Issue-Based Strategies in Election Campaigns: The Case of Health Care in the 2000 Canadian Federal Election

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Issue-Based Strategies in Election Campaigns: The Case of Health Care in the 2000 Canadian Federal Election

RICHARD NADEAU, FRANÇOIS PÉTRY, and ÉRIC BÉLANGER

This article contributes to the emerging literature on election campaign strategies by studying the strategy adopted by the Liberal government in the 2000 Canadian federal election. Two questions are addressed: Why did the Liberal government choose in that election to focus its campaign on health care in spite of its poor record with regard to this issue? And, even more surprisingly, how did the Liberals manage to win this election and get a parliamentary majority using such a seemingly counterintuitive strategy? This case study suggests that an incumbent with a bad record on an important issue not only can redirect voters' attention toward other topics but can also define the debate about that issue in a more advantageous way. These ideas are tested with qualitative and quantitative data from the 2000 Canadian election. Content analysis of party campaign material and media coverage demonstrates how the incumbent Liberals successfully framed the debate about the health care issue so as to undermine the credibility of the official opposition. Statistical analyses of individual vote choice show that the Liberal campaign strategy had a significant impact on the election outcome.

Keywords electoral campaigns, issues, incumbent strategy, health care, Canada

In the course of the televised debate that took place during the Canadian federal election campaign of 2000, the leader of the official opposition, Stockwell Day, broke with the rules and held up a sign that read "No Two-Tier Health Care." He was responding to the incumbent Liberals' allegation that he wanted to dismantle the Canadian universal health care system and establish in its place a two-tier system not unlike the American one. This incident shows how difficult it was for Stockwell Day and his Canadian Alliance party to counter the allegation. Day was stuck in a defensive position, and he found it very difficult to effectively strike back against the Liberals on the health care issue, on which they themselves were vulnerable.

This turn of events in the 2000 Canadian campaign raises important questions. Why did the Liberal government choose to focus its campaign on health care in spite of its poor record with regard to this issue? And, even more surprisingly, how did the Liberals

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manage to win this election and get a parliamentary majority using such a seemingly counterintuitive strategy? This article examines how and why the incumbent Liberals framed the debate about the health care issue in the 2000 Canadian election. In doing so, we contribute to the literature about campaign strategies by showing that an incumbent with a poor record on an important issue not only can redirect voters' attention toward other topics (Vavreck, 2009) but can also frame the debate about that same issue in an advantageous way. This strategy can be used, for instance, when certain issues are highly salient to voters and thus are difficult to dislodge from the public agenda (Simon, 2002).

The article is divided into four sections. The first section discusses recent theoretical developments in the scientific literature on campaign strategies. The second section examines the issue context of the 2000 Canadian election campaign in light of these theoretical considerations. The third section examines the nature of the debates surrounding the main issues in the 2000 campaign. Using information from content analyses of party advertisements, print media, and TV news, and from in-depth interviews with campaign strategists, we compare theoretical expectations with the messages that were actually conveyed to voters by the parties and the media during the campaign. The final section uses 2000 survey data to assess the effects that the mediated party campaign messages had on individual voting decisions.

The choice of the 2000 Canadian election as a case study for understanding and illuminating the interplay between parties' communication strategies, media coverage, and voters' choices has much to recommend it. The combination of the information available, the context of the 2000 campaign, and the intensity[1] and clarity of the battles over issues during this election seems to constitute one of the rare situations allowing for "opportunistic exploitations of natural experiments . . . of the sort that . . . provide reassurance that communication effects are not confined to experimental settings" (Kinder, 2007, p. 158). The 2000 Canadian election thus offers the opportunity to document the plausibility of the entire "chain" from the beginning of the campaign to its measurable impact on the decisions of voters.

Our detailed examination relies on the documentary evidence left behind by the parties and by the media in 2000. We acknowledge that we will not be able to reconstitute exactly the design and implementation of the communication strategies of the Liberals and the Alliance. Part of the relevant documentation is too difficult to collect, some has been lost, and some, like party polls, is privileged. Fortunately, the Canadian Election Study (CES) research team has preserved some of the strategic information that the Liberals and the Alliance used during the 2000 election campaign. In this article, we conduct content analyses of two kinds of party messages: those that are sent out directly to the voters through TV ads and those that reach the voters indirectly through daily press releases. We also examine the media messages that reach the voters through nightly network news and two national daily newspapers. Finally, we rely on in-depth interviews with senior Alliance and Liberal campaign organizers and pollsters to obtain information that was not accessible elsewhere.[2]

