews" conducted in the course of the election. The chapter is divided into three sections. This first section expands upon the brief summary of the historical context of provincial political parties and elections in British Columbia, found in the Introduction. In particular, I look more closely at the distinctive left/right split that has dominated BC politics for over eighty years. Next, the chapter reviews the methods and findings of the content analysis of the television news coverage during the 2001 provincial election, and how it applies to party coverage. This includes findings on the relative occurrences of the parties and their leaders in news stories, an overview of the data on the parties in relation to news topics and news sources, a review of the television reports of the polls conducted during the election, and a look at the content of the "feature interviews" with the major party leaders. The final section of this chapter discusses the findings in the larger context of political parties and the news media.

Contextualizing BC politics

In this dissertation, I have adopted the view that elections are as much an exercise in political communication as they are in political ideologies. Yet, I also recognize that all communications must be seen within the social and political contexts within which they occur. As noted in the introduction, elections are conducted against an historical background of shifting relationships between political parties and their
followers, changing social environments, historical conventions, and idiosyncratic personalities. The specific contexts in British Columbia have been the source of much commentary by political scientists, who have traced the political and partisan history in far more thorough a manner than can be accomplished here (Carty, 1996; Johnston, 1996; Morley et al., 1983). In particular, many authors have commented on a unique situation of a BC electorate historically divided into a right/left polarity, represented by, on the one side, the CCF/NDP (the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, later renamed the New Democratic Party), and on the other side, a coalition of self-described “free enterprise” interests banding together under various party names to fight off the threat of the “socialists” (Blake, 1985 and 1996; Fisher & Mitchell, 1996; Mitchell, 1987; Palmer, 1987; Young, 1983). Within this history, four major parties have had the largest electoral impact in BC political history: the Liberal Party (“Liberals”), Conservative party (“Conservatives”), the Social Credit party (“Socreds”) and the already mentioned CCF-turned-NDP.

While the political history of British Columbia is far outside the scope or topic of this dissertation, it is useful to offer some contextualizing data on the electoral history and patterns as a source of comparison for this election study. To do so, I created the following two Tables 5-1 and 5-2 in order to explore the historical voting patterns in British Columbia since 1928, the first year the election was run along the lines of party identification. All of the data used to create these tables were found in official Elections BC reports. In particular, two reports by the BC Elections Chief Electoral Officer were used: the Electoral History of British Columbia 1871-1986 (1988), and the Electoral history of British Columbia: supplement, 1987 – 2001 (2002).

A few comments on how to read the tables would no doubt be helpful. The tables are to be read concurrently, with Table 5-1 representing the period from 1928 to 1960, and Table 5-2 representing the period from 1963 to 2001. Along the top of each table is a column title representing every year there was a provincial general election in British Columbia, and the total number of seats in the legislature at the time of that

44 The phrase “political ideologies” is used here as is commonly used by political scientists, as a representation of party beliefs and policies. An alternative use and meaning of the term ideology in critical studies has been outlined in chapter one.
45 This was the first election that BC Elections reports the party affiliations as being “reliable”. Prior to this, candidates may have identified as being affiliated with federal parties, but most candidates ran as “government”, “opposition” or “independents”. See Elections BC, Electoral History of British Columbia 1871-1986 (1988).
46 Both publications can be found in pdf format on the Elections BC website at: www.electionsbc.ca.
election. Along the left side of the tables is a list of the major political parties in BC in bold, with the minor political parties listed afterwards. Any party that ever received either 1% of the overall provincial vote, or elected a member to the legislature at any time during 1928 to 2001, is included in these tables, while the rest are combined under the general category of "others". The tables indicate the percentage of the provincial vote received by every party at every general election, with the number of seats won by each party included in parentheses. In addition, the shaded sections of the results for the major parties indicates, at a glance, which party won the election and created government.
Table 5-1: BC Election Results, by Party (Percentage of Vote & Seats won) Part I : 1928-1960

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<td><strong>Major Parties</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative IPC</td>
<td>53.3% (35)</td>
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<td>28.6% (8)</td>
<td>30.91% (12)</td>
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<td>9.66% (4)</td>
<td>1.11% (1)</td>
<td>3.11% (1)</td>
<td>6.72%</td>
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<td>Coalition</td>
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<td>55.83% (37)</td>
<td>61.35% (39)</td>
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<td>Liberals</td>
<td>40.04% (12)</td>
<td>41.74% (34)</td>
<td>37.34% (31)</td>
<td>32.94% (21)</td>
<td>3% (1)</td>
<td>25.26% (6)</td>
<td>23.36% (4)</td>
<td>21.77% (2)</td>
<td>20.90%</td>
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<td>Social Credit(^51)</td>
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<td>1.15% (7)</td>
<td>1.42% (7)</td>
<td>1.21% (10)</td>
<td>30.16% (19)</td>
<td>45.54% (28)</td>
<td>45.84% (39)</td>
<td>38.83% (32)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCF(^52)/NDP</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>31.53% (7)</td>
<td>28.57% (7)</td>
<td>33.36% (14)</td>
<td>37.62% (10)</td>
<td>35.10% (7)</td>
<td>34.30% (18)</td>
<td>29.48% (14)</td>
<td>28.32%</td>
<td>32.73%</td>
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<td><strong>Minor Parties</strong></td>
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<td>Constructive Party</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
<td>1.01% (2)</td>
<td>7.74% (3)</td>
<td>1.76% (1)</td>
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<td>.74% (1)</td>
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<td>Ind. Conservative</td>
<td>1.87%</td>
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<td>Labour/Ind. Labour</td>
<td>4.95% (1)</td>
<td>.62% (1)</td>
<td>.43% (1)</td>
<td>1.57% (1)</td>
<td>.28% (1)</td>
<td>.21% (1)</td>
<td>.26% (1)</td>
<td>.27% (1)</td>
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<td>Labour Progressive</td>
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<td>Unionist Party</td>
<td>4.05% (1)</td>
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<td>United Front</td>
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<td>Others(^54)</td>
<td>10.19% (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>99.3%</td>
<td>98.94%</td>
<td>99.78%</td>
<td>98.78%</td>
<td>98.67%</td>
<td>98.61%</td>
<td>99.66</td>
<td>99.76</td>
<td>99.2</td>
<td>99.18</td>
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\(^47\) First election to use the alternative voting system, where voters ranked all the candidates in order of preference, and the candidate with the least number of votes would be dropped until someone had a clear majority.

\(^48\) Last election to use the alternative voting system.

\(^49\) The Conservative Party did not formally contest this election. Candidates split into Independents, Independent Conservatives, Unionists and Non-Partisans.

\(^50\) After this election, the Liberals and Conservatives created a Coalition government. The Liberal leader T.D. Pattullo however, refused to sit as a coalition member. He was removed as Liberal leader by his party, and sat as an independent Liberal, leaving the Coalition government with 32 seats.

\(^51\) The Social Credit began as the Social Credit League of BC but by 1952 became the Social Credit and were unofficially known as the “Socreds”.

\(^52\) Refers to the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation.

\(^53\) Includes Conservatives who ran as independents in this election.

\(^54\) Parties with less than 1% of the vote in the election, including: Conservative Independents, Social Credit League, Communist Party, Reform, Western Reform, and independents, among others.
### Table 5-2: BC Election Results, by Party (Percentage of Vote & Seats won) Part II : 1960 - 2001

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<tr>
<td>(Total Seats)</td>
<td>52</td>
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<td>57</td>
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<td>79</td>
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<td><strong>Major Parties</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative/PC</td>
<td>11.27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberals</td>
<td>19.98%</td>
<td>20.24%</td>
<td>19.03%</td>
<td>16.40%</td>
<td>7.24%</td>
<td>.47%</td>
<td>2.69%</td>
<td>6.74%</td>
<td>33.25%</td>
<td>41.82%</td>
<td>57.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Credit&lt;sup&gt;56&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>40.63%</td>
<td>45.59%</td>
<td>46.79%</td>
<td>31.16%</td>
<td>49.23%</td>
<td>48.23%</td>
<td>49.76%</td>
<td>49.32%</td>
<td>24.05%</td>
<td>(33)</td>
<td>(77)</td>
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<td>(33)</td>
<td>(33)</td>
<td>(38)</td>
<td>(10)</td>
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<td>(47)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDP - New Democrats</td>
<td>27.80%</td>
<td>33.62%</td>
<td>33.92%</td>
<td>39.59%</td>
<td>39.16%</td>
<td>45.99%</td>
<td>44.94%</td>
<td>42.60%</td>
<td>40.71%</td>
<td>39.45%</td>
<td>21.57%</td>
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<td>(14)</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(38)</td>
<td>(26)</td>
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<td>(51)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minor Parties</strong></td>
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<td>Green</td>
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<td>1.99%</td>
<td>12.39%</td>
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<td>Marijuana</td>
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<td>3.22%</td>
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<td>PDA&lt;sup&gt;57&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>5.74%(1)</td>
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<td>Reform</td>
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<td>9.27%(2)</td>
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<td>Unity</td>
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<td>3.23%</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>99.88%</td>
<td>99.45%</td>
<td>99.74%</td>
<td>99.82%</td>
<td>99.51%</td>
<td>99.75%</td>
<td>98.55%</td>
<td>98.66%</td>
<td>98.01%</td>
<td>98.27%</td>
<td>99.99%</td>
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*NOTES: All data from BC Elections documents. 1928 is the 17<sup>th</sup> general election in BC but the first where party affiliations were generally reliable. Prior to that party affiliation was not required or was only required in Vancouver/Victoria riding. The 1993 was the first provincial election to be fought along federal party lines; i.e.: Conservative and Liberals, but party affiliation, according to the source, was imprecise. Prior to this political lines were drawn between "government" and "opposition" or as independents. Only parties that received at least 1% of the popular vote have been included in this table, unless they won a legislative seat, in which case they are included regardless of the vote percentage. Shaded sections represent who formed government.*

<sup>55</sup> First election after the CCF changed its constitution and its name to the New Democratic Party (NDP).

<sup>56</sup> Ousted Liberal leader Gordon Wilson created his own party, the Progressive Democratic Alliance (PDA) for the 1996 election. He later joined the NDP after winning his seat.
As Tables 5-1 and 5-2 show, the early days of party politics in BC began in the 1920s, with the Liberals and Conservatives vying for provincial power. Both of these major parties were parallels of their respective federal parties at the time, containing much the same policies and membership as their federal counterparts. The Conservatives held power until 1933 when the Liberals wrestled success from them garnering 34 of 47 seats. Liberals then remained in power for eight years, although they lost seats with each subsequent election. Some political scientists have argued that the history of the two-party dominant system began in British Columbia in the election of 1933, with the formation of, and subsequent support for, the newly created socialist party, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation - the CCF (Fisher & Mitchell, 1996; Young, 1983). While the Liberals remained in power for those eight years from 1933 to 1942, the CCF's popularity grew until by 1941 they had become the official opposition.

After the 1941 election the Liberals and Conservatives banded together under a Coalition party. Some authors have argued that, “despite appearances to the contrary, the coalition was not designed as an instrument to contain the left” since the CCF was also initially invited to join the all-party coalition, presumably to present a united legislature during the second world war (Blake, 1996, p. 70). However, the CCF refused to join, and by the 1945 election the province's governing parties, and the anti-communism of the times, had transformed the “non-left” into the “anti-left” (Blake, 1996, p. 70), and the polarity of BC politics was solidified. As one commentator put it, “[p]arty politics then became largely a matter of keeping the right sufficiently united in order to keep the left out” (Young, 1983, p. 85).

By the 1952 election, the Coalition was dissolved because of various political and personal tensions between the Liberals and the Conservatives, (Fisher and Mitchell 1996). Before the dissolution, however, the Coalition government had introduced an alternative ballot system that hoped to ensure that, while the Liberals and Conservatives were now running their own candidates, the voters “second choices” would go to each other's candidates and thereby still ensure the CCF did not gain power. However, by then W.A.C. Bennett had abandoned the Conservatives and became leader of the fledgling Social Credit party, and subsequently attracted most of the Conservative and Liberal votes. Thus, 1952 marked the first Social Credit government (albeit a minority one) in British Columbia.
The only successful challenge to the Social Credit dynasty over the next 35 years, was mounted by the NDP under Dave Barrett, who won the 1972 election and reigned for three years (1972-1975). By the 1980s the Socreds were described as

...not only a self-identified champion of free enterprise but also the party that had successfully defended British Columbia from the depredations of socialism for twenty years. (Young, 1983, p. 84)

During the "Socred era", the diminished Liberal and Conservative Parties never regained their status as major parties in BC until the 1991 election. Before then, both parties continued to run candidates in elections, and would sometimes win a few seats. The Liberals were more successful at this than the Conservatives, (winning up to six seats in 1952 and 1966) by appealing to the big city vote and the "intelligensia" while the Socreds ruled in small towns (W.A.C. Bennett was from the interior town of Kelowna) and was mostly supported by the business sector.

In their first election in 1933, the CCF won 31.53% of the popular vote in their first election, although the party only won 7 of the 47 legislative seats. Prior to that time there had been little electoral action in BC on the part of the political left. The CCF performed well in the next 9 elections (until 1960), with a popular vote as high as 37.62% in 1945, and as many seats as 18 (out of 52) in 1952. This support came primarily from the small resource communities and areas of heavy industrialization, such as the Kootenays, the north, east Vancouver and central Vancouver Island. In 1960 the party convention changed the constitution of the party and the name to the New Democratic Party (NDP) and the party ran in 1963 for the first time under the new banner, garnering 27.8% of the popular vote and 14 of the 52 seats. After that election, the popular vote for the New Democrats climbed to a high in 1972 with almost 40% of the vote, and 38 out of 55 seats, resulting in the minority government under Dave Barrett. Ten years later, a noted BC political scientist argued that the NDP win was the result of "marginal changes in votes produc[ing] major changes in party strength in the legislature" (Young, 1983, p. 83).

While their popular vote remained respectable in the next election (39%), the New Democrats lost the 1979 election to the renewed Social Credit Party, united under W.A.C. Bennett's son Bill Bennett. The Social Credit successfully drew the Liberal vote, dropping the Liberal Party from a high of 16% in the 1972 election to only 7% in the 1979 election. The "the socialists at the door" warning was a familiar refrain by 1979, and the strategy was an obvious feature of the electoral success of the Socreds. While New
Democrat electoral support rose as high as almost 46% over the next few elections, the Socreds remained in government with a slightly higher popular vote and a continued dominance of the right.  

The Socred party collapsed in the 1991 election after their new leader, Bill Vander Zalm’s, numerous political scandals and subsequent resignation. The Socreds only won 7 seats, paving the way for a rekindling of the BC Liberals. Under then leader Gordon Wilson, the BC Liberals rose from a showing of less than 7% of the vote in the previous election, to 33% and 17 members out of 72 in 1991. But it was the NDP under leader Mike Harcourt who gained the most, and formed government for only the second time in BC’s history. Later, the Socreds changed their name to the BC Reform party in an attempt to echo the successes of a party with the same name (Reform Party of Canada). However, the new BC Reform party continued to lose members and supporters to the Liberals.

The NDP’s electoral win in 1991 can be seen in Table 5-2 as again accompanied by the right-of-centre split in the popular vote, and while it was no surprise that the New Democrats became the governing party, the success of the BC Liberals to form the official opposition was an “astonishment” even to the seventeen Liberals elected (Ruff 1996, 5). As the support for the Socreds collapsed, the right-of-centre vote moved to the Liberals in droves. By the 1996 election, BC politics was quickly returning to a “reconfigured two-party system” comprised of the traditional NDP support and the revitalized BC Liberals under the new leader – ex-mayor of Vancouver Gordon Campbell. Indeed, part way through the election the floundering Social Credit leader, Larry Gillanders, withdrew his candidacy, urging his other candidates to do the same, “to allow voters to opt for the free-enterprise candidate best able to defeat the NDP” (Ruff, 1996, p. 16). Regardless of how much effect the move had, the BC Liberal Party won 41.82% of the popular vote (to the NDP’s 39.45 %) but secured only thirty-three seats to the NDP’s thirty-nine. NDP Premier Glen Clark, who had replaced Mike Harcourt at the helm of the party after Harcourt had to step down due to a party financing scandal, squeaked into power. Many, including media commentators and political pundits, saw this as a huge loss for Gordon Campbell.

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58 According to Stan Persky (1983) this was accomplished with allegedly a little electoral reform "gerrymandering".
By 1999, Clark was himself under investigation, this time for alleged influence peddling. He was forced to resign and was replaced as leader in the fall of 2000 by popular NDP Attorney General Ujjal Dosanjh. By the 2001 election, the NDP were low in the polls, and were tainted by scandals. At the same time, disaffected NDP supporters were showing substantial interest in the Green Party. The newly energized Liberals won the 2001 election by a landslide. The split in the NDP vote saw about 12% go to the Greens while the NDP held onto almost 22% of the popular vote. Indeed, together, the Greens and NDP collected almost 34% of the vote, but the combination of a split on the left and the unification of the right resulted in only two New Democrat seats remaining in the legislature. The Greens did not win a single seat.

Political Polarity in BC.

This brief review demonstrates a consistent historical division in the BC electorate. From reviewing the electoral successes, it appears that when a strong coalition of the centre-right and the conservative-right vote existed (usually under the banner of a single party) it won elections. However, when there was an electoral split among the various centre-right (liberal) and right-wing parties, the NDP has been successful. Some have referred to this as a persistent polarity within BC politics between left and right (Blake, 1996; Carty, 2001) while others have suggested that polarity is over-stated (Fisher & Mitchell, 1996; Ruff, 1996). Indeed, the polarization between left and right in BC has been described as "more rhetorical and polemic than reasoned and substantive", and yet one that has "long fuelled the political dynamic of the province" (Carty, 2001, p. 7).

The data in Tables 5-1 and 5-2 support the contention of a relatively consistent left/right split in BC, and a historical pattern of voting that began with the introduction of the CCF and remains to this day. Consequently, past experience suggests that the NDP were unlikely to win the 2001 election regardless of the political scandals or policy issues that plagued it during the election campaign, simply because the various conservative parties had united under a BC Liberal banner led by Gordon Campbell. Arguably, the unpopularity of the Clark government could have been what provoked a visceral reaction on the right, which made it easier to unite. However, the Liberal's 1996 loss was also a motivating factor.

Further, the additional dynamic of a split on the 'left' as the Green Party emerged as a political electoral force was what made the defeat so devastating for the NDP. If combined, the
popular vote of the two parties in 2001 is similar to the historical 'centre-left' vote in BC. While merely speculation based on electoral outcomes, these suggestions show a certain amount of support for the concept of party identification (or at least right/left identification) as one of the key indicators of election results, a suggestion that runs counter to much of the recent views of voting behaviour.

Two things arising out of the data outlined in Tables 5-1 and 5-2 can be argued as especially unique to BC. First, the emergence of the CCF in the 1933 election with an impressive 32% of the vote, and 7 out of 47 MLAs, can be seen as a significant catalyst for the early coalitions of the various incarnations of “Conservative” and “Liberal” parties. As noted above, the rhetoric of “uniting against the socialist threat” supports this contention. Secondly, the voting patterns have remained fairly consistent if you combine the support for all left-of-centre parties and compare to the combined support for right-of-centre parties. I have represented this historic and distinct right-wing/left-wing split in a line chart (Figure 5-1). In order to identify the parties with their right-centre-left affiliations, I categorized them in the following way.

On the right-of-centre, the list includes the traditional Conservatives, the once powerful Socreds, the revamped Social Credit under the name of BC Reform (in 1996 election), and Unity parties. It also includes the BC Liberal Party, whose re-emergence as a political force in 1991 under leader Gordon Wilson put it back on the provincial map. In 1996 the old Socreds ran as the BC Reform party. After the Liberals narrow loss in 1996 under leader Gordon Campbell, all of the remaining Reform party MLAs joined the Liberals, or retired and actively supported the Liberals in the 2001 election. However, a few left-overs of the Socreds/Reform (mostly the religious right) ran candidates as the Unity party in 2001 under Chris Delaney, with no success.

While one could argue it is inaccurate to include the Liberals in an historical rendering of “right-wing” parties, two aspects make this a reasonable exercise in this case. First, the CCF/NDP has always historically been aligned with the labour movement, (and since the 1960s, with environmentalists), and the "socialist threat" has formed the basis of various coalitions and much candidate movement between the self-described “free enterprise” parties of the Conservatives, Social Credit and Liberals. This can be seen as creating a “leaning” in the BC Liberal party that may not be as historically apparent in provinces without a strong “progressive” tradition against which the ‘right can unite’. Thus, the BC Liberal Party has, for the most part, been far more aligned with conservative parties and policies than may be the case in other provinces, and certainly
more than is the case with the federal Liberal Party of Canada. Indeed, in recent history, the only time the Liberals have been described by political pundits as “centralist” or “moderate” was under Gordon Wilson’s leadership in 1991. However, after making a break-through for the Liberals in the 1991 election at the expense of the disintegrating Social Credit, the party make-up changed substantially. The party was over-ran by conservative influences coming from the disaffected Social Credit Party and other conservative parties, as well as increased influence from the business community, and Gordon Wilson was ousted as leader and replaced by pro-development ex-mayor of Vancouver Gordon Campbell. Under Campbell’s leadership, the party underwent a noticeable shift to the right and actively sought to appeal to both the economic conservatives (market-liberal, business) and social conservatives (‘family values’, anti-abortion, etc.). By the time of the 1996 and 2001 elections, and to this day, the BC Liberals resemble right-wing parties such as the Ontario Reform Party under Mike Harris, or the federal Reform/Alliance/Conservatives, more than they do the federal Liberals or even the historical federal “Red Tories” of the Progressive Conservative Party of the 1950s and 60s.

On the left, I have included the CCF, the NDP and the Green Party. While the CCF/NDP is an obvious left-of-centre party, some explanation of including the Greens in this list is necessary. During the 2001 election campaign, comments from both Green Party supporters and Green candidates themselves identified the Green Party as a place for the disenchanted NDP supporters. While the Green party leaders described the party as more centralist than the NDP, their policies did not always match their self-description. Nonetheless, public opinion research conducted at the time of the election indicated that most of the Green supporters were ex-NDP supporters, thus justifying their inclusion in the left-of-centre list.

The Marijuana Party has not been included in this left/right vote split demonstration for two reasons. First, as initially a one-issue party, its political views on other issues were not well known at the time of this election. Secondly, while many of its supporters claim to be progressive, its emerging policies and political advisors often come from the right-of-centre parties, including the federal Alliance. Indeed, the Marijuana party policies more closely resemble that of the Libertarian party, a party that does not fit easily into the left/right spectrum because it tends to be ‘right’ on issues of economics, but ‘left’ on social and moral issues. Nonetheless, the political leanings of the Marijuana party had not yet solidified enough to make a statement about their
position on this polarity, and their lack of electoral success leaves them as a merely 'fringe party' to date.

As noted below, Figure 5-1 shows that the voting blocks in British Columbia are surprisingly consistent. In particular the left-of-centre vote (represented by the CCF/Labour/NDP/Green) has remained remarkably stable over the course of BC's history. While the popular vote ranged between a low of 28% in 1963 and a high of 46% in 1979 (an 18 point difference), the vast majority of elections show a solid support of 30-40%. The 2001 election was by no means out of the ordinary in terms of the popular vote, with the left-of-centre vote showing at over 34%. What was unusual was that the left vote was split between the NDP and the Green Party, resulting in only two seats for the NDP and not a single seat for the Greens. The right-of-centre vote, variously represented over the years by the Conservatives, Liberals, the Coalition government (consisting of Conservatives and Liberals), the Social Credit, the Reform, and the Unity Parties, shows slightly more of a fluctuation of support, with a historical low of just over 40% in 1933 (when many conservative candidates ran as independents) to a high of just over 70% in 1963. Generally the right-of-centre vote was in the 60-70% range in the 1950s and 1960s, and hovered in the 50-60% range in the 1970s to the 1990s.

Figure 5-1: Historical Voting Patterns in BC

![Right-Wing/Left-Wing Split in BC Voters](image)

In the above chart "Right-Wing" represents the added values of: Conservatives, Liberals, Coalition, Social Credit, Reform and Unity parties. "Left-Wing" represents the added values of the CCF, Labour, NDP and Green parties.

This consistency of voting patterns has been discussed and explained in a number of ways by those who study provincial politics (Blake, 1996; Fisher & Mitchell, 1996; Ruff, 1996; Young, 1983) and has been acknowledged as a factor in federal
political support as well (Carty, 2001). What is interesting for this case study on news and elections, however, is that this historic voting pattern was readily available to journalists by accessing the information at the BC Elections website, or by reading even a handful of the numerous academic and popular articles about voting trends in BC. It would have been an easy task for enterprising journalists to consider in their coverage of the 2001 election, yet none appeared to do so. As the next chapter will show, the discussion of the NDP’s loss was focused on the unpopularity of the government (whose support in opinion polls was clearly low) and the “events” of the election as they happened. Other than one feature interview with historian David Mitchell on the CBC the first day of the campaign, there was scant attention paid to the historical context of voting in BC. While later in the campaign there was a recognition that the Green party was likely to cause a unprecedented “split on left vote”, the same attention was not devoted to the “uniting of the right”.

This is not to say that historical voter alignment with political parties is the only factor in election campaigns. All elections are the result of a combination of numerous influences, including the record of past and incumbent governments, leader personalities, and party policies. Yet a historical voting pattern as distinct as this cannot be ignored as a factor in both the winning or losing of a campaign (the “horse race”, in which the media are so interested), or in the analysis of issue topics (economic and social issues). Instead, the television news focused on the results of the polling, showing the Liberals as high as 70 and the New Democrats “neck and neck” with the Greens at as low as 12%. The following sections discuss some of the major trends in party coverage in Canadian research, and outlines the results of the content analysis of how the parties were covered during the 2001 election.

**Parties & Leaders**

*Background: Influences on party coverage*

Four trends in party coverage have been reviewed in many Canadian election studies. These are: the convention of proportional coverage, the incumbency advantage, the increase in the media’s negative tone when covering elections, and the focus on party leaders. While each of these trends has gained credibility in media studies, sometimes the research has been far from conclusive.
1. ‘Proportional Coverage’ Convention

Media researchers in Canada have suggested that during elections, it is the convention of the broadcast news media in Canada to proportion the amount of coverage of the major parties so that it is roughly equal to the parties’ seats in the legislature at the time of the election call (Crete, 1991; Fletcher & Everett, 1991). The authors argue that this practice of ‘proportional coverage’ is a conscious choice on the part of the broadcast media, as a response to the requirements under the Broadcast Act 1991, and cautions from the CRTC during elections. It is also used as a defence to ward off complaints from the parties, most of whom monitor media coverage during elections and will respond if their candidate is not according a ‘fair share’ of coverage. But this is clearly not just a Canadian phenomenon. In the two-party system of the United States, the media coverage of the Republicans and the Democrats has remained fairly equitable over time. An extensive meta-analysis of US media studies looking for a media ‘bias’ in presidential elections (based on the amount of coverage afforded the two parties during election years from 1948 to 1996) found negligible differences overall (D’Alessio & Allen, 2000).

Proportional coverage may ensure that the parties with the majority of voter support get the majority of media coverage. It may also help third parties (those not likely to win the election, but still garnering significant voter support) to secure some coverage, rather than being completely overlooked in the news media’s focus on the leading parties. Yet it has also been criticized for yielding some drawbacks (Hackett, 1991b; Fletcher & Everett, 1991). Leading parties know that they will get their ‘news hit’ every day, and have tried to ensure their chosen message is what makes the news by providing a single event for reporters to cover. Of course, this attempt to influence news content is not always successful. The party may indeed get its ‘news hit’, but the content of the story may not be what the party strategists had hoped for. For example, a journalist may cover one party by focusing on its decline in standings in the polls or its internal leadership struggles, and the other party by reporting on its platform or issue focus, thus providing proportional coverage, but not equitable coverage. While it is clear that the frequency of occurrence alone provides little assurance of equitable treatment of the parties, it is also clear that party visibility in the news is not meaningless. Without

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60 As for the print media, the authors state that “…newspaper coverage also tends to follow these guidelines, though the editors of most of the large dailies deny it” (Fletcher & Everett, 1991, p. 194).
news coverage, voters are unlikely to be familiar with, or to support a party or candidate (Jenkins, 1999; Zaller & Hunt, 1995).

As well, other evidence suggests the proportional coverage convention is not always followed, especially in the case of ‘insurgent’ or emerging parties or candidates. While some researchers have suggested that the ability of smaller parties to get access to media coverage, regardless of the quality or substance of their campaign, is limited by the convention (Fletcher & Everett, 1991), other examples suggest this is not always the case. Small circulation and local news outlets are more likely than the larger media organizations to focus on local candidates from small parties, or independents (Hackett, 1991b; Carty & Eagles, 2000). As well, other news values can override the trend of proportional coverage, resulting in considerable coverage of emerging parties. For example, some election coverage can be seen to be a result of the party’s performance (either in the campaign or in the polls) relative to media’s expectations (Jenkins, 1999; Johnson et al., 1992). The ‘surprise’ element of a party doing better than the news media or political pundits expected, or having a different campaign, can increase the coverage to higher than its proportion of existing seats, resulting in a situation where the news value trumps the common convention. This dynamic was apparent in the Canadian media’s coverage of the Reform party during the 1993 election.

The 1993 Canadian federal election saw the Reform Party of Canada contest its second federal election. The Reform party was created in 1987, and ran in the 1988 Canadian election primarily as a populist party born of western alienation, and ran on the slogan “the west wants in”. By the 1993 election, it had established itself as a “hard-line” right of centre party that concentrated on a combination of economic conservatism (spending cuts, less taxes), libertarianism (smaller government, less regulation), and social traditionalism (“family values”) (Carty, 2001; Laycock, 2001a). 61 While voter intentions (as identified by polling results) indicated support for the Reform was low at the start of the 1993 election, the news media provided it far more coverage than either its present seats in the house, or its voter support, would normally warrant under the ‘proportional coverage’ scheme (Jenkins, 1999). The Reform also received more positive coverage. Reform leader Preston Manning was repeatedly shown “presenting Reform’s vision of Canada” and discussing issues, while the Conservative leader Kim

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61 For an excellent overview of the ‘new right’ in Canada, (primarily the Reform Party and its successors the Alliance, and later the Conservatives) see David Laycock, 2001b.
Campbell was shown responding to questions about campaign strategies and political gaffes (Lumb, 1994, p. 119).

The high level of Reform coverage could be based on the anticipated or predicted electoral standings for parties based on their organization, platform, history or financial resources. The news judgement to increase media attention of the emerging party was the result of various influences:

Reform benefited not so much because of its successes in the campaign, which occurred after coverage had begun to increase, but because of where the party was located in terms of electoral competition. With the faltering Conservative campaign, Reform represented a new dimension to the horserace because it meant a conflict over the right-wing vote in Canada and because reform was talking tough on deficit and social programs where the Conservatives ... were soft. (Jenkins, 1999, pp. 442. Emphasis added.)

Thus, the media's expectation of the emerging party's importance to the campaign - the role it might play in a split of voters intentions, and its platform differentiation from the historically major right-wing party—all influenced the amount of coverage afforded to it. The reason for the universally positive tone, while not explored in the research, was likely a reflection of the media's excitement about the party's potential impact.

Importantly, the media's dynamic increase in attention throughout the campaign can be seen as an influencing factor in the party's momentum. As Jenkins (1999) noted, parties who "receive more than their share of coverage because journalists view their candidacy as important" can benefit from this coverage in terms of voter support, especially if the candidate (or party) is relatively unknown (p. 432). Indeed, the trend of increased support for the Reform party by voters did follow the increased media coverage. Twice during the election, surges in the amount of media coverage of the party were followed by spikes in voter support. Further, a dramatic decline in coverage at the end of the campaign was also followed by a decline in voter intentions, leading the author to conclude that "coverage led opinion" (p. 438).

These results do not suggest that media consumers blithely follow the media lead. Decades of research on media effects have shown that the relationship between media attention and voter intentions is far more complex than that. Indeed,

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62 Jenkins (1999) used various statistical methods to measure the effects of the media coverage. This included using moving 5-day averages of coverage to accommodate a time lag to reaction, the Granger Causality Tests (a method that compares two series of temporal data for causation), and a time-series model of coverage and intentions (an "error correction model").

63 See Chapter Two for a discussion of the research on media effects and "media effectivity".
momentum appears to be a mutually constituting phenomena, and party coverage and party support needs to be seen in terms of a “dynamic equilibrium”. The pattern of coverage may begin with the media: positive media attention towards a party may increase the voter’s awareness of it, resulting in higher interest and potentially higher polls standings, which in turn may result in ever more increased media coverage. However, the pattern may also begin with the voter: grassroots interest of voters may increase a party’s popularity resulting in a surge of media attention. In neither case will media attention remain high if the party support does not, since this would contradict the media norms of objectivity as operationalized during election campaigns. Nor does the positive effect of media coverage have unlimited opportunities to increase voter support – the partisan effect appears to level off over time. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this review, the potential for media influence on voters’ intentions cannot be dismissed. There is a compelling body of literature, including the Jenkins study discussed above, that provides evidence of the potential for media to increase or decrease voter support by the amount and tone of a party’s coverage, especially if it is a third party. 64

In conclusion, while the proportional coverage convention may apply to the major parties already in existence in the house of commons, it cannot be said to be a guideline when it comes to the smaller or emerging parties.

2. ‘Incumbency Advantage’

Another factor that has been suggested as an influence on media coverage of parties during election, is incumbency. While Fletcher (1987) found that the proportional coverage convention, when it is applied, may favour incumbency by linking the party coverage to existing party structures and standings, the overall findings of the effects of incumbency on party coverage has been less consistent. For example, Crete’s (1991) review of Canadian elections from 1974 to 1988 found that the amount of coverage for the two major parties (Conservative and Liberals) was relatively stable, and close to the party’s relative vote. He concluded that in general, incumbency does not provide the governing party with an advantage in the amount of media attention it receives. However, he found a party specific advantage of incumbency. When the incumbent was Liberal, it received more media attention (an ‘incumbency advantage’), but a Conservative government did not. Crete concluded that rather than incumbency, the

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64 In particular, the effect of media “priming” of attention has been convincing. See Chapter Two.
amount of time devoted to the major parties was based on past performance in elections.

The finding of a Liberal-specific incumbency advantage was further supported by a 1997 election study which found the governing Liberals received slightly greater coverage than the Reform or Conservative parties (Nevitte et al., 2000). Nevitte and his colleagues noted that the other parties received media visibility linked to either their competitiveness or their major policies.

...the attention given to other parties was generally linked either to their competitive character (the Reform and Conservative parties) or to the nature of their fundamental political project (the Bloc). The NDP was at a disadvantage in terms of visibility, perhaps attributable to its peripheral place in the campaign (Nevitte et al., 2000, p. 27).

Incumbency, then, is only a selective advantage, and only for some parties. Indeed, many incumbent governments have been held under the microscope for their record while challengers have remained largely unscathed. The finding that voters who switch from a governing party are likely to cite negative assessments of the party or its leader suggests the media tone towards the incumbent may have more effect than incumbency itself (Clarke et al., 1984, pp. 142-143). Furthermore, while party activists can be expected to be particularly critical of media attention, they have not always been found to perceive an incumbency advantage (Carty & Eagles, 2000). Still, the incumbency advantage, when it has been found to occur, appears to be both party specific (favouring only one party) and election specific (occurring in only some elections), but not a generally recognizable trend.

3. ‘Negative News’

Another familiar comment about election coverage relates to the news tone about the parties. The first major election study to analyze media tone found that while the election coverage of the 1960s and 1970s was largely positive, this had shifted in the elections of 1979 and 1980, to a distinctly negative tone (Clarke et al., 1984, p. 119). Fletcher and Everett (1991) noted that content analysis found this negative tone was not necessarily party specific - all three major parties and leaders received more negative than positive references in 1980 and 1988. However, in the intervening election (1984) only the incumbent Liberal under new party leader (John Turner) received more negative than positive coverage. Another study by Crete (1991) examined the empirical evidence

of content analysis from 1974 to 1988 and found that the coverage of the two leading parties was more often negative than positive. Other, more recent studies, have noted a general trend towards negative coverage in Canada (Frizzell et al., 1990; Frizzell & Pammett, 1994; Nevitte et al., 2000) and in the United States (Capella & Jamieson, 1997).

However, there have been some interesting findings in the party breakdown of media tone. While the two major parties appear to receive similarly negative tone in coverage in general, this does not seem to universally apply to other parties. The perennial third party in Canada, the federal New Democrats, have often received more positive tone in media attention compared to the two major parties, although this is counter-acted by it getting far less attention (Crete, 1991; Nevitte et al., 2000). In contrast, the Reform “suffered the opposite fate” than the NDP in the 1997 campaign by having much higher visibility than the NDP but much more of the attention consisting of negative coverage (Nevitte et al., 2000). When both attention and tone were analyzed together, Nevitte and his colleagues suggested that media biases in Canada operate not so much in favour of the left as against the parties of the right.

Not all media studies have found a pervasive negative tone. Nevitte et al.’s (2000) study of coverage in the 1997 election found that, in general, the tone was not particularly negative. Yet the authors also pointed out that while the positive and negatively coded stories may have balanced each other out over time, there were shifts in that ratio over the period of the campaign, and differences among the parties at various times in the campaign. Thus, while the tone was not pervasively negative, it was also not “uniformly positive” (Nevitte et al., 2000, pp. 28-20). More importantly, perhaps, is that the authors noted the small number of items coded as neutral, suggesting that there were a large number of stories where journalists offered ‘evaluative’ content (either positive or negative). This large number of evaluative stories indicated to the authors a similarity between Canadian and American media commentary, compared to the more neutral tone found in the UK (Semetko, 1991).

The most commonly discussed reasons for this increased media negativity in election coverage are: news values, party strategy and reporter cynicism. The concept of news values supports the notion that media have a tendency to seek out bad news, confrontations, and negativity in general, and in election campaigns in particular (Soderlund et al., 1984). This negative tone, then, is merely a by-product of media’s highlighting the drama of confrontations between parties, rather than reporting on
substantive policy platforms. In addition, if the parties themselves tend to adopt a confrontational strategy during an election, media reports will report with a more negative tone. Finally, negative reporting of elections has also been blamed on increased reporter cynicism (Capella & Jamieson, 1997; Gilsdorf & Bernier, 1991; Fletcher & Everett, 1991). For example, Gilsdorf and Bernier (1991) conducted interviews with journalists who cover elections, and noted that journalists acknowledge being more cynical towards politicians and their strategists, and resent the attempts at manipulation by party operatives. The effect, say the authors, is to detract from serious reporting of policy analysis. Instead, the media reports on the “inside scoop”, the inner workings and strategic decisions of the party, and offer more appraisals of the party’s behaviour and expectations (p. 11).

While the debate about the nature and scope of the negative tone of reporting remains, evidence is mounting that it has an effect on voters. Researchers have suggested that negative tone in political reporting is linked to a general decline in voters’ assessment of the integrity of both political leaders (Fletcher & Everett, 1991, p. 202) and politics in general (Capella & Jamieson, 1997). More specifically, a decline in voter support for specific parties has been linked to specific incidents of negative reporting about that party. When Nevitte et al. (1997) noticed periods in the 1997 federal election where there was a negative media tone about either the Liberals or the Conservatives, they also found a corresponding loss of support in the polls for that party. The inverse was also true — both parties regained ground after media tone turned positive. Yet, this specific effect did not translate to the smaller parties. The favourable coverage for the NDP in that same election did not translate into increased voter support, and the Reform made substantial gains even in the face of the least favourable coverage. This suggests that the tone of the coverage may only affect the parties most likely to win the election, and that tone may not be as important to voter support as the volume of attention afforded to the smaller parties.

Perhaps the tallest hurdle to overcome when trying to draw conclusions about the media tone during election campaigns is a methodological one. While it is a popular exercise in election studies to test the party tone of the media content (to determine if there was a party bias), it is fraught with reliability and comparability difficulties. First, how do the various studies define and measure tone? Coding for tone usually involves a simple positive/negative/neutral coding on the part of coders. The best studies use a large number of coders (25 or more) from all political views (including non-voters) and
both genders. Other studies have been based on a small number of coders, or a researcher's interpretations. Even if these studies could be controlled for reliability, they still do not distinguish between a story that has a negative evaluative comment from a journalist, and a story were a negative comment is from a source. Nor do they distinguish between stories that have a negative tone because of reporters' comments (editorial tone), and those that are negative on the basis of a topic that is damaging to one party and not the other (topic tone). More importantly, both the methodology issues and their results raise questions about the usefulness of the measure altogether. The tone of the campaign may be more appropriately discovered using more sophisticated quantitative and qualitative methods than the simple one-dimensional coding methods found in most of the Canadian studies.

4. ‘Follow the Leader’

The most consistent finding and universally accepted trend in media coverage of elections is the focus on the party leaders and their activities. All major studies that analysed news content during elections in Canada found that the media was preoccupied with the national leaders (Crete, 1991; Fletcher & Everett, 1991; Gilsdorf & Bernier, 1991; Johnston et al., 1992; Soderlund et al., 1984). For example, a recent content analysis of newspapers found that more than 60 percent of the election coverage had the leaders of the parties as the “principle actor” (Dornan & Pyman, 2001). Others have found similar numbers. These trends in leadership focus have been found consistently over the years, and in other western industrial countries as well, and have been criticised as resulting in a neglect of the local candidates, and substantive policies (Fletcher, 1987; Fletcher & Everett, 1991; Johnston et al., 1992). Both the media coverage and the party campaigns are now organized around the leaders’ tours and their daily ‘sound-bite’. Indeed, the media’s focus on the leader is so ubiquitous as to be seen as almost taken-for-granted – as common sense. Yet, some have suggested that it represents an “Americanization” of Canadian parliamentary politics (Clarke et al., 1984).

Method

To determine the media attention afforded to the political parties in the television stories, a measure was made of the occurrences of the political parties and their leaders. To do so, every news item was coded as to whether the party and/or their leader was the focus of the story, was mentioned in the story, or was absent from the story. Each
unit could have more than one party and/or leader coded as a focus, and numerous parties could be mentioned.