Issue-Based Campaign Strategies in Modern Elections

A Matter of Context

The literature about campaign strategies is still emerging. For instance, Damore (2005) notes that "traditionally, the study of campaigns has focused on the effects that campaigns

have on voters" and concludes that "as a consequence, we know little about what candidates do, particularly in terms of the information they communicate to voters" (p. 71). In the same vein, Riker (1986, 1996)—in his last works written before his death in 1993—observed that political scientists were still unable to tell candidates "what to say in campaigns" in order to win elections (cited in Vavreck, 2009, p. 21).

A central strategic question for candidates is to determine which issues to emphasize during campaigns. A common answer to this question is that parties and candidates should try "to increase the saliency of issues over which [they] are perceived as credible" (Damore, 2005, p. 72). This idea was initially developed by Budge and Farlie (1983), who suggested that parties and candidates tend to selectively emphasize issues over which they are likely to hold an electoral advantage over their opponents. The core components of campaign communication from this perspective are the "agenda-control" battles waged by the parties to impose their own priorities on the media and the voters (Norris et al., 1999; Simon, 2002) and the triggering of a "priming effect" through which an advantageous issue would become a crucial factor in the decision making of voters (Petrocik, 1996, p. 826; Jacobs & Shapiro, 1994; Druckman, 2001).

Scholars have long recognized that parties face constraints in selecting campaign issues. For instance, Ansolabehere and Iyengar's (1994) "riding the wave" thesis postulates that candidates need "to be seen as concerned, responsible and informed" about "the major issues of the day" (p. 337). Downs (1957) made the more general argument that candidates should cast "some policies into the other's territory in order to convince voters that their net position is near to them" (p. 135). Pfau and Kensky (1990) suggest that candidates may discuss "unexpected" issues to neutralize or respond to attacks. Jacobson (1990) demonstrates that voters expect presidents to pursue collective goods and evaluate them in terms of their ability to handle national problems. Hayes (2008) notes that parties sometimes need to address issues raised by the media. Aldrich and Griffin (2003) argue that candidates will tend to converge on issues important to voters irrespective of their own reputation about them. Sigelman and Buell (2004) contend that one possible way to account for the high level of issue convergence during campaigns is the idea that "the actual state of the world . . . makes it virtually impossible for the competitors to ignore some issues and highly unlikely to emphasize others" (p. 660).[3]

The discussion above suggests that the selection of issues during campaigns depends on the context faced by parties at the time of an election. Vavreck's (2009) work offers a useful framework for understanding why candidates focus on certain issues and choose to ignore others depending on the circumstances of particular elections. Studying U.S. presidential elections, she stresses the importance of the economy as an issue almost constantly at the top of voters' priorities and suggests that an incumbent presidential candidate will promote his economic record when the economy is doing well and focus on the policy vulnerabilities of his rival about *other* issues when the economy is doing poorly (a challenger will behave the opposite way). Candidates following these rules, according to Vavreck, will usually succeed and those who do not will generally fail.

The present article aims to contribute to the campaign strategy literature by documenting a case where an incumbent with a poor record on a dominant issue succeeded not so much by redirecting voters' attention toward other issues but by "framing" the debate about the same issue in an advantageous way. In the next subsection, we discuss the nature of this strategy before turning our attention to the 2000 Canadian election, which serves as a case study to illustrate how this approach can be applied in the realistic setting of an actual electoral campaign.

Framing the Debate

The literature on campaigns suggests that the decision to discuss certain issues, and to do so in particular ways, is linked to the institutional and political context in which elections occur (Simon, 2002). When the campaign period is relatively short, as is the case in most parliamentary systems, there is reason to believe that the priorities of voters and the media are partly fixed; certain issues can hardly be dislodged from the agenda (West, 2005). This situation creates incentives for candidates to adopt mixed strategies in order to secure political gains by promoting certain issues and also by trying to frame the debate about immovable issues in advantageous ways.

One strategy available to an incumbent with a poor record on a highly salient issue is to frame the debate in terms of position rather than performance (see Hwang et al., 2007). This means, for instance, redirecting voters' attention away from the incumbent's past performance and toward the potentially negative consequences associated with the position of rivals on the *same* issue. To be effective, such a strategy must highlight the differences between the probable outcomes associated with the positions taken by each party, emphasizing the negative outcomes that might result from the proposals of the opposing parties. The appropriate response for the challenger would be to counter this message and to redirect the debate toward the incumbent's record.

The notion of "debate framing" used in this article refers to the efforts made by parties to define the debates about key electoral issues, and thus the overall tone of their campaign, either as *policy-oriented* or *incumbency-oriented* (Kiewiet, 1983). In the U.S. context studied by Vavreck (2009), the idea mainly refers to the choice made by the incumbents to either focus their campaign on the economy in good times (incumbency-oriented campaign) or to move, in bad economic times, to issues about which their main opponent is vulnerable (policy-oriented campaign). We suggest that this core idea applies to dominant issues in general and that an incumbent with a poor record on a key issue can run a successful campaign by adopting a policy-oriented strategy on the *same* issue. This strategy is likely to be even more successful if incumbents can also portray their challengers as extremists and can present themselves as the more mainstream alternative (Vavreck, 2009). In the case at hand, these ideas refer to the strategy deployed by the incumbent government to focus the discussion about the salient health care issue during the 2000 Canadian election not so much on its record but mainly as a debate about the opportunity to maintain the existing universal health care system or to establish in its place a two-tier system not unlike the American one. To be successful, such a strategy required that voters might be persuaded that the main contenders in this election held distinctive views about this question. The Liberals acted accordingly by portraying themselves as the champions of the existing (and largely supported) universal system and by presenting the Alliance as being (secretly) favorable to the unpopular idea of implementing a two-tier system in Canada.

To suggest that such a strategy took place during a campaign requires assembling various pieces of evidence about (a) the strategic motivations of parties, (b) the penetration of their messages in the media, (c) the impact of these messages on voter choice (particularly among more attentive voters), and (d) the locus of this impact (see Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). The preceding discussion provides the lens through which the issue dynamics of the 2000 Canadian federal election will be examined. The task that we undertake in the remainder of this article consists of documenting the evidence about the motivations of party strategists, the coverage of health care in the media, the penetration among voters of the idea that the Alliance was favorable to the implementation of a two-tier system, and the impact on vote choice of holding that view. The next three sections will look at the issue

context of that election, at the party and media messages that were conveyed to voters on various issues, and at the way voters reacted to these messages.

Campaign Strategies: The Health Care Issue and the 2000 Canadian Federal Election

The Political Context

The most important aspect of the 2000 Canadian federal election was the high salience of health care in the public agenda. Although health care is a provincial jurisdiction, many Canadians consider that the federal government plays an important role in this policy domain and that it is accountable for making sure that health care is adequately financed and fairly administered across the country. The reduction in federal transfers to the Canadian provinces during the 1990s had forced the latter to drastically cut health spending. By 1998, the state of health care had become the most important policy issue confronting Canadians, and it was still at the top of the list of "most important problems" at the end of 2000 (Mendelsohn, 2002). This was certainly the case at the time of the 2000 election: nearly 85% of CES respondents (84.3%) indicated that improving health care was "very important" to them personally in the election.

Not only did health care dominate the agenda at the beginning of the 2000 election but, as Table 1 (second panel, columns 1 and 2) shows, its relative salience increased slightly during the campaign. That said, the dominant pattern for recent elections in Canada (1997–2006) is the stability of voter priorities during campaigns, despite the fact that the party system during that period was in flux with a divided and ultimately unified Right (with the PC party, which collapsed in 1993, finally merging with the Alliance just prior to the 2004 election). For the 1997 and 2000 elections, voters were asked a series of questions about the importance of selected issues. The results in Table 1 (first and second panels) show that the importance attached to these issues largely remained stable between the beginning and the end of both campaigns. The average variation in the level of issue importance was less than 2 percentage points (1.8 and 1.9 for 1997 and 2000, respectively), and only 3 out of 14 changes were statistically significant (at the .05 level; see Table 1, first and second panels, column 3). Moreover, voter priorities, as measured by the ranking of the proportion of voters thinking that an issue is very important to them personally, remained exactly the same for the 2000 election and barely changed in 1997 (see Table 1, first and second panels, columns 4 and 5). The stability of voter priorities is equally striking for the 2004 and 2006 elections (third and fourth panels). Overall, these results suggest that voter priorities tend to remain relatively stable, especially during relatively short campaigns. Issue salience has not changed much in recent elections in Canada, thus giving the Liberals little choice except to address health care during the 2000 campaign.