The following example is used as a demonstration of the coding process. One story, in the second week of the campaign, was about the “split on the left” – that is, the increase support for the Green Party and the view that this was at the expense of the New Democrats. Accordingly, this story focused on the New Democrats and the Greens, and the popularity of their party leaders. Within this story, both the Liberal and the Unity parties were mentioned, but only the Liberal leader was mentioned. Thus, for the data on party occurrences this story was coded as: NDP focus, Green focus, and Liberal and Unity mentions. For leader occurrences the story was coded as: Dosanjh (NDP) focus, Carr (Green) focus, and Campbell (Liberal) mentioned. The other parties and leaders were coded as “absent” from the story.

The coding of news stories for party tone in this study proved both unreliable, and of questionable value. Consequently, this approach was discarded in favour of a more detailed look at the leaders’ feature interviews, and the tone of source quotes. Further, the discourse analysis in chapter six offers a far richer and more accurate account of the narrative tone of the election reports than a simple content analysis could capture.

**Findings: Party and leader occurrences.**

Figure 5-2 shows the full data of all party and leader occurrences in this corpus. As could be expected, the two major parties held the majority of the media's attention during the election coverage. The Liberal Party occurred as a focus in 52% of the stories, was mentioned 33% of the time, and was absent in 15% of the election stories. Similarly, the New Democrats were a focus in 55% of the stories, mentioned in 31% and absent in 14%. Overall, both the Liberals and the NDP were present, either as a story focus or a mention, in 85% or 86% of the stories respectively.

The media attention to the rest of the political parties was significantly less than the leading parties. The only other political party that garnered any significant amount of coverage was the Green Party, which was present in 25% of the stories, about half as a focus and half as a mere mention. The Unity party, which was the only other party to be included in the televised leaders debate, occurred in only 9% of the election stories, two

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66 See methodology appendix A for a discussion of the methods used and problems that arose.
thirds of which were only mentions. All other parties, including the Marijuana Party, and independents, occurred in only 8% of the stories overall.
Figure 5-2: Party and Leader Occurrences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Occurrences</th>
<th>Leader Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liberal Party Occurrences</strong></td>
<td><strong>Campbell (Lib) Occurrences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mention</td>
<td>Mention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NDP Occurrences</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dosanjh (NDP) Occurrences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mention</td>
<td>Mention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Green Party Occurrences</strong></td>
<td><strong>Carr (Green) Occurrences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mention</td>
<td>Mention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unity Party Occurrences</strong></td>
<td><strong>Delaney (Unity) Occurrences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mention</td>
<td>Mention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>'Other' Party Occurrences</strong></td>
<td><strong>'Other' Leader Occurrences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mention</td>
<td>Mention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the two leading parties were almost identical in the amount of overall coverage they received, their leaders fared slightly differently. Liberal leader Gordon Campbell was almost equally the focus of, or mentioned in, approximately 69% of all stories. While NDP leader Ujjal Dosanjh was the focus in slightly more stories than the Liberal leader (at 37% of the stories compared to 35%), the total number of occurrences (focus and mention) was less than Campbell at about 59%, 10% less than the Liberal leader. In both the Liberals and the NDP, then, the leader occurred in a majority of the time in stories that mentioned their party. Further, Campbell occurred about 10% more often than Dosanjh in all stories.

In addition, when calculating the leader occurrences as a percentage of only those stories where their party occurred, the difference is even more striking. In stories where the Liberal party occurred, Campbell was present in fully 81%, indicating that the focus on the leader remains a predominant feature in Canadian political news. However, in contrast Dosanjh was represented in only 69% of all of the stories where the NDP occurred. While the leader of the NDP was still found as a dominant feature in the majority of stories that included the NDP, he was far less visible than the Liberal leader. While the New Democratic Party strategy had Dosanjh less visible for the first two days after the election call, this was not the case for the remainder of the campaign (as is demonstrated in Chapter Six). Thus, party strategy alone cannot account for these differences of visibility.

Looking at the other parties, Green Party leader Adriane Carr occurred in 12% of the stories (less than half of the amount of her party, and equally as the story’s focus and as merely a mention), and Unity leader Chris Delaney occurred about 6.5% (about two thirds of his party’s occurrences). All other party leaders, including Brain Taylor of the Marijuana Party were almost invisible at just over 2% occurrence, compared to 8% overall occurrences for their parties. Thus, while it can be held that the media’s focus on the two leading parties was also a focus on those party leaders, this did not hold true for the smaller parties, including the two seen as the only other serious contenders: the Greens and Unity.

It is fair to say that an overwhelming amount of attention to political parties was focused on the two leading parties of the BC Liberals and the New Democrats, and much of that was focused on the leaders. It is also clear that there was no favouring of the incumbent in this case. While the overall occurrences of the NDP and the Liberals
were almost identical, the overall occurrences of their leaders was not. Given the
general emphasis on leaders in contemporary campaigns, and the fact that Dosanjh was
considered an asset to his party (as identified in opinion polls), this could be interpreted
as a disadvantage for the New Democrats. On the other hand, Campbell was less
popular than his party in public opinion polls, thus his higher frequency of occurrences
could also be interpreted as a disadvantage for the Liberals.

**Party Occurrences & Story Topics**

The data on party occurrences indicates how much media attention each of the
parties received, but not what the attention was about. To explore the dynamic between
the amount of party occurrences and the story topics, I looked at the breakdown of party
occurrences in both campaign-focused stories and issue-focused stories.

Table 5-3 indicates that there were 266 stories coded as being about the election
campaign, as opposed to election issues. Looking at the percentage and frequency of
topics about the campaign shows that the NDP campaign was the primary topic in more
stories than any other party (secondary topics were not used for this calculation). The
NDP campaign was accorded 25.6% of the campaign stories (68 stories) compared to
19.2% for the Liberal campaign (51 stories), 4.5% about the Green Campaign (12
stories), 1.9% on the Marijuana campaign (5 stories) and only 1.5% that focused on the
Unity campaign – the same amount that looked at smaller parties or independent
candidates' campaigns.
Table 5-3: Campaign Stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Topic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n=266</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP Campaign</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Campaign</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign – General</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaffe/Scandal</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poll Results</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal &amp; NDP campaign</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Campaign</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders Debates</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP &amp; Green Campaigns</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana Campaign</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity Campaign</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Other” Campaign</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Record</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Record</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, there were a number of stories that looked at two or more campaigns: 17 focused on both the Liberal and the NDP campaigns (6.4%), 7 focused on the NDP and the Green campaigns (2.6%), 10 reported on the leaders' debates (3.8%), 23 reported on poll results (8.6%), and another 39 (14.6%) reviewed the campaign in general and mentioned at least three parties. Together, the campaign stories that looked at the New Democrats, the Liberals, or both, represent over half of all the campaign stories (51.2%). Finally there were 24 stories (9%) that focused on a candidate's gaffe or scandal (twelve Liberal, eleven NDP candidates, and one story about a Green candidate), and two stories that looked at the NDP government's record (0.8%).

The situation was reversed for stories that were primarily about the issues. As Table 5-4 indicates, over 57% of all of the stories about policy or platform issues had the Liberal party as the focus, while only 36% focused on the NDP. Thus, not only were issue stories in short supply in the coverage of this election, but when they were covered they were far more likely to have the Liberal party as the focus than the NDP, and almost never included the other parties at all. This difference will be discussed in more detail in a later section.
Table 5-4: Issue Stories and Party Occurrences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Occurrences</th>
<th>Focus* n=75</th>
<th>Mentions n=75</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Other&quot; Party</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102.6</td>
<td>85.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Totals may not add up to 100 since more than one party could be coded as being a focus in the issue story. For example, if a story compared the NDP and the Liberals' positions on tax cuts, both would have been coded as being the main party focus.

Sources & Party Tone

As identified in Chapter Four, sources are often used in news items to represent the theme or perspective of a story. Sources offer an under-utilized form of data for media analysis of election coverage. In particular, an analysis of source-use provide some insight into the patterns of both their use, and the types of 'sound bites' that make the air. While the research in Chapter Four looked at the sources in terms of their affiliation, it is also interesting to examine the actual content of source quotes to determine partisan tone, and any patterns which emerge from this data.

To determine the partisan tone of every source quote, each one was reviewed and coded to ascertain if it had obvious partisan content. In other words, if a person was quoted speaking negatively about the Liberal party or one of its candidates or platform positions, it was coded as "negative Liberal". This would be the case whether the person was a Liberal supporter or a supporter of another party, or neither. If the same person, however, was quoted saying something positive about his/her own party, for example the NDP, then this quote would be quoted as "positive NDP". In many cases individuals were quoted saying who they were voting for, or, more commonly who they were voting against, and were coded appropriately. However, many of the quotes, such as those about issues, were not explicit in their partisan preference, and these were coded as "n/a" for "not apparent". Importantly these quotes were coded as n/a even if the topic under discussion was one that could be interpreted as favourable or unfavourable to one party or another. The reason for doing this was to compare the
different uses of sources who were quoted making partisan statements on the news stories.

**Findings**

Each source used in a story was counted as one, even if they were quoted more than once in that story. By reviewing all 1087 sources to seeing if they offered a recognisable and overt party tone, coders found that 881 did, and none commented on more than one party. The remaining 206 were coded as "n/a" and the results of the calculation can be found in the following bar chart (Figure 5-3).

**Figure 5-3: Political Tone of Sources**

![Bar chart showing the political tone of sources](chart.png)

The figures show that while the tone of sources commenting on the NDP were equally positive and negative, every other party had more positive quotes than negative. The Liberals had about 20% more positive comments than negative ones by sources who were not 'neutral', while the Green party had seven times the number of quotes that were positive compared to negative. The Green party source-tone results were not surprising, since front-runners rarely bother to attack a minor party. While the Unity and
Marijuana parties both received scant attention from the media, all of the sources quoted who had a partisan tone were positive about the two minor parties.

Polling in the News

Background
The increased use of media-initiated polling as a major news-creating technique has been tracked in Canadian election studies since 1979 (Fletcher & Everett, 1991; Frizzell, 1989; Johnston et al., 1992; Pammett & Dornan, 2001). From 1984 to 1988 the number of media generated polls in the federal election had doubled from 11 to 22 (Johnston et al., 1992) and had become the primary focus of the coverage in between 11 and 14% of television newscasts. By 2000 every major media outlet in the country (and some minor ones), except the CBC were conducting their own polls throughout the campaign and highlighting the results in their news outlets. And the increase continued in the 2004 election, which saw “more media polling … than in any other past campaign, and it was given far more prominence in the media coverage” (Marzolini, 2004, p. 290). Some, such as the Globe and Mail and CTV, were conducting polls every 4-5 days on average, and while the media organizations had previously reported only on the polls they sponsored, the 2004 federal election saw cross-reporting of polls by media competitors (Marzoline, 2004, p. 302). Empirical evidence as to the amount of media attention on polls could not be found in the recent federal election studies, however, it is fair so say that polls create a large enough story source as to warrant their expense. Further, while polls may not be the focus of a story, or even overtly mentioned by name, research has shown that polls tend to shape the context for “virtually all horse-race-oriented reports” and in addition, they “leak into other forms of coverage, including background commentary and issue analysis” (Fletcher & Everett 1991, pp. 202-203).

Yet, while they form the dominant basis of the campaign related stories, polls can be misleading. They offer little more than a snapshot of a single moment; consequently, situations where voters’ intentions are shifting quickly cannot be captured by polls. For example, the 2004 federal election saw inaccurate poll predictions which, afterwards, left polling companies defending their industry and credibility (Marzolini, 2004). Further, methodological problems in election polling are consistently found, including problems

67 The CBC had stopped doing their own polling by then.
with question wording, sample size, sample methods, and analysis. This does not mean that polling companies do not try to qualify their findings for their clients, and caution against mis-use. However, media organizations who sponsor these polls have “demanded that pollsters stretch their analysis into unsafe territory, such as providing seat projections that have no scientific or statistical basis” (Marzolini, 2004, p. 293).

The methodological quality of a poll may be questionable, but in news reporting it is often unknown. According to standards set by the Canadian Daily Newspaper Publisher’s Association (CDNPA), reporting responsibly on a poll requires that the media organization report, among other things, the sample size, sponsorship, refusal rates and sample selection (Frizzell, 1989, p. 98). Yet, this information is often not included in even the first story on the poll results. And even when such qualifying information is included in initial reports, follow-up stories rarely mention the accuracy or sample sizes, and report on the poll numbers as if they are “gospel” (p. 98). Problems with inconsistent or missing method information has led some theorists to suggest regulations that make all election polls available for independent scrutiny during the election (Entman, 1989).

More critically, while polls provide information about voter intentions, they are only one measure of public opinion. As Herbst (1993) notes, the contemporary definition of public opinion is “an aggregate of many individual opinions” and the polling interview is accepted as a “public expression” of that opinion (p. 43). But opinion can be formed in a number of ways, and polling merely tests the individual in isolation, not as a member of a group or community, or in relation to their knowledge. It may be an effective tool for reporting on the horse-race, but its public information values is questionable. Even when the polls include questions on policy issues, these questions are asked in isolation. Policy questions, argues Herbst, are not individual, but social. What we can determine from simple polling, and even simpler analysis, as is done in most elections, does not encourage what many have argued democracy needs most – political dialogue (p. 175).

So why are the media so captivated with polls? A number of dynamics are at play. First, polls have authority. The quantitative method of measuring ‘public opinion’ is attractive to the media because it appeals to the media practice of “objectivity”. Numbers connote rationality and credibility. Second, polls are a good story. They chronicle the election horse-race, which has become the dominant story in election

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68 In the 1988 federal election, the CBC was far better at affording the information than the private stations (Frizzell, 1989).
news. Third, polls are good for publicity. They are used for promoting the news organization to attract viewers, and imply a credibility that they can market. Indeed, some have suggested that “Canada’s media use polls much like a drunken man would use a lamppost: for support, rather than for illumination” (Marzolini, 2004, p. 299).

Fourth, reporting on polls has become a routine aspect of election reporting. This habitual use of polling, both during and outside of elections, has led one observer to argue that that the media’s obsession with polling is a dangerous addiction – that “polls have become the crack cocaine of national politics” (Robinson, 2002, p. 34). Moreover, journalists find polls exciting; they can act like insiders to the political process, “play armchair strategists”, and handicap the horse race like election bookies (p. 89).

As for empirical evidence of direct effects on voters, there is little evidence to support that polls have either a bandwagon or underdog effect on voting intentions (Frizzell, 1989). However, the effect of polling may not be as direct or simple as a partisan bias. They clearly have had an impact on news content, and been a factor in the increased horse-race coverage and emphasis on strategic-oriented rather than issue-oriented stories. Such an emphasis has been linked to an increasingly cynical and frustrated public, and low voter turnout (Capella & Jamieson, 1997).

**Findings**

During the 2001 election campaign in British Columbia there were four public opinion polls on voter intentions reported by the television stations. The information for each poll follows:

1). The first poll was conducted by the research firm of McIntyre and Mustell for the *Vancouver Province* newspaper. It was first reported on April 22, the 5th day of the campaign. BTV, Global and VTV all reported on the poll, but CBC did not. No methodology information was included in any of the reports by the three stations.

2). The second poll was conducted by the firm Ipsos Reid for VTV, popular radio station CKNW and national newspaper the *Globe and Mail* and released by VTV on April 24. All four television stations reported on the extensive poll over the next two days but only VTV and CBC included methodology information. (The poll was conducted between April 19 and April 24, had a sample size of 800, and was accurate within 3.5% points 19 times out of 20.)

3). The third poll was conducted by Compas Research Group for BCTV, the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Victoria Times Colonist* newspapers. It was reported first on
May 3, by BCTV, CBC and VTV. BCTV reported that the poll was conducted on May 1 (the day after the leader's debate). Only CBC included any methodology information (a sample size of 500, and accurate within +/- 4.5% points 19 times out of 20).

4) The fourth public poll on voter intentions was conducted by McIntyre and Mustell Group and was sponsored by Global TV. It was reported on only by Global on May 13, who included no methodology information in their report.

In this study, polls constituted only 6.7% of the primary topic of election news stories, and were secondary topics in another 1.5%, for a total of 8.2% occurrence as a major topic in all of the stories. Each of these polls received high placement in the news broadcast, (either the first or second election story) and generated multiple stories. As well, in every case the poll was sponsored by a news organization or organizations. CBC was the lone television station that did not sponsor its own poll.

In addition to polling British Columbians to determine their voting intentions, some of the above described polls also asked questions about the 'most important issues', specific opinions about policy proposals (such as the land claims referendum and tax cuts), and the leaders' approval ratings. Stories on VTV also reported on questions from their poll about whether a "Liberal sweep" was a "good thing or a bad thing", and if voters would change their vote if they thought there would be no opposition (30% said they would). As well, VTV broke down their polling results to determine the voter intentions in union households. BCTV's poll offered regional breakdowns of voter intentions, and in some cases, reported on specific ridings.

There were some differences between stations. The CBC only reported the results of polls twice, on April 25 and May 3, and it was the only television station that consistently provided methodology information on the polls they did cover. The only private station to provide methodology information was VTV, which did so for all but the first poll on April 22. Thus, neither BCTC nor Global provided any methodological information on any of the polls they reported, including ones they themselves sponsored. Moreover, no station identified the statistics on the undecided voters, or the refusal rates, when reporting on the provincial party standings. BCTV included the undecided vote only once when it was reporting on the survey results in a specific region (Vancouver Island): the undecided vote was reported as 26% (BCTV May 12). VTV (April 25) once included the percentage of "undecideds" in a story about voters' opinions on a substantive issues: whether or not respondents supported a "significant tax cut", as
promised by the Liberals (13% were “undecided”). The results of the voter intention information provide by these four polls is summarised in the following chart (Table 5-5) and bar graph (Figure 5-4).

Table 5-5 Party Support as Reported in TV News

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>NDP</th>
<th>Green</th>
<th>Unity</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22-Apr</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-Apr</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-May</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-May</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5-4: Party Support as Reported by TV News

The story told by the polls, as shown above, indicates that the Greens’ support from decided voters rose throughout the campaign anywhere from 5 – 6%. At the same time, the NDP’s share of popular support fell, albeit so slightly it was well within the margin or error for all of the polls (between 2 and 3%). The biggest change indicated by the polling numbers was the Liberal decline in support of more than 10% of the decided vote. This decline in voter support could indicate a shift in voters’ intentions, or a large number of undecided voters choosing to support the other parties fairly equally. Unfortunately, it is impossible to tell what was the reason for this dynamic without
information about the undecided voter share. More importantly, this decline in support was not noted in a single story. All stations repeatedly reported on the Liberal's 'tight campaign', the 'floundering' New Democrats, and the 'surging' Greens. The real dynamic change indicated by the polls was overlooked. It may have been because a Liberal decline, even at twice the 10%, would have no affect on who would win, the gap was just too large. Nonetheless, this shift in numbers was the only interesting trend in the polls.

Further, the amount of coverage afforded the four major parties (as a percentage of all party attention in election news stories) tells a different story than the poll reports. The following two line graphs show the percentage of election stories where each party was a focus, (Figure 5 -5) and the percentage of election stories where each party occurred at all (Figure 5-6) whether they were the focus of the story or merely mentioned.
Figure 5-5: Daily Media Focus on Parties

TV Reports - Party Focus

Figure 5-6: Daily Media Attention (all mentions) by week

TV Reports - All Occurrences
This result can also be demonstrated as the percentage of weekly party attention in election stories. Figure 5-7, below shows that the amount of media attention on the Liberal and NDP was relatively similar. Both parties had the highest amount of attention in the first week of the campaign, and dropped to a relative low in the second week, gained very slightly in the third week and settled again in the final week. Correspondingly, and in contrast, the media attention on the Green Party rose dramatically in the second week, dropped slightly in the third week, and rose again to its highest point in the last week of the campaign. The media attention on the Unity party started very low, gained slightly in the second week, but dropped back down to a negligible level for the rest of the campaign.

Figure 5-7: Percentage of Media Attention by Week

Given the comments about the potential effect of media attention on voters' intentions, the most important finding of this data is the media attention on the Green party. As Figure 5-6 showed, the percentage of the overall amount of media attention on the Green party peaked around April 29, near the end of the second week, and the day before the leaders' debate. The polling data (as problematic as it was) released on May 3 showed the Greens' standings the day after the debate to be at its highest, and this number remained relatively stable in the last poll, taken two days before the election. It is impossible to tell if this increase was a result of the media attention, the debate, or some other factor altogether, without having conducted extensive voter interviews at the time. However, given the research outlined earlier, the possibility must at least be
contemplated that the media’s high level of attention on the Green party had some impact on its attractiveness to voters.

Leaders and the “Feature Interview”.

Background and method

As noted above, much of the media’s attention is focused on the party leaders. While most of the coverage is dedicated to the leaders’ activities on the campaign trail, a key part of leader coverage is in the feature interviews with the major leaders, especially in the early part of the campaign. As previous findings have shown, the opportunity for the politicians to put their platform out for discussion has diminished because of the use of shorter sound bites and more journalistic interpretative (see Chapter Four). The feature interview is a rare opportunity for the party leaders to speak to the news audience for more than a few seconds. Partly this is because the interview is usually done live, thus less subject to mediated editing. And in the case of this election, all of the feature interviews were done “on the spot” – that is, with the anchor in the studio asking questions of a leader who was on a live feed from an outside location, most commonly an outdoor setting.

The setting for these leader interviews is worth noting. Outside of election time, most government representatives, as well as other elites, are commonly interviewed in surroundings that compliment and reinforce their authority, such as offices or studios (Hackett, 1985; Hartley, 1978). This is contrasted with protesters, workers, or in the case of labour disputes, strikers, who are more likely to be interviewed in noisy surroundings, on the street or some other outside location. In the case of the election, however, the political elites – the leaders of the major parties – are more often interviewed in a setting of less authority, outside, and ‘on the campaign trail’. They have, in a sense, been visually demoted from ‘elite’ status to ‘interest group’ status during the election campaign.

The verbal structure of the leader interviews is also worth noting. Political leaders answer every question by repeating their main message, be it one that focuses on the issues they have determined to be the most important during this election (e.g.: tax cuts, health and education) or a repeated theme (for example, the Liberals’ “new era of hope and prosperity” in 2001 and the New Democrats’ “on your side” in 1996). What is of interest here, however, is the questions asked by the reporters and anchors, not the
answers given. American journalist James Fallows (1996a & 1996b) noted that while political reporters claim to be asking questions on behalf of the public, the actual questions they ask do not resemble those asked by audiences or public members when given a chance. Instead, he notes, that in American elections, the public almost always asks questions about issues, be it health care, education, poverty or taxes. The media, on the other hand, consistently ask questions about political strategy, scandals and gaffes, and popularity issues, as well as intrusive personal questions.

Journalists justify their intrusiveness and excesses by claiming that they are the public's representatives, asking the questions their fellow citizens would ask if they had the privilege. In fact, they ask questions that only their fellow political professionals care about. And they do so with discourtesy and rancour that represents the public's views much less than they reflect the modern belief that being independent boils down to acting hostile. (Fallows, 1996b, p. 50)

A journalist's "natural instincts" argues Fallows, is to present every issue as if its real meaning were political in the meanest and narrowest sense of that term with no analysis of the deep problems of public life.

Many journalists, on the other hand, see themselves as not only representing what the public wants to ask, but also asking the "tough" questions that voters may not know to ask, and thus attempting to get beyond the political spin of a campaigning leader. Further, they believe that "the media have the right to define the issue agenda of the campaign" based both on the actions of politicians, and on "what journalists perceive the reader to be interested in", and to do so a good reporter must be sceptical of politicians and their statements (Gilsdorf & Bernier, 1991, p. 22). After extensive interviews with journalists covering election campaigns, two Canadian researchers concluded:

Cynicism seemed to be one route for many individuals [reporters], manifested in a critical reporting style that often focused on strategic rather than substantive elements in the campaign. (Gilsdorf & Bernier 1991, p. 28)

Certainly the earlier findings on the campaign topics and news sources indicated that the strategic and campaign focus remains prevalent in provincial election news, but is it evident in the leaders' feature interviews as well as the regular reporting of the campaign? To explore this question, I collected the questions asked of all leaders in their “feature interviews” throughout the campaign. Further, I analyzed the type of question asked, defining it as either a “campaign question” or an “issue question”. Campaign questions were identified as any questions about popularity, campaign
strategy, personal integrity, or predictions. A classic example of a campaign question is variations on the questions “how can we trust you” and “who will put out the first attack ad?”. Issue questions were any questions that asked the leaders about their policy platform, promises, or positions on any substantive issue, even if the questions were framed in negative terms, therefore inviting the leaders to expand upon their positions. Examples of issue questions would included “how do you plan to cut taxes?” and “is there anything new about this promise?”.

Findings

The only feature interviews with leaders were found in the first week of the campaign. There were ten feature interviews with party leaders: six with Liberal leader Gordon Campbell and four with New Democrat leader Ujjal Dosanjh. Neither Green Party leader Adriane Carr nor Unity leader Chris Delaney were given a feature interviews, although both received ‘profile’ stories later in the campaign (a combination of sound bites from the subject and others, and a human interest frame).

The following pages (Tables 5-6, 5-7, and 5-8) show all of the questions asked of the two party leaders in the feature interviews, and whether the question was campaign related (indicated with a "C") or issue related (indicated with an "I"). There were feature interviews with the two major party leaders on three of the four stations. BCTV and CBC each interviewed the Liberal leader twice, and the NDP leader once, while VTV interviewed both leaders twice. The second interview of the Liberals by BCTV was in response to the Liberal release of their election platform, and by CBC was in response to the NDP’s negative advertisements. Complete transcripts of these interviews, including the leader’s answers, can be found in Appendix E.
### Table 5-6: Questions Asked by BCTV in Feature Interviews with party leaders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Campbell) Liberal Leader Feature Interviews</th>
<th>Q. type</th>
<th>Dosanjh (New Democrat Leader) Feature Interviews</th>
<th>Q. type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BCTV (18.04.01)...</strong></td>
<td>C/I</td>
<td><strong>BCTV (18.04.01)...</strong></td>
<td>C/I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) ...the New Democrats are making this a contest between the leaders, and while their campaign signs feature Mr. Dosanjh prominently, some of yours barely mention your name. What do you say to the accusation that we've heard that you are the party's biggest liability?</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1) ...a lot of people are saying you should be admitting you can't win; you should be trying to convince voters that a strong NDP opposition is in their best interests. Aren't you worried that by insisting that you CAN win you simply look like you're out of touch with us?...</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) ...you have the experts predicting you'll wipe out the NDP, aren't you afraid that many of your supporters won't vote because they think its all over?</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2) ...you say underdog, and this afternoon you compared yourself to David taking on Goliath, and then someone asked what your rock was for your sling and you didn't have an answer. So how do you plan to defeat the giant?...</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) The NDP as you may have heard are going to hammer home their contention that you can't cut taxes and protect things like health care and education at the same time, so how do you convince voters that you can do that?...</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>3) ... you say you want to win this campaign on the issues. The fact is though voters are having trouble getting past the issue of a disastrous record of the NDP, how do you overcome that in a campaign?...</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BCTV (23.04.01) (About platform release)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>BCTV (23.04.01) (About platform release)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) ...you're promising to improve health care, but you don't commit to increasing the health care budget. Aren't you a bit worried that your promise to find efficiencies in the system will sound like just more of the same old stuff to voters?</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>No 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) You mention your dramatic tax cut. But there's nothing you said that specifies what it will be.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) You say you can't do anything 'til you see the books. That's more of the same old, same old for voters as well isn't it?</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) You're also saying Mr. Campbell that parents will be able to choose the school they can send their children to. Sounds like a good idea on paper, but it sounds like chaos in communities across the province as well....</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

69 This question could be also be coded as an issue question, since it suggests some actual issue content. However, since the final question was framed as a "how do you convince voters" question, it was coded as a 'campaign' related question.
Table 5-7: Questions Asked by CBC in Feature Interviews with party leaders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Campbell (Liberal Leader) Feature Interviews</strong></th>
<th><strong>Dosanjh (New Democrat Leader) Feature Interviews</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CBC (18.04.01)</strong></td>
<td><strong>CBC (18.04.01)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Now in the days leading up to this campaign liberals were predicting that you were going to take all 79 seats. What is your prediction... Now? C 1) Can you tell me in 5 words or less how are you feeling right now... C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) You've been in an election campaign before and last time you came out on the losing end of this. What are you going to do differently this time? C 2) Now some of the NDP strategist have said that you should be running this campaign as opposition leaders rather than trying to become Premier once again, so what do you say to them?... C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) And what do you expect to see develop through the campaign now? What do you think it will be like, the tone of it? C 3) Now you're last legislative sessions didn't make many waves, but are we looking forward to anything for the campaign itself, anything new planned?... C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) ...you have been doing this with your ad campaign, so far, sort of person to person, there's Gordon Campbell up there with his message. But what about the negative ad campaign. Who's going to put the first one out?... C 4) ...health, education environment, those are familiar themes and they haven't translated into numbers at the polls for you yet. So What is it going take for you to convince the voters?... C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CBC (24.04.01) (In response to NDP negative ads)</strong></td>
<td><strong>No 2nd Interview</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) So what about this hidden agenda that Mr. Dosanjh is referring to? I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) The NDP's saying your party's tax cuts are going to favour the well-to-do. Can you tell us tonight whether you plan to cut taxes for people earning more than $60,000 a year? I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) You have been very clear about those lower tax brackets. But, you haven't been clear at all about the upper three, those over $60,000. Are you ruling out a tax cut for the top three income tax brackets, those above $60,000? I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) And anything beyond the $60,000? I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Let's get that pinned down as well, when you say the end of our first term. So you have several years in fact to implement these tax cuts? I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) It's interesting that Alberta is about to bring in this flat tax, 10.5% Of taxable income. That's flat right across the board. Is that a possibility in BC?... I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell (Liberal Leader) Feature Interviews</td>
<td>Q. type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTV (18.04.01)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) ...you are standing apparently some 50 meters away from perhaps your future office. And lets face it you are well ahead in the polls. But you entered the 1996 campaign with a commanding lead as well and you ended up losing in large part because some people just wouldn't or could not trust you back then, why should they trust you now?...</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) ...you have outlined a range of Liberal polices heading into this election for some time now. But now a new level scrutiny begins. How much detail are you going to disclose about your plans?...</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTV (20.04.01) (Re: Health announcement)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) ...we have heard today about your plan to train more doctors and of course your have already blamed the NDP for creating the nursing shortage. How would you solve the labour situation right now?</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) .... of course you announced your plan today to double the number of doctors trained right here in BC. Is that actually new?</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) ... we've been looking at these numbers as well and it would appear that the plan you are talking about right here is very much like the plan that is already in place from the NDP, in fact has been funded since the top of the year? Aren't you just really re-announcing something that's already out there right now?...</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) He [Campbell] says his program is much more ambitious than yours....?</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the preceding pages show, many of the questions by the anchors were strategically framed, asking campaign-related questions rather than issue-related ones. The following table 5-9 summarizes these findings.

Table 5-9: Summary of Campaign vs. Issue Questions in Leader Interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date &amp; station</th>
<th>Liberals</th>
<th>NDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Campaign questions</td>
<td>Issue questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.04.01 (BCTV)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.04.01 (CBC)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.04.01 (VTV)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.04.01 (VTV)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.04.01 (BCTV)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.04.01 (CBC)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In the first interviews by each station, all of the questions were campaign-related (BCTV, CBC, and VTV on 18.04.01). Not a single question was related to an issue. Follow-up feature interviews were even more interesting. VTV did second interviews with each of the leaders (20.04.01), and in these interviews, the Liberal leader was asked issue-related questions exclusively while the New Democratic leader was asked an equal number of campaign-related and issue-related questions. BCTV did a second feature interview with only Gordon Campbell to discuss his release of the Liberal campaign platform, but no corresponding interview was done with the New Democratic leader. In BCTV's second interview (23.04.01), only one question could be considered a campaign one (“that's just the same old same old, isn't it?”), although it could more accurately be described as an open-ended rhetorical question which still allowed the leader an opportunity to expand upon his plans. The remaining three questions were all issue-related and invited further expansion on his proposals. CBC also did a second feature interview with only the Liberal leader. This interview was introduced as a chance for Campbell to respond to the negative advertisements released by the New Democrats alleging that Campbell had a "hidden agenda". In this interview, every single one of the questions asked of the Liberal leader were issue-related questions, rather than related to the campaign or strategy.

Discussion

While party strategists see the feature interviews as an opportunity for party leaders to distinguish themselves and “get their message out”, the motivation on the part
of the media interviewer appears to be quite different. Every single question in the first set of interviews the day of the election call found the anchors asking strategic and campaign-related questions at the expense of any issues. In every case where there was a second interview, there were more issue-related questions asked. However, since both BCTV and CBC aired a second feature interview with Campbell only, this opportunity to provide further information about the NDP platform was absent for the New Democratic leader during the election. It could be summarized, then, that the Liberal leader was given substantially more opportunity to discuss his party's platform and issue than his New Democratic counterpart, both by the granting of follow-up interviews on specific subjects, and the nature of the questions asked in those interviews.

The partisan differences in both the granting of feature interviews and the questions asked within them begs the question. Certainly, the New Democrats were the incumbent government and thus, perhaps, their positions were known both from the government record and the budget released just before the election. Similarly, since the NDP were assumed to be losing the election, it was the Liberal platform that could have been seen as most relevant to the media. However, the opportunity to compare the two platforms during the election was lost with this uneven granting of interviews.

**Further Discussion: Parties Without Policies**

The findings from this chapter offer a perspective of the dynamics of media coverage of parties in both this election, and elections in general. There appear to be several patterns emerging, some which are consistent with previous research and some which points to the need for more nuanced analysis. In total, these trends call into question how well the voters, and parties themselves, are being served by the news media.

The two major parties, with relatively equal seats in the provincial legislature, held the majority of the media's attention during the election coverage, representing support for the notion of proportional coverage. Overall, both the Liberals and the NDP were present, either as a story focus or a mention, in 85% and 86% of the stories respectively. The media attention to the rest of the political parties was significantly less than the leading parties. The only other political party that garnered any significant amount of coverage was the Green Party, which was present in 25% of the stories,
about half as a focus and half as a mere mention. As for leader attention, both the Liberal and the NDP leaders occurred in the majority of stories that mentioned their party. But while the two leading parties were almost identical in the amount of overall coverage they received, their leaders fared slightly differently. Liberal leader Gordon Campbell was present in approximately 69% of all stories, while NDP leader Ujjal Dosanjh was the present in only 59%, 10% less than the Liberal leader. In addition, Campbell was present in fully 81% for the stories that mentioned his party, while Dosanjh was represented in only 69% of all of the stories where the NDP occurred. As for Green Party leader Adriane Carr, she was present in 12% of the stories (less than half of the amount of her party, and equally as the story's focus and as merely a mention), and Unity leader Chris Delaney was present in about 6.5% (about two thirds of his party's occurrences). Thus, while it can be held that the media's focus on the two leading parties was also a focus on those party leaders, this did not hold true for the smaller parties, including the two seen as the only other serious contenders for legislative seats: the Greens and Unity.

These findings lend qualified support to the concept of proportional coverage, in-as-much as it applies to the two major parties in this case study. The relatively equal standings in the BC legislature were paralleled by relatively equal amount of media attention for the governing New Democrats and challenging Liberals. However this 'convention' clearly does not apply to smaller parties whose emergence on the political scene is interesting to the media due to its potential impact on the political dynamic. While the Green party held not a single seat in the legislature at dissolution, its appearance on the scene gave the traditional left-of-centre voters a place to "park" their votes, resulting in an unprecedented split on the left. The potential for this split was clearly a factor in the Greens obtaining visibility in 25% of the stories. Importantly, this attention was focused not on the Green policies, but on its standings in the polls, the threat it posed to the New Democrats, and the up-beat mood of the party workers as the campaign progresses. Nevitte et al. (2000) found a similar dynamic in the 1997 federal election with the emerging Reform party. However, while Nevitte and his colleagues found a predominantly negative tone applied by the media to the Reform party, the evidence from this case study indicates a predominantly positive tone applied to the Greens.

To some extent, the difference in the occurrences of the two major party leaders can be explained by the fact that Dosanjh was a new leader, while the NDP was the
incumbent government. To the extent that the campaign touched upon the NDP's record, it would be past NDP Premiers Glen Clark and Mike Harcourt who might be mentioned. This was especially the case since the Glen Clark government was extremely unpopular by the time of the election. (This narrative about the parties will be explored further in the discourse analysis in Chapter Six.) On the other hand, since Dosanjh was a new leader who had in fact been instrumental in Clark's resignation (as Attorney General, he announced that Clark was under investigation, therefore forcing him to resign) it could be argued that his attempt to put his own "stamp" on the party was limited by the media's unwillingness to show him as much as his party, nor as much as his rival, the Liberal leader.

The findings on the media attention to the parties also contradicts the notion of an incumbency advantage. The incumbent NDP did not receive more attention than the Liberals, and the NDP leader received less attention than the Liberal leader. In addition, based on the tone of source quotes, the NDP received more negative than positive attention while the Liberals had relatively equal amounts of positive and negative attention. Of course, this was not a 'typical' election (if there is such a thing). The incumbent New Democrats had dropped dramatically in voter support because of the unpopularity of the Clark government, and were never expected to win. The mood in the province, as reflected in the media coverage, was generally understood to be a variation on the sentiment of "throw the bastards out". Indeed, political strategists often say that 'no one wins an election, someone loses it' – indicating that it is the incumbent party who must defend its' actions while the challenger can represent a clean slate. If the incumbent is relatively popular and the challenger less so, as with the federal Liberals and the challenging Conservatives/Alliance/Reform, there may indeed be an advantage for that party. However, where the party is not the "perennial ruler", as is the case with the federal conservative parties and the provincial NDP, incumbency may be a disadvantage.

In addition, the type of news stories where the parties received attention lends further support for an incumbency disadvantage, at least in this election. While most of the stories, and thus most of the media attention, were focused on the campaign instead of the issues, there were partisan differences in this focus. The NDP campaign was accorded 25.6% of the campaign stories compared to 19.2% for the Liberal campaign, and 4.5% about the Green Campaign. (In addition, there were a number of stories that looked at two or more campaigns.) More dramatically, 57% of all of the stories about
policy or platform issues had the Liberal party as the focus, while only 36% focused on the NDP. Thus, not only were issue stories in short supply in the coverage of this election, but when they were covered, they were far more likely to have the Liberal party as the focus than the NDP, and almost never included the other parties at all.

Stories with a campaign-focus are sometimes referred to as "strategy coverage" or as providing "strategic frames" within election news (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Devitt, 1997; Iyengar, 1991; Iyengar & Reeves, 1997; Patterson, 1993). These stories are characterised by a tendency on the part of the reporter to discuss candidate behaviour and party policies as motivated primarily by the desire to gain support with voters, rather than as philosophical or political differences in how to best handle public policy. For example, in this study, the NDP’s policy positions on aboriginal issues were seen by the news media as an attempt by the party to shore up support with the only issue they still had an advantage over the Liberals, according to the opinion polls. The Green Party’s focus on economic issues was presumed to be an attempt to downplay their environmental roots and seek the centre vote, rather than an actual policy shift. Campaign stories focused on the performance of the leaders and their parties, as if running a successful campaign strategy was tantamount to running a government. The consequences of strategy coverage such as this, according to media scholars, is that the media coverage ends up answering questions about who is running a better campaign, and who is likely to win the election, but not who might run a better government.

Further, research into the effects of strategy coverage has shown that viewers of campaign strategy stories had higher levels of cynicism towards the political subjects (and politics in general) than those who viewed issue stories (Jamieson and Capella 1996). If so, a higher volume of campaign-related stories about one party compared to another is likely a disadvantage for the former. The voters do not benefit from exposure to party policies, and the party and leader are seen as attempting to manipulate the electorate rather than seeking to govern.

In addition to the larger percentage of strategy coverage about the NDP, as the next chapter demonstrates, the predominant content of the stories about the NDP’s were negative. Journalists focused on the NDP’s “weak” campaign, repeatedly using terms such as “disastrous”, “lackluster”, and “plodding”, and framing almost every report in terms of the party’s unpopularity and low standings in the polls. For example, many reports compared the mood and behaviour of the two major campaigns, in terms of the numbers of people showing up for announcements, and how “considerably less slick”
the New Democratic campaign was. Indeed, the news media became fixated on the story of the New Democrat's poorly managed campaign, and barely mentioned the substance of a single announcement without framing it in terms of how it may or may not fit within the dominant frame of their loss of popularity. In contrast, the Liberal leader was shown with large crowds of cheering people. As a BCTV reporter noted (without irony), it was the "lackluster" campaign that "had become the focus of this race, even more than the issues" (April 28). It had certainly become the focus of the media's attention.

Yet, there were other stories to tell, even about the campaign itself. For example, the largest change in voter support from the first polls of the campaign, was a Liberal decline in support of more than 10% of the decided vote. Certainly the dramatic loss of support for the New Democrats was an interesting story, and would clearly attract coverage. As well, the emergence of the Greens as the third party and their potential for an unprecedented split on the left meets the news values attributed to campaign news. And given the comments about the potential effect media attention to minor parties could have on voters' intentions (above) the media attention on the Green party is also an interesting finding. However, the loss of Liberal support was the most dramatic polling information in the campaign, and was completely ignored.

A final comment about strategy coverage concerns the results of the analysis of the questions raised in the feature interviews with the two major party leaders. Every single question in the first set of interviews the day of the election call found the anchors asking strategic and campaign-related questions at the expense of any issues. In every case where there was a second interview, there were more issue-related questions asked: however this opportunity was afforded to only the Liberal leader. Thus, there were partisan differences in both the granting of feature interviews and the questions asked within them, indicating that the opportunity for voters to compare the two platforms during the election was limited.