The data in Table 2 describe in more detail the issue background at the time of the 2000 election. The table shows that the record of the incumbent Liberals regarding health care and tax cuts was poorly perceived compared with their record in international relations, national unity, reduction of the debt, and employment. According to the "issue priming" approach, the Liberals should have moved away from the first two issues and fought the election on the more favorable terrain of winning issues such as employment, debt, national unity, or international relations. As shown below, the opposite happened.[4]

The Liberals could have chosen health care and tax cuts despite their poor record on those issues provided that they had a clear reputational advantage over the other parties.

Table 1
Changes in issue salience during four Canadian federal elections

	Beginning weeks	Ending weeks	Change	Ranking	
				Beginning	End
1997 election					
Creating jobs	82.9	80.4	−2.5	1	1
Fighting crime	72.9	68.7	−4.2*	2	2
Protecting social programs	60.9	60.1	−0.8	3	4
Reducing the deficit	59.7	60.6	0.9	4	3
Preserving national unity	57.4	56.5	−0.9	5	5
Cutting taxes	42.8	41.3	−1.5	6	6
2000 election					
Improving health care	81.4	85.7	4.3*	1	1
Fighting crime	71.5	71.4	−0.1	2	2
Creating jobs	65.1	66.3	1.2	3	3
Protecting the environment	56.7	58.7	2.0	4	4
Promoting traditional values	53.5	52.3	−1.2	5	5
Cutting taxes	53.2	52.0	−1.2	6	6
Reducing the federal debt	51.8	51.6	−0.2	7	7
Improving social welfare programs	33.7	38.6	4.9*	8	8
2004 election					
Health care	47.9	50.0	2.1	1	1
Corruption in government	25.1	22.0	−3.1	2	2
Taxes	15.1	15.0	−0.1	3	3
Social welfare programs	7.6	7.1	−0.5	4	4
Environment	4.4	5.4	1.0	5	5
2006 election					
Health care	44.8	40.4	−4.4	1	1
Corruption in government	28.2	32.0	3.2	2	2
Taxes	13.0	11.7	−1.3	3	3
Social welfare programs	8.8	10.6	1.8	4	4
Environment	5.1	5.3	−0.2	5	5

Note. The format for questions in 1997 and 2000 was "To you personally, in this federal election [issue], is it very important, somewhat important, or not very important?" Entries are the percentages selecting "very important." The format for questions in 2004 and 2006 was "Which of the following five issues is the most important to you personally in this election [issue]? Entries are the percentages corresponding to the various categories. Beginning and ending weeks correspond to the first and the last 2 weeks of the campaign. Separate chi-square tests for each issue were used for 1997 and 2000. Global tests were used for 2004 ($\chi^2 = 4.2$, $pr = .37$) and 2006 ($\chi^2 = 5.4$, $pr = .25$).
*$p < .05$.

The data from Table 2 show that this was not the case. The main challenger, the Alliance, had the edge over the Liberals on the tax cut issue (35% to 27%), while the Liberals had no clear advantage over the Alliance in health care, at least at the outset of the election (in the first week of the campaign, 14.6% of nonpartisan CES respondents picked the Alliance

Table 2
Issues, performance, and parties' image in the 2000 Canadian election (respondents with
no partisan affiliation only)

	Level of satisfaction[a]	Best party to handle the issue (%)				*N*
		Liberal	Alliance	NDP	Conservative	
Health care	17	16	16	28	10	860
Tax cuts	24	27	35	6	9	746
Jobs	48	37	14	10	9	691
Debt	54	27	19	3	7	1,285
Crime	38	17	25	6	7	972
International relations	55	35	6	3	11	1,285
National unity	48	48	11	5	12	725

[a]Percentage of respondents indicating that the Liberals' performance was "very good" or "good."
Source: CES 2000.

as the party best able to improve the quality of health care, as compared to 13.9% for the
Liberals).