This focus on strategy questions on the part of the news stations cannot be attributed to viewers' preference. When given the opportunity in election campaigns voters almost always ask questions related to issues, and want detailed and specific answers (Fallows, 1996b). Indeed, in this election, when viewers were given the opportunity to ask questions of the parties, almost every one was about an issue, and often one that had previously been ignored by the media (e.g.: disability programs, arts funding). Similar to the voters, politicians also prefer to focus on specific issues in
interviews. In every case the reporter's strategic questions were answered with attempts to highlight policy information or repeat the platform theme (see Appendix E).

Television media coverage of the parties in this election can be summed up in the following ways:

1). Proportional coverage was a factor for the two major contenders, but not for smaller parties. Incumbency appears to be a disadvantage in the party coverage, at least for the NDP, in British Columbia.

2). Generally, a small party may received more attention than either its standings or its poll reports warrant, if it a) is new on the scene, and b) has voter support beyond media expectations, and c) offers an interesting dynamic in the horse-race aspect of the campaign. In this case the Green Party met these conditions.

3). Leaders were present in the majority of stories about their parties for the two major parties, although the proportion of attention varied, with the Liberal leader receiving more attention than the New Democratic leader.

4). The leader of the 'third party' (the Greens) was only present in half of the stories that mentioned the party, and leaders of smaller parties were in a minority of stories that mentioned their party.

5). The New Democrats received a higher amount of 'strategy coverage' than the Liberals, both in terms of the topics of stories where the party was the focus (more campaign, fewer issues stories) and the percentage of campaign strategy questions asked of the leader in feature interviews.

These findings lead to more questions. How can voters learn about policies, and make an informed decision about voting, when the information from the major media information source is so limited? There is, and should be, a tension between the increasingly sophisticated strategies of large political parties and the media’s claim of a watchdog role on these parties. However, the information needs of citizens exercising their franchise cannot be lost in this struggle. Fletcher and Everett (1991) put it well:

The objectives of election campaigns are best served when regulations and practices strike a balance between the freedom of the parties to market their candidates and programs as they see fit and the need to provide voters with sufficient information to make a reasoned choice. The goal is to facilitate debate within a framework of fairness that maximizes information availability and the legitimacy of the process. The media play a crucial role in monitoring the parties and leaders and providing a critical
perspective on their activities and proposals. However, the parties
deserve a reasonable opportunity to communicate their appeals directly.
(Fletcher & Everett, 1991, p. 210)

The parties, it appears, did not get this opportunity in the 2001 BC election – at
least not in the TV news reports.
CHAPTER SIX: CAMPAIGN NARRATIVES AND NEWS FRAMES

In the previous chapters I have analysed the frequency and occurrences of the topics in the election news, the sources used, and party coverage. However, it has not told us how the election story was told. For that, one needs to undertake a qualitative analysis of the election discourse. This chapter begins to do that.

Analysing news content as a discourse draws upon the literature that views language as having a role in the social construction of reality. With the odd exception, few contemporary media theorists believe that the news media merely present "facts" and accurately mirror reality. Instead, theorists have recognized that the news media represent the world through symbolic content, that is not neutral, but is offered within frameworks and paradigms that prefer some interpretations over others. These interpretative choices are themselves not neutral, but steeped in relations of power. As one author put it, "each particular form of linguistic expression... has its reason" (Fowler 1991, 4. Emphasis added). The reason is to "make things mean" -- whether it is to reinforce the social and political values and institutional practices in legitimizing one form of meaning and downplaying another, or to challenge the status quo.

Discourse analysis approaches have utilised concepts such as binary oppositions, intertextuality (the conscious or unconscious use of material from other previously created texts, as in parody or style), modality (the weight attached to an utterance by, for example, its placement and use of verbs), lexical classifications (word choices), transitivity (e.g. passive or active speech), and mode of address (e.g. formal vs informal). These and other methods are used to determine how the underlying codes, rules and form of language work to make a discourse meaningful.

While analysing news as discourse can incorporate numerous methods and approaches, for the purposes of this case study, I have chosen to focus on two aspects: news narratives and news frames. This chapter looks at the topics covered in the

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election news with two questions in mind: What stories were told in this election narrative? And, how were these stories and topics framed? These questions raise other related questions, such as: What topics or stories are missing, ignored or marginalized? What linguistic and discursive devices were used to construct narratives and frames? To answer these questions, I begin with week-by-week descriptive summary of the news stories in the case study, and then examine more closely the narratives and framing of selected campaign and issue stories.

**Telling the "Campaign Story"**

**Week One: The election is called & the election is over.**

In the first week of the campaign (April 17 – 24, 2001) fully 78% of the stories were primarily about the campaign, and 22% primarily about policy issues. While reporters had been prepared for, and perhaps even hoping for "surprises" in the campaign, the election story began with what became the dominant story of the entire campaign: the fact that it was already over.

The campaign related stories began the day before the election was called (April 17) and continued through the day of the announcement (April 18) when all of the networks focused on the huge and historically unusual gap in popularity between the two leading parties—the incumbent New Democrats and the challenging Liberals—and concluded that "barring any disasters" the election was already decided. All television newscasts commented on the public opinion poll results (the Liberals were an unheard of 49 points ahead of the New Democrats at the start of the campaign), and offered various comments and predictions about the state of the incumbent government’s position in the polls. Premier Ujjal Dosanjh himself used an analogy from the biblical story of David and Goliath and called himself the "underdog" in this campaign when making his first speech announcing the election, and these analogies were repeated throughout the campaign.

Comments from sources in the first two days were about the potential effect this gap would have (or should have) on the party strategies and on voter turn-out. One political reporter noted that "the media will presumably be more negative or at least apply more scrutiny" to the Liberals because of their overwhelming lead (BCTV, April 17). The New Democrats were shown insisting they could win the election. News
reports on their campaign strategy noted that the New Democrats, (in contrast to the media themselves) were “downplaying” the party name in an attempt to distance themselves from past premier Glen Clark and emphasise new leader, Ujjal Dosanjh because of his personal popularity. Following are some examples of reporter’s and anchor’s comment from news reports for April 17 and 18, 2001.

Table 6-1: Quotes from television news stories (April 17 and 18, 2001)

| BCTV                        | ...NDP candidates putting on brave fronts ...
|                            | ...NDP activists throwing in the towel even before the race even starts...
|                            | ...varying degrees of doom and gloom...
|                            | ...anything more than 32% would be a miracle for the NDP...
|                            | not a strategy designed for political victory but one designed for political survival...
|                            | ... saying publicly that they can win, and hoping privately that they can avoid extinction...
|                            | ...so far NDP has yet to find any weapons capable of wounding the Liberals...
|                            | ...the only hope of the party is to admit the sorry state it is in...
|                            | ...Barring some catastrophic political meltdown, this [Campbell] is the face of BC’s 33rd Premier...

| CBC                        | ...NDP facing an uphill battle, ...fighting an uphill battle
|                            | ...put[ting] on a brave front...as their party limps into an election
|                            | ...the man who would be Premier [Campbell] seems destined to lead his party to victory..

| Global                     | ...already Dosanjh is admitting the NDP has a tough hill to climb with voters...
| VTV                        | ...even New Democrats admit this will be a tough election for them, when they are not making optimistic predictions...
|                            | ...The future is looking bright for this guy [Campbell]... they are going to win according to opinion polls...Gordon Campbell enters this campaign as not just the favourite, but as the man the opinion polls say will reside over the obliteration of the NDP...

In addition to the election being already over, news stories reviewed what were commonly believed to be the reasons for the drastic unpopularity of the New Democrats. A number of stories referred to or provided overviews of the “NDP’s legacy”, with an emphasis on the scandals of Glen Clark’s government. The CBC did a long story (over 8 minutes) about the NDP’s legacy based on a movie review concept, titled “the good, the bad and the ugly” and using two political pundits sitting in a movie theatre watching clips from the incumbent’s ten years in power and commenting at the successes and the failures in the look and terms of popular movie critics. This was a typical example of the use of intertextuality from another form of media, and included the use of the “thumbs up/thumbs down” approval ratings coined by movie critics Eberts and Roeper.

The NDP’s “baggage” was outlined in additional stories by CBC and BCTV, emphasising political scandals about money wasted on the building of ferries (coined the
"fast ferries fiasco"), scandals about the NDP's claim of balancing budgets (referred to as the "fudget budgets") and references to former Premier Glen Clark's resignation due to criminal charges. During the coverage of the popularity gap, both BCTV and CBC also commented on the Liberal's leader's strategies for this election compared to the one in 1996 when Campbell narrowly lost to Glen Clark. BCTV noted that Campbell "seems determined not to make the same mistakes he made last time around" pointing out how the party had "toned down its campaign promises" that were widely criticized last time (BCTV, April 18). "This time around they've been a lot more cautious... a little more cagey" comments a CBC political reporter by noting that the Liberal platform was vague on promises compared to 1996, thereby providing fewer targets for criticism. Instead, the Liberal strategy was described as "to make no mistakes" and to "ride into power on the tide of anti-NDP sentiments".

The hopeless situation for the New Democrats continued as a major theme throughout the first week of the campaign. On April 19, the day after the writ was dropped, CBC opened its 6 p.m. newscast with a short story about Mike Harcourt, former NDP premier predicting a loss for the NDP. The story was also covered by BCTV. The CBC described it as follows:

We will begin with the BC election and a shockingly candid comment from former NDP premier Mike Harcourt. Now normally during an election campaign former party leaders either actively campaign or remain silent. But Harcourt, who led the NDP to victory in 1991 is doing neither. In fact, he says Premier Ujjal Dosanjh doesn't stand a chance of winning. (CBC, April 19)

Harcourt's actual quotes, however, appear less shocking or sensational.

Harcourt: I think Ujjal Dosanjh has put it quite well when he said he knows how David felt facing Goliath. I think, he's got an uphill fight. But he's a brave fellow, but my sense is the people of British Columbia want to see a change. But I think Ujjal will fight well.

Reporter: Any thoughts on what went wrong?

Harcourt: What went wrong? No I think after ten years in most provinces the public say okay that's what democracy is all about and its time to put the ins out and the outs in. (CBC, April 19)

Nonetheless, the ex-Premier's comments appeared to reject the political tradition of "never admitting defeat" and thus became a news story that fit within the frame about a party that had lost all of its support. BCTV also covered the quotes from Harcourt at the end of their lead election story which focused on the New Democrat's small crowds and low energy campaign start.
As if today's sparse turnouts weren't bad enough for the NDP, consider today's comments from the man who led to the decimation of the Socreds in 1991. Former Premier Mike Harcourt was in Tofino today and Chek TV got his surprising predictions for May the 16th. (BCTV, April 19)

Thus, in an interesting juxtaposition, media reports suggested the New Democrats as misguided and possibly dishonest "insisting they can win" while at the same time framed Harcourt's opinion of an unlikely win as "another blow" for the New Democrats. It is one of those paradoxes in media coverage of elections: those who cannot win also cannot admit to knowing they will not win or they are seen as already giving up or abandoning the cause. But when the candidates are quoted as believing they can win, it is framed as evidence of being out of touch with the voters.

For the next two days (April 19 and 20) the dominant story carried by all stations was the difference between the atmosphere of the campaigns of the two leading parties. The New Democrats' campaign was reported as low key, with few public events, few supporters and little energy. Reporters commented on how, at the first event of the day after the election call, reporters outnumbered voters, and juxtaposed it with Campbell's large enthusiastic crowds. Thus, the differences in momentum became a stand-in for the differences in popularity, and the "lackluster" campaign of the New Democrats furthered the narrative of a party in trouble. BCTV notes that "the Liberals have a near monopoly on momentum...more than 500 enthusiastic Liberal supporters crowded into a hall." Similar stories were found on the other stations during the two days. On April 19, 2001 the CBC reported that

...The differences in tone between Gordon Campbell's campaign and Ujjal Dosanjh's were apparent from the start. Dosanjh was only on the hustings for a couple of hours and he stayed in friendly territory. But Campbell began his day with a large rally and then wasted little time in heading up the highway for the interior.... More than 600 people turned out to greet Liberal leader Gordon Campbell this morning at a rally in Cloverdale.... (CBC, April 19)

The next day (April 20) the CBC reported that Dosanjh could not "buy a break anywhere" because of public reactions to his campaign. While the campaign was off to a "plodding start" and the response is "less than overwhelming" the reporter comments that this is unusual in a campaign.

While in past elections the NDP's vaunted 'machine' makes sure the campaign runs like clockwork, it appears that this time someone forgot to set the alarm... Normally campaigns are run with almost military precision. ... Small crowds at the start of the campaign may be part of the strategy of an underdog building to bigger crowds in later weeks to give
the feeling of momentum... But in this case some analysts say a weak start is symptomatic of the problems plaguing the NDP... it seems impossible for the NDP to lose any more momentum. (CBC April 20)

Global News was also carrying the story of the low key campaign, noting on April 19 that “... the NDP are taking a distinctively low-key approach to the campaign” and the next day “...another quiet but rough day for the premier ... greeted by handfuls of supporters and rude gestures and swearing from passer-bys”. And finally, VTV led with a lengthy story comparing the two leaders on the first full day of campaigning.

...Day one of the election campaign has turned into a tale of two teams. The Campbell team, upbeat energetic and keeping up a brisk pace. In contrast the Premier kicked off his day in a nearly empty community centre and he stayed close to home in safe NDP territory.... Premier's first day on the campaign trail was a bit of a let down. In contrast to the well-oiled machinery of the Liberal campaign...

...the Premier appeared to be showing some strain at the final stop.... While there was more of a crowd it was still outnumbered by the media.... In less than 10 minutes the Premier returned to the campaign bus. His first day over mid-way through the afternoon.... in politics where symbolism counts for so much, will the symbol of today be a lonely premier in an empty room?...

...not a stellar beginning of the Premier's campaign.... But what will voters remember of this day? The danger for Dosanjh is that his vision will be lost among the sad images of a governing party the people appear to have abandoned.... (VTV, April 19, 2001)

Throughout the first week, the NDP’s “weak and embarrassing campaign” was seen as a symptom of a fractured party, and by the third day Dosanjh is being described as “embattled”. This narrative of a sad, abandoned party and its hapless leader was furthered by the release of a poll on April 22 showing the NDP “all but annihilated” (BCTV, April 22). Every station (except CBC, since it was a Sunday) led with the report that a Mustell and McIntyre poll (commissioned by the Vancouver Province newspaper) gave the Liberals 72% of the decided vote and the NDP only 18%. The Green party was shown at 7%, while the Unity party had a decided support of only 2%. The reports did not usually include the number of undecided voters or those who refused to answer. At the end of the first week, Global news asked voters in the street if they were paying attention and concluded the story by suggesting that “most people say they would rather skip the next three weeks of campaigning and get right to election” (Global, April 23). This suggestion -- that the campaign itself was meaningless because poll results indicated that the voter's decisions had already been made -- was countered only once
by a political historian-turned-pundit on a CBC interview. The day after the election call, historian David Mitchell argued:

... BC history tells us otherwise. For those who think its all over but the crying, they should think again, because one only has to look to British Columbia’s political past to see that voters can be counted upon, in this province in particular, to surprise us, to demonstrate that they don’t really make up their minds until the campaign is over. (David Mitchell, CBC TV, April 18, 2001)

But his was a lone voice among the news stories. Interestingly, the frame of the “disastrous” New Democrat campaign continued even in the face of contradictory, though minimized evidence in the television news itself that later in the week. BCTV (April 20) reluctantly noted that the NDP campaign “did generate a little more excitement”, the crowds were bigger, and the Premier appeared to have “more energy, however the story was framed within a warning that it was not a “smooth ride” for the NDP. Global (April 21) showed Dosanjh in the Interior of the province with larger and enthusiastic crowds, (although not to the level of the Liberal campaign) yet this did not appear to affect their overall ‘disaster frame’. Instead, they focused on the fact that the retiring NDP MLA from the area (Harry Lali, from Merrit) had in the past criticized Dosanjh, even though Lali was shown giving a rousing campaign speech in support of the NDP leader. Global summed it up as another “bad day” for Dosanjh. VTV used the same frame for the same campaign stop, even though the actual quotes are Lali supporting Dosanjh, and shots of Dosanjh ‘main-streetering’ with positive response. VTV’s (April 21) commentary focuses on a woman complaining to Dosanjh about something that is not clarified in the newscast and comments that “main-streetering” is not without confrontation”. Then, VTV shows the “biggest crowd yet” for Dosanjh and MLA David Zirnhelt, in 100 Mile House. Thus, the commentary by the media did not always coincide with their own evidence. Further, while the news media covered Dosanjh’s campaign and any confrontations he may have had with voters, there was no reference to the Liberal campaign strategy of Campbell exclusively attending invitation-only rallies of Liberal party supporters, and rarely meeting with the public. Dosanjh, on the other hand, was mingling with the public, admittedly with mixed results.

As is typical in the Canadian news media, the election reports focused on the two front runners. Only Dosanjh and Campbell were given feature interviews on three of the four television stations during the first few days of the campaign, and again later in the week after the Liberals unveiled their health care announcements and their platform. Other parties received scant attention except the Green party, which was noted as
having some momentum. However, while the Greens had little coverage, what little they had was universally positive, with lengthy feature stories on day three by BCTV and VTV, and on day six by CBC. As noted above, the Unity party was reported as having stalled in the polls at anywhere from 2-5%, depending on the research, and received very little attention. The Marijuana party, on the other hand, attracted some minor attention from all stations, mostly as a fringe party and therefore not a serious contender. However, the CBC did a feature story on an unusual aspect of the Marijuana's campaign: that contrary to what the viewer might expect, its polices were primarily conservative and many of its key strategists came from Conservative backgrounds. A handful of other parties were mentioned only in passing.

TV stations ran three times the number of campaign stories than issue stories. Of the issue stories, three of the news stations ran stories about what they considered the issues in the campaign in the first half of the first week. For example, on April 18, BCTV announced it had conducted a poll with the Vancouver Sun showing that the top issue was the economy. BCTV then interpreted this to mean that British Columbians wanted tax cuts.

**Anchor:** The New Democrats may claim that if the issues were the focus of this campaign they'd have a chance of winning. The liberals say they are more than happy to debate the issues. What are they? Tonight as we begin our campaign focus on "Your vote, Your issues" Brian Coxford has the results of a BCTV/Vancouver Sun poll that asked British Columbians what they care about most.

**Man on Street:** ...Mis-management of the economy. ...

**Reporter:** The top issue for BC voters according to a recent poll is improved economy and tax cuts.

BCTV further declared health care as the second most important issue, and "competence and mismanagement of government" as the third, each supported by quotes from people in the street. Both CBC and Global also offered their take on the issues, defining them as primarily related to "what's etched in people's minds" (Global, April 18). What was etched in people's minds in these stories was the problematic legacy of the New Democratic governments, as noted above. Thus, their focus on the "key issues" was a focus on the scandals of the Clark government. All of the stories about the issues and the New Democrat's legacy included extensive use of "streeters" to see what voters ("you") were saying about the election. In addition, all but BCTV carried a story on April 19 of forest giant Interfor's closing of a mill and laying off over five
hundred people while blaming it on a land use decision of the governing New Democrats. BCTV followed the story the next day with interviews with the forestry company, mill workers and an environmental representative. The story also included a quote from Dosanjh who accused the forest company of "playing politics" and pointed to large donations the company had made to the Liberal party. The forest company executive denied the accusation.

On the third day of the campaign the Liberals announced health care funding for a UBC centre for brain research and on the fifth day they released their overall election platform. Both of these announcements resulted in issue stories by the news media. The Liberal platform was released with fanfare and much media attention, and included major announcements on health, education and tax cuts. It was followed by a number of feature interviews with the Liberal leader. All four stations did relatively straight news stories outlining the content of these announcements and emphasising the promise of tax cuts. The New Democratic Party was relegated to responding to the Liberal platform and when Dosanjh attempted to challenge the Liberal leader's claim that tax cuts would help the low incomes, the attempt fell flat. BCTV didn't report on Dosanjh's claims at all, and Global gave it very little coverage. VTV and CBC reported on the "counter-offensive" in a little more detail, however the story did not succeed in getting any "legs". Instead, the next day (the last of the first week) the big story was that British Columbia was on the verge of becoming a "have not" province by federal equalization standards. The origin of this claim came from a private researcher in Canada's east coast; however, he was not listed as having associations with any institute. Nonetheless, it was a big story, and was the lead story by both BCTV and CBC, with the former using the right-leaning Fraser Institute for extensive quotes on the economic situation in BC and suggesting that the only solution is tax cuts. The leads for the two top stories were:

Good evening. We all know that BC's economy has been in trouble. That's why it's become one of the top issues in this election. But it could be even worse than we thought. In fact, BC is in danger of losing its status as one of Canada's have provinces. Using a formula based on provincial revenues, Ottawa currently lists BC, Alberta, and Ontario as have provinces when it decides who will get equalization payments. The rest are have-nots. (Graphic: "Nearly Not?" on map of BC) But according to the government's latest calculations, BC is now perilously close to being downgraded to a have not province. [Inset text "It's the economy"]. It is that kind of economic malaise that Liberal leader Gordon Campbell says he'll help correct with that dramatic tax cut he keeps promising. He hasn't given any specific numbers, but he does promise we'll have the lowest provincial tax rate in the country. How much will that mean to
you? As Harvey Overfeld reports tonight, it depends on your definition of
dramatic. (BCTV April 24, 2001)

It is no secret British Columbia’s economy has not been performing very
well over the past few years. But the following story may come as a
surprise to some people. The province may be on the way to falling below
that benchmark that separates provinces in Canada between have and
have not status. Terry Milowski reports. (CBC, April 24, 2001)

The tax cut theme was continued in two other stories developed in the last days
of the first week. The NDP began to use a negative television advertisement that
challenged Campbell’s claims about tax cuts. At the same time, BCTV ran another story
about the need for tax cuts, included a long list of taxes running along the bottom of the
screen during the story, and concluded by asking how would parties “put money back in
your pocket”. The news peg was a family of four earning in the top income bracket.
This family owned a house in east Vancouver and had two kids with a stay at home
mother. Nonetheless, the reporter comments, they “find they have very little money to
go around after paying bills and taxes”. The father states in the story that tax cuts would
be a helpful boost for their family. The report then used the Fraser Institute’s “tax
freedom day” to say that BC ranks “dead last” among the ten provinces in disposable
income after taxes.

VTV’s top story for the final day of the first week was of its latest poll indicating
that the top issue for British Columbians in the election was health care, (contradicting
the earlier claim by BCTV that the top issue was the economy/tax cuts). This helped to
reinforce the two major health care announcements Campbell had made in the first
week. Global’s top story of the final day was how the Liberals were now making health
care their “key issue”. The following chart indicates a summary of the top (leading)
election stories of the first week:
Table 6-2: Week One -Top Election Story Leads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>BCTV</th>
<th>CBC</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>VTV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>Campaign differences &amp; Harcourt</td>
<td>Harcourt’s “shocking” prediction</td>
<td>Interfor shuts mill, bad news for NDP</td>
<td>Lib campaign difference from 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>NDP campaign lacking, Campbell on health &amp; education</td>
<td>Dosanjh challenges Campbell on cost of tax cuts, Liberals respond.</td>
<td>Liberal announcements on health &amp; education.</td>
<td>NDP premier “embattled” on campaign trail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>(Sat) Catch all of NDP/Lib leaders activities, &amp; Patrick Wong (Lib)</td>
<td>[No newscast.]</td>
<td>NDP’s campaign troubles in interior.</td>
<td>NDP campaign not getting easier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>(Sun) Poll results. NDP all but annihilated.</td>
<td>[No newscast]</td>
<td>Poll results &amp; party strategies.</td>
<td>Poll results &amp; NDP unpopularity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>BC a “have not” province, and tax cuts.</td>
<td>BC a “have not” province.</td>
<td>Libs make health care key issue.</td>
<td>VTV Poll results: health #1 issue, libs ahead on all issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Week Two: A party collapses & another emerges.

As with the first week, stories about the campaign dominated the election coverage in this second week (April 25 – May 1, 2001) at 79% compared to only 21% about issues. Once again the major campaign story for the second week of the campaign, both in terms of frequency (highest number of stories) and placement in the newscast (“top” stories) was the collapsing support for the New Democrats and the continuing problems with their campaign. At the beginning of the week, another poll was released showing the Liberals as the choice of 70% of the population, while the “bad news never seems to end” for the NDP who were “floundering in the polls” (BCTV, April 25 and 26). The CBC reported that the journalists travelling on the NDP campaign bus had dubbed it “the train of pain” and described it as continuing to “grind across the lower mainland, trying to ignore public opinion” (CBC, April 25). While the NDP leader was shown attempting to introduce issues into the campaign (hydro rebates, auto insurance) the media remained focused on asking Dosanjh questions about his unpopularity (BCTV, April 25) and his “considerably less slick” campaign (BCTV, April 28). The news reports continued to compare the mood and behaviour of the campaigns and provided little substance on the issues. BCTV reported that “while Dosanjh has trouble attracting a crowd, Campbell does not” and provided comparison film footage of the two campaigns.
Indeed, the news media had become fixated on the story of the New Democrat’s campaign, and barely mentioned the substance of a single announcement without referring to it as how it may or may not fit within the dominant frame of their loss of popularity. As a BCTV reporter noted, “that’s become the focus of this race even more than the issues” (April 28).

Further attempts by Dosanjh to shift the news frame to issues and “expose” what he called the Liberal’s “hidden agenda” were unsuccessful. His attempt to highlight his belief that the Liberals would privatize Hydro, based on their campaign platform of 1996, fell flat in the media, although it did attract supporters’ attentions. As BCTV notes:

Dosanjh spent much of today attacking the BC Liberals flip flops when it comes to whether or not they will privatize BC Hydro. The Liberals do have a spotty record on that issue, and Dosanjh tried to take advantage of that. But it’s hard to get your message out when the questions are all about your lackluster campaign.” (BCTV April 25, 2001)

One network went as far as to call the hydro issue a “blunder” on the part of the Premier, and a strategic attempt to misrepresent the Liberal’s position. (April 25, VTV). VTV reported that “Campbell seems to have been remarkably consistent on the issue...” and quoted him saying:

We have never said we are going to privatize BC Hydro, and we don’t have any intention of doing that. What we do have an intention of doing is reviewing what’s taking place in BC Hydro. (Gordon Campbell quoted on VTV, April 25, 2001)

Campbell further accused the premier of using “scare tactics”. The reporter then commented that since the NDP was “getting hammered in the polls on key issues like health care and education, it’s no wonder that the premier is talking about something else” and asked Dosanjh “Are you scrambling for an issue, Mr. Premier?” (VTV, April 25). Dosanjh’s attempt to discuss an issue was minimized and contradicted in the same news story that introduced it, and his motives were interpreted as desperate. During this second week, reporters from all stations began asking the New Democratic leader if he would campaign for opposition, which he refused (April 27). Other stories about the NDP campaign included VTV’s continuing poll report showing that even the “traditional labour support” for the party had collapsed (VTV, April 26), and the BC Board of Trade asking Dosanjh to withdraw the “attack ad” showing Gordon Campbell at a Board of Trade luncheon (April 26, all stations).

71 These ‘questions’ were coming from the media, indicating that they themselves were setting the agenda.
The second most dominant stories in the second week of the election were the Liberal campaign stories. Unlike the NDP campaign stories, however, these focused on the leader’s daily activities, and showed him making policy announcements at a rally in the north-west (April 25), at a sawmill in the interior (April 27) and at a high-tech firm in the lower mainland (April 30). Many of these stories about the Liberals still commented on “problems” created by the New Democrats, even though the story was ostensibly about the Liberals. For example, the BCTV story about the Liberal leader’s trip to the Peace area in northern BC was introduced by the anchor this way:

It’s no secret that the sorry state of BC’s economy is one of the biggest hurdles for the NDP. But tonight the Liberal leader found more evidence that it’s not the only one. (April 25, BCTV)

The story noted that even though the economy in the Peace River region was relatively good because of oil and gas revenues, that didn’t translate into support for the New Democrats. The Liberal leader was shown making campaign promises about money for medical travel, support for the oil and gas industry, and is accompanied by former Reform leader and MLA for the area, Jack Weisgerber to “help sell his image in the north” where Liberal support had been traditionally lacking. The reporter noted that "Weisgerber says Campbell has worked hard to shed his Howe Street, city slicker image in the last four years” and he was now promoting the new, more conservative Liberals to the locals. (BCTV, April 25). Since the Peace River area was a region of the province that had always voted for right-of-centre parties, Weisgerber wanted to show that the Liberals now represented that vote. “I believe it will put to rest the notion that other parties are going to represent the centre-right. The Liberals are the centre right party” (CBC, April 25). This is an example of using the already set up frames (NDP is losing its support, the economy is suffering) to create a story narrative that is essentially unrelated to the frame (since the NDP never had support in the north-east and the economy was doing fine there).

The Peace River story was typical of coverage of the Liberal leader’s campaign tour. The Liberal campaign stories tended to focus on the leader’s announcements rather than the party strategy in making those announcements. For example, a story on BCTV (the most watched station in the province) about Campbell’s visit to the sawmill opened with this lead: “The Liberal agenda was again the focal point of electioneering in BC, with Liberal leader Gordon Campbell promising to unshackle BC business from its socialist bonds”. The visual images included shots of Campbell touring the sawmill and making an announcement about changes to Forest Renewal BC. (BCTV, April 27).
While there was no explanation or definition given for the use of the term "socialist", nor was the Liberal leader quoted using the term, it adds an implied evaluation of the New Democrats within an otherwise straightforward news story. On the same day, CBC ran stories of Campbell making election promises about upgrading the Trans-Canada highway and at a high-tech video game facility. He was quoted saying "BC has the worst rate of high-tech growth among the four largest provinces in the country" and making a promise "to bridge what he calls the digital divide that is growing between rural and urban British Columbia" (CBC, April 27). Further, Campbell was quoted promising "more computers in schools [and] to set up a premier's council on technology made up of industry experts to advise on the best ways to build the province's high-tech industry."

Many of the Liberal campaign stories showed Campbell making substantive announcements and referring to policy issues, and the media reported them without reference to election strategies.

Other stories reported on Campbell's promise of a "dramatic tax cut" and his plans to "fix the current health care crisis" (April 25, Global). Indeed, the promise of a "dramatic tax cut" became a major theme in the second week, following the tax cut stories of the first week, and influenced by the difficulty the Liberals ran into with comments about tax cuts made by of one of its candidates. Daniel Lee, running in Vancouver East against New Democrat powerhouse Joy MacPhail, was quoted in a Chinese language newspaper saying the promised tax cuts would mean a cut in services in the short-term, something Campbell and the Liberals had been denying. Lee insisted the quote was a misunderstanding due to translation, but MacPhail claimed he was being "muzzled" by the Liberal leader. Campbell denied both the suggestion of service cuts and that his candidate had been muzzled. While the incident did raise some interest in possible services cuts as the New Democrats had been claiming, the coverage minimized this concern by using quotes from the Fraser Institute, the Liberal finance critic and the Liberal leader insisting the tax cuts would "pay for themselves". Instead, the dominant media focus in this story was on Lee himself. This was now the second "gaffe" Lee had made in the campaign (earlier in the campaign he was accused of inappropriate use of his city counsellor position in a landlord dispute) and combined with the rumours that he was not showing up for all-candidates' meetings, he was beginning to be seen by the media as a weak candidate. The next day Lee apologized for his statements and denied that he was ordered to do so by the Liberal leader. Still, the frame was set and for the rest of the campaign all but one of the "gaffe" stories involving a Liberal candidate focused on Daniel Lee.
The key issue topic of tax cuts also focused on the Liberals when questions arose about in the media about just how dramatic the tax cut would be. The questions asked in these stories was “will it be big enough?”. Global News began the questioning of the size of the tax cuts on April 25 with a story that referenced the Fraser Institute’s calculation of what the promised Liberal tax cut would mean. The Fraser Institute noted the Liberal pledge of the “lowest base rate of personal income tax on the bottom two brackets” would save a family of four about $600 a year. A reporter then questioned the Liberal leader, asking him for more details (which he declined) and suggested that “if you aren’t a little more specific [aren’t you worried]… that, gosh, people may kind of figure it out on their own and realize that perhaps the tax cuts won’t be dramatic?” The next day Global continued the story with a calculation of how much the tax cut would mean in revenue loss to the provincial treasury and interviewed the Liberal Finance critic Gary Farrell-Collins. In response to the reporter’s question “so how are you going to deal with 780 million dollars in lost revenue?” both he and Campbell are quoted explaining the theory of ‘trickle down economics’.

Collins: ...in every jurisdiction in Canada, regardless of political stripe, where they’ve actually reduced personal income tax rates, revenues to government have actually gone up.

Campbell: What do you think British Columbians will do when their take home paycheck starts to grow? They’ll spend it, and when they spend it, it goes into the local economy, it creates jobs, it creates more taxpayers, and it puts more revenues into government to make sure we have the health care and education that we need.

The debate about tax cuts and the effect on both the economy and the provincial coffers was thus primarily restricted to the Liberals and the Fraser Institute on one side (for) and the counter-offensives on the other by the NDP (against). The news did not provide any opposing views by an alternative source, such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) on any network on the effect of tax cuts or the claims of the Fraser Institute, except those coming from the already unpopular and discredited NDP.

Another major story in the second week was the increase in support for the Green party, juxtaposed with the collapse of the NDP. While the increase was in fact relatively minimal (from 8% to 10% province-wide), the Green party was clearly showing some momentum, and this “surprise increase to double digits” garnered the fledgling party additional media attention on the part of all four of the stations, although not as much as the Liberals. Every station increased its coverage of the “Green surge” in popularity during the second week and discussed how their support was almost
exclusively at the expense of the struggling New Democrats, who had dropped to 16% in the latest poll. The theme of the coverage was about popularity, momentum, and celebration:

The surge in Green Party support can only add insult to injury for the New Democrats because .... it is almost certainly coming at their expense ... the polls are suggesting that as the NDP sinks, another party's numbers may be on the rise. It's the Green Party. ....It's unusual for a Green Party leader to be attracting this kind of media coverage in a BC election campaign. But if the NDP's campaign never does catch fire, look for Adriane Carr and the Greens to approach equal footing with the once powerful New Democrats. (BCTV, April 25)

The leader of the Green Party is walking on air tonight, thrilled with the results that show the Greens for the first time in the double digits and gaining on the NDP... These are good days for the Green Party. It looks as if momentum is building and leader Adriane Carr is obviously very pleased. (VTV, April 25, 2001)

...While the Liberals and New Democrats battle it out on centre stage, one of this campaign's supporting players is making the most out of its bit part and getting a lot of attention. The Green Party is celebrating a surge in the public opinion polls which has brought it to within a few points of the NDP. Why the sudden popularity? (BCTV, April 26)

On April 26, BCTV ran a story on the Green's strategy to gain more support, and the reason supporters of the New Democrats have shifted:

It's disenchaned New Democrats the Greens are after. It's been attempting to broaden its support and not come across as too green... Adriane Carr, the Green Party leader, is hoping social democrats who are angry at the NDP and wouldn't dare vote for Gordon Campbell and the Liberals will take the plunge and park their vote with the Greens. (Jas Johal, BCTV Reporter, April 26)

The news media described the Green Party as a party of disenchaned New Democrats. However this view was contradicted by the Greens themselves. They preferred to try and position themselves as a “centrist” party, which succeeded when later that week the BCTV described them as “a mix of ecology and capitalism”. This confusion about whether the Greens provided another place for the progressive vote or offered a centrist third option is not a surprise given the fact that through out the campaign, there was no media attention paid to their actual policies. Instead, the media were either emphasized their momentum or framed the party in terms of the personality of the leader. For example, CBC provided substantial coverage of the Green Party's popularity on April 26 with two stories: one about their momentum, and another about the fortunes of the Green party in the East Kootenays. By the weekend (April 28 and 29), all stations were increasingly commenting on the Green leader Adriane Carr's
activities as part of the regular coverage (though not as much as the two front-runners) and reported on expectations for a possible "breakthrough" for Carr during the upcoming leaders debate.

Indeed, the big story at the end of the second week was the televised leader's debate, which was held on BCTV on Monday, April 30, exactly half way through the campaign. After the debate, the top election story in every station adopted the Liberal view that Dosanjh had conceded defeat with his closing comment "I would be happy whether in government or in opposition to represent your interests". Dosanjh denied he admitted defeat but BCTV opened the night's story with the following lead:

The leaders were back on the campaign trail today after last night's debate on BCTV, and while the jury is still out on who came out on top, one thing is certain. The debate marked the first time NDP leader Ujjal Dosanjh publicly acknowledged that he is, for all intents and purposes, running for second place. (BCTV, May 1, 2001)

CBC, however, identified the view that Dosanjh had conceded was part of a Liberal "spin".

As we mentioned earlier B.C.'s political leaders were back on the campaign trail today following last night's televised debate - a debate in which the Liberals say NDP leader Ujjal Dosanjh acknowledged he would be satisfied as leader of the opposition. (CBC, May 1, 2001)

And Global News identified the admission this way:

The biggest surprise of the night came near the end of the debate, when for the first time the Premier seemed resigned to the fact that his party will lose the May 16th vote. (Global News, May 1, 2001)

Regardless of whether he did or didn't admit defeat, CBC, BCTV and VTV all report that the debate seemed to energize the NDP's campaign. CBC noted that "only now with the campaign half over has Ujjal Dosanjh's personal campaign heated up in an effort to win at least a credible opposition" (CBC, May 1, 2001) and both CBC and Global noted that the premier was "fired up".
Table 6-3: Week Two – Top Election Story Leads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>BCTV</th>
<th>CBC</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>VTV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>Tax cuts &amp; Lee’s comments</td>
<td>Tax cuts &amp; Lee’s comments</td>
<td>Campbell &amp; tax cuts</td>
<td>Campbell &amp; Lee and tax cuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>Election poll – bad news</td>
<td>Green momentum</td>
<td>Tax cuts, the numbers</td>
<td>Poll: NDP Labour support collapses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for NDP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>NDP and Lib leader tours</td>
<td>Nurses and election,</td>
<td>Lib tour and cost of</td>
<td>New poll, NDP collapsing, strategic voting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dosanjh offers support</td>
<td>election promises</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>NDP/Lib Leader’s activities &amp; leaky condos</td>
<td>[No newscast.]</td>
<td>NDP and Liberal Leader’s activities.</td>
<td>Marijuana party’s “Canna-Bus”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sat)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>Carr signs nurses pledge</td>
<td>[No newscast]</td>
<td>Election round up (21 seconds).</td>
<td>Lorne Mayencourt (Lib) in West end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sun)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>Leaders Prep for debate</td>
<td>Lib/NDP leader activities</td>
<td>Voter’s, the debate and NDP/Lib leaders activities</td>
<td>NDP/Lib leader’s activities, Greens &amp; “battle for 2nd place.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tonight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>Debate - Dosanjh</td>
<td>Debate - Dosanjh admits</td>
<td>Debate - Few sparks</td>
<td>Dosanjh’s “brand new campaign” still has problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acknowledges defeat</td>
<td>defeat</td>
<td>&amp; Dosanjh’s surprise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Week Three: Gaffes & scandals.

While there were slightly fewer stories about the campaign compared to the first two weeks, campaign related stories still dominated the third week of coverage (from May 2 – 8, 2001) at 72% compared to 28%. The dominant campaign stories still focused on the Liberal and NDP campaigns; however, a new campaign focus emerged as significant this week: that of candidate gaffes and party scandals.

For the only time in the campaign, the third week saw news coverage of the Liberal campaign receive more attention than the New Democratic campaign. However, it was only slightly more, and the dominant frame was still a fairly straight-forward report on the Liberal leader’s activities and announcements. Still, Campbell was met with what was described as his first protestors and hecklers on May 2. CBC, VTV and Global reported in short stories (between one and two minutes each) about “a few hecklers” on the street in Smithers concerned with taxes and the legalization of marijuana (which “for the record”, Campbell is reported as against, and having never smoked). They also reported on “a few dozen very loud protesters led by nurses [who] shouted down the Liberal leader” in the small interior town of Williams Lake (Global, May 2). The media also covered Campbell’s response to the protesters: “I would think they would be trying to give Ujjal Dosanjh a couple of crowds for a change” which gained laughter from the rally audience. VTV provided a little more detail about the protestors, including an interview with one stating they were concerned about the tightly controlled local Liberal
candidate. While BCTV reported on the protestors in Williams Lake, the story was exceptionally short (36 seconds) and included a round-up of both the Liberal and the NDP leader’s activities of the day. Nonetheless, the story noted that Campbell “only joked that it was the most energy he’d seen from the NDP since the campaign began.”

More significant in the Liberal coverage was the developing story of the “missing Liberal candidates”. This was almost exclusively focused on two Liberal candidates, Daniel Lee and Patrick Wong, both of whom were running in Vancouver ridings. Lee had already run into trouble earlier in the campaign for “flip-flopping” on the short term cost of tax cuts and for missing a number of all-candidate debates. In addition, and to a lesser extent, there were questions about the whereabouts of Liberal candidate Patrick Wong, running in the premier’s riding. Wong had also attracted notice earlier in the week when he was seen avoiding a question about gay rights in a community debate with Premier Dosanjh and other candidates. But it was on May 3 that CBC and VTV focused on a story that became a sub-theme during the third week of the campaign.

So, where is Daniel Lee? That is the question constituents may be asking tonight. When the trouble-plagued Liberal candidate for Vancouver-Hastings is again a no-show at a debate in his riding. (VTV, May 3, 2001)

It's halfway through the election campaign. Do you know where your candidate is? In the riding of Vancouver-Hastings some voters are still wondering. These days Liberal candidate Daniel Lee is keeping a pretty low profile. In the past two weeks he has been criticized for intervening with police in a landlord tenant dispute, and he's contradicted Gordon Campbell saying tax cuts could reduce government services. As Anna Mae Zeviar reports, Lee's new strategy seems to be 'out of sight, out of trouble'. (CBC, May 3, 2001)

CBC continued the coverage with repeated attempts to contact Lee, shots of frustrated Liberal campaign staff also trying to “track him down”, streeters with constituents who had not seen him, and finally a short interview with Lee defending himself. The “missing candidate” theme heated up at the end of the third week when reporters began questioning the Liberal leader on whether Liberal candidates were being “muzzled”, as had been suggested in the first week of the campaign by NDP MLA Joy McPhail. Reporters had periodically mentioned the “tightly controlled” Liberal campaign and NDP and Green candidates had attempted to highlight the low profile being kept by many of the Liberal candidates. However, only CBC had given much attention to the tendency of Liberal candidates to miss debates and to read from prepared statements or “scripts” during the first two weeks of the campaign. This changed on May 8, three quarters of
the way into the campaign, when BCTV, Global and VTV all ran high profile stories about the issue.

To the election trail now, where Gordon Campbell was under the most intense scrutiny so far. His party is seen as a shoo-in to form the next government, and he is seen by the majority of voters as the best man for premier. But, just how deep is the talent pool behind him? We begin our campaign trail watch tonight with more nagging questions raised today about Campbell's team and the quality of his candidates.... (Reporter, BCTV, May 8, 2001)

This isn't a joking matter for Gordon Campbell. He was hammered by reporters today, asked about hiding his candidates....It is one of the few stories spun by New Democrats and resonating in the media. (Reporter, VTV, May 8, 2001)

Possibly, they've been muzzled. We're talking about nearly invisible Liberal candidates in this election, two in particular have been no-shows at all candidates meetings and now their leader is taking the heat...., reporters asked Campbell about the so-called missing Liberals. In fact, they asked him about it a lot.... (News Anchor, Global News, May 8, 2001)

In these stories Campbell was given the toughest media scrutiny during the campaign, and the media self-referentially reported on it. Shots from a scrum with the Liberal leader showed him surrounded by reporters and answering repeated and insistent questions about the muzzling of candidates, their "no-shows" at all-candidates meetings, and the tight control from the central Liberal campaign. For example, Global showed almost two full minutes of reporters flinging questions to Campbell, which included:

- Isn't this getting a little embarrassing?,
- Why are you giving them scripts to read?
- There is a public perception that they're running away and hiding?
- They won't go to all candidates meetings and you won't even address those questions in a scrum?
- No central communication from your office to tell them to back off or not to go to specific events?
- So are you concerned about controlling the forum in which they speak, and for yourself?

Campbell was clearly frustrated with this barrage, but carefully answered every question asked. While the "missing candidates" coverage was the most critical coverage the Liberal leader and the Liberal campaign had received to date, it amounted to no more than a few stories and occurred three quarters of the way through the campaign.
The Liberal campaign had one further note of scrutiny applied to it during this third week, and the first substantive policy issue of the Liberals to be seriously questioned by BCTV: the strategy and advisability of the Liberal's position on holding a treaty referendum. While questions had been raised earlier in the campaign about the cost and benefits of tax cuts and whether the Liberals would privatize BC Hydro, these stories provided internal “closure” on the issue by concluding or implying that “tax cuts were good for the economy” or stating that the Liberals had “no intention of privatizing hydro”. The referendum question, however, was presented as more of a potentially problematic policy on May 6 and 7. BCTV led into the story this way:

It could be one of the last remaining issues that the NDP can use to their advantage. Ujjal Dosanjh headed into the heart of land claims country today and was feted by native leaders. Dosanjh was portraying himself and his party as the only ones who could bring peace to the aboriginal issue. Whether he is playing the fear card or not, questions are being raised about Liberal leader Gordon Campbell's plans for a referendum on land claim settlements. (BCTV, May 6)

The story compared Dosanjh’s reception to the less friendly one received by Campbell at a meeting of First Nations organizations a few weeks before the election began, indicating they were angry at this plans for referendum on land claims. Furthermore, a University of Victoria professor was quoted saying the issue was the most important political issue in the province since the First Nations' claims were interfering with investment in the province. The news peg for this story was a poll indicating that of all the issues in the election, respondents were split on whether they agreed with the Liberal, the NDP, or neither, on their approach to land claims. A further quote from renowned Harvard Professor and author Michael Ignatieff (in town on a speaking engagement) noted that the referendum could have “devastating results” in terms of anger and frustration on the part of First Nations. The reporter concluded the story with a comment that potential native unrest could “produce another blockade for BC's struggling economy” (BCTV, May 6, 2001). Later on, in the BCTV newscast senior political reporter Keith Baldry provided an analysis on the referendum wondering if the Liberals would back down on their plan. As with the earlier story, the issue was framed as one of economics, rather than potentially alternative frames such as charter rights, human rights or justice. Instead, Baldry noted that:

... some of the senior economists in B.C., Helmer Pastric with Central Credit Union BC, and Jock Finlayson with the BC Business Council, today, all in the Vancouver Province [newspaper] talking about how that is the number-one challenge facing Gordon Campbell and the Liberals, that no matter what they want to do with tax cutting, that the economy cannot
go forward and can't grow unless there's peace and progress made in relationships with aboriginal communities, and that includes getting on with the issue of land claim settlements.... (Keith Baldry, BCTV, May 6, 2001)

Of all of the Liberal policies discussed in the campaign coverage, this was the only one that received critical attention from economists and interestingly, the only one that did not have the criticism of the Liberals contradicted within the story itself.

While stories critical of the Liberals were unusual, the most interesting change in news reports in the third week of the campaign was the number of stories about candidate gaffes and scandals. The most prominent of these was the "secret deal" between NDP forest Minister Gordon Wilson and the forest company Doman Industries. The aforementioned missing Liberal candidates and another Liberal candidate being accused of racism were included in this gaffe count. Nonetheless, the Liberal "gaffe" stories were short-lived while the "Doman deal" story had "legs" and continued to plague the NDP for the rest of the campaign. VTV appears to have introduced the issue, with two mid-length stories at the beginning of the third week (May 2) – one about the particulars of the deal, and another looking at Wilson's defence of the action.

Well it could cost BC taxpayers $30 million. A secret deal to bail out one of BC's most prominent forest companies, negotiated by Gordon Wilson in the dying days of the NDP mandate.... The premier was taken aback when told that on the eve of the election campaign, Gordon Wilson made a binding pact with financially strapped Doman industries to buy back two forest licenses. (WV, May 2, 2001)

BCTV and Global ran very short stories with few details. BCTV ran a very short 24 second story that said merely:

The Liberals were given new campaign ammunition today by a baffling move by controversial NDP forest minister Gordon Wilson. Wilson has apparently made a secret deal with Doman industries to buy back two forest licenses at a price that could reach $30 million. Ujjal Dosanjh says he isn't aware of the deal, but Gordon Campbell says it's another stunning example of NDP incompetence. (BCTV, May 2, 2001)

In less than 30 seconds BCTV was able to provide a story that continued the frame of an incompetent NDP government. By the next day BCTV had increased its coverage leading with "[a]s if Dosanjh needed any more trouble, he spent much of today fending off questions about his forest minister" (BCTV, May 3) and followed with quotes from both Wilson (he is "unrepentant") and the owner of the forest company ("the letter is binding"). The following day (May 4) BCTV, VTV and Global all reported on "new developments" in the story. BCTV interviewed the finance minister who confirmed that
Wilson did not have the authority to make the promise, and Global noted that Dosanjh had removed Wilson from the file (Global, May 4, 2001). By May 7, five days after the story first broke, the forest company had filed a lawsuit against the government for not honouring the agreement and the media raised further questions about how much the Premier knew and who else might have been involved. Interestingly it was only when the Forest Company had a press conference, announced their lawsuit, and provided strong evidence of a breach by releasing the letter of agreement with the government that CBC finally joined the media band-wagon and reported on the issue in a short (minute and a half) story on May 7.

The NDP campaign also received major focus with repeated references throughout the week to their ongoing collapse in support. A poll released by BCTV on May 3 was reported with the now familiar news peg that it was a "close race for second place". As Keith Baldry reported:

Ujjal Dosanjh has put on so many brave faces this campaign, you have to wonder how many more he has in stock. Poll after poll shows his party may be facing extinction, although he's insisting it's really not all that bad. (BCTV, May 3)

Other stories included one about supporters finding it "tough to take that their party will no longer be the party in power" (CBC, May 2), the difficulty the NDP would have holding onto ex-Premier Glen Clark's old riding (Global, May 4), difficulties Gordon Wilson had in his Powell River riding because of joining the NDP (Global May 4), Dosanjh's visit to the traditionally NDP northwest area of the province and if it could hold onto the ridings in the wake of the province-wide anti-NDP sentiment (VTV, May 6), and finally, how polls showed the NDP were losing support even from labour households in resource towns (BCTV, May 8). The stories about the NDP and Liberal campaigns and their candidates' gaffes and scandals were the most frequent stories making up over half of all the stories and over 80% of the campaign related stories.

Surprisingly, the Green Party and their leader Adrian Carr received very little attention in the third week compared to the previous week, other than the periodic mention in general 'round ups' of leader's activities. Perhaps this was due to the fact that her performance at the leader's debate had not been overwhelming, or perhaps it was because the scandals and gaffes were taking over the news time. However, only one story focused exclusively on the Green Party or their policies (the same number as Unity and Marijuana parties received). BCTV ran a story about how the Green's rise in the polls was curiously in contradiction to what the polls said people were concerned
about. Ironically, while the Green Party was originally and primarily a party of environmentalists with ecological concerns, the environment was almost a non-issue in the news media, with few mentions and only one story focusing on the environment in the whole four weeks of television coverage. Other stories in the week commented on the Green's part in the race for second place, or Carr's chances in the Powell River riding, but generally the attention was subdued compared to the first two weeks, while remaining within the frame of a party on the rise.

Of the issues raised in stories in the third week the two most frequently discussed were health care and aboriginal issues, although both were significantly less frequent than any of the campaign stories. Health care became an election story again because of two events. First, Gordon Campbell made an announcement about an additional million dollars a year funding for the brain research centre at the University of British Columbia, and the campaign promise received fairly straight reporting on the part of all stations. Second, later in the week the big health care story was Premier Dosanjh’s intervention in the nurses labour dispute on May 5.

Patients may be suffering but an end to the protracted nurses dispute has been ordered up by the boss himself. Ujjal Dosanjh now says he's ordering his finance minister to get down with management bargainers and offer B.C. nurses the same money their Alberta-counterparts recently agreed to. But questions are being raised about the politics of the move, whether it's the premier doing the province's business or crass vote buying by candidate Dosanjh who is staring defeat in the face. (BCTV, May 5)

Global and VTV also covered the story, but since it was over a weekend CBC did not report on the intervention. Aboriginal concerns were the next most common issue in the third week of the campaign due to questions about the Liberals' plan to hold a referendum on treaty principles, as discussed above. There were only a handful of other issues that received more than a cursory mention within stories about the campaign: two stories about ICBC rates, and one each about education, forestry, mining, the environment, leaky condos, gambling and the real estate market.

In summary, it was in the third week of the campaign, and not before, that some attention began to be paid to the Liberal campaign tactics (e.g.: high control of candidates) as opposed to their campaign's effects (high energy crowds), and to one of the Liberal policies (conducting a treaty referendum). Early in the campaign two stations (BCTV and CBC) had predicted that presumably, since the Liberals were so far ahead of the NDP in the polls, more attention would be paid to the Liberal policies throughout the
campaign. Yet, the treaty referendum was the only policy that collected a critical review. Whether this was because it was the only Liberal policy of concern to the business community is difficult to prove, however the fact that the issue was shown as worthy of consideration because of its potential impact on investment, rather than its moral cause, gives some evidence as to the influence on the news frame by economic interests. This could be seen in contrast to the coverage of the NDP’s concerns about the crown corporations such as Hydro or ICBC, which were rebuffed within the story, thereby affecting a kind of closure on the criticism. Still, by far the most compelling narrative of the third week involved scandals and misdeeds, from the missing Liberals to the Doman/Wilson secret deal.

Table 6-4: Week Three – Top Election Story Leads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>BCTV</th>
<th>CBC</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>VTV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>Campbell faces protesters, Dosanjh increases energy.</td>
<td>Marijuana candidates have criminal convictions</td>
<td>Wilson/Doman secret deal.</td>
<td>Wilson/Doman secret deal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>Dosanjh intervenes in nurses dispute.</td>
<td>[No newscast.]</td>
<td>Dosanjh enters nurses dispute - patients suffering..</td>
<td>Nursing action and Dosanjh intervenes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>Dosanjh &amp; Treaty referendum.</td>
<td>[No newscast]</td>
<td>Leaders tours, mostly Dosanjh &amp; Unity predictions</td>
<td>Dosanjh in north-west &amp; anti-NDP sentiment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>Campbell’s controlled campaign, NDP &amp; Doman’s suit.</td>
<td>Campbell &amp; environment (Sumas II).</td>
<td>NDP &amp; Doman suit, Campbell &amp; Sumas II.</td>
<td>Dosanjh defends intervention in nurses dispute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>Missing candidates (Lib), Campbell questioned.</td>
<td>Election round-up: Dosanjh, Campbell &amp; Carr activities</td>
<td>Invisibility Lib Candidates, have they been muzzled?</td>
<td>Wilson/Doman deal: did premier know?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Week Four: The race for second place.

At 84%, the final week of the election saw the largest amount of campaign stories in all four weeks, while the remaining 16% of the stories were about policy issues (May 9 – 15, 2001). Again, most of the campaign stories were about the NDP and Liberal campaigns. For the NDP campaign stories the week began with Premier Dosanjh conceding defeat and admitting that he was campaigning for opposition status. The reporters, following poll reports, also characterised this shift as an attempt to ward off "extinction".

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It is almost unheard of, conceding defeat a whole week before the election, but that's what happened today. The premier has changed his tune. He knows he's lost the fight to govern the province. Now he's just hoping the NDP can clinch second place and form the opposition. (VTV, May 9)

With just five days left to election day, Ujjal Dosanjh took his message to Castlegar and Revelstoke, hoping to stop the NDP slide. Already admitting defeat to the Liberals he continued his campaign to elect enough New Democrats to form the official opposition. (BCTV May 12)

This led to numerous stories throughout the week about Dosanjh's concession, and the NDP's change in strategy to woo Green voters "back to the NDP". The New Democrats began a new set of negative television advertisements warning that a legislature full of "Gordon Campbell clones" would be bad for the province, and targeting those voters who were supporting the Green Party as a protest vote. Indeed, the ads specifically asked voters not to vote Green.

Who can defeat Gordon Campbell's candidate in NDP-held ridings? Its not the Greens.... And voting Green will only take votes away from the NDP candidate who can defeat the Liberal. Vote for the candidate with the ability to win and the experience to provide an effective opposition for working people. Vote New Democrat. Text: Only the NDP candidate can defeat the Liberal. (Excerpts from an NDP TV ad, released May 12, 2001)

Television news media reported on these advertisements and the change in strategy throughout the week, noting for example that "the New Democrats are stepping up their '79 Gordon Campbells' scenario in a bid to avoid being wiped out in Wednesday's provincial election" (BCTV, May 12, 2001). Dosanjh's key message also received a lot of attention.

Reporter: While the premier has already conceded the election to the Liberals, at a campaign rally in Castlegar last night, Dosanjh urged people not to vote green. [Clip from Dosanjh speech at rally]. Dosanjh: It would be a tragedy to cast their vote for environmental values and then end up with another Gordon Campbell Liberal MLA. (VTV, May 12, 2001)

To make matters worse for the NDP, a new poll was released by BCTV on May 13 showing the NDP and the Greens in a "statistical dead heat" for opposition status. The riding break-downs done by BCTV showed that the Greens had more strength and were slightly ahead of the NDP in the lower mainland while the NDP (who had risen by three points since the previous poll) were ahead of the Greens on Vancouver Island. The "race for second place" remained the news peg for further stories about the NDP and the Green Party throughout the week, and Dosanjh's pleas to Green voters dominated the next few days of coverage.
With just a few days left before British Columbians cast their votes, the NDP leader is appealing for left-of-centre voters to unite... Dosanjh admitted Green vote splitting could cost the NDP at least eight ridings if not more. And perhaps even lead to a liberal sweep. (Excerpts from VTV newscast, May 13)

Premier Ujjal Dosanjh is spending the final days of the campaign trying to shore up support by luring green party supporters back to the NDP... he warned voters about the consequences of voting green and splitting the left wing vote....Now that he's conceded defeat to the liberals, Ujjal Dosanjh changed his campaign message, attacking the Greens in a frantic attempt to shore up his party's vote to avoid a shut-out scenario. (Excerpts from BCTV, May 14)

With less than two days until British Columbians go to the polls, the NDP is taking dead aim at the Green Party. The NDP needs to win four ridings if it hopes to retain official party status, and it realizes the best way of ensuring that is by convincing disenchanted New Democrats to come back into the fold. (CBC, May 14)

It is the race for second place that's dominating the final hours of the election campaign. And at every opportunity, Premier Ujjal Dosanjh is urging green voters to return to the NDP instead of splitting the left wing vote. He insists the Greens don't have enough hard-core support in any riding to elect an MLA. (Global, May 14)

A radio debate between Dosanjh and Campbell at the popular radio station CKNW was a key election news story for all four television stations on May 10, the second day of the final week. While BCTV noted in its story that the "format was less structured than what the parties wanted for the television debate" it was not a completely accurate statement, since it was the Liberals who demanded (and BCTV who agreed) that the television debate format be restrictive and not include any actual debate. All of the other parties, and many of the other media outlets had preferred less structure and more face to face interactions. Global News noted that finally there was "a real debate". "Forget the dull, structured exchange they had on TV. This is a head to head, toe to toe, clash of the so-called titans" (Global, May 10). VTV and BCTV both suggested the debate was unlikely to change the results.

Well it may not have changed the outcome of the election but a leaders' debate today at least provided some emotion in a lack-luster campaign. (VTV, May 10, 2001)

Dosanjh's ceaseless attacking style at times made him sound almost desperate, as perhaps befits a leader facing extinction next Wednesday. (BCTV, May 10, 2001)

Indeed, a debate in the last week of the campaign would only have some effect on voters if there were a large number of undecided voters and the parties were closer in
the polls. At this point the debate was only significant in its ability for Dosanjh to ‘take
on’ Campbell, but likely too late to make much difference in the outcome.

CBC’s coverage of the debate noted that the “most heated debate” happened
around the treaty referendum issue. But the CBC also dismissed an untruthful
statement made by Campbell during the debate. During the debate the Liberal leader
had denied Dosanjh’s criticism that he planned to eliminate the corporate sales tax, even
while the Premier insisted it was in the Liberal platform. When the news anchor asked
political reporter Kim Emerson if eliminating the corporate sales tax was in the Liberal
platform Emerson responded:

Oh sure it is Gloria. It is. Right on page ten, one of the highlighted items,
it says quite clearly they’re going to phase out the investment tax. And
while Gordon Campbell wouldn’t admit to it during the debate in a scrum
with reporters afterwards he did knowledge that yes they did plan to
phase out the investment tax. (Kim Emerson, CBC News Hour, May 10,
2001)

Nonetheless, the reporter shrugged off this lack of veracity as expected and almost
acceptable behaviour on the part of all politicians in an election. In many ways this
dismissal can be seen as a classic representation of what the BC news media deem
normal enough as to not be considered newsworthy (a politician denying a plank in the
party’s released platform on a live radio show). None of the other stations, nor any of
the newspapers, reported on this misrepresentation of the Liberal platform. Instead, all
of the coverage of the debate showed the “vigorous” and “testy” exchanges between the
two leaders, and the debate itself was framed as not likely to change anyone’s mind.

The Liberal campaign also received a lot of focus in the final week. On May 11
Gordon Campbell “got the nod” from former Social Credit Party (Socreds) premier Bill
Bennett while campaigning in the Okanagan. This endorsement was no surprise,
especially considering the feature interviews with Bill Bennett on BCTV the first day of
the campaign when he was quoted extensively about his support for the Liberals and the
danger of New Democrats getting elected if people were “complacent”. Still, all four
television stations gave the Bennett endorsement first or second billing on the election
news of the night. BCTV and CBC both used the metaphor of Campbell as the “heir
apparent” to the historical political dynasty of the previous right leaning governments of
the Socreds.

It’s the heartland of an BC political old dynasty - the Okanagan, where
the Bennetts - first W.A.C. and then Bill - emerged to rule B.C. for more
than 30 years. So, what better place for the new heir to the Bennett
dynasty to campaign? Gordon Campbell came to “Bennett country” today, on a trip that was about symbolism and history. So, it was no coincidence that Bill Bennett, for years a recluse, attended his first campaign event in fifteen years at a lakeside winery luncheon. Bennett and Campbell have a lot of similarities. Both are remote personalities, although Campbell is more outgoing, and both have strong pro-business views and neither like big governments. Both are leaders that molded their party in their image, not the other way around. Today was the passing of a political torch. The next Bennett is about to take power except this time his name is Campbell. (BCTV, May 11)

In the provincial campaign the Liberals visited the Okanagan today for the passing of the torch. Since leaving the political arena fifteen years ago former Social Credit premier Bill Bennett has kept a low profile. But today he publicly handed the free-enterprise mantle to the man many consider BC’s premier in waiting. Winding down his campaign this weekend, Gordon Campbell played homage to the birthplace of the roots of his party. The Okanagan is where one of BC’s political dynasties was born. And today, Bill Bennett made Campbell the heir.... And as he heads into the last days of the campaign, Gordon Campbell takes a step back to connect with a history he hopes will help him more forward. (CBC, May 11)

The meeting of Campbell and Bennett was framed as a story about “passing of the mantle”. To do this the news reports emphasized the lengthy time in power of the Social Credit and the Bennett dynasty as a powerful endorsement. Yet, the Social Credit history is not without its problems and scandals. Ironically, there was no mention of the other part of the well-known history of Socreds; how they were soundly defeated by the New Democrats in 1991 and never recovered; Bill Bennett’s personal fall from power and the legal scandal which plagued him after he left office (ironically related to insider trading with Doman Forest Industries, the same company who had just launched a suit against the New Democrats). Indeed, the most recent history of the Socreds resembled the flagging New Democrats in this election more than the Liberals. As well, the story of Bennett “passing the mantle” contained no historical or comparative analysis between the Socreds and the Liberals. It was clearly an uncritical “feel good” story.72

72 Political historians generally describe the Social Credit as a coalition of Liberals and Conservatives, led by WAC Bennett who governed the province for an unprecedented twenty years (from 1952 to 1972) by appealing to small business and undertaking a number of expensive mega-projects during a period of economic prosperity. He lost to the New Democrats in 1972 and immediately resigned as leader. The Social Credit Party returned to power a short three years later under the leadership of son Bill Bennett, who shifted the party closer to big business. Bennett Jr. won three elections in a row (1975, 1979 and 1983) and then resigned in 1986 because of flagging personal popularity. He was replaced by Bill Vander Zalm, the charismatic but scandal-ridden premier who was a small businessman and a social conservative. Vander Zalm was forced to resign due to an investigation into influence peddling and the Socreds were soundly defeated by the New Democrats in 1991, and disappeared from the political landscape. Bennett was later found guilty of insider trading involving shares into Doman Forest Products.
A number of stories also appeared in this last week commenting on the tightly controlled Liberal campaign. CBC ran a story on May 10 that could have been critical of the control, but where the tone of the reporter shows an almost grudging admiration for the campaign organization:

**Voice Over:** At every campaign stop the Liberal's well oiled and highly efficient campaign machine makes sure everything goes according to plan... Every step is choreographed. Every word is scripted... And it's a script from which Campbell rarely deviates....

**Reporter to Campbell in media scrum:** How important is it to have an elected opposition for the proper functioning of democracy? Many people would say you were an effective opposition, but how important do you think it is?

**Campbell:** I think it's important for people to go to the polls and elect the person they think is best to represent them.

**Reporter:** That's not what I was asking. I was asking how important is it to have an elected opposition?

**Campbell:** I think it's important to open up government. I think it's important to have honest public debate.

**Voice Over:** Every word is recorded by his director of communication who stands behind him in every scrum. ...Technology plays a major part on the campaign trail. Campbell is always wired for sound. He travels with a mobile audio system. Campbell himself is downplaying the control around his campaign.... But the tight control and rigid scripts that have been on display throughout the campaign only lend speculation as to how a premier Campbell might run his government. (*Excerpts from CBC story, May 10, 2001*)

Two days later VTV ran a story about the Liberal campaign that concluded that it had been run with “dazzling efficiency” and how reporters were joking because the tour was just a few minutes behind schedule (VTV, May 12, 2001).

Similarly, VTV's *wrap up* report on the Liberal campaign noted how the Liberals had run a “flawless campaign” (May 15, 2001). Other Liberal campaign stories included an interesting poll, covered by both BCTV and CBC, although framed in significantly different ways. The poll's “horse race results” had been reported on by the television stations the day before, but on May 14, two days before the election, BCTV and CBC each ran stories of over three minutes in length on another question asked in the opinion research:

While a majority of British Columbians may plan to vote for Gordon Campbell and his Liberals on voting day, a new poll says voters don't have a great deal of faith that he will follow through on campaign promises. The BCTV/Vancouver Sun Compass survey has the Liberals with a decided lead of higher than 61% of decided votes, but barely half
believe he will follow through on promises to cut taxes, strengthen the economy and bring honesty and integrity to government. (BCTV, May 14)

It's just two days until the provincial election and the recent polls suggest not everyone who will be voting Liberal on election day actually believes that Gordon Campbell is actually going to live up to his campaign promise. And they may be right. As Melissa Fung reports, Campbell's self-imposed 90 day agenda shows signs of being unworkable. (CBC, May 14)

However, the two stations framed the stories quite differently. CBC framed their story about how likely it is that Campbell and the Liberals could keep their campaign promises, by analysing the platform promises and what would be needed for them to be met. For example:

Campbell has promised to deliver balanced budgets. But that will be difficult if he also plans to make dramatic tax cuts.... He is also promising to give school boards multi-year funding. But to do that would require a fundamental change in the law the government uses to allocate funds... Whether he will be able to keep all 200 of [the promises] remains to be seen. The bigger question is how quickly he will be able to act and more importantly, how forgiving the voters will be if he can't fulfill them all.... (excerpts from CBC, May 14)

In contrast, BCTV framed the story as being about general voter cynicism, used quotes from political commentators who suggested that voter cynicism was generally on the increase and asked the leaders "what they would do to increase public confidence in government". Neither VTV nor Global covered the story at all. In addition to the dominant stories above, two other stories about the Liberals ran: one on the Liberal's position on Grizzly bear hunting (Global, May 12), a very short reference to a Liberal candidate's linkage with the Westray mine disaster on Canada's east coast (May 11, BCTV), and a few general stories showed Campbell taking his mother out to lunch for Mother's Day.

The Green party received extremely limited coverage in the last week of the campaign, significantly less than the second and third weeks of the campaign. The media attention on the Green Party was dominated by the "race for second place" framing, and most often found in stories that compared the NDP and Greens' chances of winning enough seats to form opposition. Only two stories focused exclusively on the Green Party: one appeared on Global about the leader's belief in their chances of forming opposition (May 10), and another on BCTV about a Green candidate whose website mistakenly contained links to pornography (May 11). Other references to the Green party included Carr's challenge to debate the NDP leader (he declined) and her
statement of why the Greens would make a better opposition. Even while the dominant election narrative was focused on the race for second place, there was no comparison or attention to the actual policies or campaign platforms of the Greens and the NDP on any television station; only on their chances of winning seats. Two stories, one by CBC and one by Global, looked at what could happen if there was no opposition (May 11). And rounding out the campaign-type stories was one humorously framed story on the Marijuana party’s “Canna-Bus” campaigning in the Kootenays. Not a single story about any of the other minor parties was aired in the available data set.

The final week of the campaign also saw the fewest stories about policy issues. Taxes returned as the top issue (although representing only 5.5% of all stories in the last week), with health care as second most frequent issue (at 4%). BCTV reported on Ontario’s new tax cuts and the amount the Liberals would have to cut taxes to beat the Ontario rate (May 9). Both BCTV and VTV did almost identical stories about the Elk Valley in the far west of the province and the small businesses struggling because consumers drove to the tax-free province of Alberta to shop. The municipal politicians and local Chamber of Commerce were quoted saying they wished there were no provincial taxes in BC so they could compete (BCTV and VTV, May 11). Finally, the CBC provided a background story on the New Democrats’ claims that the Liberals’ promised tax cuts would mean a loss of $1.3 million to the provincial treasury. While the reporter notes that the Liberals do not give many details on exactly what taxes would be cut, she concludes that the NDP are “at least partly right”.

Health care stories were fewer than taxes, and fewer than in the previous weeks of the campaign. Global ran a short story quoting the leaders of the doctors’ organization saying it was “irresponsible” of Dosanjh to call an election before the nurses’ job dispute was settled (May 9). CBC did a “reality check” story about the Pharmacare program introduced by the New Democrats, concluding that contrary to Liberal claims, the program (that substitutes generic drugs for more expensive brand names) did save the province money and had no health side effects (CBC, May 11). As for other issues, BCTV did a story about the lack of adequate funding for schools, using a half-empty library as the news peg, and another about the struggles of a coal mine trying to get started in the Elk Valley, with little support from the New Democrat government (both on BCTV, May 10). CBC did a “reality check” story on the Liberals’ claims of a “fudget-budget” from the NDP and concluded there were no facts to support
the accusation (CBC, May 10), although all media organizations continued to use the term.

On the last day of the campaign the big story was the loud and angry protestors who surrounded Campbell's bus at a campaign stop on the east side of downtown Vancouver. The protesters, described by Global as "aboriginals, students and anti-poverty activists" (Global, May 15), refused to let the bus move for over an hour, burned an effigy of the Liberal leader, then demanded a meeting with him. The Liberal staff called the police and after the officers arranged a short meeting between Campbell and the aboriginal members of the protest, Campbell slipped out the campaign office's back door. Later, Campbell commented that the "NDP's mark was all over the protest", but Dosanjh denied the accusation. This was the final day of campaigning, and of news stories about the campaign. The next day, and following the tradition for voting day, all major networks carried live reports of the election returns from the closing of the polls at 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. or midnight.

Table 6-5: Week Four – Top Election Story Leads.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>BCTV</th>
<th>CBC</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>VTV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>[tape damaged]</td>
<td>[not available]</td>
<td>Dosanjh concedes defeat – vies for opposition.</td>
<td>Dosanjh concedes defeat, appeals to Green voters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>Campbell gets Bennett nod.</td>
<td>Bennett passes torch to Campbell.</td>
<td>New poll: concerns about no opposition.</td>
<td>Bennett supports Campbell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.12 (Sat)</td>
<td>NDP tries to woo Greens.</td>
<td>[No newscast.]</td>
<td>Dosanjh's sons help with campaign.</td>
<td>Dosanjh meets Stockwell, appeals to Green vote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.13 (Sun)</td>
<td>New poll &amp; NDP appeals to Green vote.</td>
<td>[No newscast.]</td>
<td>New Poll &amp; Dosanjh pleads with Green voters</td>
<td>Dosanjh focuses on NDP-strong ridings &amp; Green voters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>Dosanjh tries to lure Green voters.</td>
<td>Voters distrust of Campbell may be right.</td>
<td>Dosanjh appeals to Greens, Campbell says he’ll keep promises &amp; CTF on cost of promises.</td>
<td>UD appeals to Greens while Carr wants debate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>[not available]</td>
<td>[not available]</td>
<td>Campbell confronted by angry protestors.</td>
<td>Campbell gets protestors &amp; Dosanjh pleads to Greens.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Election Narratives – Two Examples

Generally speaking, a narrative tells a story. More specifically, a narrative is a constructed text (be it fiction or non-fiction) that organises events into a sequence,
providing causal connections and associations. Narratives are populated with characters or actors who are shown interacting with these events. In news stories, it is the journalist who is the narrator—who guides us through complex information drawing upon familiar themes to assist our interpretation and add drama to the story. Indeed, being a good journalist involves recognizing the role of the journalist as a modern-day storyteller. “Journalism is story-telling” states television journalist Tim Knight in his “how to” manual. “There is no truth, only storytelling. For better or for worse, it is storytellers who give us most of our values and culture and always have” (Knight, 1995, p. ix).

Structuralists have argued that narratives use both denotative and connotative levels of symbolic representation to create meaning (Fiske, 1987, p. 128). A narrative uses similar structures whether it is a folk-tale or a “realistic” story, such as television news. Narratives are not neutral. Along with their fundamental cultural power for meaning-making, they also relate events in a certain way, provide a specific perspective on the story being told, and often involve an overt or concealed evaluative message. For example, the perspective offered in a news narrative may legitimate a social institution, or provide positive or negative models of behaviour. In this way narratives are understood to do “socially integrative work” (Jary & Jary 2000, pp. 402-403).

In this case study, by observing the dominant narratives used in election coverage we can examine the working of narratives in television news. Two meta-narratives in particular are apparent in these data. The first, the “disruption/stability” story, draws upon a narrative structure outlined by Todorov (1977). In this model, an equilibrium has been disrupted, the disruption is worked through to some kind of resolution, and stability (of some sort) is restored (Fiske, 1987). The second dominant story outlined here is one that draws upon the familiar narrative of “winners and losers”, and the use of binary oppositions.

From ‘Disruption’ to ‘Stability’

At the beginning of the election campaign, the media focus was on the floundering New Democrats and their allegedly disastrous decade of governing of the province. The legacy of the NDP included financial mismanagement, fleeing investment and suffering hospital patients. Personal scandals had resulted in two premier’s resignations and criminal charges. The New Democrats had brought the province to ruins. Not only that, even the most stalwart supporters, such as union members had abandoned the New Democrats, and even ex-Premiers predicted a loss for Dosanjh.
Indeed, they were so financially and strategically bankrupt they could barely run an election campaign. The province needed saving, and the challenging Liberal party represented the stabilizing force the province needed. The Liberals and their "new and improved" leader promised to fix health care, fix education, and fix the economy. While their policy promises were thin on details, their campaign showed enthusiasm, momentum, and celebration. Even those who didn't believe they would keep their promises still supported them. They were seen as the best way to bring the province back to prosperity.

It is a compelling story, and the most dominant narrative of the election discourse. It is also a familiar story. In 1977, Todorov outlined this very narrative model, and Fiske (1987) and others have applied Todorov's model to television news stories. In this view, the narrative begins with "a state of equilibrium or social harmony", followed by a disruption, usually resulting from the actions of a villain. From there, the narrative continues through the disruption to a resolution that restores stability, although the new state is never identical to the original equilibrium (Fiske, 1987, pp. 138-9). The social order is emphasized over the characters of the story by representing the narrative in terms of the "opposing forces of stability and disruption". In addition, in a news narrative, the initial state of equilibrium is rarely included since, as Fiske noted, it is only the disruption and the subsequent restoration of equilibrium that is newsworthy.

The state of equilibrium is not itself newsworthy and is never described except implicitly in its opposition to the state of disequilibrium which, typically, is described in detail. Here, the ideological work is at its clearest in the selection of which events are considered to disrupt or restore which equilibrium and in the description of what constitutes disequilibrium. (Fiske, 1987, p. 139. Emphasis in original)

Indeed, what constitutes the forces of disruption and the forces of stability are, simply stated, ideology. In news narratives, the original state of equilibrium is assumed to be normal and good, and by association, the disrupting forces are bad and evil. In this way, Fiske notes, Todorov's theoretically neutral narrative is used in news discourse to reinforce the status quo.

For the disruption/stability narrative to be successful, it requires that primarily information that advances the story be emphasized in the news reports. In this case study, it required that some information be consistently excluded from the appraisals of both the New Democrats and the Liberals, and other information be highlighted. For example, it could be argued that rather than bringing the province to the brink of ruin,
there was evidence that the New Democrats had actually created stability in some areas of public policy.

As only one example, in 1991 when the New Democrats were first elected, the "war in the woods" was one of the most controversial and pressing problems in the province. Forestry, the province's primary industry, had for years been practising whole-scale clear-cutting with the tacit support of the Socred governments. Environmentalists had become more militant, both in the province and in the European countries which bought BC wood products, and numerous conflicts and blockades ensued. By all accounts (public opinion polling, punditry), the environment was the top issue of election in 1991 when the New Democrats were elected. The new government instigated a number of ambitious projects, under Premier Harcourt and continued by Premier Clark, including the aggressive protection of parklands, new regulations to improve forestry practices, and an extensive public consultation and community decision-making process (see British Columbia, 1992, 1994a, 1994b; and academic assessments of the process: Burrows, 1996; Finnigan, 2003; Frame, 2002; Penrose, 1996; Syer, 1998; Wilson, 1995). In this sector, at least, the New Democrats had been credited with reducing the conflict and bringing an unprecedented balance to land use decisions. The very fact that the environment was no longer a primary issues in the 2001 provincial election supports this view (see for example Careless, 1997, pp. 192-195).

Other examples of increased stability could be argued, such as the improved relations with labour unions resulting in fewer labour disruptions, and the commencement of treaty negotiations resulting in fewer native blockades. These examples demonstrate the selective use of information in order to maintain the particular narrative theme. The selection of examples to demonstrate the legacy of the incumbent government consistently fit within the story of disruption.

Not only did the New Democrats represent disruption in the news narrative, the Liberals were consistently represented as capable of returning the province to stability. Very little scrutiny of Liberal policies by the media was conducted during the election, even when the "horse race" was no longer a story. Gordon Campbell was repeatedly shown espousing his main message of "a whole new era of hope and prosperity" and

73 Calculations from the Government of Canada statistics on work stoppages in British Columbia demonstrate that the 1990s (under the NDP governments) experienced 3.4 million days of lost work compared to the over 10 million lost works days in the 1980s (under the Social Credit governments) – representing a drop of almost 66%. Data source: HRSDC, Labour Program, Workplace Information Directorate, Statistics Canada.
was rarely questioned or contradicted. Past scandals by the Liberals or their leader were either ignored or explained away. For example, a year earlier the Liberal caucus in the provincial legislature had been caught using a large amount of public money for partisan purposes. The caucus funding is the only public money to which an opposition party has access, and therefore, the Liberals' use of this money could have been seen as a demonstration of how they would act in government. Yet this incident was never mentioned during the campaign. In addition, the tightly controlled, and tightly scripted leader's tour did not come under significant scrutiny until the final week of the campaign. Critical stories tended to focus on one or two of the weaker Liberal candidates, not the leader, his campaign, or the Liberal party as a whole. Consequently, there was very little information in the news stories that contradicted the narrative of the Liberals as a stabilizing force for the province; compared to the information that reinforced discourse.

Positioning Oppositions: ‘Winners’ and ‘Losers’

As noted earlier, one of the most interesting findings in this case study is how the television news media continued to cover the story of the losing New Democrats, even long after it was no longer “news”. Indeed, the quest for stories about “just how low the NDP could go” in popularity was so dominant a narrative that it framed almost all other stories, with comments from anchors and journalists alike noting that the New Democrats were widely abandoned even by their own supporters (such as ex-premier Mike Harcourt). Almost every action by the New Democratic candidates or an announcement of policy positions was, if reported at all, presented as a decision made by the party for a strategic purpose related to their decreasing popularity, rather than for a policy reason. Both visual and narrative proof of the losing position was provided by focusing on the small number of supporters present at an announcement or the amount of time Dosanjh spent on the campaign bus. One story, ostensibly covering the Premier’s visit to a seniors’ home, offered close-ups of a lapel button stating “I met a clown today” pinned to a senior from an earlier event, and suggested this showed a lack of planning on the part of the New Democratic campaign and an already embattled premier. In addition, numerous stories about other parties or issues also commented on the struggling New Democratic campaign. For example, a story about the surge for the Green Party was introduced as “adding insult to injury for the New Democrats”. Another story about the treaty referendum was introduced this way: “It could be one of the last remaining issues that the NDP can use to their advantage”. To be sure, the voters had
turned away from the New Democrats, and public opinion polls were indicating a dramatic loss after ten years in government. Yet, the story of the predicted results of the horse race dominated long after the likely results were well known and barely news. And the repeated emphasis on the lackluster campaign positioned the New Democrats as not just losing the election, but as losers, full stop.

Similarly, the Liberal standings in the election were accorded a major narrative theme, although with less use of descriptive adjectives than the New Democrats. Gordon Campbell and the Liberals were described as winning from the outset. While this prediction was understandable based on the poll results, it nonetheless became the dominant frame of the Liberal stories. An example of the narrative theme dominating the story was the differences accorded the two campaigns when faced with protesters. When Dosanjh was faced with a protester, it was defined as a representation of the overwhelming negativity of the public towards the New Democrats, even when the protester was later identified as a Liberal campaign worker. However, when Campbell was faced with protesters, they were marginalized by being described as a small group of “nurses and other labour reps” and identified as likely NDP supporters. Thus, regardless of actual origins of the protesters, they were all described in a way that fit the already established narratives. Interestingly, in the first few days of the election, reporters suggested that the overwhelming evidence of a Liberal win would presumably result in intensified scrutiny of the Liberal platform and record by the media as the campaign progressed. However, this did not happen, with the one exception of the aboriginal treaty referendum. Coverage of Liberal policy announcements were most often covered as straight news stories, not identified as strategic decisions, and rarely given any actual scrutiny, except by the CBC. Indeed, the Liberals were cautiously and rarely critiqued, and therefore were positioned not just as winning, but as winners.

Such narrative themes are apparently common in election discourse. Patterson (1993) identified a number of major story lines in political news, including what he referred to as the “likely loser” scenario – when a candidate is trailing in the polls the news reports become less favourable – and the “bandwagon” story-line – when a candidate is supported in the polls the news about him becomes more favourable (pp. 117-124). Patterson noted that when a presidential candidates fell behind in the polls, the evaluations of the campaign style and strategy were “singularly negative” (p. 106) and “superficial and nasty” (p. 109). Indeed, the structure of the winner/loser story is a
variation on one of the most common cultural narratives involving the struggle between
good and evil.