The importance that Canadians attached to health care put the incumbent Liberals
in a delicate situation. Canadians were quite dissatisfied with their past performance in
this issue area. According to the 2000 CES survey, less than one Canadian out of five
(17%) estimated that the performance of the Liberals was "very good" (2%) or "good"
(15%), whereas 51% said it was "not very good" and 25% believed it was "not good at all"
(these figures are for nonpartisan respondents only). An attractive strategy for the Liberals
under the circumstances was to reframe the debate in a more advantageous way. Given
the dissatisfaction among Canadians regarding the government's record on health care, the
incumbent party did not want to have the debate on this issue revolve around past perfor-
mance. Instead, the Liberals had a clear incentive to focus their message on the potentially
negative consequences of letting an Alliance government come to power and implement a
two-tier health care system. This strategy of raising the Alliance's (and Day's) negatives
had the additional advantage of preventing third-party voters from supporting the Alliance,
and of perhaps helping the Liberals gain votes from those PC or NDP supporters who
wished to protect the existing health care system.

In contrast to the Liberals, the optimal strategy for the Alliance was quite obvious.
It was to define the debate about health care in a typical reward-punishment perspective
and to go on the offensive in order to make sure that the Liberals' poor record on this
issue would be on voters' minds on polling day. The opposite occurred. The Liberals went
on the offensive about health care, and the Alliance remained relatively silent about the
issue. The next sections examine how these apparently counterintuitive strategies were
adopted.

Framing the Debate About Health Care

Previous analyses of the 2000 election showed that issue priming was part of each party's
strategy (see Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau, & Nevitte, 2002). The Liberals tried to avoid dis-
cussing the issue of ethics, remained relatively silent about crime, and focused on their
demonstrated ability to manage the economy. Conversely, the Alliance made efforts to
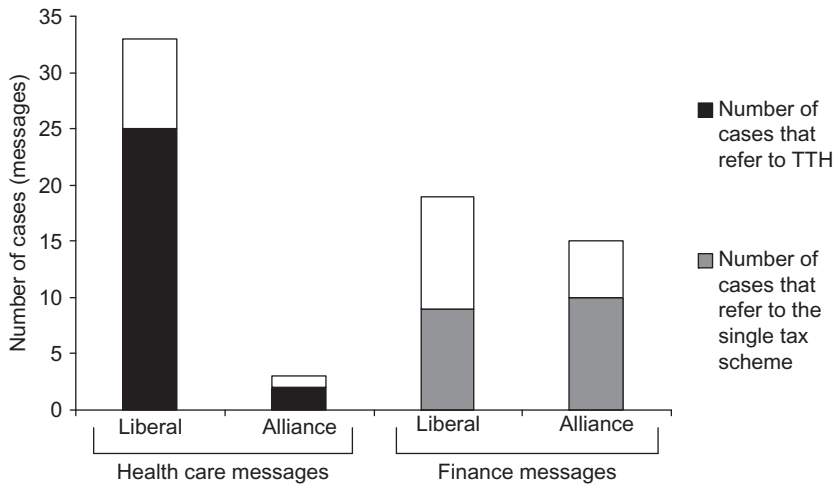
Figure 1. Health care and public finances in Liberal and Alliance press releases and TV ads.

bring crime and ethics to the forefront, limited its critiques regarding the economy, and tried to position itself as the taxpayers' party.

Two issues were of particular interest during the 2000 campaign: health care and tax cuts. Health care was at the top of the voter agenda, and the Alliance entered the election with strong credentials on taxation. Moreover, low levels of satisfaction with the government's record on both issues made the Liberals vulnerable and created opportunities for the main opposition party to secure electoral gains. Despite these unfavorable circumstances, the Liberals did not remain silent on these issues, whereas the Alliance appeared unable to turn the debates about them to their advantage.

Figure 1 reports the distribution of the press releases and TV ads of the Liberals and the Alliance about health care and taxation (see Appendix A for coding details).[5] Two things stand out from the data about health care. The first is the focus on health care in the Liberal campaign and the Alliance's surprisingly low profile on this issue. The traces left by Liberal efforts to reframe the debate about health care are also evident. Most Liberal campaign messages about health care (76%) focused on the two-tier health care proposal attributed to the Alliance (hereafter TTH) rather than on Liberal achievements (which mostly related to funding) or the state of health care in general.[6]