Fiske (1987) notes how the Levi-Strauss (a structural anthropologist) researched
how cultural contradictions are usually expressed through the use of binary oppositions.
For example, there is compelling evidence that characters in news are often determined
through the use of binary oppositions such as good:evil, hero:villain, and us:them.74
The characters in a narrative, according to Fiske (1987) are not judged on the basis of
who they intrinsically are, but on their associated actions within the narrative structure.
In other words, the villain or the hero is determined not on who he/she is, but on what
he/she does. It is this function of the character that advances the narrative. Importantly
then, and related to the discussion above, the fight between good vs. evil is necessarily
constructed as one of disruption vs. moral order. The villain/disrupter fights, opposes,
pursues, stumbles, and in the end loses, while the hero/stabilizer returns the situation to
some form of stability and therefore ultimately wins the struggle.

As with the narrative of disruption to stability, the winner/loser narrative in news
requires that the characters are not represented by who they actually are, but by what
role they play in the narrative. Information that contradicts that narrative is either ignored
or minimized. For example, before becoming elected as party leader and running in the
election, the news media had represented Ujjal Dosanjh as a well-like political moderate,
and a man of integrity. He had been a highly respected Attorney General who had
successfully managed an armed aboriginal blockade in such way as to avoid
violence. He was praised by the media for his handling of the criminal investigations
launched by the RCMP against then-premier Glen Clark, ultimately resulting in Clark’s
resignation. Yet this view of Dosanjh was not included in the election discourse.
Indeed, he was barely defined as a person, even when opinion polls reported that his
personal popularity was far higher than that of Campbell’s. Instead, in the winner/loser
narrative, Dosanjh represented the villain/loser and the forces of disruption. The
information about his personal credibility was inconsistent with the narrative and
therefore meaningless.

The representation of Campbell as the hero/winner was also consistent with this
narrative, with one important addition. While the news media reported that he was less

74 Discourse analysis approaches that apply this binary opposition are many. See for example the socio-
linguistic works of Fowler, 1991; Hodge & Kress, 1988, 1993; the critical discourse analyses of Hartley,
1982; Fiske, 1987; Caldas-Coulthard & Couthard, 1996; and discourse methods texts such as Phillips &
Jorgenson, 2002; and Phillips & Hardy, 2002.
popular than Dosanjh and less popular than his party, this was balanced by telling the story of his "transformation" from a loser/villain in the 1996 election to a hero/winner in this one (see BCTV April 18 and 19, and especially VTV April 19, which highlighted how Campbell was "different politician" than 5 years ago, and has "morphed" into "GQ Gord"). Thus, Campbell was arguably even more attractive since he represented a flawed and transformed hero.

**Election Framing**

The concept of a news frame recognises that the meaning of an event is not inherent in the information itself, but has to be "made to mean" (Hackett & Zhao, 1998, p. 119). A much-used definition of media frames comes from Todd Gitlin's 1980 study:

> Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual. (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7)

In other words, newsworkers select some information from the vast array of what is available, and emphasise some "facts" while excluding or marginalizing others. News frames do far more than simply act as heuristic short-cuts to understanding an event or situation. They also assist in constructing meanings that prefer some "readings" or interpretations over others, that reinforce or challenge dominant powers; that position the audience in ways that are passive or active. Indeed, media frames are "composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 6). What follows is a brief outline of some of the dominant news frames found in this case study.

**Framing of ‘Campaign Stories’**

*Metaphorical frames*

"The essence of metaphor is to understanding and experience one kind of thing in terms of another" say linguists Lakoff and Johnson (2003). Metaphors are common in news discourse. They help journalists translate information using symbolic references, and carry meanings that unconsciously structure our understanding. Indeed, some have argued that metaphors not only structure our interpretations, but also our actions. In

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75 See also Tuchman, 1978.
particular, Lakoff and Johnson, examined how the things we do and our interpretation of what we do is partially structured by our metaphorical conceptions about the activities.

Using the example of argument is war metaphor, they show how the metaphor itself structures the actions we perform in an argument, and contrast these with actions that might accompany a culture where arguments are not conceptualised as war. In their view, we conceptualise meaning and reality using metaphors (among other linguistic devices) and are influenced by them, at least in part, in our actions, our evaluations and our interpretations. Wars have battle strategies, skirmishes, battle fronts, weapons, casualties, winners and losers. To understand the use of the metaphor of “war” requires an act of decoding that triggers particular conceptual paradigms. In a sense, then, we not only speak in metaphors, but we are also spoken by them. In news discourse, they are a particularly effective framing device. The 2001 election coverage included the following metaphorical frames.

Elections are a game. Sometimes referred to as “the game frame” or the “horse race frame”, the discourse of election campaigns is dominated by numerous sport metaphors. For example, the CBC and BCTV began their coverage of the first day of the election this way:

*We begin tonight with British Columbia’s other blood sport – politics.*
(Gloria Macarenko, News Anchor, CBC, April 18, 2001)

*.... the wide gap between the two major parties suggest it won’t be a horse race this time around, because the front runner has already lapped the field.* (Keith Baldry, Senior Political Reporter, BCTV News Hour, April 17, 2001)

One particularly vivid use of the sport metaphor from boxing was used by BCTV when it stated “we head into this campaign with a government on the ropes and an opposition smelling blood”. Other references to the “race is already over”, the “race for second place”, “throwing in the towel before the race started”, one party “entering as the favourite” while the another was “limping to the finish line” are all examples of the use of the sport metaphor to frame the election as a game.

Elections are a War: As with the example of “argument as war” outlined above, the framing of elections as war is apparent in the metaphors used by television reports. Numerous references to the “marshalling of troops”, “putting on brave fronts”, “facing an uphill battle” and “going on the attack” all identify the act of politics as an act of war. Some stories discussed the party’s policies in terms of arsenal; for example, Dosanjh had “little ammunition to fight the anti-NDP sentiment”, and the party “yet to find any
weapons capable of wounding the Liberals”. Indeed, the very cliché use of the term “campaign” to refer to the period of time when the parties are vying for the vote, comes from the military. One report noted how “usually campaigns are run with almost military precision”. Others referred to party strategies as counter-offensives, party leaders as "down playing the threat”, how the public will be “bombarded with carefully crafted images”, and how the NDP were “in this for survival, not victory”. And parties were cited as moving into “friendly territory” if it was an area traditionally supportive of their party.

**Elections are Entertainment:** Politics and elections are also framed as entertainment. A leader’s “performance” is judged, a campaign event is successful if it "draws a crowd". A number of stories were impressed with how the Liberal leader had learned to be image savvy. “Plaid Gordon has morphed into GQ Gordon with the turtle and black suit and snazzy glasses..." stated one report, with only a slight sense of irony. “The candidate coming into this room is wearing TV make-up, dresses well, and preaches about a new era” states another. This emphasis on style rather than substance reinforces the frame of celebrity news, a genre that has been increasing its foothold in television news. But the most predominant example of the entertainment metaphor is found in the lengthy (eight minute) story by CBC titled “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly”, after a movie of the same name which showed two popcorn munching pundits in a movie theatre watching edited news clips and evaluating the NDP’s “legacy” in the discourse and style of movie critics. Indeed, as with movie critics, an important element of framing an election as entertainment requires a preference for drama. This election was described by the news discourse as nasty even before the election had started.

Well, get ready, it all starts tomorrow. Twenty-eight days of name-calling, mud slinging and maybe the occasional debate over the issues. (Ravi Baichwall, News Anchor, VTV, April 17, 2001)

Well lets look at the 28 days ahead -- a traditional, nasty, negative BC campaign. (Russ Froese, News Anchor, Global News, April 18, 2001)

While the potential for negative drama was shown cynically, as above, the lack of drama appeared even more problematic as the campaign progressed. The election was considered fairly boring, the NDP’s campaign was negatively evaluated as lackluster, and a party platform was criticized for being released “without any fan fare”. A negative campaign may prove that politics is a war, but what is worse is that a boring campaign makes for boring TV.
Previous studies have shown that news discourse most commonly uses the metaphor of war to discuss politics, followed by the metaphors of politics as a game and politics as a drama (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Fiske, 1987). On one level, such metaphors make common sense. Campaign events or incidents may appear to fit these metaphors. The behaviours of politicians, pundits, political consultants, “spin doctors”, and even journalists, may seem at times to render such metaphorical comparisons accurate and appropriate. Indeed, the use of these metaphors to frame the introduction of an election campaign are so cliché and have become so common as to be almost invisible. Their familiarity makes them rarely questioned. However, as Fiske noted:

Making sense of politics by metaphors of war or sport constructs politics as a conflict between parties and not as a public sphere serving the good of the nation. Using the metaphor of drama makes sense of it as a “stage” upon which talented individuals “perform” as stars. (Fiske, 1987, p. 291)

This case study shows that not only are these three dominant metaphors prevalent in the 2001 provincial election news, they are also used in specific ways. For example, while the news discourse used the game, war and entertainment frames to report on the election in general, these frames were used more selectively with specific political parties. For example, the war metaphor was almost exclusively applied to the losing parties (the NDP, and to a lesser extent the Greens) and almost never to the winning party (the Liberals). The Liberals were never shown using the war analogies of the winning side in a battle, only the winning side in a game. Thus, while the NDP were facing uphill battles and looking for effective arsenal, the Liberals were the “front runner”.

However, while the game metaphor was used to refer to the Liberal campaign, the primary metaphor used to refer to the winning party was one of entertainment. In particular, the Liberals were playing to an “enthusiastic crowd”, were “well-scripted” and in essence provided, a “good show”. The New Democrat campaign was framed using the entertainment metaphor as well: they were lacking in drama by providing a “lackluster” and “boring” campaign, and “couldn’t muster a crowd”. More exploration into the selective use of these metaphors might offer some further advancements on their uses in election news. Are these patterns of selective metaphor use linked to the reporting of specific political parties or is the selective application based on the party’s
standing in the polls? Is the use of the war metaphor primarily applied to losing parties? Under what conditions? 76

Metonymic frames:

A metonymy is a linguistic device that uses part of an element or phenomenon to stand for the whole thing (Edgar & Sedgwick, 1999, p. 239). For example, the term “the crown” is often used to refer to a monarch, or (in Britain or Canada) the government. In the context of a news report, an example of a metonymy is a photograph of a starving child used to represent the whole country of Ethiopia, or one aspect of a political movement is used to represent the whole movement.77 The news is metonymic, because it carefully selects “people and incidents that stand for a more complex and fuller version of reality” (Fiske, 1987, p. 291). As an example, the news may use the visual of two striking workers on a picket line to stand in for the whole reality of a labour/management dispute. Metonymy works because we fill in the rest of the information;

...we construct the rest of the 'story' from the part that we have been given, in the same way that we construct the rest of a sentence if a speaker finishes in 'mid-air'. (O'Sullivan et al., 1994, p. 181)

Indeed, metonyms seem so familiar and common-sense that they are easily invisible and taken for granted. We overlooked that the use of a different part might give a different interpretation of the same event or phenomena. "A militantly protesting striker and a bored cold striker are both part of the same picket line, but they may be represented as significantly different metonyms" (O'Sullivan et al., 1994, p. 182). Two striking metonymy frames were apparent in this case study of the 2001 election news.

**The “campaign” stands in for the party and its policies:** While journalists have often complained about the amount of time and energy political parties spend on 'image' and 'spin', their reports in this study consistently judged parties on the basis of how polished their campaign was. Indeed, the “slickness” of their campaign, (or lack thereof) was the dominant topic when reporters analysed the parties, and both subtle and overt generalizations were made as to how the competing parties would govern, in the case of the Liberals, or how they have governed in the case of the NDP. For

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76 Other election stories used metaphors selectively to frame an event or person. For example Liberal candidate Daniel Lee’s on-going problems were framed within a discourse of ‘one bad apple’. Yet, the rest of the cliché, that a few bad apples could spoil the whole barrel, was not.

77 See for example Hackett & Zhao’s (1994) analysis of the media coverage of the protests against the Gulf War. One example from their study saw the use of the slogan “no blood or oil” being equated with the peace movement’s "entire case against the war".
example, a reporter commented on the NDP’s “lackluster” campaign by stating that “some analysts say a weak start is symptomatic of the problems plaguing the NDP”. Another noted that while Dosanjh was “buoyed by the biggest turnout of his campaign so far” his campaign was still lacking the large enthusiast crowds of the Liberals, and ended with a camera shot of the NDP leader on his campaign bus and concluded rhetorically “in politics where symbolism counts for so much, will the symbol of today be a lonely premier in an empty room?” Another story later in the election campaign ostensibly reported on a major policy announcement made by Dosanjh, but after camera shots of small crowds the story ended with another rhetorical statement:

But what will voters remember of this day? The danger for Dosanjh is that his vision will be lost among the sad images of a governing party the people appear to have abandoned....

A similar use of metonymy was applied to the Liberals, although less consistently. Impressed with the “slick” and “flawless” campaign reporters noted that the tightly controlled speeches represented an “image of professionalism”. Campbell’s improved performance on the campaign was lauded, not criticized or rendered suspicious. “His speaking style is much more convincing. He’s better at staying on message. And that may be some of the reasons he’s favoured to win”, stated one report. Interestingly, and as noted previously, journalists’ suggestions that the Liberals’ dominance in the polls would result in increased media scrutiny of party policies, this was largely absent.

Polling stands in for voting: Throughout the election the news stories repeatedly commented on how the Liberals were far ahead in the polls and the NDP was unlikely to win. This reporting was based on the results of various public opinion polls, mostly commissioned by the news media. It has become standard practice for news organizations to commission their own public opinion surveys during an election. The results of these polls become leading news stories and are reported as if they fully represent the intentions of voters. While there is no doubt that, if done well, public opinion polling is a good indication of the voting intentions of citizens, however, it is not the whole story. For example, news stories habitually report on the answers from decided voters without mentioning the number of respondents who are undecided or who refuse to answer participate in the survey. The reports of the results of the polling research in this case appeared to stand in for voting, and indeed for the whole democratic process. Numerous news reports commented on the election as being already over. Some reporters went so far as to ask people on the street if the whole
election campaign was a waste of time since the results were already known. One week into the election a report suggested that the campaign itself was meaningless since so many people had already decided how they were voting and had stopped paying attention to the election.

**Framing of ‘Issue Stories’:**

As noted in the previous chapter, policy issues received far less attention in the news reports than did the stories of the campaign. I examine two examples of the framing of issue topics in this campaign; one of the top two dominant issues in terms of its frequency (taxes), and one that received a moderate amount of attention (aboriginal treaties). In the end, the framing of these two topics demonstrated two approaches to issue framing which I have labelled the *false consensus frame*, and the *legitimate debate frame*.

*‘False consensus’ frame*

The election news frames about taxes almost exclusively adopted the frame that tax cuts were accepted as a positive measure, and would result in little or no negative economic or social consequences. Thus, the need for and value of tax cuts was part of the social consensus. However, this view was in fact *contested*, and consequently the frame represented a false consensus.

BCTV began its election coverage stating that the major economic issue was tax cuts. It then continued by noting that “if tax cuts are an issue for the voters, putting more cash in our pockets to hopefully help boost the economy, the party leaders have clearly staked out their positions on that”. While the news report noted the differences between the two parties, it clearly framed tax cuts in a way that was consistent with, and at times overtly *adopted* the Liberal position. All stations included quotes from either Collins or Campbell or both, explaining their position on how tax cuts would not mean a reduction in services. “Tax cuts will pay for themselves” and would even “increase government revenue”. BCTV was especially active in this regard, using sources from the right-leaning Fraser Institute and using the Institute’s “tax freedom day” as an indication of how British Columbians are overtaxed.

The NDP’s attempts to move the tax cut issue into an area of *legitimate debate* were consistently reframed within the news stories that reported them. For example, Dosanjh was reported as “*trying* to portray Gordon Campbell as a tax cutter and nothing
more" but “so far, though, Dosanjh’s argument is falling on deaf ears”. In another story Dosanjh “went on the attack” saying “proposed tax cuts won’t help the people who need it most”. However the story then cut to Liberal finance critic countering Dosanjh’s claim by “once again the NDP have their figures wrong and once again they’re making it up as they go along”. Indeed, in almost every one of the tax stories, Liberal candidates either had the last word or the reporter summed up the issues in a way that favoured tax cuts.

The competing perspectives around both the concept of over-taxed British Columbians and the theory of ‘trickle-down economics’ have been challenged by the left-leaning CCPA (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives). However, these views were either not included, or if they were, only in passing. In particular, only one story quoted an economist from the CCPA, and that story was about whether the tax cuts would be dramatic enough. The representative of the CTF (Canadian Taxpayers Federation), an anti-tax lobby group, argued that the tax cuts would not be enough. The representative of the CCPA is quoted saying BC already has low taxes, so making BC’s taxes the lowest in the country “wouldn’t really amount to much”. However, the view that BC “already has low taxes” was not explored by any television station.

The NDP further released some “negative ads” challenging the Liberal’s view on tax-cuts. While all stations reported on the “attack ads” the CBC did more. They did a feature interview with Gordon Campbell entirely about his tax cuts plans, his theories of how they will pay for themselves. Near the end of the campaign, however, CBC’s ‘reality check’ explored some of the Liberal claims and NDP criticisms and found that some of Dosanjh’s concerns about the cost of tax cuts were legitimate. Still, this was one of the very few stories that allowed that there even was a legitimate competing perspective on the effect of the Liberal’s promises of tax cuts. In general, the overwhelming framing of the stories on tax cuts represented them as simply common sense.

‘Legitimate debate’ frame

While news stories about tax cuts were framed as part of the general ‘common sense’ consensus, the news discourse about a proposed aboriginal treaty referendum was presented as a legitimate topic for democratic debate. Indeed, it was one of the very few Liberal policy proposals to receive this framing and certainly the most predominant topic of the ones that did. The negotiation of land claims treaties had been initiated by the New Democrats in 1992. The progress had been slow, and there was debate about the constitutionality of aspects of the treaty principals as well as the usual
concerns from some non-native groups and individuals worried about losing their private lands or their access to public lands and resources (fish, timber, range lands, etc.). The first major treaty to result from the renewed negotiations was the Nisga’a Land Claims Agreement affecting a large area in the north-western section of the province. The Nisga’a treaty signing had been a major accomplishment for Glen Clark, according to pundits from all political parties (see CBC, April 18). However, at the time the Liberal opposition had responded by submitting a court challenge as to the legality of the treaty vis-à-vis the Charter of Rights. This created tension between the First Nations and the BC Liberal party. The tension was further enhanced when the Liberals unveiled their plan to conduct a public referendum on “treaty principles” if they were elected.

During the election campaign a number of news stories reported on this issue. A BCTV story in the second week resulted from a reporter’s trip to north-western BC, and focused on the views of First Nations, who represent almost 40% of the riding he visited. The reporter noted that the Liberals’ pledge to “put the principles of any treaties to a province-wide referendum” was causing members of the Tsimshian Nation to be “worried that their future could be decided by non-natives who know little about their problems.” The story included a profile of the native community where “the unemployment rate is 68%, the infant mortality and suicide rate much higher than in Caucasian communities, [and] there are health and education issues that they believe a treaty can address”. The perspective from the native leaders from the area was well represented in this story. There were extensive quotes from Kitsumkalum Band Chief Diane Collins and the Tsimshian Tribal Council President Debbie Jeffrey. In addition, the item also showed two members of the province-wide organization the First Nations Summit at a meeting with Gordon Campbell expressing their anger at the Liberal leader including a quote from one saying “if you want a fight, you are going to get it”. The story concluded that “everyone on the reserve is hoping a referendum won’t stand in the way of their desire for independence and dignity in their life.” Thus, this story presented the referendum as primarily an issue of rights and dignity.

Later stories by BCTV took different perspectives. One interviewed “experts” on the issue (a University of Victoria professor and a Harvard historian) who expressed concern both that the referendum could have “devastating results” for human rights, and that it might result in renewed native blockades. Most interesting, though, is the final comment on the part of the reporter. “And while it’s not clear how non-natives might respond to a referendum, even the suggestion of unrest could produce another road
block for BC's struggling economy" (emphasis added). Thus, the concern about the referendum was presented in this story as one about social disorder and the potential for economic impacts. In addition, another story by BCTV's senior political reporter noted that "it is a mistake to assume that the aboriginal community are automatic supporters of the NDP" and that many First Nations were not happy with the slow progress on treaties. The story continued to note that "some of BC's senior economists", and representatives of BC Business Council were warning the liberals that "the economy cannot go forward and can't grow unless there's peace and progress made in relationships with aboriginal communities".

The CBC referred to the treaty referendum idea as "one of the most controversial Liberal campaign promises". The public network suggested that Campbell added the referendum to the Liberal policy positions in an "effort to bring Reformers into his tent". However, Dosanjh is quoted on the potential economic impacts of the referendum while making a campaign speech in Prince George.

We're losing a billion dollars of investment every year that doesn't flow into British Columbia because of the economic uncertainty caused by the lack of treaties in British Columbia. For God's sake, if you don't understand justice, you understand money! No referendum in British Columbia at all!

The CBC story then noted that a recent poll found that while 34% of respondents backed the Liberals position, and 27% the NDP, almost 40% supported neither party's policy positions on land claims. "Even right-leaning pundits like Rafe Mair said a time for the referendum passed when the Nisga'a treaty was ratified". Interestingly the story also hinted that the Liberals may not hold the referendum.

If the Liberals win the election, the referendum may end up a moot point. Liberal MLAs are quietly telling native leaders they plan to focus on economic development with First Nations, and that means treaty tables may simply stagnate.

The combination of the poll results and concerns from "even right-leaning pundits" indicates that there is a lack of consensus on this issue. Indeed, the appearance of varying frames both between and within the networks concerning the treaty referendum indicates that this issue is considered to be within an area of legitimate debate in the news media.
Further Discussion: Telling Stories

In 1991 Gilsdorf and Bernier suggested, based on their review of Canadian elections, that "there is good evidence to suggest that Canadian political journalists tend to rely on tried and true narrative themes in their election reporting" (Gilsdorf & Bernier, 1991, p. 6). The summary of election discourse in this case study supports that view. Indeed, the "tried and true" narratives in telling the story of the election are so dominant as to result in the overshadowing and minimizing of any information that may not fit into the narrative or the frame. In particular, the above summary of two of the dominant narrative frames in this study (that of "disruption/stability" and "winner/loser" narratives) showed how the news discourse use of these narratives resulted in stories that left out significant and relevant information about both leading parties. In order to advance and maintain the narrative that the governing New Democrats were the disrupters/villains of the province, the news stories during the campaign could not accommodate information outside the perspective of the frame. For example, the "disruption/stability" frame could not include the possibility that the province's economic difficulties were due, in part, to international markets, nor that the New Democrats had brought an increased level of stability on environmental or aboriginal issues, nor that the leader of the New Democrats was a political moderate for whom many in the news media had expressed deep respect only a year earlier. Similarly, in order to advance and maintain the narrative that the BC Liberals were the stabilizers/heroes of the province, the news stories during the campaign could not accommodate prominent information that suggested the Liberal policies may not be up to the task, nor that the Liberal party may have some history of financial mismanagement of public money.

Similar to the research on narratives in election news discourse, the limited research on the framing of Canadian election stories is supported by this study. In 1993, Mathew Mendelsohn identified some of the dominant frames of interpretation that TV news applied to the 1988 Canadian election campaign (Mendelsohn, 1993). He argued that these frames affected the political discourse and the voters' understanding of the campaign, making it more likely that voting was based on leadership tours and "horse race" coverage than on actual political or policy issues. Similarly a study in the US, found that although a wide range of topics was presented by the television networks, the concentration of the issue frames was not nearly as dense as those for campaign frames such as candidate advertisements, political polls, the debates or voting possibilities (Iyengar & Reeves, 1997). This case study shows a predominance of campaign framed
stories, and the use of metaphor and metonymy to establish these frames. In a particular, the use of three metaphors was significant: elections as war, elections as sport, and elections as entertainment. Yet, while these metaphors are used fairly consistently when discussing the election in general, this study indicates that these metaphors are used selectively when discussing the parties. Specifically, and as noted earlier, the use of the war metaphor was almost exclusively applied to the losing parties while the entertainment metaphor was used most frequently in relation to the winning party. This last finding in particular deserves further research.

This analysis helps to substantiate the view that once the news media adopt a particular narrative or frame, the principles of selection and rejection ensure that it is commonly the material that supports the established frame is seen to be most relevant to the continuing stories. This doesn't mean that the frames are purely intentional. Numerous influences affect the news frame, including the daily routines and professional conventions of news work. In addition, this pattern of selection and construction of consistent material has to be exercised within the constructs of news media as 'realistic' and 'objective'. Thus, some information that is contradictory to the frame may be included, such as competing perspectives and voices of dissent. Nonetheless, this study supports the view that overall, once a frame or narrative is set in an election campaign, it is unlikely (though not impossible) that it will be revised.

This review of narratives and frames is not to say the audience has no role in the interpretation of news discourse. Sometimes the preferred reading that is encoded into a discourse is rejected by the viewers. As recognised by Stuart Hall and associates, "an event can only 'make sense' if it can be located within a range of known social and cultural identifications... cultural maps". (Hall et al., 1978, p. 54). For a journalist, it is part of his or her professional skill to apply a believable frame to a story – one that coincides within existing cultural maps in order to be accepted as "factual" and "objective". Further, there can be no doubt that the story of this campaign, its narrative structure and its frames, was constructed to some extent before the actual election call. In this election, for example, the year leading up to the election call was one that contained numerous media reports on NDP scandals (primarily the fast ferries, questionably balanced budgets and Glen Clark's resignation as premier due to an investigation into influence peddling). To be sure, incumbents are often the focus of more critique and inspection than challengers, since after all, they have governing

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78 As first outlined in the work of Tuchman, 1978; and Gitlin, 1980.
records to defend while the challenger does not. Highly unpopular governments, as the NDP clearly had become after ten years in power, are not usually covered by the news media without mentions of their record, or their unpopularity. What is demonstrated here is the way in which the stories were constructed and framed.

While acknowledging that to analyse the narratives and news frames during this election requires a contextual understanding of the narrative and news frames prior to the election (and indeed within society as a whole), it is also critical to understand the period of the campaign as a unique period of narrative, with its own stories and story frames. This chapter has merely skimmed the surface of the rich textual patterns of news discourse on elections, yet the findings offer a glimpse into the capability news has in directing our interpretation of an event. Some media researchers have suggested that it is because the news often reports events and issues that are outside of our direct experience they are in the unique position of interpreting "problematic reality" for us (Hall et al., 1978, p. 56). Others have added that people are more likely to accept media messages about a subject where we lack direct experience (Hackett, 1991, p. 14). Thus, if we have no other information to combat or resist the media interpretation of an event, the news media offer us a map of how to "make sense" of the issue. Indeed, the potential effect that the media may have on the audience, is a significant issue, and one that the final chapter of this dissertation will discuss in more detail.
CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In this final chapter, I will offer a brief summary and discussion of the findings from this specific case study, and then address some of the implications and political significance of these findings vis-à-vis the exercise of democracy.

Summary of Findings

Chapter One of this dissertation reviewed the prevailing theories on the role of the news in society in general and in politics in particular. It compared and contrasted the dominant liberal and critical views of the roles the media have and/or should have in a democratic society. From the liberal view, these roles include the traditionally promoted role of a watchdog on governments, a market representation of the consumer's wants and needs, and a provider of information to citizens and consumers alike. From critical perspectives, media organizations have been theorized as instruments of the powerful, be they economic or political power holders, structurally limited by routines and commercial logic, and as hegemonic institutions, naturalizing particular dominant interests. Each of these six versions of the role of media have overlaps and variations, but fall roughly into the two theoretical camps: the liberal perspective that sees the media as primarily unproblematic institutions, although perhaps needing minor adjustments to ensure they adequately fulfil their normative responsibilities adequately; and the critical perspective that sees the media as problematic and in need of significant restructuring.

In outlining the origins and overlaps of these perspectives in some detail in Chapter One, I also noted that there was increasing concern on the part of liberal theorists in recent years as to the nature and effect of news media vis-à-vis politics. Similarly, overly rigid perspectives from critical studies have benefited from the more negotiated model of an 'active audience', providing increased room for perspectives on the social-construction of power relations and recognizing the importance of the media text as itself a site of struggle. While distinctions between the two classic perspectives
on media and society clearly remain (and my own perspective is more closely aligned to a critical view), it is in the area where the two potentially meet – their growing convergences – that I have situated this dissertation. Thus, chapter one did not set up a model of the media's function in a democratic society from which to test against the data from this case study. Instead, it outlined the case for quantitative or qualitative analysis of media texts, that start from the data, in order to identify patterns of coverage that may add to the research on media and elections, and provide further argument for the value of this research within both traditions.

Chapter Two contextualized this study's research into media content by reviewing the findings and theories of what types of influences help to construct the content, and what the political impacts of content may be. In exploring the research into news determinants, this chapter outlined both the various traditions of inquiry into what influences news content, and also employed a useful model from Shoemaker and Reese (1996) of five levels of influence. These levels of influence ranged from the most specific (the influences of the individual journalist), to the more structural influences (news routines, organizational structures, influences from outside the media organization), to the broadest influence (ideological). The review of the research into each of these types of influences demonstrated that while the individual journalist has little influence on the patterns of news content, the larger structural pressures are more influential on the overall media content. Influences on journalistic routines, such as professional norms, routine source strategies, "entertainment" values, and the "regime of objectivity" (Hackett & Zhao, 1998), all effect how reporters practice their craft. The hierarchy of this influence extends to larger structural limitations, such as commercial pressures, and the dominance of market liberalism. Thus, media content is the result of a complex array of pressures, some of which are more influential than others.

Chapter Two also reviewed the literature on media effects, tracing the history of research into what was believed to be the political impacts of mass media. Following the early twentieth century beliefs about the propaganda role of media content, a dominant view of media effects arose out of research into voter's behaviour during elections. This research resulted in the "minimal effects" model of media influence, that argued that media messages were either "filtered out" of people's minds by other influences, or primarily reinforced their existing beliefs. While this model still dominates many popular and academic assumptions, challenges to the minimal effects model began to appear around the 1960s. While these challenges were initiated by
researchers from critical media studies who were concerned about the ideological effects of mass media, later liberal pluralist research began to find that voters were, indeed, affected by media content. In particular, this created a rich tradition into research on media agenda-setting, priming, and framing. This research has been pivotal in shifting the attention of news content's influence away from direct short-term measurable effects, and towards a broader and longer term media effectivity. The chapter emphasized that, while conclusions about the political effects of media on voters are complex, they are not insignificant.

Having established the case for research into media's political significance, Chapters Three, Four and Five explored the findings of the content analysis of the television reports in this case study, while chapter Six considered the nature of the news discourse, by providing a summary of the narrative of the news stories as they occurred and by reviewing some of the dominant frames the media adopted in this coverage. For the purposes of setting the stage for a discussion on the implications of this case study, I will first review the salient findings from each data chapter in turn.

In the first data chapter, Chapter Three, I began reporting on the findings of this content analysis by focusing on the amount of election news, and the dominant frequency of topics in the news coverage. It outlined how the television media organizations devoted, on average, about nine minutes a day of the 6 o'clock newscast to election news stories, almost all of which occurred within the crucial first twenty minutes of the news hour, and representing about 20% on average of a station's time devoted to news (the "news hole"). The amount of attention between television stations ranged widely, from a high of almost 14 minutes per day of newscast by the CBC, to a low of just over 4½ minutes by VTV. The most watched television news hour, BCTV, provided a significant amount of almost 10 minutes (9 minutes 55 seconds) per day of election coverage on its six o'clock news show. Within that time period, election news stories were, on average about 2 ½ minutes long with almost all of the story lengths found between one and four minutes in length. There were differences between the broadcasters, with the range represented by the CBC providing the highest number of longer stories (over four minutes) and Global the highest number of shorter stories (less than a minute long). In total then, based on a combination of overall amount of coverage combined with the length of stories, it can be concluded that the largest amount of election coverage as a percentage of overall coverage and length of story,

79 The exact number is 9.02 minutes per newscast. See chapter 3 for other exact numbers.
came from the CBC and BCTV, while Global and VTV provided less coverage and shorter stories. This also held true when looking at the daily and weekly coverage of the election as well as the cumulative coverage amounts.

With regard to which topics the broadcasters covered, the overwhelming amount of media attention (78%) was devoted to campaign-related stories, with much less space (22%) devoted to issue-related stories. This division was further broken down by week, and by overall amount of time, with similar findings. The number of stories focusing on the campaign rather than on an issue, was consistently dominant throughout every week of the campaign, with a low of 72% in the 3rd week of the campaign, and a high of 84% in the final week. When calculated as a percentage of overall time (rather than number of stories) devoted to campaign vs. issue stories, the breakdown was also similar, at 76% to 24%. In total then, less than a quarter of all election news stories in the election news focused on issue topics. Of the small number of issue topics discussed in the television reports, health care topped the list (7% of all stories in total, 32% of issue stories), followed by taxes at half the amount. Other topics were barely mentioned.

In Chapter Four I explored the use of news sources in the election news. News sources, as applied in this context, were those who were directly quoted in the news media. Over a third of the overall news time was devoted to quoting sources. Not surprisingly, almost 60% of the people quoted in the election news were political actors, and their quotes lasted, on average, about 9 seconds. More surprisingly, only about half of the quotes from political actors were from the party leaders, the rest were from other party candidates (32%), and party supporters (18%). Thus, while party leaders may have been the focus of the majority of news attention, they were directly quoted only 30% of the time. The second most frequent source-use, at just over 26%, came from individuals, 65% of whom were unnamed streeters or vox pop. The rest were employees (12%), business people (7%) or a variety of others (e.g.: nurses, students, patients, etc) who acted as 'representations' in the story rather than active participants. In addition, while the overall average length of sound bite for all categories was just under 10 seconds, the average sound bite from the individual category was less, at about 6 ½ seconds. Both representatives of organizations or institutions (those speaking for their organization), and those who were coded as experts (used by the

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80 Campaign related stories were identified in this case study as those focusing on party standings, strategies and activities, rather than policy or platform issues.
media because of their specific expertise), were quoted minimally, about 7% of the time each, although their quotes were lengthier than average (at 11 seconds and 13 seconds respectively).

Perhaps more significant than the frequency and length of quotes from the different categories of sources, was how sources were used in the stories. Building on the findings and analysis of Chapter Three, it was possible to determine the types of stories in which the various sources were used most often. For example, 82% of the time, political actors were used as sources in campaign-related stories, while they were used as sources in issue-focused stories only 18% of the time. On one level, this is not remarkable, given the overwhelming majority of stories about the campaign (78%) compared to those about issues. The source-use of individuals was similar in that 73% were quoted in stories about the campaign. However the source-use of experts and representatives was especially interesting. Experts, those who were quoted by the media because of their expertise in an issue were also used 82% of the time in stories about the campaign and only 18% in stories about issues. Indeed, when one looks more closely at the type of expertise that the media considered important, the list is dominated by political pundits and university professors talking about party strategies, party advertisements, poll results and campaign activities. Experts were rarely used to talk about issues. In contrast, the only source category to be used more in stories about issues were representatives – 58% of the time representatives were quoted in issue stories, and 42% of the time they were quoted in campaign stories. It appears that when covering issue stories, the media preferred to quote from interest groups and organizational representatives far more than from experts. Arguably, this tendency in source-use on the part of the media provides viewers with knowledge of the interest group positions, but not necessarily information about the issue itself.

In Chapter Five I analysed the data on media coverage of the political parties. First, I provided historical background of the parties in British Columbia, and provided evidence of a persistent left/right split in election results, accompanied by 10 – 15% ‘swing vote’.

Thus, historical political identification (at least in terms of the left/right definitions of provincial political parties) can be seen as a key indicator of electoral results in British Columbia elections, and one that the news media appeared to have ignored. Still, while party/polarity identification may be a key indicator, it is not the only indicator. It can neither explain the swing vote, nor can it explain changes in support to parties within a polarity, such as the shift from Socred to Liberal in the 1991 and 1996
campaigns, and the shift from NDP to the Greens in this election. Indeed, as noted earlier, there is sound evidence that more voters make their voting decisions during the election campaign itself, and are influenced by the news media in their deliberations.

The content analysis of the party attention in the media indicated some support for the notion of 'proportional coverage', but only as it applied to the two leading parties in this election. Not only did the NDP and the Liberals receive approximately the same amount of coverage, they both received media attention in about 85% of all of the election stories. However, the amount of coverage of the Green party was far more than either its standings in the legislature (zero) or its popular support (as reported by the polls) would explain. Instead, the analysis in Chapter Five showed that the Green party benefited from more coverage, and more positive coverage, most likely because it provided a 'horse-race' dynamic in the election, with its minor surges of support and split of the left. However, the major story about party standings from the poll reports –10% drop in Liberal support during the campaign – was ignored altogether. Yet, reporting on the drop in Liberal support would have reinforced the dominant 'horse-race' frame of the election news by strengthening the remote prospects of a race. This suggests support for the suggestions outlined in Chapter Two – that are other, and sometimes contradictory, influences on the news content, in addition to the tendency to cover the campaign.

While the media attention on the two major parties was equitable, the media attention on the leaders was not. NDP leader and premier Ujjal Dosanjh received 10% fewer media occurrences than Liberal leader Gordon Campbell, and was present in only 69% of the stories where his party occurred, compared to 81% for Campbell. Consequently, not only did the NDP leader fare worse in terms of media visibility, these findings also indicate that there was no 'incumbency advantage' applied to the NDP or its leader. Moreover, when the data from chapter one on story topics was applied to the coverage of the two major parties, there was also a difference in coverage. The NDP was the focus of 26% of the campaign stories while the Liberals were the focus of 19% of campaign stories. In contrast, the Liberals were the focus of 57% of the issue stories and the NDP were the focus in only 36% of the issue stories. Thus, the type of coverage the NDP received was far more focused on its campaign (poll standings, strategy, activities, analysis) than on its policies, while the reverse was true for the Liberals. While

81 "Proportional coverage" is the notion amount of coverage that parties receive during an election is roughly equal to their standings in the legislature at the time of dissolution.
the tone of the sources quoted in news stories was of roughly equal in terms of the frequency of positive and negative comments about the NDP, the source-tone for the Liberals was more positive, and for the Greens was almost all positive (although less frequent).

In Chapter Five, I also demonstrated the media framing of the election through an analysis of the feature interviews of party leaders. Both the NDP and the Liberal leaders were the subject of feature interviews on three of the four stations in the first week of the campaign, although the Liberal leader enjoyed more access than the NDP leader. While BCTV and CBC both did two interviews with Liberal leader Gordon Campbell, they only interviewed NDP leader Ujjal Dosanjh once. VTV, however, interviewed both leaders twice in the first week. More importantly, in the first feature interview, every question asked of the leaders by the news anchor was a strategic or campaign-related question and not a single question was related to an issue. In the second set of interviews, three for Campbell and only one for Dosanjh, Campbell was asked more issue-related than campaign-related questions while Dosanjh was asked an equal number of each. In total then, the ratio of campaign to issue questions for Campbell was 10:12 while for Dosanjh was 14:2. In total, it appears that rather than enjoying an incumbency advantage, the New Democrats were subject for an incumbency disadvantage.

In Chapter Six I reviewed the discourse of election news. While a full-scale discourse analysis of the corpus of the election news was not possible, I provided an overview of the television election stories by week, and summarised the main themes and framing of the stories over the course of election narrative. From this analysis it was demonstrated that the election coverage drew on two dominant and evaluative narrative structures in telling the 'campaign stories': that of disruption to stability, and that of winners/losers binary oppositions. In the first narrative device, the creation of disruption was attributed to the New Democrats, while the stabilizing force was represented by the Liberals. The use of this narrative device resulted in an emphasis on information that advanced the sequence of disruption-to-stability in the news discourse. The second dominant narrative was the use of the binary opposition of winner/loser. The New Democrats were represented in the news through the use of narrative structure, as not just losing the election, but as losers. This narrative theme dominated election stories even when evidence that it might not apply was embedded in the story itself.
In addition to narrative structures, the discourse review in Chapter Six found a number of framing devices and metaphors used in the election news coverage. The three most common metaphors used in election news are those of *elections as a game*, *elections as a war*, and *elections as entertainment*. Each of these metaphorical devices are accompanied by various descriptors (e.g.: the *game frame* used descriptors such as "horse race", "front runner", "blood sport", etc; the *war frame* used descriptors such as 'arsenal', 'troops', 'fronts', 'battles', etc.; and the *entertainment frame* used descriptors such as 'performance', 'drama', 'fan fare', etc.). What was distinct about this metaphorical use its selectivity, depending on the party and its position in the polls. In particular, the analysis demonstrated how the war metaphor was almost exclusively applied to the losing parties (primarily the New Democrats, and to a lesser extent the Greens) and almost never to the winning party, the Liberals. The primary metaphor used to describe the Liberals was the *entertainment frame*, although it was accorded the winning side of the *game frame* as well. Metonymy frames were also used, and chapter five outlined two in particular: the use of campaign activities to substitute for the parties and their policies, and the use of polling to stand in for voting. As well, the discourse analysis found evidence of the media's use of a false consensus frame in its stories about tax cuts, the second most dominant issue story in the election news. Thus, using discourse analysis techniques, I substantiated the view that the news media adopt particular narratives and frames, and differentially apply them to political parties. Further, once that narrative or frame was set, the principles of news selection and rejection helps to influence the type of material that is included in the stories that follow. Material that primarily supports the already established frames generally becomes more newsworthy than that which contradicts the frame.

In summary, then, this dissertation offers empirical evidence of the following:

1) *The election news concentrated on campaign stories at the expense of issue stories*. While the television news media spent a substantial amount of time and attention on the election stories, campaign stories (strategies, standings, activities) were by far the most prevalent type of story (at 78%), while stories that provided information and analysis on issues lagged far behind (22%).

2) *The election news was highly mediated by journalists*. While political actors and individuals were quoted often in news stories, their average quote lengths indicate that their role was primarily that of representations of the election
campaign rather than actual information providers or primary definers of the election issues.

3) *The political parties in the election received differential coverage.* The Liberals and the Greens received preferential treatment. The Liberals were presented in more issue stories, were asked more issue questions in feature interviews, and had more positive source-quote evaluations than the NDP. The Greens received less visibility than either the Liberals or NDP, but more than their standings could explain, and they had virtually all positive source-quote evaluations. The New Democrats were subject to both a higher quantity of stories about their campaign (compared to issues they attempted to raise during the election) than the Liberals, and the use of more limiting frames concerning their campaign.

4) *The media relied on ritualized metaphors and frames,* even when they were not applicable or situational evidence in their own reports did not support the frame. There was a predominance of strategic and competitive metaphors and frames which were applied selectively to parties depending on their standings, and resulted in a narrowing of the information included in the news discourse.

I will briefly explore some of the implications of these specific findings here.

1. **The Prevalence of Campaign stories**

As noted previously, campaign stories, as defined in this case study, included those that were concerned with the *horse race* (opinion polls, party standings, momentum, predictions), the *strategies* (analysis of party strategies to increase their support, inside information) and the campaign *activities* (the leader's tours, events and “pseudo-events”\(^\text{62}\) such as press conferences and rallies). Emphasis on the campaign itself, also referred to as the 'game frame' (Robinson, 1998) is a common and repeatedly found pattern in the news media coverage of elections. And while journalists and commentators often respond to criticisms about this pattern by insisting that the race is the story, this thesis contradicts that defence. The 2001 BC election was characterised by the lack of an actual “horse race” (due to the persistently large gap in popularity between the two front runners) and as such, it was not the story. Indeed, (as noted in Chapter Six) reporters and pundits reasonably expect that the news media would find other ways to cover the campaign, such as focusing more on the issues, and providing a

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\(^{62}\) A term used by Gans (1980) and others to refer to events that are staged for the benefit of the news media, even if there is an audience present, in order to capture media attention.
more critical look at the un-tested Liberals and their policy and platform content. However, such an issue focus never happened. Instead, the emphasis on the campaign as a race remained dominant even to the point where the media manufactured a "race for second place" between the New Democrats and the Green Party.

One major implication of this finding is that, after decades of laments from both within and outside the media profession, and the news stations' promises to focus on election issues and improve their coverage, the trend of elections news remains unchanged. This study demonstrates that, as Bennett (1996) argued, there are immutable rules of journalism, a pattern of covering politics that overrides its usefulness or relevance, and a "routine indexing" of certain types of information that indicates a false consensus of interest. In short, the news media, it appears, are only capable of reporting on the campaign at the expense of the issues.

In addition, this study demonstrates the election news does not contain the type of information citizens want or need for making electoral decisions. There is no doubt that the amount of time the media spent on the election news was significant. This is because stories that focus on the campaign itself, rather than issues, do not lack for interesting material. As anyone who has ever attended a horse race (or is a member of a hockey pool) knows, the amount of information available to assist people in making their wagers is staggering. Race tracks provide glossy publications packed with an enormous amount of background information about the horses, their trainers, owners, and jockeys, their previous performances, and the odds of their winning. One can study the statistics on a horse's "win, place and show" in the last season, last year, or over its lifetime; whether it performs better on short or longer races; if it is first out of the gate, gains speed mid-race, or is a strong finisher. One can endlessly review the context of the horse's performance: the 'track-record' of the trainer, the owner and the stable; the 'track record' of the jockey, his or her weight, experience and winnings; the context of the breeding and the lineage; the racing environment such as the condition of the track, the weather, and the track surface. In short, horses have histories, contexts, and handicaps, each of which offer the opportunity for an immense amount of information about the particular race. When elections are treated as a horse race (or a game, or a war, or entertainment), the amount of information that is available for the analysis of a party's performance is equally abundant. Journalists and pundits can dedicate a vast amount of time reviewing this information; they can speculate, handicap, analyse, and even wager on the results. The problem is not that there is too little information in the
campaign-obsessed news accounts of the election, but that the type of information is inadequate for the exercise of voting on a government. There was a large amount of information about the campaign, but very little regarding the issues and policies that citizens care about when choosing a government. Viewers may have enough information in order to place a wager on the winners, losers, and standings on election night, but not enough to know the policies of the parties seeking the mandate to govern the province. Thus, while the amount of election news may be a reflection of an election's importance to the news organizations, it appears the nature of that importance is on gaining viewers, and not on informing citizens.

It appears that rather than give the voters 'what they want', the news media are interested in giving the voters what they don't have access to – the celebrity-type details, the 'on the bus reporter', behind the scenes intrigue, what its 'really like' in the campaign headquarters. It also reinforces the media's own self-image and public (and marketable) reputation as being "in the know". Like the current popular obsession with TV reality shows, such reporting gives the patina of validity and realism, yet provides little (or no) context and little (or no) information of value in making electoral decisions.

Further, campaign-related stories – those that focus on the horse race, the strategies and the activities of parties – have been linked to the quantity of 'adversarial' election reporting (Mendelsohn, 1993). Such a campaign focus views elections as a partisan game, and politicians as players whose primary motivation is to seek personal advantage or power. It renders politics as a contest, "heightens polarization by focusing on oppositions between party leaders, functions, and goals, rather than on their communalities (sic)" (Robinson, 1998, p. 93). In the election stories, then, opposition and style become more important than substance, and power differences between the competing contenders are obscured.

Even when issues were reported in this study, the information value of the story was still suspect. As will be discussed below, health care, the most frequent issue topic to be discussed, was covered with a subtext that referred to the nurses' dispute. Tax cuts, the second most prevalent issue topic, were falsely framed as a consensus, with contrasting information about the value of tax cuts never reaching the television reports (although a smattering of stories did question if the tax cut would be "big enough"). Other issue stories also had similar subtexts. The forestry stories were primarily about the Interfor shutdown, which occurred during the campaign, and was itself a response to a land use decision. Aboriginal issues were primarily about the Liberals plan for a
referendum, and were the only story that included an almost universally critical perspective on the Liberal plan. Still, the treaty referendum stories lacked information on why some supported the plan. What was lost in the news media reporting about the election was a discussion about the range of political and policy options, the very substance of democratic politics. The question that arises from this discussion about issues is this: Do the media adequately represent competing societal dialogues about important public issues, or do they act as advocates for a specific interpretation about an issue? This points us to the discussion on the next major finding in this study, the amount that journalists mediated the election news.

2. Election news was highly mediated and framed by journalists.

As I discovered in Chapter Three, while a third of the overall time in the election stories was devoted to source quotes, those quotes were on average less than nine seconds long, and were predominantly used in stories about campaign issues. Further, chapters four and five noted that the news discourse about the election was focused on strategic frames, where analyses of campaign events and policy issues were presented by journalists in terms of their impact on the election, as opposed to the province. Journalists pondered how a promise or poll standing would affect a party's chances, or its strategies. When given the opportunity, most candidates and members of the public demonstrated their interest in discussing issues; however this was not paralleled by journalists' questions or their analysis. Instead, reporters strung quotes together, from mostly political actors and unnamed individuals, who served as mere representations of the election, rather than to provide actual information for the viewers.

Chapter Four discussed how the prevalence of the shrinking sound bite in political news is linked to horse race journalism. Hallin (1992) argues that the tendency to shorter sound bites has affected both the content and the tone of political news by torqueing the content away from what politicians are saying to what journalists are saying about politicians. Thus, shorter sound bites increased the discretionary role of journalists. As a Hallin put it:

...today's television journalist displays a sharply different attitude toward the words of candidates and other newsmaker. Today those words, rather than simply being reproduced and transmitted to the audience, are treated as raw material to be taken apart, combined with other sounds and images, and reintegrated into a new narrative. (Hallin, 1992, p. 9-10)

Robinson also noted a tendency of journalist-centred reporting in her discourse analysis 1980 referendum campaign in Quebec. Her study found that the news media chose to
cover the referendum as an election campaign, and thus the conventions of election coverage were applied. In the process of a detailed discourse analysis of the coverage she found that while the predominant ‘voices’ in the election discourse included those of politicians, news personnel, experts and ‘ordinary people”, the construction of meaning of these different voices was hierarchical.

In this sense-making hierarchy, contemporary news personnel inhabit social roles that are narratively more powerful than those of politicians, and the voices of citizens are at the bottom of the pyramid. (Robinson, 1998, p. 198)

Sources, in general, were merely “characters” in the news narrative (p. 146).

In this case study, the election news was primarily populated by politicians and ‘ordinary people’, but the most authoritative voice was the journalist. Moreover, in contrast to earlier studies on source-use, politicians were not afforded ‘higher status modes’ of representation, such as being interviewed in the studio, or in a calm surrounding – they were shown on the ‘hustings’, in the street, at a chaotic scrum with reporters, and on the bus. The visual representation of ‘politicians on the move’ reinforced the presentation of the election as dramatic action, but it also represented politicians as no more than representatives of competing interest groups whose comments had to be interpreted and mediated by journalists. Journalists were willing to offer analyses of how politicians were performing, how many showed up for their announcements, how their election strategy had changed since the last election and who they needed to win over, but little analysis of issues. The most seasoned political reporters evaluated poll results and speculated on their meaning, and most of them offered predictions. Senior political correspondents, such as BCTV’s Keith Baldry and the Vancouver Sun’s Vaughn Palmer, had reached celebrity status through their political reporting in the past, and during this election their voices carried the highest level of authority on the news reports. They were the experts. Indeed, in election campaigns, it appears to be the journalist who is the star.

Importantly, source-use in election campaigns has not been studied before. Thus, this research provides empirical evidence that the concept of primary definer is not applicable to politicians in an election campaign. It was the journalists who defined the stories, and journalists and pundits who talked about campaign strategies. The political candidates are better described, as Schlesinger (1990) suggested, as political entrepreneurs, trying to get their message out to the public through a variously reluctant (in the case of the NDP or the Greens) and/or acquiescent (in the case of the Liberals)
news media. While I am not suggesting that the notion of 'primary definer' is irrelevant altogether, there is credible evidence to support specific applications of this concept to some situations (such as crime stories as found by Hall et al., 1978; and Ericson et al., 1989), but not to all. However, it is clear that in election situations, it is the journalist, not the source, who provides the dominant definition of the campaign.

This leads to another implication of highly mediated and journalist-centred political news during elections. Political parties and candidates have had to adjust their strategies to accommodate this structure if they are to have any success in getting their message out to the public. Because of the importance of reaching citizens through the news media, political parties cannot afford to ignore them, and must work within the confines and contradictions of the conventions of election reporting. To get any visibility at all, their media strategies must include events that meet the requirements of political news values and conventions of TV news. Their main message must be truncated, rendered into an overly simplistic form that fits within the 10 second sound-bite and leaves the least amount of room for reinterpretation. While journalists and other commentators alike have complained that party strategies have cheapened politics, it is clear that they must acknowledge, at least in part, their role in the changing media strategies of parties.

Proponents of 'public journalism', such as Jay Rosen and Paul Taylor (1992) have suggested that journalists can and should raise important issues on the public's behalf – that journalism that is highly mediated by a report is what will increase the public service value of news reports. However, while the intention is laudable, the evidence suggests that highly mediated election news narrows the parameters of the election debate. For whatever reason, mainstream journalists are reluctant to raise important issues during elections, or allow politicians to speak for themselves, and are themselves locked into a tradition of covering elections as horse races and strategic contests. In effect, there remains little room for a discussion of democratic values or citizen needs, or for problem-solving difficult and complex public policy issues.

3. The political parties in the election received differential coverage.

The practices of both the media and the political parties resulted in routine media exposure of the major political parties and their leaders. However, as noted above, the treatment was not the same. The Liberals were present in more issue stories than the NDP, were asked more issue questions in feature interviews than the NDP, and had

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more positive source-quote evaluations than the NDP. While such a focus may not necessarily be positive for the Liberals, the framing of these stories allowed the Liberals more un-mediated explanations of their announcements and less critical evaluation of their strategies. The New Democrats were subjected to both quantitative (frequency-based) and qualitative (framing-based) foci on their campaign, and less on issues. As well, their leader received less media visibility than the Liberal leader. The Green party received less visibility than either the Liberals or NDP, but more than their standings could explain, and they had virtually all positive source-quote evaluations. In summary, the Liberals and the Greens received preferential treatment by the attention offered and/or the framing used by the news media.

A few implications of these findings can be offered here. First, notions of proportional coverage and incumbency advantage were found not to hold true in this study. Instead, this study suggests that such notions must be researched as not just election specific, but party-specific as well. There certainly are numerous, and well documented influences that come to bear on how the news media reports on a political party during an election – its poll standings, its potential to introduce a surprise element, its historical support – but the fact of partisan generated differences cannot be completely ignored.

Moreover, it is clear from this study that the media love a winner, and a party with momentum. While all parties were subject to the media’s obsession with campaign stories, the Liberal and Green parties were shown in relatively straightforward election activities and less strategic analysis than the New Democrats. I will review below how strategy coverage have been shown to affect voters’ evaluations of leaders and their motivations, but what is pertinent to this discussion is that the data indicate that differential coverage was a mainstay of this election.

4. The media relied on highly ritualized metaphors and frames

As noted in Chapter Five, the dominant metaphors used in the election news were not unique to this election but are common ritual representations of election news (Fiske, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Familiar cultural metaphors, narrative styles and framing devices are used in news discourse in order to make them readily understood. Yet such discursive devices are not without their implications. The use of oppositional framing combined with a focus on campaign strategies, symbolically and discursively “draws the reporter closer to the campaign strategist and further from the citizens”
The process of news gathering, then, can be limited by a journalistic perspective on what constitutes newsworthiness, and the ritual use of these devices may "overdetermine" the story content (as noted in Chapter Two). Reporters may "smooth out the disjunctions and shortcomings" of news content by using "coherent narrative forms" to construct a story that fits within the rules of political reporting (Bennett, 1996, p. 381). These narratives may provide a semblance of cognitive coherence, but often at the expense of citizen enlightenment.

For example, poll standings are a major device for the framing of election stories. They shape the context of most stories, and provide the interpretative frame that elections are contests with winners and losers. Further, poll results are naturalized as unquestionable and accurate, even when they are potentially misleading. As a result, the campaign focus of stories, framed within a context of poll results, undermines the view that elections may be more than merely a race – they may be a dialogue between different policy solutions to societal issues. Other implications of the use of the election narratives and frames outlined in Chapter Six concern the limiting of the tone and the types of information that can be included in election discourse. Robinson (1998) argues that the discursive conventions of political reporting, combined with a journalist's depoliticized 'outsider' status, help to construct an "adversarial narrative stance vis-à-vis politicians" (p. 214). Further, and as noted earlier, she notes how the 'game frame' hides relations of power by "obscuring fundamental power and status differences in the political arena" (p. 102). It is assumed, in a game frame, that the contest is between relative equals with relatively equitable access to economic and cultural resources. Similarly, Tuchman (1978) states that news narratives have "the power to raise certain questions and to ignore others" (p. 104). If this is so, then the narrative devices used in this election defined what knowledge was available to the voter, and what was invisible. As Chapter Two outlined, this narrowing of the public discussion during elections has an effect on the voter during an election, but perhaps more distressingly, it limits the parameters of democratic communications in general. During the 2001 provincial election, whole topics and types of information were missing from the election news because they did not fit within the narratives and frames utilized by the media. While the emphasis on the campaign remained dominant, the stories about issues were limited. When the issues were reported, they were done so with a subtext that undermined the informational value of the story.
For example, health care stories, the most prevalent issue story in this election, were most often framed with a subtext of the nurses’ job action competing against a lack of money in the health care system. Every newscast included a story, often before the election stories, about the nurses’ refusal to perform overtime during the employer’s suspension of contract negotiations, and the effect this was having on patients. Many of these stories, (not included in the content analysis of this study, but reviewed for their contextualizing material) included highly personalized stories about heart and cancer patients waiting for treatments. The juxtaposing of the nurses ‘demand’ for more money with the suffering of patients is not unusual (albeit certainly objectionable) in stories about labour disputes. But the relentless framing of the nurses’ dispute as a representation of what was wrong with the health care system was clearly a subtext for the election. Labour unrest is associated, in BC news discourse, with the New Democrats, because of the NDP’s historical and institutional connections with labour organizations. Yet, at the time of this election the NDP had been in power for ten years, during which time there had been fewer days of labour disruption than any other period in BC history. Still, the frame persisted that labour was bleeding the health care system, the NDP were capitulating to their labour ‘bosses’ and patients (us) were suffering. Thus, the framing of health care as a story about labour disputes and wasted money was a narrative device that could incorporate some types of information but restrict others. The potential effect of this subtext, as noted in Chapter Six, is to negatively evaluate the NDP’s handling of unions, and this close relationship with labour as a leading cause of the province’s health crisis.

Taken together, these findings have, on one level, unique elements. In particular, the ratio of campaign to issue stories is unusually large, especially given the lack of an actual race. The findings about the source-use of experts and representatives is interesting, along with the ‘de-statusing’ of politicians in the hierarchy of voices in the news. The differential use of election metaphors and other framing devices provide an indication for future studies; and the coverage of the emerging Greens is unique in Canadian provincial elections. Further, the incumbency disadvantage may be a unique feature of BC election news, or merely unique to this particular election – the lack of comparative data with other BC elections makes this impossible to explore.

On another level, these findings fit within the larger patterns and trend in news reports of politics that have been reviewed throughout this dissertation. Indeed, twenty-five years ago, Wilson (1980) noted that in the 1979 and 1980 elections, the media tended to report on the parties, their actions and platforms in elections, in primarily 'tactical' terms, that is, in ways that emphasized the strategic political advantage at the polls of all their actions and standings.

Much of the coverage is analogous to the colour commentary one hears during televised athletic events. It is not just that our journalists rely heavily on the argot of the sporting world. What is more important is their approach. There is endless speculation about how the teams are running, continual analysis of their competitive strengths and weaknesses, and a steady stream of commentary on their strategies. Every move by parties and politicians is analyzed for its political impact and described in terms of its tactical motives. (Wilson, 1980, p. 56)

Twenty five years later, the situation remains the same. The inability of news media to provide the analysis on issues and policy positions that democracy so requires of them, is striking. Regardless of the reasons for this inability, it is clear that the patterns of election news remain static; constant over time and over geography variations. Electoral information is severely limited, boxed in, by TV news. Or, put another way, politics is screened out.

Why do journalists repeatedly report on the campaign rather than on the issues? While this question cannot be answered empirically by an analysis of media content such as this, and is far beyond the scope of this dissertation, a number of reasons for the enduring values of news coverage in general were offered in Chapter Two. Specific reasons for the nature of election coverage are worth expanding on here. Jeremy Wilson (1980) suggested that reporters enjoy acting as "election bookies", getting the inside scoop and adding to the drama and intrigue of the horse race. More importantly, the entertainment value of the campaign interacts with the dominant entertainment function of television. In addition, Wilson correctly points out that journalists are not trained in the analysis of issues, and thus they lack the policy expertise from which to evaluate either the issues or proposed solution. They are left to analyze the 'cut and thrust' of politics. Indeed, others have noted that the routines and conventions of election coverage have become almost as rigid as rules, and that these rules are so entrenched that they represent the very definition of 'good journalism' (Bennett, 1996). Still another view of the reasons for the emphasis on campaign stories rests with the journalistic practices of objectivity itself. As discussed in Chapters One and Two,
objectivity is a regime of practices that has the potential to limit the parameters of debate (Hackett & Zhao, 1994). Wilson (1980) noted how the reluctance on the part of journalists to analyze issues could be based on the fear of being seen as lacking in objectivity. Further, Robinson (1998) argued that the notion of objectivity was a major reason why style trumped substance in election reporting. In Chapter Two, I evaluated these and other explanations for determinants of news content in general, and concluded that it is the intersection of structural limitations (commercial pressures, definitions of journalistic professionalism, etc.) with ideological influences (dominance of market-liberalism) that provides the most compelling explanation for news content. Such dominant influences also provide the most likely explanation for the dominance of campaign coverage at the expense of issue coverage in election studies, as well as the tendency to journalist-dominated stories, differential coverage of the parties, and the framing of election stories.

The previous discussions have outlined the findings of this case study, noting the persistent patterns of election news and some of the implications of these patterns. In Chapter Two, I addressed the question of why any of this matters for the functioning of democratic elections. In short, there are two major reasons to care about these findings. The first, as previously discussed, is because there is credible evidence that a large number of voters increasingly make their electoral decision during election campaigns. Thus, there is a potential for the campaign itself to affect the voting decisions. But that is only if the media have any effect on voters. This is the second reason to care about these findings. News media can and do have an influence on audiences in general, and consequently, news content has political significance for voters. In my research, the evidence suggests that one of the overall effects is to limit the nature of political discussions, at the expense of political involvement.

Further Discussion: Limiting politics

Both the selection of news (including and excluding material and sources, making paradigmatic choices about which descriptors, metaphors or metonymies to use to represent an event) and the construction of news (the narrative and causal frame, the linkages or non-linkages of events) play a significant role in how an event is understood by citizens. News media provide maps of the social world (Hartley, 1982; Hackett, 1991). They define and construct what is good and important, what is bad and dangerous, and what is altogether insignificant, both through the treatment and very
presence or absence of a subject within the news discourse. Further, news media content has an effect on how we understand and interpret the political world (the cognitive dimension) and on our emotional response to it (the affective dimension) (Van Dijk, 1988 & 1998).

Within this political world, elections are hugely important events, indeed some would argue they are the defining events in a functioning contemporary democracy. As others elsewhere have demonstrated, citizens are increasingly making their electoral decisions during the campaign itself (in some studies as many as 76% of voters), and using the content of the dominant news media to gather information and evaluate the parties, their leaders and their policies. Yet, as this dissertation has shown, news about politics and elections is limited by journalistic norms that have become so rigid as to constitute overdetermining rules (Bennett, 1996). Further, these limitations of news content have measurable effects on the perspectives of citizens, on their political decisions, on the institutions that conduct politics, and on the functioning of democracy itself.

Returning to the findings in this case study, it is apparent that the following types of effects are conceivable. First, the higher the frequency of a topic in the news, the more likely voters would deem this topic to be important for their decision-making. Since, in this election, as with many others, the news content was dominated by stories about the campaign, then clearly it was the campaign itself that was judged by the news media, and thus the voters, as having the highest importance in the election. The fact that one campaign was run with “military precision”, another campaign “couldn’t draw a crowd” and a third was “upbeat and gathering momentum” all potentially had an impact on what voters would consider important information for making their evaluative judgements. Further, embedded within this narrative was the implied metonymy that the running of a campaign represented the whole of a party’s political purpose, as well as its political worth.

One characteristic of campaign stories is their use of strategic or episodic frames (Patterson, 1993; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Devitt, 1997; Iyengar, 1991; Iyengar & Reeves, 1997). These stories are characterised by a tendency, on the part of the reporter, to discuss candidate behaviour and party policies as motivated primarily by the desire to gain support with voters, rather than as philosophical or political differences in how to best handle a situation. For example, (and as noted in Chapter Four) the NDP’s
policy position on the aboriginal treaty referendum was seen as an attempt to shore up support rather than as originating from an intellectual and ethical perspective on aboriginal rights. The Green Party's focus on economic issues was presumed to be an attempt to downplay its environmental roots and seek the centre vote, rather than an actual shift in policy-making. Episodic frames, as noted above, have been shown to affect the evaluation of a topic. Such focus on events, at the expense of themes or historical contexts, results in viewers seeing a situation as the result of individual decisions, rather than societal situations. And strategic frames have been shown to increase a viewer's tendency to see politicians as self-interested and self promoting. Thus, differential media attention on party campaigns has the potential to encourage voters towards differential evaluations. In this case, the greater focus on the NDP in campaign stories meant that the application of the episodic and strategic frames was applied more to the NDP than the Liberals. By presenting the New Democrats in the greatest number of campaign stories, not only was their campaign strategy itself subjected to more intense scrutiny, but its motivations were more likely to be seen as purely politically based (in the narrowest sense of the term).

The focus on campaign stories, and the accompanying frequency of strategic frames has been shown to affect more than the individual voter. Indeed, citizens are more than just political individuals reasoning their way through election choices based on a "what have you done for me lately" attitude. They are also part of a political collective, who, when primed to evaluate governing options from a thematic problem-solving-public-policy perspective, rather than a narrow strategic and self interested stance, will do so. Some critics have suggested that the focus of framing politics as a terrain of individuals (both politicians and individual voters represented by vox pop) has removed the public from politics altogether. Because of this focus, Carey (1995) argues that political journalism, as currently practised, can produce publicity, scandal and spectacle, but not politics. The decline of political participation and knowledge, and the rise of independent voting, are evidence of an "active opposition to public life and an absence of public spirit in favour of a private and apolitical existence" (p. 393). Thus, in Carey's view, the nature of news media content relegates citizens to a passive role in politics – a citizen becomes merely a consumer of political news. Further, viewers are alienated by the "objective" media's picture of politics as a cult of personality and self-interests. Public opinion, in this model, is "formed by the press and modelled by the
public opinion industry and the apparatus of polling" (Carey, 1995, p. 392). As a result, the political public disappears, or is splintered into a disconnected set of individuals.

Others have expressed concern for the functioning of governments. Robinson (1998) notes that the news media affect political life by “providing the major information link between the government and the public” (p. 5). It is through the media that governments communicate their policies, and the very nature of this linkage also “shapes the public’s involvement in political processes.” During elections, the ‘government’ ceases to exist in election news, and is replaced by competing ‘special interest’ and ‘partisan’ teams in a contest of style over substance. As this study showed, the news defines elections as a “blood sport” of sordid characters engaged in a “war of words” where the truth itself may be expendable. This discursive cynicism about elections bleeds into other reporting about governments and governing, as is evident in the contemporary and ever-present news stories of “government waste”. As the linking mechanism between the public and the government, the news media are the primary source of information and interpretation for the functioning of a democracy. If, as Robinson says, the news media are the “sense making” institutions who “profoundly influence the fabric of political life and everyday culture” (p. 5), that fabric is fraying.

Researchers have also shown that the focus on strategic campaign stories has had a negative effect on the atmosphere of elections and on the overall political attitudes of voters. If nothing else, the trend of a high level of campaign stories in British Columbia election news is distressing because it limits the time available for other, more substantive information to be presented to voters (Fletcher & Everett, 1991). Further, the dominant patterns of election news have an impact on political parties and political institutions. Parties cannot afford to bypass television coverage if they are to have any visibility with voters, and thus structure their campaign strategies to coincide with media conventions and news values. The rise of political consultants to meet the structural and economic needs of news organizations (for example, by providing quick and previously synthesized material for media consumption, to offer a steady stream of stories, and to advise clients on media “savvy”), can be seen as both a cause and a response to increased news media cynicism.

But perhaps the most distressing impact of election news on political parties practices, at least as it affects the voting citizen, is the lack of information about party policies. The philosophies and tenets that define a political party are fundamental to its
existence. Competing perspectives on economics, social rights, and the role of government all reflect the basic convictions of different party members and their leaders. Beliefs about the causes and solutions to public issues provide insight into the governing approaches of the parties. Yet election news content is virtually silent on these topics. Indeed, many voters have little idea of whether their own beliefs harmonize with those of any political party. While the news media may have an effect on public opinion, that opinion is based on very little information about the parties they cover. This is problematic for the practices of democracy, for, as David Taras stated:

To the extent that the range of opinions to which we are exposed is limited, then society as a whole becomes impoverished (Taras, 1999, pp. 200-201).

The lack of substantive information about party philosophies and policies raises the question: why should parties bother to create policies at all? In fact, evidence in recent elections suggests that policies are being abandoned, at least by some parties, during elections campaigns. In this election, for example, the BC Liberals abandoned most of their 1996 platform and replaced much of their concrete propositions with vague promises of a “new era of hope and prosperity”. Since the 1996 platform consisted of a number of proposals that proved to be unpopular with the voters, their 2001 policy release, complete with much media fanfare, was, in the words of one journalist “thin on details”. After winning the 2001 election, the BC Liberals went on to implement many of the unpopular proposals that had lost them the election in 1996 (selling BC Rail being one high profile example). Yet, the lack of policy details in the Liberal platform does not appear to have warranted much scrutiny on the part of the campaign-obsessed news media, since issues are rarely the focus of news attention. Rather, the news media focused on the fact that the Liberal platform release was high profile while the New Democrats quietly loaded theirs onto their website with little fanfare.

If, as Capella & Jamieson (1997) have demonstrated, citizens are distracted or disgusted by the spectacle of what politics appears to have become, according to news accounts, then it is not surprising that voters are alienated and withdraw from politics altogether (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995), or reject formal politics for various alternative forms of “citizens’ politics” (Dalton, 1996). However, the trend in the depoliticization and fracturing of the public is worrisome for the overall functioning of democracy.
Suggestions for Further Research.

In this final section I will outline a number of areas for specific and broad-based research derived from this examination of election news. My comments fall into three categories: specific suggestions for similar content analysis research, suggestions for expanding the contextual research into election studies, and finally, suggestions for broad-based research into changing the structures of democratic media.

1. Further content analysis research.

It is my hope that this thesis may, in some small way, inspire an increase in the study of election media from the perspective of communications scholars. With that in mind, I make the following, specific suggestions for such research.

Methodological coherence: Content analysis of election news reports would benefit immensely from a coherent methodological approach to sampling, categorizing and analyzing the data. In particular, this work needs to come from a communications perspective.

Provincial and municipal election news: Almost all of the Canadian studies surveyed here, and every study done in the last four decades, focused on federal elections. Attention must also be paid to regional and municipal elections, especially given the trend in the concentration of media ownership and the effect that may have on local news, and the parallel and paradoxical trend in the devolution of federal responsibilities to the provincial and local level.

Source-use in election news: There is a definite lack of research into the area of source-use during elections. Yet, clearly, the use of sources is different during election periods. In this analysis, I questioned the applicability of the concept of "primary definers" as it relates to political candidates during an election, even if those candidates are commonly used as authoritative sources between elections. Further research into the specific phenomenon of politicians as sources is worthwhile. In addition, this study's finding that the media used "experts" as sources primarily to discuss the election race, and interest group "representatives" to discuss the issues, is important to examine more thoroughly.

Party coverage: The coverage of parties during elections is an area of focus for many recent election studies, primarily conducted from the perspective of political science. However, seeing elections as "exercises in communication" rather than just
"contests for power" (Fletcher 1994), enhances election studies. For example, this study examined what questions interviewers asked, how the media reported polling results, and how parties and leaders were framed by election discourse. Further qualitative research into party coverage is needed to provide a richer analysis than has commonly been applied in recent years.

**Discourse Narratives:** One of the interesting findings of the discourse analysis here was the selective use of the traditional frames and narratives of elections, depending on the popularity status of the party in questions. Such research into specific use of frames, and narratives would be beneficial to more thoroughly understanding the specifics of news coverage of parties and candidates during elections.

2. **Research into the context of election news.**

   This study only considered the actual content of the television reports, and did not provide evidence for the reasons for, or effects of this coverage. Empirically based and Canadian-centred studies of both the actual influences on the election news content, and the effects of such content on news audiences would be a welcome addition to communications research.

3. **Research on democratic communications.**

   **Research on public media:** This study demonstrated that, while still problematic, the CBC’s television coverage of the election was better at providing information on polls, more quotes from the politicians, less vox pop, and marginally less journalist-centred mediation. It had longer stories, and many of the longer stories were issue-based. In other ways, the public broadcaster fared no better than the private stations in providing stories about issues, the use of pundits as experts, and the race-horse type focus of many of the stories. Yet, clearly there is a difference between the public broadcaster and the private ones. Further research into the performance of and potential for public broadcasters to provide improved election news is necessary before conclusions can be reached. Public systems may be better, as some scholars have suggested (Curran, 2000), but not necessarily so.

   **Research on the Role of Regulatory Bodies:** Similarly, further research needs to consider the role of the existing broadcast regulatory bodies in Canada. At the beginning of this dissertation, I suggested that the television news media were arguably on their 'best behaviour' during election campaigns due to a combination of increased levels of public and political scrutiny, and reminders from the Canadian broadcasting
regulator (CRTC) about their obligations to report on elections as part of their ‘service to the public’. In particular, the CRTC routinely sends out circulars to all broadcasters when an election is called in Canada, and did so for this BC election. The circular reminds broadcasters that they need to meet “high standards” and ensure that the public is provided “reasonable opportunities” to be sufficiently informed about issues so that they can make an informed choice at election. This includes offering “differing views of public concern and provid[ing] equitable treatment of issues, candidates and parties”. The “public’s right to be informed” is a “quintessential one for the effective functioning of a democracy, particular at election time” (CRTC, 2003, p. 2). Still, among these stern warnings and solemn urges for democratic responsibilities, the broadcast regulator is clearly reluctant to be seen as interfering with the commercial workings of the ‘free press’ when it adds that “the commission agrees with the arguments put forward that news coverage should generally be left to the editorial judgement of the broadcast licensee”. It is clear that broadcasters are not enamoured with the concept of influence in editorial decisions coming from a regulator. Complaints to industry organizations such as the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) have no actual effect. Membership is free, decision making is even more influenced by profit-making companies than that found at the CRTC, and even if a member is found in contravention of one of the Council’s guidelines, there are no actual effective sanctions.

This returns us to the question of the normative roles of the news media in a democracy, as I discussed in Chapter One. If the CRTC is to be believed, the news media serve a public interest, especially during elections. News broadcasters are required to provide adequate and sufficient information during elections so that voters may make reasonable decisions based on substance, not style. This is especially important given the fact that most voters get their information from the ubiquitous mainstream news media. Indeed, news companies hold a uniquely powerful position in democratic societies, and one that has a potentially positive or negative impact on the exercise of politics, in its broadest sense. Thus, there is an urgent need to further research and reconsider the regulatory structure within which media companies operate in order to better meet the needs of citizens.

Research on Structures of Journalism: While this dissertation may sometimes read as a critique of the motivations and practices of journalists themselves, that is not

84 For example, sanctions from the CSBC due to a successful complaint about a BC radio journalist’s actions to the CBSC (CBSC 1997) were ignored by the radio station (CKNW) with no negative consequences. See McCune 1995, Howard 1997.
the case. Many journalists are concerned about these patterns of election news and the effect it has on the functioning of democracy. As Frizzell and Westell (1985) noted, anxiety-laden post election de-briefings in newsrooms are common:

After every campaign there is an internal debate and inquest; where they fair in their treatment of the candidate and parties, or did bias creep into their coverage; did they focus too closely on the leaders and ignore the ‘real issues’; did they, in short, provide the information the voters needed to make a responsible decision on how to vote? (p. 55)

Further, interviews with journalists indicate that they recognize the problems with the reporting of elections, and want it to change (Gilsdorf & Bernier, 1991). For example, when journalists were surveyed about the media coverage of the 1988 federal election, most respondents expressed dismay that the media placed too much emphasis on the leaders and not enough on the issues of the campaign, too much attention on the “horse-race” aspect of the election, too much sensational coverage, an over-emphasis on blunders or gaffes, and not enough attention on analysis or review of party platforms. More recently, journalist and media scholar Stephen Ward (2004) criticized the news media’s coverage of the most recent federal election as over-emphasising the horse race, lacking in information about issues, and having a tendency towards “unfair commentary masquerading as ‘attitude’ or ‘edge’” that has the “force of bombastic opinion or sarcasm” but not information or facts. He lamented that the superficial coverage is dangerous for democracy. His solution was to urge journalists to adopt a three part “moral imperative” to improve election coverage, thus focusing on the limited influence the individual journalist has, rather than the economic, commercial or structural pressures within which they practice.

Yet, research shows (as noted in Chapter Two) that individual journalists do not have the influence to effect such changes in media content. Perhaps the fact that such proclamations of change are rarely accompanied by ongoing organizational and structural commitments on the part of journalist organizations to self-monitor, is part of the reason none have been successful. As noted by researchers:

One of the results of the lack of systemic assessment is that old patterns of coverage are repeated, along with the routines and constraints that both frustrate and limit the quality of coverage (Gilsdorf & Brenier, 1991, p. 53)

Indeed, such journalist-centred ‘solutions’ to the problem of election news have failed, and will likely continue to fail, if they ignore the predominantly structural reasons for
news content. Journalists, like many professional occupations before them, could reasonably affect structural and organizational change in numerous ways. For example, journalists could research the system of self-regulation and standards commonly practised by other professions and businesses that have an influence on citizens and are required, by the public good, to meet certain ethical and professional standards. The self-regulating "colleges" system by health professionals, or the variously configured law societies who monitor complaints about legal practices offer at least a starting point for exploring alternatives. Physicians, lawyers, and accountants, among other public professions, are regulated by self-governing bodies of their peers who ensure they are meeting certain professional standards and regulatory requirements, regardless of who their employer is or what their company's quarterly profit projections demand. There are many ways to ensure that this type of self-regulating body is not limiting on the practices of journalists themselves, while providing them with a set of standards from which they can exercise their craft, and some ability to better control their own work. While I am aware that such a suggestion may be met with concerns for over-centralized governing bodies, I am also aware that numerous other professions have found solutions to thorny self-governing problems and that such a structural change has increased both public credibility and members' independence and creativity. It is an idea worth serious research.

Expanded research on election news: As noted in the introduction, election news research has fallen out of fashion among communications scholars in Canada. Few of the published studies on Canadian election news in the last decade have benefited from the perspective of communications researchers who are familiar with the theories and historical research in the field of political communications. This is an unfortunate trend, since the reach and effect of the news media is arguably significant, and worthy of academic research and intellectual assessment. As one study put it:

The political significance of campaigns must be assessed, not only in terms of voter choices and election outcomes, but also with regard to the quality of the public debate, the information environment provided for voters, and the images of parties, leaders, and issues and institutions that emerge. Campaigns should promote a constructive engagement of citizens, foster their interest and confidence in and understanding of the electoral process, and provide a stimulus to participation. (Fletcher and Everett 1991, 180)
Perhaps the abandonment of election news studies in Canadian communications scholarship is based on a belief that there is little left to study. Indeed, both this dissertation, and previous empirically based research into media reporting at election times has repeatedly demonstrated that our news media do not serve citizens as well as they serve consumers. The news media do not provide sufficient information about party policies, they do not promote dialogue nor constructive problem-solving discussions about salient issues, and they do not engage citizens in the complex and difficult work of negotiating between competing interests and needs to find solutions to public problems. In reality, the news media, as they are organized today, may be structurally and systematically ill-equipped to tell us anything substantial about election issues. As well, studies, such as this may continue to demonstrate how the news media narrow the political debate by removing the substance from the public discourse — by giving us elections without politics. Yet this is not always the case at all times, nor must it always remain so. The intellectual process requires that we look closer at election news to discern when and under what conditions news practices serve democratic purposes, and when they do not. It is from this empirical base that suggestions for media reform can be most effectively proposed.
REFERENCE LIST


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Appendix A: Methodology Appendix – Content Analysis

A. General Approach

Content analysis is a common method of textual analysis used in media research. A classic definition of content analysis from over five decades ago describes it as follows:

Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. (Berelson, 1952, p. 18)

The four key characteristics outlined in Berelson’s definition above, have been expanded upon by other researchers and authors in relation to analyzing media texts (see for example, Stempel & Westley, 1989; Bailey & Hackett, 1997). These four characteristics (objective, systematic, quantitative and focusing on manifest content) are all subjects of debate within the social sciences. Objectivity, for example, is a contested concept in sociology in general and media studies in particular (see for example Hackett & Zhao, 1994). However, for the purposes of applying the method of content analysis to the data collected, I have adopted the following definitions of the four characteristics, as outlined by Bailey and Hackett (1997). In this view, objective means that the study, if replicated by another researcher using the same coding protocols, would yield the same results. In this way, the personal biases of the researcher are, to some extent, limited by the design. Systemic means that the same process (sampling, coding, etc) has been applied to all the data in a consistent manner. Quantitative simply means that the data is transformed into numerical values for the purposes of analysis. A focus on manifest content refers to the analysis of the actual content, rather than the intended or perceived reception.

In media research, content analysis is applied through categorizing, counting, comparing and interpreting messages in media text samples. It typically involves developing a sampling system, managing and categorizing the sample material into units of study (topics, headlines, leads, sources), and coding the data based on frequency of occurrences, associations, correlations, clustering, use of images and/or contextual classifications (Krippendorf, 1980). In this case study, content analysis was employed to investigate the manifest content of the television reports about the British Columbia provincial election. While not purely a case study in the classic definitions of such, this
research adopts the case study approach of conducting an exploratory and descriptive inquiry of a contemporary phenomenon – in this instance that of election news. It is bounded in time by the election campaign period itself (28 days beginning April 16, 2001 and ending on May 15, 2001) and by the data source (the 6 o’clock news reports from the four major television stations broadcasting in British Columbia at the time of the election). Further, I limited this content analysis by focusing on three pre-defined areas of analysis: 1) the story topics, 2) the sources quoted, and 3) the party coverage in the election news.

The following pages outline the details of the methodology used at every stage of the content analysis. Importantly, and as the research questions indicate, I was primarily interested in descriptive analysis (frequencies, cross-tabulations, etc) in order to make reasonable and data-supported generalizations about the patterns of television media coverage of the election. I have outlined the details of this methodology below.

The primary research question for this case study was exploratory in nature:

- How did the news media report on the 2001 BC provincial election?

This question led to a number of sub-questions:

- What themes, topics and patterns are apparent in the news coverage of the 28 day election?
- How much attention was paid to issues? How much to the campaign?
- Who did the news media quote as sources during election news? What does this imply about the key players and definers of elections in the news?
- How did the news media cover the different parties during the election? How much attention was paid to parties and their leaders? How were the parties framed?
- What patterns of framing, agenda-setting and priming are evident?
- What were the dominant narratives of the campaign news?

B. Data Collection Process

The data for this case study was collected from four television networks over a 28 day period; from the day before the 2001 BC provincial election call or “dropping of the writ” (April 17, 2001) to the day before the election, the last day of coverage before

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85 Case studies are defined by Yin (1994) to include multiple sources of evidence.
the results were reported (May 15, 2001). During that period of time, a series of video recorders (one for each network) was set up for taping in the Communication Graduate Lab and a total of four people were hired to tape the 6pm newscast for each day.  