By centering the discussion on the TTH proposal, the Liberal party avoided a situation where it would have to defend its record before the voters. The TTH debate helped the Liberals to bolster their image as champions of universal health care—a strong symbol at the heart of the Canadian model of a compassionate society. The TTH debate lent itself well to the use of messages calling upon voters' negative emotions. The Liberal strategy was to instill fear in voters that the Alliance and its leader were hiding their true intention to establish an American-style health system in Canada, and then exploit this anxiety to lead voters toward a position of risk aversion that would lead them to reject the Alliance and support the Liberals or a third party. This strategy was exemplified by Liberal attack messages, many of which aimed to evoke fear and uncertainty around the Alliance's alleged support of a two-tier system with words such as "It scares me," "Seniors are feeling really threatened," and "I believe someone who gets sick in Newfoundland will have to worry about whether they will be better off than in Ontario or BC." The deputy Liberal campaign

chair himself confirmed in an interview that the infusion of negative emotions was part of the Liberal strategy: "There were fears about Stockwell Day, and we just ensured that people knew about those fears."[7]

An additional strategic advantage of the TTH question was that it resonated well not only with Liberal supporters, but also with Progressive-Conservative and New Democratic voters. To quote once again the deputy Liberal campaign chair: "You try to build the largest coalition that will oppose your challenger. . . . Two-tier health could build the largest possible coalition against Stockwell Day's vision."[8] By depicting the Alliance as having a radical hidden agenda on health care and old age pensions, the Liberals were alerting third-party supporters (not only Liberal supporters) of the danger involved in voting for the Alliance, thereby dividing support for the main opposition.[9]

Overall, the traces left by the campaigns lend support to the idea that the Liberals tried to change the voters' decision-making framework regarding the health care issue. Thanks to the TTH counterattack, Canadians, instead of thinking about the opportunity to "throw the rascals out," would be faced with the decision to "pick the lesser of two evils." They were left to choose between returning the Liberals to power despite their poor record on health care or voting for the Alliance and risk that this party might try to implement an unwanted, American-style health care system in Canada. Following this new perspective, the outcome in question was not the government's past record but rather the potential consequences of the opposition's proposals. The dominant mood shifted from anger to fear. Moreover, party images changed as a result of this new perspective. Instead of being seen as poor managers, the Liberals positioned themselves as the compassionate champions of the Canadian universal health care system. The Alliance, on the other hand, lost its position as the competent alternative to the Liberals on the health care question and found itself painted as a threat to one of Canada's most important symbols.

Alliance strategists did frame the tax issue with their single tax scheme proposal, and they were relatively successful at drawing public attention to the Liberals' mixed record and credibility deficit on tax cuts (see the low level of satisfaction in Table 2). The Liberals responded by trying to dramatize the potential consequences of the Alliance proposal. Moreover, they presented themselves as champions of the existing, *fair* progressive taxation system in Canada—as opposed to the *unfair* Alliance proposal, which would allegedly benefit the well-to-do (for a similar argument in the U.S. context, see Sides, 2006, p. 428).

The tax issue aside, the Alliance campaign was flawed in a few other ways. First, early in the campaign the Alliance failed to engage with the Liberals on the issue of health care from the perspective of the government's poor performance. As a result, they left the field open to the Liberals, who successfully framed the debate about health as a referendum on the preservation of the Canadian health care system. Accused of having a "hidden agenda" to implement a TTH system, the Alliance was constantly on the defensive about the health care issue, torn between the option of responding to Liberal attacks and being almost silent on the topic.[10]

A second problem with Alliance positioning during the campaign is related to the party's approach to the taxation issue. The Alliance tried to gain from its advantage on this issue and emphasized public finances in its issue-based campaign messages. But picking a favorable issue does not mean that a party will necessarily benefit from the debate around it. The optimal strategy for the Alliance would have been, as for health care, to discuss the Liberal record on taxation. Instead, the Alliance put forward a controversial single tax scheme, giving the Liberals the opportunity to counterattack and present themselves as champions of fair taxation.[11] Finally, the Alliance campaign was made less effective because of the poor timing of their messages. Attacking the Liberals on ethical grounds

could have been the breakthrough that the Alliance needed. However, previous studies of the 2000 election have shown that the ethics issue came onto the agenda too late in the campaign and therefore did not have a detectable effect on the vote (see Figure 2b and Blais et al., 2002).

Getting the Message Across

To succeed, parties should be able to make their messages visible to voters as early and as consistently as possible during campaigns. Figure 2 reports the weekly changes in emphasis of the two-tier proposal, the single tax scheme, and the ethics question in the press releases of the Liberals and the Alliance. In the figure, "2-tier" refers to statements against TTH in Liberal campaign documents; "tax" refers to support for fair taxation from the Liberals and support for a single tax proposal from the Alliance. We have also included the ethics issue in the figure. Ethics was at the top of the Alliance agenda in the final weeks of the campaign.