In total, 102 broadcasts were caught on video, 29 from VTV, 28 each from BCTV and Global, and 18 from CBC.  

Sampling: While most content analysis projects use sampling to define the population of data in question, in this case, the newscast data was used from the four television stations over the 28 days.

C. Preparing the Data for Analysis

Transcribing: Transcriptions were initially made by a professional transcriber through the use of a software program that was able to pick up the typed captions used by networks for hearing impaired. However this was not always accurate and both the transcriber and later myself checked the transcripts against the videos for accuracy. The transcriptions focused on the stories found in the first 20 minutes of the newscast; however, if there was an indication that there were further stories of the election later in the newscast, these were found and included. CBC was an exception to this guideline, since it began its one hour newscast with national news and moved to provincial news half-way through the broadcast. Thus, the whole CBC broadcast was checked for election stories.

Every transcription was formatted into a chart form to allow for timing and visual data to be included, and then checked again against the video tapes for accuracy. At the same time visual information and timing (in seconds) was included on the transcript. The type of visual data noted was who or what was shown, any text on the screen, camera shots, and charts and logos. A sample of the transcribed chart is found in Appendix F.

Defining Units: Studying television news content requires that decisions be made concerning the division of units to be coded. For this study, I chose to study each separate news story as a unit. However, this decision was not as simple to implement as it may seem. It is sometimes difficult to tell when one story is finished and another

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86 Six of the potential 108 broadcasts are not included in this data due to technical difficulties.
87 The CBC did not broadcast a 6 pm newscast on the weekends.
has begun. A story that begins with one reporter talking about the Liberal leader’s tour activities and then switches to another reporter with the NDP leader could be coded as one item, (about the leaders’ tours) or two items, (about each of the leaders). A third, generally more senior reporter, may then be asked to analyze the activities just reported on. Is this an additional story or the third part of one story? Thus, a decision must be made about how to divide these bits of information for the purposes of coding.

To solve this problem, the format of television itself was utilized to determine when a story began and ended. Typically, news stories in television are introduced by the news reader or anchor, who signals, both visually and verbally, the change in topics. In many cases the story is also accompanied by a report from a journalist ‘in the field’, and a final summing up comment from the anchor. In the cases where there is no report, the story is merely ‘read off’ by the anchor, and followed by a verbal pause before beginning the next story. The return to the news anchor, or ‘pause’ by the reader, was counted as a separate story, and numbered as a unit for analysis.

As a comment on my approach, I rejected the use of coding for sections of stories as units of analysis, as used by Johnston et al.’s (1992) review of the 1988 Canadian election. In their study of television coverage, they divided each broadcast item into smaller units than the story itself. Each unit dealt with only one subject, mentioned no more than one actor quoted or discussed, and used only one source of information. Units varied in length and thus the length of a unit was a useful variable in its own right. While this approach clearly provided a rich source of data (a total of 518 news stories or items broken down into 5,399 units), this amount of coding was unnecessary for the content analysis review conducted here. Instead, I chose to define a unit as a story in order to correspond with the editorial divisions of the news organizations.

In total, the following data was used for the analysis:

- 102 total news broadcasts from 4 television networks (BCTV, CBC, Global and VTV)
- 341 total units (stories) about the election
- a total of (approximately) 14.5 hours of election news stories
- a total of 600 pages of transcripts. (Transcriptions included verbal transcripts, notes on visual content, and length of segments in seconds).
D. Coding

*Constructing Coding Categories:* Any content analysis research must, to some degree, narrow the focus of the study in order to construct useful and relevant categories for both counting and analyzing the material. In this case, I conducted a content analysis that focused on three areas of interest: story topics, the use of sources, and the news coverage of the parties.

For the first area, that of story topics, I reviewed the categories of topics used in previous studies of Canadian election news. Some of the categories were adopted as relevant for the pilot study to test, and others were identified as relevant to the context of a British Columbian election, either because the topic had been an election issue in previous elections in BC or because the topic had already become a repeated topic in the news leading up to the election. In addition, the coding sheets and protocol included sections to write down the information on the topics as they were coded so as to allow for creating categories and values afterwards. Post-coding categories in this way allows the study to more accurately reflect the actual content of the stories without attempting fit to them into categories that may not apply.

After the initial categories of topics were created they were tested on a small random sample of the transcripts (10%). This first pilot study helped to identify category values or topics that were insufficiently specific, topics that overlapped, and topics that needed to be added or dropped from the design to better reflect provincial issues and BC's political uniqueness. After revisions were made to the coding sheet and protocol, a second pilot study was done on another 10% of the transcribed units using two trained coders. This second pilot study was intended to identify any further difficulties that may be encountered by the coders. It allowed the researcher to define the coding sheets for accuracy and ease of use, to review the inter-codal agreements or disagreements with coding, and to revise the coding protocol to address these problems. The coders kept notes of any questions or inquiries they encountered, which were discussed at regular intervals throughout the coding process. In this way, problems were resolved, precedents were set, and consistency was ensured.

Some of the problems encountered in this process are typical problems in conducting a content analysis. The revision of categories entails identifying where the categories are not working and either amending or collapsing these categories to ensure accuracy and specificity. For example, during the review of the second pilot study, it
became apparent that while on paper, the differences between the topic category of "campaign activity" and "campaign strategy" were clear, it was impossible to code these separately in practice. The coding sheet requested that coders identify what was the primary topic of the story (not the first topic, but the dominant topic). In some cases, one coder identified campaign strategy as the primary theme and campaign activity as the secondary theme, while another coder reversed the order. Upon further examination, it was clear that both categories were often included together, sometimes in the same sentence, in the news story, and separating them was impossible. Thus, the two categories were collapsed into one, defined as simply "campaign". However, I also found that it was more accurate and specific to indicate which campaign was being reported on in the story. Thus, the campaign topic was expanded again to include the list of parties (NDP campaign, Liberal campaign, Green campaign, etc), and by the two most common dual-focused story-lines that emerged (Liberal and NDP campaigns, and NDP and Green campaigns).

Post-coding of some topics was done when it was far too large a group to be included in the "other" category, in order to identify its significance. After the second pilot study the coding sheets and protocols were revised again, and the final results are included here in Appendices B and C. Importantly, and as is apparent from the coding sheets, I retained the open-coding options for the analysis in order to allow for a description of the data without the constraints of pre-conceived categories. Thus, some of the categories were generated from the "data up".

Coding the Items: The complete corpus of material, all 341 story units, was coded by two trained coders using the transcript charts shown in Appendix F, and tested for inter-codal reliability (see below). In addition, each coder repeated the coding of a random sample of 15% of the data again, in order to check for intra-codal reliability. The results of the inter-codal and intra-codal reliability tests are outlined below.

The choice was made to use the transcripts for coding (as opposed to the video tapes) for a number of reasons. First, and most practically, transcripts offer both an ease of use, and improved accuracy, for the coders. A coder can read through the transcripts once, in order to determine the overall dominant topic and sub-topics of the piece, then return again for the purposes of a detailed coding. Material later in the story unit can be checked backed against earlier material, thus providing a more accurate record of the text. Indeed, the coding accuracy, (where relevant, such as the recording of
sources quoted) was higher in textual coding than in visual coding. Second, although television relies to a large extent on visuals, media researchers have noted that it is often the text which is the real story. Herbert Gans described television news as "visual radio" (Gans 1979, 156), and Robinson (1998, 91) argued that it is the text that fundamentally tells the story, and the verbal element that frames and semantically fixes the meaning of the images. While this may be overstating the case, however, the text is clearly important in the interpretation of news.

In order to check that coding from the transcripts and coding directly from the video tapes did not create different results in this case study, 30% of the overall corpus was randomly coded again using the video tapes, to check for consistency between the textual and the visual coding. The only notable difference found between the two methods was in the coding for editorial tone. However, as discussed below, the coding for editorial tone had been noted as unreliable in the inter-codal reliability tests of the coding from transcriptions, and was determined to be a problem with the overall methodology of coding for tone, and not an inconsistency between textual (from transcripts) and visual (from video) coding of the data. Other coding results between the textual and visual coding were found to be reliably consistent, once corrected for empirical mistakes (e.g.: omission of a source quote, coding for leader occurrence when only the party was mentioned).

Reliability Tests: After adopting and revising categories for the research material, procedures were undergone to test the internal validity and reliability of the material. The pilot studies helped to identify problems with application and with reasoning. Coding protocols were established (see Appendix C), defining all of values to be tested. External reliability was assured by using additional coders and comparing results where different. For intercoder reliability, all of the transcript material was coded twice by two different coders and periodically reviewed together to analyze differences and problem-solve categories. As well, both coders re-coded 15% of the material randomly to ensure intra-coder reliability.

In addition, as mentioned above, 30% of the units were coded again by coders using the video material in order to reflect difference in visual tone. Inter-coder and intra-coder reliability for topics was 95% and 96% respectively. The visual coding showed no significant difference in the dominant and secondary topics, the sources, and the party/leader occurrences. Reliability tests are outlined below.
Topics: Initially, inter-coder reliability of topic coding was 56% in the first pilot study. After category adjustments were made, primarily to the campaign topics categories, the reliability increased to 88% in the second pilot study, and was further increased to 95% in the final coding (resulting in a total of 16 of 341 units coded differently by different coders). Intra-coder tests showed a 96% reliability. Among those differences in coding, the only remaining inconsistencies were related to the designation between the primary and secondary or other topics (i.e.: the importance of the topic in the story – primary, secondary, etc). However the topics themselves remained consistent within the stories.

Sources: In the range of five to seven times, a coder missed a source (primarily because it was ambient, interpreted as crowd noise, or merely a mistaken omission due to human error); thus, the inter-coder reliability was almost 99%. Careful review of the material ensured accuracy of this data. The name of source, and his/her affiliation or description was recorded by the coders and categories were created afterwards.

Parties: Differences in determining party focus vs. party mention and leader focus vs. leader mention were related to stories where two or more parties were discussed within the story. Decisions had to be made by the coder as to which parties or leaders could be said to be the “focus” of the story. In most cases, these decisions were easily made, and in some cases the researcher checked and re-coded. Thus, the overall coder reliability for this section was approximately 92%.

Details on Coding Story Topics:

Unlike print media, television news does not always use the ‘inverted pyramid’ principle in news stories. The opening topic may be merely mentioned as a segue towards the main topic of the story. For example, numerous times in the election news, a reporter would begin his or her story with a short (30 second or less) clip on one political party, and then shift to a two minute coverage of a second party. It is clear from this example that the first topic is not the primary topic of the story. Thus, coders were asked to determine the dominant or primary topic of the story after reading and/or viewing the total story at least twice. As the coding protocol sheet outlined, and training sessions with the coders formalized, operationalizing the topic coding required coders to ask the question, what is this story primarily about? In many cases, news stories have a main theme (such as party campaign strategy, or “health care crisis”) that is then “framed” in terms of secondary themes, such as a comparison with another party’s
approach or what the polls say). In this case, these would be coded as the primary topic (health) and secondary topic (polls). As well, additional themes may be part of the story line (i.e.: government credibility in the area) and these should be coded as the third topic. Finally, where additionally topics (either related or unrelated to the dominant story line), were included in the story, coders were asked to list them in writing in the section for additional comments.

As outlined in Chapter 2, the general topic categories divided between what I called campaign-related topics, and issue-related topics: Campaign-related topics were as follows (details of coding instructions in Appendix C):

**Party Campaign Stories:** These included stories primarily about one party, its candidates and leader, and the overall strategy or "performance" of that party in the campaign (such as its standings in the polls). Specifically, they were coded as: **NDP campaign**, Liberal campaign, Green campaign, Unity campaign, Marijuana campaign, and "Other party" campaign. In addition, two categories were created to accommodate the predominance of stories that focused on both the Liberal and NDP campaigns combined, and the NDP and Green campaigns combined. For example, initially, most news stories were about either the Liberal or the NDP campaign; however, as the election period progressed, it was not unusual for a news story to focus on both leading parties and their campaigns equally, and not other parties. In some cases this included comparisons of the two campaigns. Similarly, stories about the NDP and the Green Party became a focus of news stories later on in the campaign, concentrating on the effect the Green Party’s popularity would have on the NDP’s success or failure, or "the split on the left". The "other" category was used for very minor parties such as the Reform party, independents, and 'fringe parties' such as the Rhinos.

**General Campaign stories:** There were two types of stories that could be identified as being about the campaign *in general*. These were the stories coded as poll-results, and stories coded as campaign-general. A story was coded as being about poll-results if it was primarily reporting on the results of a public opinion poll, including a number of professional polls conducted by various news outlets, and any independent polls by the polling companies themselves. It also included "unofficial" polls such as the New Westminster’s Burger Haven “burger poll”, which kept a tally of the sales of burgers named after the competing parties or their leaders. If a story only mentioned poll results as part of the overall discussion it was not considered a story about a poll result. All other stories about the campaign were coded as general campaign stories. This
included, for example, profiles of a specific riding and its candidates (but only if it did not focus on the issues), or about political donations. As well, a number of topic categories were collapsed into this category of general campaign stories because they were only mentioned once or twice. These included: two stories each about political donations and party support, and one story each about the campaign history, and campaign predictions. In addition, a category for "leadership" was initially included based on categories borrowed from federal election studies. However, in this study there were no stories coded as being primarily about "leadership", and only one story mentioned leadership at all. Thus, it was collapsed into the general campaign category.

Specific Campaign Stories: Two types of stories were found to be related to specific campaign events. The first was the candidate scandal or gaffe. These were stories about a candidate’s gaffe or strategic error, or a scandal regarding a specific candidate. The two predominant gaffe stories throughout the campaign were about Liberal candidate Daniel Lee (for alleged inappropriate behaviour as a Vancouver City Councillor, being absent from campaign debates and events in the riding, and contradicting party policy) and NDP Forest Minister Gordon Wilson (for alleged inappropriate behaviour concerning a timber license sale). The second type of specific campaign stories was about leaders’ debates. There were two leaders’ debates in the campaign. The first was a BCTV television debate between four leaders: the Liberal, the New Democrat, Green Party and Unity Party leaders. The second was a CKNW radio debate on the Rafe Mair show, and only included the Liberal and the NDP leader.

Government and Party Record: Another type of campaign story focused on the government or party history or record. If a story focused on the government/party record or policy as part of a review of an issue, it would have been included as an “issue” story rather than here as a campaign story. Campaign related stories that were coded as being about a government/party record, focused on the list of “scandals” (such as the fast ferries, the “fudget budgets” and the Premier’s resignation) and did not offer any substantive or evaluative analysis of the issues that led to the scandal, nor explored the scandal itself in any detail. Indeed, in practice, these stories were mostly a summary of the list of scandals about the government, and represented the “record of incompetence and scandal”. Thus, in every single case, government record stories were campaign stories. For the purpose of symmetry, I included a category for the Liberal record, however this was not a primary issue in any story.
Issue-related topics were also developed through the two pilots and a final post-coding and collapsing of the issues was done. The following list represents the majority of issue topic categories developed through the process:

**Health**: Stories that focused on health issues included anything to do with the health care system in BC, and what the party policies or campaign promises suggested. Health care had become an increasingly important public policy issue in Canada over the last decade, and strains on the BC system were showing. In addition, during the election period, there was a breakdown in contract negotiations between the hospital employers and the nurses union, resulting in demonstrations and job action on the part of the nurses. Often the nurses dispute was the lead story on the evening news, and shown separately from the election news. While these stories no doubt had an impact on the framing of election issues they were not included in this data as election stories unless they overtly discussed the election -- only stories that were specifically about the election in relation to health issues were included. As the nurses’ controversy progressed, the Premier and the Leader of the opposition made comments about the ‘nursing crisis’, and these stories were included as election stories.

**Taxes, tax policy and tax cuts**: The BC Liberals, under leader Gordon Campbell, had made tax cuts a major campaign plank leading up to this election, following in the footsteps of the Ontario Reform and federal Alliance policies. The media had already adopted the issues as dominant ones before the campaign started, and the NDP responded during the election period by criticising the tax cut plan. Any stories about tax cuts in relation to the election were included here.

**Forestry** is the largest industry in the province, and the source of many contentious public debates over the last three provincial elections. Thus, there was an assumption that there would be a number of issue stories about the forestry industry.

**Aboriginal issues**: The NDP had made an election promise in 1991 to begin treaty negotiations with the First Nations, and had a record of attempting to solve land claims and treaty issues. There was growing concern from some First Nations that the government approach to treaty negotiations was too slow. On the other hand, the Liberals had promised, as part of their campaign platform, to conduct a public referendum on treaty negotiation principles. This promise angered aboriginal people and human rights experts alike. Thus, there was a possibility that aboriginal treaties would play a role in the campaign.
The category of government spending was used to catch stories about how the provincial government spends its money. In particular, the money the incumbent government spent on a project to build fast ferries in the province became a public scandal that had been in the media for over a year before the election, and while it warranted its own category, was not as prominent as expected. As a controversial subject, it was expected that the media and the opposition party would spend some time on this issue as either a review of the scandal's particulars, or creating solutions to the ferry problem (the need for more boats) as a discussion or campaign issue.

Government integrity: This category, alternatively referred to in some election studies as “honesty in government”, was a secondary topic in a number of stories, but not a primary topic in any. However, as mentioned above, the issue of the government record did appear a number of times as a campaign issue. Related to governing, the electoral process itself occurred as the primary topic in one story, due in part to the increasing prominence of the Green party and one of their key campaign promises to reform the electoral process.

Other topics were also coded. The NDP made ICBC a minor campaign issue by claiming the provincial Liberals would privatise auto insurance. Tourism was BC's second largest industry and thus was expected to garner some attention during the election. The third largest industry in BC was fishing, and fish stock and regulation was a pivotal issue for coastal communities, and had been the focus of federal/provincial disputes, land claims disputes. Agriculture, as BC's fourth industry in terms of gross product and sales, had been part of a provincial public debate primarily related to urban encroachment, environmental concerns, and marketing. Mining and exploration, while not as big an industry as forestry, had been an environmental and economic issue for some time, and oil and gas exploration had been a major and contentious issue in the north west of the province, and one where the parties had different perspectives. The NDP had placed a moratorium on oil and gas exploration in the early 1990s due to environmental concerns about the development, and representatives of the oil and gas industry, and some business interest in the north-west, had been pressuring the New Democratic government to remove the moratorium, while environmental and First Nations groups supported it. Other than these specific industry and economic stories, there were a collection of stories coded as about the economy in general, he latter story focused on the general economy of the north coast region.
As well, a number of issues were given some minor, yet specific attention. There was one story focused on the real estate business, overtly suggesting that a potential real estate boom was likely once a "change in government" created more economic optimism. Two stories talked about the provincial hydro company (BC Hydro) after the NDP accused the Liberals of planning to privatise it. Not a single story focused on employment as a primary topic; however it was alluded to in a number of stories. As well, while the issue of the state of the roads and other transportation structures also did not appear as a primary topic, it did appear as a secondary topic in one story. Education as an election topic included all aspects of education, from public school to post secondary, showed up three times as the focus of a story. The environment had been a major issue in previous elections, however it was coded as a primary story topic only once.

Social issues included poverty, which had recently been a major issue in the Vancouver municipal campaign occurred as a focus of two stories. Gambling was raised as the focus of an election story once, and had been a controversial issue during the NDP's reign. And, while not a major election issue, the misfortunes of condo-owners in Vancouver and Victoria because of poor construction was raised by advocates a few times during the election (coded as "leaky condos"). The issues of service to the disabled appeared as a secondary topic brought up by a member of the public, and funding for the arts was discussed only as a secondary topic, and again, only in relation to a question by a citizen about government spending in the arts.

Interestingly, crime topics, sometimes referred to as law and order stories, is a common category used for research into election topics. However in this case there were no stories where this was the primary topic.

Any topics that did not fit into the categories above were coded as "other".

Collecting Data on Sources:

For the purposes of this study, a "source" was defined as a person who was directly quoted, both seen and heard speaking in the story, i.e.: an actuality clip. Sources included people on the street (vox pop), people in crowds, interviews, scrums, and quotes from press conferences. While recognizing that much source use in the construction of a news story is unattributed, accounting for these non-quoted sources was outside the scope of this content analysis. However, where a non-quoted source was identified by the reporter or anchor and the source information (such as a report or
press release) formed the basis of the story, this was coded as a “non-quoted reference”. Some story units had no sources, and some had as many as fifteen.

Types of sources. Every time a source was quoted information was collected through a number of methods. Briefly, each source identity was recorded, including the source’s name (if available), and was coded as a source type that would indicate his or her affiliation or identification by the news cast, (a descriptor of the source, for e.g.: student, Liberal candidate, hospital representative).

In some cases the more descriptive categories used by the coders was collapsed into generic types for the purposes of statistical analysis. For example, a source identified by the coder (and the story itself) as an “HEU spokesman” was coded in the category of “union leader”. Other times, a decision was made to code a representative in the “other category” if it was difficult to determine the nature of his or her affiliation. For example, a representative of the gay and lesbian magazine “Xtra West” was used as a representative of the gay community, and was interviewed about the two gay candidates running in Vancouver’s West end. This source could be coded as a “journalist”, or as a “gay man”; however, his reason for being quoted was because he was seen as a representative of the gay community. Since he was the only person used in the whole data-base as representing the gay community, (other than the gay candidates), it did not warrant adding a category for “gay representative”. Thus, he was simply coded as “other”.

Other source types were included in the data base with as much detail as possible, and then further collapsed into meta-types. For example, there were a number of industry and business sources that were identified as, for example, forestry managers, mining representatives, business people, insurance representative, etc, that were then further collapsed into the category of “business”. Similarly, there were a number of categories such as different kinds of political analysts that were divided as party pundits, neutral pundits and university professors, who were further collapsed into the meta-category of “pundit”. This allowed further recognition of patterns of source use by the media. These meta-types were then further compiled into the broader categories of “political actors”, “representatives”, “experts”, “individuals” and “other”. See Appendix D for a total list of source “types” and their categories.
Number and Length of quote: Every person or "actor" quoted in a story was coded in the order she or he first appeared in that news item, and was counted as one source, regardless of how many times she or he was quoted in that item. Thus, the source counts used in the analysis represent each separate source in the item, not the number of quotes themselves, and only refer to the sources actually quoted, not those paraphrased by reporters. In addition, each quote was timed, and the amount of time devoted to quoting sources was calculated. Thus, the average length of quotes in all stories could be calculated, as could the length of time devoted to quotes in those stories that were coded as "news" stories only. In other words, quote lengths could be calculated a second time once the stories that were coded as "feature interviews" or "analysis" were removed, in order to see if there was a significant difference in the amount of time devoted to source quotes used for news stories compared to other types of longer, in-depth stories. Feature interviews could be excluded since they have their own style involving a reporter (or anchor) and the interviewee in a long conversation. The analysis stories were interviews with panels, usually political panels, analysing the election.

The length of the quote was recorded in seconds using a VCR as the timing instrumentation. The same VRC instrument was used for all times. Note that all time calculations in this study are approximate only, since the taping equipment only measured to the closest second, not to the more technically accurate tenth of a second. However, it remains a useful approximation of quote time, especially in relation to other variables, such as overall story time and percentages of time spent on topics. The purpose of the timing was to get a sense of any patterns or large-scale differences in the length of time the news media devoted to certain types of sources, the topics they discussed, and the parties they represented or supported.

Substantive and non-substantive quotes: For the purposes of analysis, the source quotes were divided into two types of quotes, substantive and non-substantive quotes, and the frequency and length of each was documented. This distinction between these two quote types was included in the design in order to explore the use and frequency of non-substantive quotes. Thus, as well as having a total length of the source quoted in any one story, or for the whole population of stories, the data would also provide an indication of what percentage of this had substantive content.
A *non-substantive* quote was defined as one where the quote was used for creating *ambience* or for *representing* the person, tone or situation of a story, but contained no substantive content. An example of an ambient quote is a receptionist answering the phone and saying "hello, the Fraser Institute" in order to create the ambient noise in preparation for an interview with an institute researcher. An example of a *representative* quote is archival footage of Glen Clark on 1996 election night saying "was that close or what?" to represent the 1996 election win by the New Democrats. Another example of a representative quote is Gordon Campbell stepping out of his campaign bus and shouting to a cheering crowd "hello everyone". In this case, the quote is used to represent the Liberal leader’s actions, and set the stage for a story on the tour activities that day. Sometimes a question from the audience at an all-candidates meeting that was not followed up by the candidate’s answer was considered representative because it is representing the event, and not highlighting the content of the question. Another example was a candidate saying hello to people on the street and asking if they want a brochure. While I make the distinction here, in my quantitative analysis I did not distinguish between ambient and representative quotes in the coding. Instead, I coded them both in the category of "non-substantive quote".

A *substantive* quote was defined as one where there was identifiable content in the quote, regardless of how short the quote may have been. The numerous examples of Gordon Campbell at a rally stating “a whole new era of hope and prosperity” is considered a substantive quote because it contains the liberals’ key campaign message. Another example of someone on the street shouting “out with the NDP” to the New Democrat premier while campaigning in Chinatown, is coded as substantive because it indicates a party preference from a person on the street. Other, and more obvious, substantive quotes include those taken from speeches, interviews, news conferences, scrums, archival quotes, or party rallies where the source was making a comment or responding to a question.

While the distinction between these two quote types was made for the collection of the source data, in the end, this distinction was not significant. Non-substantive quotes accounted for less than 1% of the overall quote time, and 6.5% of the total number of quotes. Therefore, this distinction between quote types was determined to be minor and was not included in the analysis summaries.
Source Tone: Each source quote was coded for its overall party tone, and categorized as either positive or negative tone towards a party, or n/a (not apparent) if there was no overt partisan comment. Party tone was defined as a quote that explicitly commented on, either positively or negatively, a party or its leader. For example, if a person was quoted speaking negatively about the Liberal party or one of its candidates or platform positions, that quote was coded as "negative Liberal". This was the case whether the person was a Liberal supporter, a supporter of another party, or non-partisan. If the same person, however, was quoted saying something positive about his/her own party, for example the NDP, then this quote would be quoted as "positive NDP". In many cases, individuals were quoted saying who they were voting for, or, more commonly who they were voting against, and were coded appropriately. However, many of the quotes, such as those about issues, were not explicit in their partisan preference, and these were coded as "n/a" for "not apparent". Importantly these quotes were coded as n/a even if the topic under discussion was one that could be interpreted as favourable or unfavourable to one party or another.

Source Quote Length: Every quote was recorded and timed. A calculation was made as to the total length of quotes, the average length of quotes, and the average length of quote by the source categories (political actor, expert, representative, individual, other). While running these calculations, 15 seconds in quote time of the total 18,711, was lost. As this represented a mere .08 percent of the total source time, further efforts to find the error were abandoned.

Party Coverage: Each story unit was coded as to the political parties that were present and absent, as well as which parties were the story 'focus' as opposed to just 'mentioned'. More than one party could be coded as a focus. The same method was used for party leaders.

E. Data Analysis

Once coded, and discrepancies accounted for, all of the data was entered into SPSS software program for statistical analysis. Analysis and interpretation of the results focused on descriptive comparisons (differences and similarities) of the coverage of the election and looked for identifiable trends and patterns of coverage both overall and by network. The results form substantial parts of Chapters 3, 4 and 5.
F. Addendum: Coding for Story Tone:

While this study was originally designed to code for political tone, as defined as a positive or negative tone for the political parties, a number of coding difficulties arose that resulted in the rejection of the data and the results. In particular, there are two methodology issues when coding for political tone that were not adequately accounted for in this study, making the results unreliable. These difficulties are worth outlining here.

First, coding for political tone has a problem of coder bias. To resolve the potential for coder partisan bias, studies have utilized a large number of coders that have been chosen in order to balance their political partisanship. For example, in Nevitte et al. (2000), a large group of coders was chosen (32), with equal numbers of men and women, and equal numbers from those who supported the different parties; non-voters were also included. The coders evaluated each story on a three-point scale, identifying whether a party treatment was favourable (+1), neutral (0) or positive (-1) towards a party. Once the scores were aggregated the researchers suggested the partisan influences would tend to cancel each other out. In this way the researchers were attempting to compensate for unconscious partisan bias and different 'readings' of the story. Since there were only two coders used for the total data in this case study, (and a third for a random sample of the data), it was difficult to compensate for partisan bias. While the inter-codal and intra-codal reliability checks indicated a 79% and 81% reliability, (not as high as the other reliability tests, but still adequate for drawing inferences) the reliability tests themselves could not account for unconscious partisan bias or interpretation on the part of the coders. Although for many studies this was considered an adequate methodology, I was persuaded by Nevitte et al.'s discussion that a more rigorous methodology was necessary for reliable and valid results.

A second issue in coding news stories for political tone is the problem of definition. Even taking into consideration the efforts to compensate for partisan differences in coders, the actual content of the story was not analyzed for the source of what may lead to differential interpretations of party treatment; in effect, this could be a result of story selection, not of tone. For example, in this case study, there was a large number of stories about the NDP campaign compared to the Liberal campaign. While the news reports may have themselves been accurate and neutral, (the campaign itself was, at times, lacking in momentum), it is the selection of this type of story about the New Democrats' that could result in it being coded as negative. This demonstrates a
difficulty with analyzing the results of tone coding. Without designing a study that makes a distinction between stories whose topics could be interpreted as negative for a party (regardless of the treatment within the story), and stories whose actual treatment of a topic warrants an evaluative rating, it is impossible to tell to which of these factors the coders are responding.

Because of these two difficulties in methodological rigor, I chose to discard the findings for political tone in this study.
Appendix B: Sample Coding Sheet (as given to coders)

Coded Sheet – Election News Project (K. Cross)

Coder: ___________________ Coded date: ___________________

Story (Unit) (Code each story/unit by number)
1. Network (check one): □ BCTV (01) □ CBC (02) □ Global (03) □ VTV (04)
2. Date: ____________________
3. Story# (in newscast – as identified on data sheet): __________
4. Additional Data Comments (e.g.: CBC after hockey, CTV 11pm): ______________
5. Type of Story:
   □ news (campaign activities, leader’s tours, polls, etc) (01)
   □ background (historical info or profiles) (02)
   □ news analysis (pundits, reporters, panels) (03)
   □ interview (feature interview) (04)
   □ internal ad (plug for special coverage or website) (05)
   □ feature (06)
   □ regular feature (07)
   □ other: __________________________ (99)

6. Key Themes/Topics
   a) Primary Theme/Topic (state in your own words, or title given by network) and then use code below to categorize.
   __________________________

   b) Secondary Theme/Topic
   __________________________

   c) Third Theme/Topic (if applicable)
   __________________________

   d) Other themes/Topic (if applicable)
   __________________________

List of general themes

□ Health (01) □ Leaky Condo (36) □ Lib & NDP camp (29)
□ Education (02) □ Gambling (37) □ NDP & green camp (40)
□ Ferries (03) □ Agriculture (38) □ Campaign general (26)
□ Tax Cuts (04) □ Real Estate (39) □ Campaign history (27)
□ Forestry (05) □ Transportation (51) □ Campaign predictions (28)
□ Mining (06) □ Arts (52) □ Party support (22)
□ Environment (07) □ Disability (53) □ Poll results (20)
□ Aboriginal Issues (08) □ Government integrity (54) □ Leadership (21)
□ Fishing (09) □ Govt. spending (12) □ Leader’s debates (41)
□ Employment (10) □ Crime (law & order) (13) □ Government record (23)
□ Economy – general (11) □ Liberal Campaign (14) □ Liberal record (24)
□ Hydro (31) □ NDP campaign (15) □ Candidate scandal/gaffe (25)
□ ICBC (32) □ Green Campaign (16) □ Political donations (30)
□ Oil & gas (33) □ Unity Campaign (17) □ 
□ Poverty (34) □ Marijuana Campaign (18) □ Other (state): (99)
□ Electoral process (35) □ Other campaign (19) □ 

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7. Sources/Actors

a) First Source (name and affiliation, if avail.):

b) Second Source (name and affiliation, if avail.):

c) Third Source (name and affiliation if avail):

All other sources and any comments.

Categories of sources:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politicians:</th>
<th>Individuals:</th>
<th>Experts:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal candidate (01)</td>
<td>employee, general (28)</td>
<td>Pollsters (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal leader (07)</td>
<td>employee on strike (46)</td>
<td>Party pundits (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal worker/supporter (13)</td>
<td>forestry employee (39)</td>
<td>Neutral pundits (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP candidate (02)</td>
<td>forestry manager/owner (40)</td>
<td>University professors (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP leader (08)</td>
<td>other managers/owners (29)</td>
<td>Other Journalists (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP worker/supporter (14)</td>
<td>nurses -not on strike. (32)</td>
<td>Researcher non-affiliated (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Candidate (03)</td>
<td>other health care workers (34)</td>
<td>Other experts (25) (65?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Leader (09)</td>
<td>Patients and family (35)</td>
<td>Report Reference (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green worker/supporter (15)</td>
<td>Students (36)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity candidate (04)</td>
<td>Teachers (37)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity leader (10)</td>
<td>Parents (38)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity worker/supporter (16)</td>
<td>Landlord (43)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana candidate (05)</td>
<td>Tenant (44)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana leader (11)</td>
<td>Mining manager (66)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana worker/supporter (17)</td>
<td>Other business person (60)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other candidate (06)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other leader (12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other worker/supporter (18)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-party leaders (26)</td>
<td>Streeters/vox pop (27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-candidates (20)</td>
<td>Aboriginal Person (59)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/regional politician (47)</td>
<td>Protestor (67)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal politician (48)</td>
<td>Mother/wife (61)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father/husband (62)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Advertisements

| NDP ad (63) | Lib ad (64) | Other ad (56) |

"Experts":

| Business Rep (30) | Union rep (31) |
| Doctors & doctors reps (33) | Environmentalist (41) |
| Community rep (42) | Public health authority (45) |
| Education official (67) | First Nations Rep (58) |
| Fed/city official (52) | Provincial official (53) |
| Hospital Rep (66) | NGO – RW or business (57) |
| NGO – LW or community (51) | |
| All other sources (54) |
8. Party Coverage

a) Story focus (if applicable). Check all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary party Focus</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Liberal</td>
<td>□ Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ NDP</td>
<td>□ NDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Green</td>
<td>□ Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Unity</td>
<td>□ Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Marijuana</td>
<td>□ Marijuana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Other (specify)</td>
<td>□ Other (specify)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) Leaders: Note if party leaders are in the story, and to what extent. Check all that apply.

- Campbell (L) □ Story Focus □ Mention
- Dosanjh (NDP) □ Story Focus □ Mention
- Carr (G) □ Story Focus □ Mention
- Delaney (U) □ Story Focus □ Mention
- Taylor (M) □ Story Focus □ Mention
- Other (state) □ Story Focus □ Mention

b) Other Comments about party coverage?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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Appendix C: Coding Protocols  (as given to coders).

Coding Protocol – Election News project. Kathleen Cross. SFU.

**Story (Unit):** Each unit has a unique number, pre-coded by the researcher. They are based on a division of what might be understood as a single "story" or item in a newscast. Enter the item number in the space provided.

**Coder:** This variable will be completed (not coded) with initials of the individual doing the coding.

**Coder Date:** Enter the date the item was coded.

1. **Network:** check the appropriate box for the network the unit was broadcast on.
2. **Date:** List the date of the newscast story, not the date of coding.
3. **Story#:** This indicates where in the newscast the story occurred. This has been pre-coded by the researcher on the transcript sheets, and should be included here.
4. **Additional Data Comments:** this is for any comments concerning unusual or anomalous info about the data as noted on the data sheets. (e.g.: "CBC after hockey" indicates the news broadcast was not at 6pm, but that CBC ran the broadcast after the hockey game. Another example: if the broadcast was 11pm, rather than the usual 6pm broadcast). This is not a coding, but a coder’s comments about the broadcast, story #, etc.

5. **Type of Story: Code (check) only one.**
   - **News** (campaign activities, leader’s tours, polls, etc): Code as a news item if a story unit covers the activities of the election, party announcements, a look at an issue, a candidate or a riding, a series of public opinion "streeters" (vox pop), issues, or other common “news” stories. For example, an overview of the leader’s tours or a review of forestry-related issues would be a news item.
   - **Feature/profile:** A feature story is usually less time-bound to a particular event. In this case, a story would be coded as a feature if it focuses on one candidate, party or issue exclusively and includes background information and is not strictly news related or time bound. Features are usually longer stories (more than 4 minutes). These items are not as concerned about “balance” as they are intended to highlight certain aspects of an issue/campaign. As an example, a story that gave an in-depth review of the background and activities of Adriane Carr, the leader of the Green party, it would be considered a feature. However, if the unit merely highlighted her activities of the day, it would be considered a news item.
   - **Regular Feature:** Where a network has a repeated and named story, such as a regular “talk-booth” or “you asked” type of feature. Regular features are always named, and usually have the same reporter each time. The exception to this is if the regular feature is a news analysis, such as a panel of pundits, see next category.
   - **News analysis** (pundits, reporters, panels): If the unit is primarily reporters or other "experts” (political analysts, past politicians, etc) talking about the campaign, its strategic meaning, or an analysis of historical and present positions of parties or government, this would be coded as analysis. If a unit is a regular feature panel discussion by pundits, for example, it would still be coded it as analysis, to reflect the content.
**Background** (historical info or facts): If the story unit looks at historical positions, personalities, current facts, or background on issues, without mentioning current activities or providing analysis, it would be considered background. An example is a look at previous election statistics, or the number of eligible voters in BC.

**Interview** (feature interview): An uninterrupted interview by a reporter with one person (ie; a candidate or a pundit). Feature interviews are usually of the party leaders, or pundits, and live or in a planned setting. Snippets or short quotes from a formal interview would not be considered a feature. In interviews the interviewee is allowed to speak at length.

**Internal ad** (plug for special coverage or website): These are usually short “plugs” for upcoming stories, specials or analysis on that network. Most of these have been left out of the coding, but some may still be in there.

**Other:** All other types that do not fit above.

6. **Topics: Defining Primary Topics, Secondary topics, other topics.**

The coding sheet has four sections for topics: primary, secondary, third topic and other topics. It is important that the coder only add a second, third or more topics if it is clearly present as a story topic as opposed to simply a mention. The primary topic is the one that the coder considers the major or dominant topic of the story. Ask the question, what is this story about? The primary topic may not be the first topic in the story but is the most dominant. In many cases news stories have a main theme (such as party campaign strategy, or “health care crisis”) that is then “framed” in terms of secondary themes, such as a comparison with another party’s approach or what the polls say). In this case, these would be coded as the primary topic (health) and secondary topic (polls). In the story, additional themes may be part of the story line (i.e.: government credibility in the area) and these should be coded as the third topic. And finally, where additionally topics, either related or unrelated to the story line, are included in the story, these should be listed in writing in the section for additional comments. There are two steps to documenting the topics for each unit, outlined below.

**Step one: Put the topic in your own words:** At first, do not code the topic. Instead, the coder is to write what their perception of the topic in their own words. The exception to this case would be if the network has indicated a title for the story (in text in the image) in which case the coder would include this title with quotation marks and if applicable a further comment. For example, a story about the NDP campaign which has the title “race for second place” the coder would write the networks title in quotation marks and add the comment “NDP campaign.”

**Step two: code the topic using the General Categories provided:** There are a number of categories of stories provided. The coder needs to indicate which of the general categories each of these topics is included in. Feel free to use “other” if the unit does not fit easily into any of the categories offered. Be specific about your coding choice if you identify “other” category in order to review for potential additions to the coding protocol.
General categories: There are two sets of general categories. The first is focused on issues and the second set on the processes of the campaign. Each of these topics is outlined below:

Issue topics:
Aboriginal Issues: This topic would be coded for stories that the media has covered as concerning aboriginal people, such as housing on reserves or land claims treaties. If the unit focuses on an aboriginal person as a expert, a candidate or a representation of an aboriginal person, but does not discuss aboriginal issues, it would not be coded here.
Agriculture: Include stories about farming, and the agricultural industry.
Arts: Include stories about arts funding and the arts industry (visual art, music, theatre, etc).
Crime (law and order): Include stories about legal issues, court cases, crime.
Disability: Include stories about opportunities for disable people, funding for disability services, etc.
Economy – general: Include if the specific topic is not included in this list. For example, a story about the economic situation in a forestry community the story topic would be “forestry”. However, if the story is about the economic situation in a community in general, or about the economy of the province, code it here.
Education: Include stories about k-12 and post-secondary education, including funding, student concerns, teachers, parents of students, schools and universities.
Electoral Process: This would include stories about issues such as proportional representation and fixed election dates, as well more practical stories about where to vote and advance polling information.
Employment: Including unemployment, loss of employment, etc.
Environment: Stories about environmental concerns, including air, land and water pollution, sustainable resource extraction (fishing, forestry, mining) and other environmental concerns.
Fishing: Stories about the fishing industry and fishing stocks in BC.
Ferries: Stories about funding to and services from BC Ferries, the fast ferry scandal, and routes and fees.
Forestry: Stories about the forestry industry, either in general or specific forestry companies.
Gambling: Stories about gambling (sometimes referred to as "gaming") issues, whether about the industry (expanding gambling) or social issues such as the results of gambling addictions.
Govt. Integrity: Stories that talk about the voter's trust in governments.
Govt. spending: Stories that focus or comment on government budgets, past present and future, as well as spending on specific issues.
Health: All aspects of health care, from nurses job action, doctor's demands, patients experiences and the costs and expenditures on health care.
Hydro: Stories about BC hydro in particular as well as hydro services or access in general, and privatization.
ICBC: Stories about the auto insurance services ICBC and privatizing the service.
Leaky condos: Stories about the results of the leaky condo crisis and resident's costs and election demands.
Mining: Stories about mining, including proposed mines, exploration, specific companies.

Oil and gas: Stories about oil and gas exploration, party promises, industry predictions, etc.

Poverty: Including street people, general statistics and specific examples.

Real Estate: Stories about the industry, housing starts and sales, and predictions.

Taxes: Stories about tax policy, tax cuts, comparable taxation.

Transportation: Stories about roads and highways, and other transportation services except ferries.

Other: Specify in your own words what the story category could be if it does not fit with any of the above issue topics.

Campaign topics:

Liberal campaign: Stories about Liberal campaign strategy, campaign activities, supporters, candidates, endorsements and the leader's tour.

NPD campaign: Stories about New Democrats' campaign strategy, campaign activities, supporters, candidates, endorsements and the leader's tour.

Lib & NDP campaign: Stories that talk about both the Liberal and the NDP campaigns, including strategy, campaign activities, supporters, candidates, endorsements and the leader's tours.

Green Campaign: Stories about Green Party campaign strategy, campaign activities, supporters, candidates, endorsements and the leader's tour.

NDP & Green campaign (left split): Stories about the both NDP and the Green Party, including campaign strategies, campaign activities, supporters, candidates, endorsements and the leader's tours, as well as the split on the left and the "race for second place" stories.

Unity campaign: Stories about Unity campaign strategy, campaign activities, supporters, candidates, endorsements and the leader's tour.

Marijuana campaign: Stories about Marijuana Party campaign strategy, campaign activities, supporters, candidates, endorsements and the leader's tour.

"Other" campaign: Stories about campaigns by independents and other parties (eg: Socred, Rhino) not included above. Includes stories about the party campaign strategy, campaign activities, supporters, candidates, endorsements and the leader's tour.

Campaign history: Stories about previous campaigns and elections.

Campaign predictions: Stories that focus on predictions for the results of the upcoming election.

Candidate scandal/gaffe: Stories about a specific candidate's mistake, scandal or "gaffe" regardless of the topic of the gaffe.

Govt. record: Stories about the NDP record in government.

Liberal record: stories about the Liberal party while in opposition, its policies and strategies.

Poll results: Results of all polls, including public opinion surveys and "straw polls" of unofficial polls.

Leadership: Stories that talk about the leadership abilities and skills of the leader.

Party support: Non-poll stories about general or specific support for parties, endorsements, etc, when more than one party is included.

Leader's debates: Stories about all organized debates between leaders.
Campaign-general: Stories about aspects of the campaign not covered by other topics here. This would include candidate or riding profiles, costs of promises, political ads and signs, costs of campaign promises, and voter apathy.

7. Sources or story "actors": Identify the name and affiliation as given in the story. Don’t worry about spelling. Then, indicate which of the following category they fall into:

Candidates & Leaders: Indicate the party and if it is the leader.
Ex-candidates and ex-leaders: Include the party name.
Other party people: Include party workers and supporters and which party.
Non-party groups: Indicate if this is a spokesperson of an organization or groups, or a “representative” of a professional group or specialized interest. Examples include union representatives, doctors, student groups, environmental representatives, forestry workers, etc.
Commentators: Someone who is commenting on a topic as some kind of “expert” either because of their affiliation (a party pundit) or their expertise in the area (political journalist, pollster, or professor of political science).
Public: Someone who is commenting on the campaign or issue as a general member of the public. They are usually not identified by name, interviewed in a public place (on the street or at a café) or working at a job. They represent the ‘voice of the public’ or vox pop. In some cases the person is named but represented as a student, parent, patient, family of a patient, shopper, tenant, etc. Indicate how the person is represented by the newscast.
Other: Anyone who does not fit within the above. Identify. This may include, for example, a public official, a federal politician, or a think-tank representative. It is important to identify the representative as identified in the news-cast.

Additional comments?: Use this area for any comments you have about the source that is not caught by the above descriptions.

8. Party Coverage

Story focus (if applicable). Each party will be coded as to whether they are focus of the story unit, just mentioned, or altogether absent. There may be more than one party focus if the unit gives equitable attention to more than one party, and there may be multiple “mentions”.

Leaders: Each party leader will be coded as to whether they are the focus of the story, mentioned, or absent. There can be more than one focus if the unit gives equitable attention to more than one leader, and there may be multiple "mentions”.

Other Comments about party coverage?: Any other comments you wish to make about the party coverage. For example, if the negative tone is related to a specific candidate as opposed to the whole party, the party maybe coded as negative tone, however the coder should mention this in the comments section for post-coding and analysis purposes.
Appendix D: Final List of Source Categories and Types

1. **Source Category: Political Actor.** All quoted sources who were presented as being affiliated with a political party. They included the following source types:
   - Liberal candidate
   - Liberal Leader
   - Liberal party worker/supporter
   - Liberal Ad
   - NDP candidate
   - NDP leader
   - NDP worker/supporter
   - NDP Ad
   - Green candidate
   - Green leader
   - Green party worker/supporter
   - Green Ad
   - Unity candidate
   - Unity leader
   - Unity worker/supporter
   - Marijuana candidate
   - Marijuana leader
   - Marijuana worker/supporter
   - "Other" party candidate
   - "Other" party leader
   - "Other" party worker/supporter
   - Ex candidates, any party
   - Ex-leader, any party
   - Municipal politician
   - Federal politician

2. **Source Category: Representative.** All quoted sources who were quoted as "representatives" of an organization, industry, or institution. They included the following source types:
   - City Official
   - Provincial Official
   - Federal Official
   - Public Health Authority
   - Hospital Official
   - Doctors' Representative
   - Nurses Representative
   - School Official
   - Environmental Representative
   - Community Representative
   - Non-government Organization (NGO)
   - NGO Advertisement
   - Business Representative
   - Union Representative
   - First Nations/Aboriginal Representative

3. **Source Category: Expert.** All quoted sources who were included in the news story because of their "expertise" on a topic. They included the following source types:
   - Pollster
   - University Professor
   - Researcher – unaffiliated
   - Think Tank (right wing)
   - Think Tank (left wing)
   - Neutral Pundit (political commentator)
   - Party Pundit
   - Other journalist (used as an expert)
   - Other expert

4. **Source Category: Individual.** All quoted sources from those who were not identified, or who were identified without an indication of their affiliation to a party, organization, institution or having no particular expertise except as individuals and/or voters.
   - Employee
   - Employee – forestry
   - Employee - on strike
   - Business owner
   - Manager/owner - forestry
   - Landlord
   - Tenant
   - Protester (unaffiliated)
   - Nurse (unaffiliated)
   - Doctor (unaffiliated)
   - Patients and Families
   - Student
   - Vox pop/audience member
   - Mother/wife
   - Father/husband
   - Aboriginal Person

Note: This list of source categories was modified from the code sheet for the following reasons: to more accurately reflect the sources used; to better identify the source identifications; and to combine into appropriate categories for analysis.
Appendix E: Transcripts from Feature Interviews with Party Leaders.

1) BCTV: 18:04:01. 6pm news.

3rd Story – Feature Interviews with Campbell and Dosanjh

Dosanjh Interview
37:56 – 38:15
_Dual head shot, Tony Parson and UD._
Tony Parsons: Now, let's hear from the leaders themselves. Live tonight beginning with premier UD outside his constituency office in Vancouver. Mr. D, a lot of people are saying you should be admitting you can't win; you should be trying to convince voters that a strong NDP opposition is in their best interests. Aren't you worried that by insisting that you CAN win you simply look like you're out of touch with us?

38:16 - :45
Ujjal Dosanjh: No, I've said very clearly that we're the underdogs in BC. I'm going into this election campaign as an underdog, and I want to make sure the issues are decided. And those issues are, what comes first. Whether it's a dramatic tax cut or improved health care, improved education, and a protected environment. And I believe that once we are able to debate those issues, we'll do better than forecasters say, but we are the underdogs in this campaign, I recognize that.

38:46 - :56
TP: you say underdog, and this afternoon you compared yourself to David taking on Goliath, and then someone asked what your rock was for your sling and you didn't have an answer. So how do you plan to defeat the giant?

38:57 – 39:35
UD: Well you know I think it's important that we are able to deal with these issues in an absolutely honest, open and forthright fashion. Governments, within the context of fiscal balance, has to make decisions about what comes first. And I've said very clearly, for me, improved health care, improved education, protected environment, they come first. For my chief opponent, dramatic tax cut comes first. For me, if dramatic tax cuts weakens health care, weakens education, weakens the protection of the environment that British Columbians want, obviously that's not for us.

39:36 - :45
TP: So you say you want to win this campaign on the issues. The fact is though voters are having trouble getting past the issue of a disastrous record of the NDP, how do you overcome that in a campaign?

39:46 - 40:26
UD: well there's no question that we've made mistakes. There was the fast ferry. Now there is the surplus. And we need to move on. Elections are about record. But elections are also about the future choices. And I want to make sure that Mr. Campbell's record as the provincial political leader for the last eight years, and my record as the premier for the last year, and our record of the last ten years. I'd be happy to debate that, I have no difficulties whatsoever. But elections
are much more about the future than about the past. And whether or not you ask for dramatic
tax cuts that weakens health care, weakens education or weakens the protection of the
environment, these are issues about the future not about the past.

Campbell Interview
40:27 - :45
Dual head shots, TP: and GC.
TP: Okay Mr. Dosanjh. Thank you very much. Now lets go over to Victoria where Liberal Leaders
Gordon Campbell is standing by live. Mr. Campbell, the New Democrats are making this a
contest between the leaders, and while their campaign signs feature Mr. Dosanjh prominently,
some of yours barely mention your name. What do you say to the accusation that we've heard
that you are the party's biggest liability.

40:46 - 41:06
Text: "Liberal Leader Gordon Campbell"
GC: Well, I think over the last number of years I've had the chance to bring together a great
team of people, and moving BC forward to a new era of hope and prosperity is going to require a
lot of people working together. We have a strong caucus, we have exceptional candidates that
are running and think we have a platform that people will embrace and move forward on.

41:07 - :13
TP: Now, you have the experts predicting you'll wipe out the NDP, aren't you afraid that many of
your supporters won't vote because they think its all over?

41:14 - :50
GC: NO, I think that British Columbians know that everyone's got to vote. The best elections are
where 100% of the voters actually cast their ballot. People in this province want to turn the page
on the NDP's decade of decay and scandal and betrayal of trust, we want to move forward to a
... (static) ...Where they have confidence in their health care system so they have it when they
need it regardless of where they live.. and we want .. (more static.. then sound cut altogether...)

41:51 - 42:02
Head shots
TP: Well we just lost our audio of that interview and we'll try to restore it to ask at least one
more question..

... (Rest of earlier story - return to GC interview)
50:11 - :29
Dual head shots TP: and GC
TP: Well, we've fixed our audio problems we hope and we're going back to Victoria now to talk
live to Gordon Campbell. Mr. Campbell, we had just one more question for you now. The NDP as
you may have heard are going to hammer home their contention that you can't cut taxes and
protect things like health care and education at the same time, so how do you convince voters
that you can do that?

50:30 - 51:09
GC: Well I think the voters understand what the NDP don't. If we don't have a strong and a
vibrant private sector economy we don't have the resources to protect the public health care and
public education. A dramatic cut in personal income tax means this, Tony. People's take-home
pay cheques start to grow, they spend those dollars in their local communities. That creates
more jobs, more tax payers, that provide more resources to provide the necessary funds we need
for health care and education and in our province. Its worked every province that its been tired.
Its time to put it to work for British Columbians.
TP: Alright Mr. Campbell. Again our apologies for that problem and thank you for staying with us.

2. BCTV: 23.04.01 6pm news

3rd story, Liberal Platform continued – Feature Interview with GC

12:08 - :21
H/s dual shots.
Tony Parson: The Liberal leader joins us live from downtown Vancouver. Mr. Campbell, you’re promising to improve health care, but you don’t commit to increasing the health care budget. Aren’t you a bit worried that your promise to find efficiencies in the system will sound like just more of the same old stuff to voters?

12:22 – 13:00
"Liberal Leader Gordon Campbell"
GC: No Tony, I think people know that there’s a substantial amount of waste in the health care system. In the lower mainland, you just have to drive by 12th and Oak. You’ll see the largest building in the City of Vancouver sitting basically empty. This will have cost BC’s taxpayers $100 million with no benefit to any patient anywhere in the province. And that’s repeated time and time again in community after community. That’s why we need a long term plan. It’s what everyone told us was needed when we did our dialogue on health care last fall, and it’s what we’re going to work with to develop with all of our health care professionals, community leaders, and patient groups so people get the care they need where they live and when they need it.

13:01 - :12
TP: You mention your dramatic tax cut. But there’s nothing you said that specifies what it will be. You say you can’t do anything till you see the books. That’s more of the same old, same old for voters as well isn’t it?

13:13 – 13:47
GC: Well, no, it’s not Tony. We’re very clear that by the end of our first term in office, four years from now, the people of BC will be paying the lowest base rate of... tax rate... for the bottom two tax brackets in the province. That means the first $60,000 of income that people earn will be paying the lowest tax rate of anywhere in the country. We obviously aren’t in a position where we can be specific about how large the tax break will be early, because we know the NDP’s fudged the books again this year. I want to be responsible, I want to tell people what we can do, and what I hope they’ll hold us to account for.

13:48 - :56
TP: You’re also saying Mr. Campbell that parents will be able to choose the school they can send their children to. Sounds like a good idea on paper, but it sounds like chaos in communities across the province as well.

13:57 – 14:22
GC: Well, we’re not quite saying that. What we’re saying is that we’re going to provide more choices in our education system. That means for example that a school district may decide to have a magnet school that focuses on the delivery of arts programs or technology programs. We understand that teachers and students alike learn and teach in different ways you know that work for people. So we want to make sure that those choices are available. Those are choices for school districts to basically make.
TP: Alright Mr. Campbell. Thanks for your time.
GC: Thanks Tony.
Interview with Dosanjh
1:03:55 – 1:07:00
Dual heads. Dosanjh in Victoria

Gloria Macarenko (Anchor): And joining me now Premier Ujjal Dosanjh. Mr. Dosanjh this has been a long anticipated election call. Can you tell me in 5 words or less how are you feeling right now.

Ujjal Dosanjh: I’m feeling very good. I believe, uh, when uh, I became Premier uh, I had certain priorities that I can talk to you about. We’ve accomplished those and we are now ready for a vigorous and a rigorous debate in British Columbia about issues and choices.

GM: I wasn’t counting words on that but it was more than five. (laugh). I get the message though. Now some of the NDP strategist have said that you should be running this campaign as opposition leaders rather than trying to become Premier once again, so what do you say to them?

UD: Well I’ve said very clearly that I’m going into this election campaign as an underdog, we are the underdogs in this campaign. But there are some very very serious issues at stake. And I’m not about to give up when there are values around public health care, public education, protecting our environment... those are very important and when you have competing and contending claims on a government, governments have to make decisions and they have to decide what comes first ... (interrupted)

GM: But are you running this campaign to win it or are you running to survive?

UD: Well, I’m running in the campaign, we’ll be campaigning all over the province and its really up to the people of the province at the end of the day to determine who forms government. There’s no question we have a ways to go before one could way we are not the underdogs.

GM:: Okay. Now you’re last legislative sessions didn’t make many waves, but are we looking forward to anything for the campaign itself, anything new planned?

UD: I think the central issues for the campaign is an issue I’ve been talking about. It is what comes first when government has to deal with competing and contending claims. I believe improving public health care, improving education and protecting our environment, they come first. And my chief opponent disagrees, he believes, I believe, that tax cuts and dramatic tax cuts come first... and I think that is the central issue of the campaign...

GM: (interrupting) ... health, education environment, those are familiar themes and they haven’t translated into numbers at the polls for you yet. So What is it going take for you to convince the voters?

UD: Well. I believe that we have to really understand. Those are changing needs of British Columbians. In health care, when you have more seniors, when you have more cancer patients and heart patients, those are changing needs, when you have more students and more working parents, those are changing needs in education, when you more population a larger population, those are changing needs in the environment. This is not about status quo. That’s why it is very very important for a government to determine what comes first. For me dramatic tax cut doesn’t come first, as it does for my chief opponent. For me, improving public education, public
health care and improving our environment – they come first, and that’s why this is still the central issue.

GM: Premier Dosanjh thank you for your time, and we look forward to the campaign.
UD: thank you very much.

Ends: 1:07:00

Interview with Campbell
1:07:15 ~ 1:10:35
GM: And now to the man that many people believe will be the next Premier of British Columbia. BC Liberal leader. Gordon Campbell good evening.

GC: Hi Gloria.

GM: Now in the days leading up to this campaign liberals were predicting that you were going to take all 79 seats. What is your prediction. Today.

GC: My predication is I’m going to work very hard over the next 4 weeks to earn the support of British Columbians in every part of this province. I think the question people are going to ask themselves is Are there any New Democrat MLAs that deserve to be re-elected. One of the things an election is about holding a government to account for their votes. And 79 ridings will decide that, they’ll decide I hope to elect a very high quality BC liberal candidate in their riding, and we’ll be able to move forward with a new era of hope and opportunity for all BC families.

GM: so your prediction out of 79 seats then?

GC: I don’t make predictions. I think what we have to do is we have to go out and earn the trust and support of British Columbians, outline a program the will move us forward so we will revive the economy to have health care system we can depend on where we live and when we need it, and that we have a education system that gives all British Columbians, regardless of their age, the tools they need to take advantage of future opportunities.

GM: Well this is starting to sound a lot like Premier Dosanjh’s comments a few moments before. Now YOU’ve been in an election campaign before and last time you came out on the losing end of this. What are you going to do differently this time?

GC: Well there’s a number of things that are different in 2001. first I have a very high quality caucus that is running with me. Secondly people have had another 5 more years of an NDP government, that has been wracked by scandal for a decade, we brought another fudget budget this year, we’ve got a government that simply can’t be trusted, that breaks contracts and I think more importantly than that, people are excited about moving forward to a new era of hope. They know that we can generate private sector economy that works again so people have job opportunities in different parts of this province. They know if we bring doctors and nurses back into the health care system patients can get the care they need where they live. And I think all of those things are exciting British Columbians and I expect to have a very high level of turnout at the polls come May 16.

GM: And what do you expect to see develop through the campaign now. What do you think it will be like, the tone of it?

GC: Well I can tell you what I intend to do. I intend to go across this province and remind people about how lucky we are to live in British Columbia. I think this is a special opportunity for
us to restore people’s sense of confidence in the province, and for BC to take a leadership role in our country again, as opposed to being left behind as in the last decade...

GM: (interrupting) ...you have been doing this with your ad campaign, so far, sort of person to person, there’s Gordon Campbell up there with his message. But what about the negative ad campaign. Who’s going to put the first one out?

GC: Well, the NDP have already done that. I’m not concerned about that, I’m going to certainly hold the NDP to account. The record of the NDP is one of scandal, of betrayal of trust, of false budgets that were presented to British Columbians and I think they’ve taken away, in some cases people’s sense of hope and excitement about our province. I want to restore the people of this province’s sense of pride in British Columbia, we can lead our country again, we can give our people a sense of opportunity again. And that’s what so exciting about the weeks ahead of us.

GM: Mr. Campbell Thanks very much for that. We look forward

GC: thanks Gloria see you later.

4. CBC. 24.04.01. 6pm news.

Interview with Campbell

1:32:08 - :24

Dual h/s

Gloria Macarenko: I’m joined now by liberal leader Gordon Campbell in prince george. Good evening.

Gordon Campbell: Hi Gloria.

GM: So what about this hidden agenda that Mr. Dosanj is referring to? The NDP saying your party’s tax cuts are going to favour the well to do. Can you tell us tonight whether you plan to cut taxes for people earning more than $60,000 a year.

1:32:25 - :55

"Gordon Campbell Liberal Leader" H/s in rural street. "Prince George"

GC: It’s very important. I’m surprised the premier doesn’t understand how the tax system works. We’ve been very clear. We intend to have the lowest base rate of personal income tax of any province in the country for the bottom two tax brackets. That’s the first $60,000 of income. So people that are earning $60,000, obviously less than $60,000 are going to have the lowest base rate of personal income tax in the province. That first $60,000 of income will have the lowest tax rate of any jurisdiction in canada by the end of our first term.

1:32:56 - 1:33:06

GM: You have been very clear about those lower tax brackets. But, you haven’t been clear at all about the upper three, those over $60,000. Are you ruling out a tax cut for the top three income tax brackets, those above $60,000?

1:33:07 - :41

GC: Sorry Gloria, but every british columbian will benefit when their first $60,000 of income is taxed at the lowest rate of any jurisdiction in the country. The way our tax system works is you get a tax rate of 8.4% on the first $30,000 of income. Of 11.9% on the next $30,000 of income. And et cetera for three more steps. So we’re going to make sure that everyone in the province who earns up to $60,000 or less has the lowest base rate of personal income tax of any place in the country. That means everyone in the province will get the benefits of the tax cut.

1:33:42 - :43
GM: And anything beyond the $60,000?

1:33:44 – 1:34:05
GC: No, we’re talking about the lowest two tax rates which are up to $60,000 in the province of British Columbia. So every paycheque will benefit within 90 days when we’ve had the initial dramatic tax cut, and by the end of our first term, you’ll be paying the lowest base rate of personal income tax of any province in the country for the bottom two tax brackets.

1:34:06 - :14
GM: Let’s get that pinned down as well, when you say the end of our first term. So you have several years in fact to implement these tax cuts.

1:34:15 - :39
GC: Well, we’ve said we’re going to have a tax cut within 90 days of being elected should the people of British Columbia decide they’d like to elect a B.C. Liberal government. And by the end of our first term which will be may the 17th in the year 2005 when the next election will be should we form government, then you will know you are paying the lowest base rate of personal income tax of any province in the country on the bottom two tax brackets.

1:34:40 - :49
GM: It’s interesting that Alberta is about to bring in this flat tax, 10.5% Of taxable income. That’s flat right across the board. Is that a possibility in BC.?

1:35:00 - :18
GC: One of the reasons we’ve been very explicit about what we intend to do, we intend to have the lowest base rate on the bottom two tax brackets. We have 5 in British Columbia. There’s 3 in some provinces. Some have surtaxes. So we’ve said on the bottom two tax brackets for the first $60,000 of income, you’ll be paying the lowest base rate of tax of any jurisdiction in the country.

1:35:19 - :22
GM: Yes, I understood but would there ever be a point where you would consider a flat tax?

1:35:23 – 1:35:47
GC: I’m not even at that stage, Gloria. We have to get in, look at what’s taking place on the books in British Columbia. And we have to get our economy moving again. I think that we are very excited about getting British Columbia investment restored. Job opportunities here. Young people with work again. All of those things are going to take precedence over moving in that direction.

GM: Mr. Campbell, thank you for that.
GC: Thanks a lot, gloria.

VTV: 18.04.01. 6 pm news.

9th Story – Leader feature interviews: Dosanjh
49:21 - :42
 RB head shot, moving to dual heads, RB and UD.
RB: And now we go back to the big story of the day in BC politics. A live interview with Premier
UD. Mr. Dosanjh, now you've acknowledged your role of course as the campaign's underdog or
David vs. the Liberal goliath, What makes you think that after 14 months of your leadership –
with the polls barely moving that your NDP has any chance of winning this election.

49:43 – 50:36
UD: Across street from campaign headquarters, traffic noise.
UD: Well, I believe a recognition that I am the underdog is an important one for me, and for
British Columbians. I believe that for the last year I've made commitments that we get health
care back on track that we expand education opportunities, and we've done that. And we put
our fiscal house in order. You know there was the fast ferries, now there is the surplus. And its
time to now look at with all the government resources, what comes first. And if we could focus
our attention on what comes first, and I believe people are fair and just across British Columbia
they will make the right decision. For me what comes first is improving our education, improving
our health care and protecting better our environment in British Columbia. And a dramatic tax
cut that comes first for my chief opponent would threaten some of those issues in British
Columbia.

50:37 - :52
RB: Well sir, being fair would be looking at the whole picture. Now how do you propose seriously
to get voters to forget years of what has been called NDP mis-management. You mentioned the
fast ferries, questionable budget, bingo scandals. And get them to assess you know NOW
essentially devoid of your government's record.

50:53 – 51:27
UD: No I'm happy to talk about the record. My record as the premier for the last year. The
record of the NDP government with 12 percent protected areas and all of the other issues we've
dealt with. That's fine. I'm happy to talk about some of the mistakes we've made. But elections
are more about the future as well. And it is in the context of that future that my record as the
premier for the last years and the MLA for the last 10 and Mr. Campbell's political record for the
last 8 years as a provincial political leader all of those are important and I'm happy to talk about
them.

51:28 - :32
RB: We've got a 28 day campaign sir. What kind of surprises might we see in this election?

51:33 – 52:12
UD: You aren't going to see any surprises from us. There are some additional issues that we are
going to talk about. Our budget sets the agenda for us. If there are any additional changes that
we will make we will be announcing them as the days go by, but it is important that we engage
British Columbians in the most important question about the future, not about the past. And
about the future the question is, what comes first? A dramatic tax cut that might weaken
education, weaken health care, weaken protection for the environment, or improved education,
improved health care, and better protection for the environment. I believe for me the latter
comes first.

52:13 – 52:54
RB: Sir, are you prepared to sit in opposition?
UD: This is a 28 day campaign... that's what I'm focused on, admittedly...
RB: sitting in opposition?
UD: Admittedly I am the underdog. And uh, I'm focused on the 28 day campaign and we'll see
you on E-day.
RB: is it going to be a popularity contest.
UD: No, this is about choices that one leader represents vs. the choices the other leader represents. And it's clearly a contest between myself and Mr. Campbell and our different priorities, which are as different as day and night. There's no question about that.

RB: Alright. Premier Ujjal Dosanjh joining us from his campaign headquarters in Vancouver. Thank you very much.

UD: Thank you.

52:55 - 53:00
RB: Alright, we will have opposition leader Gordon Campbell with us very shortly. That is still to come in this newscast. But first....

[Other Stories]
53:01 – 59:36

13th story - Campbell interview
59:37 – 1:00:03
Dual heads. Campbell in front of Victoria legislature.
RB: Let us get back to the election now. And now joining us live form Victoria is opposition leader Gordon Campbell. Mr. Campbell you are standing apparently some 50 meters away from perhaps your future office. And lets face it you are well ahead in the polls. But you entered the 1996 campaign with a commanding lead as well and you ended up losing in large part because some people just wouldn't or could not trust you back then, why should they trust you now?

1:00:04 - :25
GC: Well I think people know that I've been traveling around this province for the last 5 years building support and getting people excited about a new era of hope and opportunity for this province. A new era where the economy starts to grow again, where we restore people's confidence in the public health care system, and where we have the kind of public education system that our children need so that they can take full advantage of their future.

1:00:26 - :38
RB: Sir, you have outlined a range of Liberal polices heading into this election for some time now. But now a new level scrutiny begins. How much detail are you going to disclose about your plans?

1:00:39 – 1:01:21
GC: Well we've been very detailed about a number of our plans. For example, we intend to provide a dramatic tax cut within 90 days. By the end of our first term in office we intend to have the lowest base rate of personal income tax for the bottom two tax brackets in British Columbia. The poorest British Columbians are going to get a significant tax break from the BC Liberals. That's pretty specific. We've said we are going to open up government. We are going to have our committees meeting again. We're going to have fixed election dates. We're going to have a fixed legislative calendar; we are going to have balanced budget legislation. Those are very specific actions that we intend to take to try and restore people's trust and confidence in our public institutions after a decade of NDP scandal and betrayal of that trust.

1:01:22 - :28
RB: Well talking about trust, why do you think that your party is more popular than you are?

1:01:29 - :54
GC: Well I think that we've got a very strong group so of candidates. And I'm very proud of the candidates we have across this province. I think that when you get quality people to run for office. When you've got a positive program to move our province forward to a new era of economic prosperity for all of BC families I think that's really a tribute to the work that BC Liberals have done all over British Columbia from the north to the south in rural communities in urban communities, and that's why I'm so excited about the days ahead.

1:01:55- 1:02:00
RB: We'll be watching a 28 day campaign. Opposition leader Gordon Campbell. Thanks for joining us.
GC: Thanks Ravi.

5. VTV. 20.04.01. 6 pm news.

5th Story – 3rd election story. Leader Interviews on Health Care
13:07 - :23
Head shot of Ravi B.
RB: Now lets turn to health politics and the leaders plans to solve the health care crisis. In a moment we're going to hear form the Premier. But first we're joined by liberal leader Gordon Campbell at the University of British Columbia.

Campbell interview
13:24 - :38
Dual head shots. Ravi and GC. Moving to GC only as he talks.
RB: Mr. Campbell, we have heard today about your plan to train more doctors and of course your have already blamed the NDP for creating the nursing shortage. How would you solve the labour situation right now.

13:39 – 14:17
GC: There's a number of things we have to do. First of all we have to recognize how important nurses have been to the health care system and are to the health care system in British Columbia... Unfortunately the NDP cut back the number of nurses we were training in our province. And that's created a serious problem. We've called for the additional doubling the number of nurses we have in this province, the nursing graduates we have in the province of British Columbia I should say. And we have to provide nurses with the kind of wait support that they need. We have to change their working condition so that they have the support they need so they carry out their profession in the hospitals and the community facilitate across the province. We have to provide for training opportunities for them, And we have to recognize the important role that they play in our health care system.

14:18 - :24
RB: Well sir, of course you announced your plan today to double the number of doctors trained right here in BC. Is that actually new?

14:25 - :47
GC: is it new? Yes its new. It's important. I think. And British Columbia, we're losing 300 doctors a year. We've been training 120 a year for the last number of years. Recently the government said they were going to add eight additional graduates to our medical schools. We've said we're going to add seventy-two additional medical graduates over the next 5 years and our goal is to double that number by 2010.

14:48 – 15:03
RB: Sir, we’ve been looking at these numbers as well and it would appear that the plan you are
talking about right here is very much like the plan that is already in place from the NDP, in fact
has been funded since the top of the year? Aren’t you just really re-announcing something that’s
already out there right now?

15:04 - :27
GC: No, hardly. What the NDP announced was $57,000 to study this, what we’ve said is we’re
going to invest $135 million dollars to create two medical school campuses, out in Prince George
at UNBC in Prince George for a rural and remote program, and at the University of Victoria for a
geriatric program, and we’re going to add to the number of graduates that come out of UBC’s
medical school here at the new Life Sciences centre.

15:28 – 15:33
RB: Alright. Gordon Campbell, leader of the Liberal opposition. Thank you very much for joining
us tonight.
GC: Thank you very much Ravi.

Dosanjh Interview

15:34 - :58
RB h/s
RB: Well health, of course, is a core issue for the New Democratic Party but the last ten years of
NDP rule BC’s medical system has lurched from one crisis to another. And joining us now with
his prescription for change is Premier Ujjal Dosanjh. Mr Dosanjh, first, lets talk about the nurses
job action. You’ve had ample opportunity to support the nurse’s wage demands. Why did you
choose the first day of the campaign to wade into this dispute?

15:59 – 16:11
UD h/s
UD: No, I’ve been saying this for some time Ravi. I said for a long time at the demonstrations
nurses had in front of the legislature that they should be paid what they are worth. And that
should be decided at the negotiating table... (cut off)

16:12 - :13
RB: Well now you’re putting actual dollars out there....

16:14 - :41
UD: No. Now I’m actually saying they have to be competitive with Alberta. All British
Columbians want to have nurses happy in British Columbia so that they fell comfortable and the
patients feel comfortable in British Columbia and I’ve simply said we will compete with Alberta.
That might cost in excess of a couple of hundred dollars. Mr. Campbell, I urge him to embrace
the same promise but he won’t do that because we know if he makes dramatic tax cuts it’d be
hard to pay the nurses a competitive wage.

16:42 - :56
RB: Okay, now Premier, in the last decade the NDP has created all these regional health care
bureaucracies, you’ve capped nurses training and you’ve presided over the departure of
hundreds of BC surgeons, so why should the people of British Columbia really trust you to mange
the system now?

16:57 – 17:33
UD: Well, you know, when I talk over, I went to Ottawa, had the funding restored to health care that Mr. Campbell thought six years ago, it should have been cut deeper, we have poured one million dollars more into more nurses, more doctors, more health care workers, more medical equipment, more research. In the last year, that’s my accomplishment. I want to make sure we have the best health care system. That’s why we can’t afford to do dramatic tax cuts at this point. And Mr. Campbell believes his own rhetoric. He believes it to the extent that he forgets that whatever he’s announcing today, we’ve already announced that it’s underway, planning is underway... (interrupted)

17:34 - :36
RB: He says his program is much more ambitious than yours....

17:37 - :56
UD: And he’s got no dollars for it. Where’s he going to get the money from? And the fact is if he wants to do a dramatic tax cut as I showed in the announcement earlier on in the morning, if you cut 500 million dollars for five years, each year you lose 2 billion over 5 years in taxes...

17:57 – 18:00
Appendix F. (begins next page)
Appendix F: Transcript Chart Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Visual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30:46</td>
<td>Shoot of Dosanjh, buses, campaign signs, offices</td>
<td>30:46 - 31:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30:55</td>
<td>Tony Parsons: The writ is dropped, the word is given and the race is on. Dosanjh is shown at the front of LG house.</td>
<td>31:18 - 31:31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30:55</td>
<td>TD: Good evening. We've been embroiled in an unofficial election campaign for months. But now, with apologies to Emeril, it's time to &quot;kick it up a notch&quot;. We head into this campaign with a government on the ropes and an opposition smelling blood.</td>
<td>31:32 - 31:46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31:47</td>
<td>NDP: The kick off. The leaders live. The issues. The bagage.</td>
<td>31:47 - 31:53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31:59</td>
<td>The story: Campaign.</td>
<td>31:59 - 32:15</td>
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Voice:

Ujjal Dosanjh: I've asked the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the legislative assembly. British Columbians will go the polls on Wednesday May, the 16th. We are entering a new era in British Columbian politics. The race is on. The issues are clear. The leader is clear. The baggage is clear. We are entering a new era in British Columbian politics.

Tony Parsons: The writ is dropped, the word is given and the race is on. Dosanjh is shown at the front of LG house. We've been embroiled in an unofficial election campaign for months. But now, with apologies to Emeril, it's time to "kick it up a notch". We head into this campaign with a government on the ropes and an opposition smelling blood.

Tony Parsons: Tonight we'll show you how the New Democrats and the Liberals kicked off this campaign. We'll take the first hard look at the major issues. We'll talk live to both Ujjal Dosanjh and Gordon Campbell. And we'll look at the political bagage both parties carry into his campaign.

TP: And we begin with the major parties starting with Keith Baldry and the New Democrats. Keith Baldry.

Keith Baldry: Good afternoon everybody. The day began with an historical first. A public glimpse of what has been traditionally private. The signing by the Lieutenant Governor of the election act in the presence of the premier. And with that it was time for the first campaign speech with an acknowledgment of the uphill battle facing the NDP.
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<th>Notes</th>
<th>Tape Time</th>
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<td></td>
<td>32:16 - 25</td>
<td>Press conference outside of LG house. Text: &quot;NDP leader Ujjal Dosanjh&quot;. Wife beside him.</td>
<td>UD: I know that I am going into this election as an underdog and I can tell you I can certainly relate to how David must have felt.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>32:26 - 36</td>
<td>Dosanjh getting into van and driving away.</td>
<td>Keith Baldry: Just how much of an underdog Ujjal Dosanjh and the NDP really are was underscored by some random reactions of voters toady when they were asked about the NDP's record over the past ten years.</td>
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<td>Reporter: Really?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Woman: Yeah.</td>
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<td>Reporter: Anything in particular?</td>
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<td>Woman: The education system. The medical. And the deficit.</td>
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<td>32:51 - 33:01</td>
<td>Headshot of older man.</td>
<td>Man: They've caused a lot of problems from what I can see. And uh I know with the money spent on the fast ferries and projects like it's been a lot of wastage and not a lot of progress.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>33:02 - 07</td>
<td>Headshot of young man.</td>
<td>Young man: First while was okay I guess. But not anymore. Not after the casino scandal.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>33:08 - 20</td>
<td>UD shaking hands in crowd.</td>
<td>KB: But the self-styled giant slayer insists this is a campaign in which the NDP stands a chance of winning. He was given a positive send off in the capital today by legislative staff and supporters. (Chanting: Ujjal, Ujjal)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>33:21 - 28</td>
<td>The bus.</td>
<td>KB: Despite his low standing in the polls Ujjal Dosanjh does seem calm and relaxed and insists he'll be coming back to the legislature.</td>
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<td>33:29 - 33</td>
<td>UD talking on bus.</td>
<td>UD: I've been here for nine years, ten years, and I'm looking back to coming back here.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>33:34 - 45</td>
<td>Various shots of bus.</td>
<td>KB: But it may be an empty promise. David slew Goliath with a single stone and slingshot. And so far NDP has yet to find any weapons capable of wounding the liberals.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>33:46 - 34:02</td>
<td>Gordon Campbell in a crowd.</td>
<td>KB: Barring some catastrophic political meltdown, this is the face of BC's 33rd Premier. With the Gordon Campbell Liberals leading the NDP by 50 percentage points a confident Campbell kicked off his campaign with a rally at the legislature.</td>
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<td>Notes</td>
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<td>34:03 - :36</td>
<td>GC on the legislature steps with lots of signs behind him.</td>
<td>GC (making speech): &quot;In another 28 days, British Columbians can begin a new era of hope and prosperity for all of BC's families. (Cheers) There is nothing that we cannot accomplish in BC when we work together. There is nothing, no challenge too great that we cannot meet if we stay together. I know that we can do it in British Columbia.&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>34:37 - :53</td>
<td>GC liberal bus.</td>
<td>KB: The liberal bus is fueled up and ready to role in what will truly be a BC campaign. While the NDP will focus on the lower mainland, the liberals will zigzag across the province and spend 6.5 million dollars on a campaign which will, at the start strongly attack the NDP record.</td>
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<td>34:54 - 35:02</td>
<td>GC at an inside press conference, flags etc behind.</td>
<td>GC: British Columbians say they want to hold this government to account. We believe it's important that that information be reminded. I am not going to let the NDP government run from its record.</td>
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<td>35:03 - :13</td>
<td>GC's campaign office. Many people</td>
<td>KB: And in Vancouver GC's campaign office is finally buzzing, with staff trying to make sure that their man doesn't spend more than 8 years in opposition.</td>
</tr>
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<td>2nd Story - The Issues</td>
<td>35:14 - :35</td>
<td>Tony Parsons head-shot. Text: YOUR vote – YOUR issues.</td>
<td>TP: Now, the issues. The New Democrats may claim that if the issues were the focus of this campaign they'd have a chance of winning. The liberals say they are more than happy to debate the issues. What are they? Tonight as we begin our campaign focus on your vote, your issues, Brian Coxford has the results of a BCTV/ Vancouver Sun poll that asked British Columbians what they care about most.</td>
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<td>35:36 - :50</td>
<td>Victoria parliament buildings.</td>
<td>BC: The big house in Victoria is empty... Our elected representatives are out of work, their jobs abolished with the election call. Who will fill their chairs? The voters of BC will decide and they seem to have a clear grasp of the issues out there.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>35:51 - :56</td>
<td>Vox Pop</td>
<td>Older man: ...Mismanagement of the economy. Young woman: ...probably health care Middle aged man: ...proper leadership and financial management</td>
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<td></td>
<td>35:57 - 36:09</td>
<td>Text: Improved economy/tax cuts Improved and Protected health care, Honest and competent gov't.</td>
<td>BC: The top issue for BC voters according to a recent poll is improved economy and tax cuts. They also want improved and protected health care. And honest and competence in government.</td>
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<td>36:10 - :12</td>
<td>Vox pop</td>
<td>Man in car: I guess the past performance of the previous government.</td>
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<td>Notes</td>
<td>Tape Time</td>
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<td>36:13 - 17</td>
<td>Vox pop</td>
<td>Man: ...the economy. And I'm not going to vote NDP.</td>
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<td>36:18 - 19</td>
<td>Vox pop</td>
<td>Man: ...getting business working again.</td>
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<td>36:20 - 29</td>
<td>Shots of money exchanging hands, at stores, cash registers, $100 bills. Clips of GC and UD ads.</td>
<td>BC: If tax cuts are an issue for the voters, putting more cash in our pockets to hopefully help boost the economy, the party leaders have clearly staked out their positions on that.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>36:30 - 38</td>
<td>GC's ad: If BC Liberals earn your support, we intend to act quickly to get our province moving again. There will be a dramatic cut tax in your personal income tax rate...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>36:39 - 48</td>
<td>UD ad: If dramatic tax cuts come first for you I'm not your man. But if health care, education, social justice and the environment, if these come first then I'm your man.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>36:49 - 51</td>
<td>Vox Pop</td>
<td>Older man: Well, it's clear for my age health care...</td>
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<td>36:52 - 53</td>
<td>Vox Pop</td>
<td>Younger man on bicycle: More money for the hospitals.</td>
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<td>36:54 - 55</td>
<td>Vox Pop</td>
<td>Middle age woman: health care...</td>
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<td>36:56 - 57</td>
<td>Vox Pop</td>
<td>Young man: health care.</td>
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<td>36:58 - 00</td>
<td>Vox Pop</td>
<td>Woman: probably health would be a big issues...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>37:01 - 12</td>
<td>Women at nursing station, patients being transferred to beds in hospital rooms...</td>
<td>BC: Improved and protecting health care, with better management of health dollars, is an issue all over BC, but its particularly strong in the north and the Okanagan where there is a more severe shortage of resources.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>37:13 - 17</td>
<td></td>
<td>BC: Competence and government mis-management of our dollars is an issue all over BC.</td>
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<td>37:18 - 25</td>
<td>Vox Pop</td>
<td>Middle age man: It's been an issue a lot time ago, just the NDP continually screwing up and, they lost my vote a long time ago.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>37:26 - 35</td>
<td>Vox Pop</td>
<td>Young Man: The issues? Um, I just want the NDP out. That's it. Just mismanagement of funds. That's about it.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>37:36 - 44</td>
<td>Shots of ferries</td>
<td>BC: We're going to hear a lot about fast ferries in this election campaign. It's a glaring example for voters of how our tax dollars were wasted.</td>
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<td>37:45 - 55</td>
<td>Shot of police at GC's home, Dale answering the door</td>
<td>BC: Integrity's another issue, and the police investigation and pending trial Involving former premier GC could follow NDP candidates in the next 28 days.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>