We see some movement in the salience of these questions in Liberal press releases. The single tax scheme was the most salient issue position at the beginning of the campaign, but its importance declined dramatically in subsequent weeks. The decline in emphasis on fair tax (and on proposals to use budget surpluses for new spending programs) coincided with a rise in the salience of statements against TTH. The TTH theme increased substantially in the second week of the campaign. It became the dominant message during the third week and remained at the top of the Liberal agenda for the rest of the campaign.

Looking at movement over time in the salience of issue positions in the press releases of the Alliance, we see first that the health care issue was rarely addressed (only twice) during the campaign. The single tax scheme dominated the press releases of the Alliance at the beginning of the campaign, as it did in the press releases of the Liberals. It declined over time as ethics became the top issue in Alliance press releases toward the end of the campaign. Unlike the press releases of the Liberals, those of the Alliance failed to stabilize over time around a particular question. Our content analysis of the campaign messages of

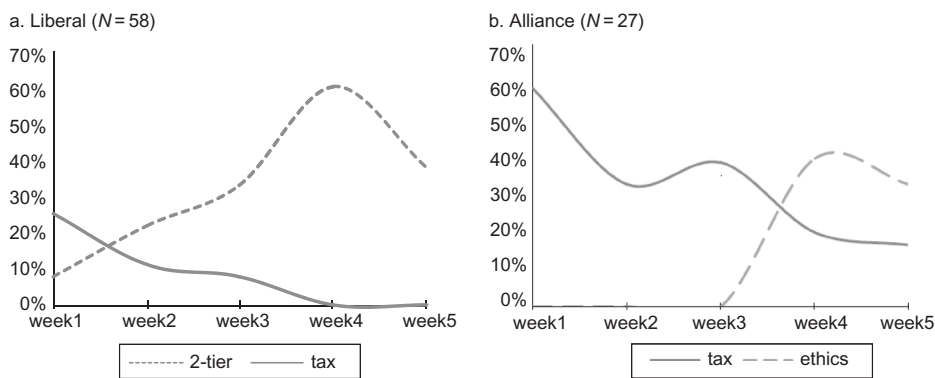**Figure 2.** Weekly change in emphasis of TTH, single tax, and ethics in Liberal and Alliance press releases during the 2000 election campaign (in percentage of all press releases presenting issue frames). *Source:* CES 2000. The time series have five points (weeks), and the lines in the diagrams have been smoothed. The "2-tier" frame includes health *and* old age pension, and "tax" refers to single tax vs. fair tax.

the parties suggests that Liberal strategists gave their campaign a clear strategic direction in the second week of the campaign, which consisted of attacking the Alliance on the issue that was most important to Canadians.

Change over time in the emphasis placed on various questions during a campaign is to be expected since parties have some flexibility in shaping the debates that address important issues. The Liberals quickly took advantage of the debate on the implementation of a TTH system in their campaign and organized their strategy around it. By contrast, the campaign messages of the Alliance give the impression of a directionless campaign. Facing a barrage of Liberal attacks, Alliance strategists looked uncertain about how to respond and seemed unable to determine which issue would replace health care as the focal point of their campaign. Indeed, it appears that the Alliance spent much more time on the defensive, having to respond to the tactical moves of the Liberals instead of imposing its own perspective on the issues.

Which party was more successful in making its case in the media? Figure 3 reports weekly changes in the coverage of TTH, the single tax, and the ethics issues in TV nightly news and in two English-language daily newspapers. The data in Figure 3 can be compared to the data in Figure 2 to determine whether the media defined the debate on health care using a performance or a policy frame.

There is evidence that the media affected the way Canadians perceived the "state of health care" throughout the year 2000 (Blais et al., 2002; Blidook, 2008; Maioni & Martin, 2004). Not surprisingly, the Canadian media continued to talk about the state of health care during the election campaign, but they also talked about TTH.[12] The TTH question started to appear in the media during the second week of the electoral campaign. The trigger was a story published in the October 31 issue of the *Globe and Mail* in which it was reported that the Alliance favored allowing the provinces to expand the use of private clinics if they so wished. The next day, the story was reported in news outlets across Canada, and it grew over the next few days, so much so that TTH was, for a time, the top issue in the written media and the TV news. It remained at the top of the media agenda until the final days of the campaign, when it was overtaken by ethics; it was probably still fresh in the minds of many voters on polling day.
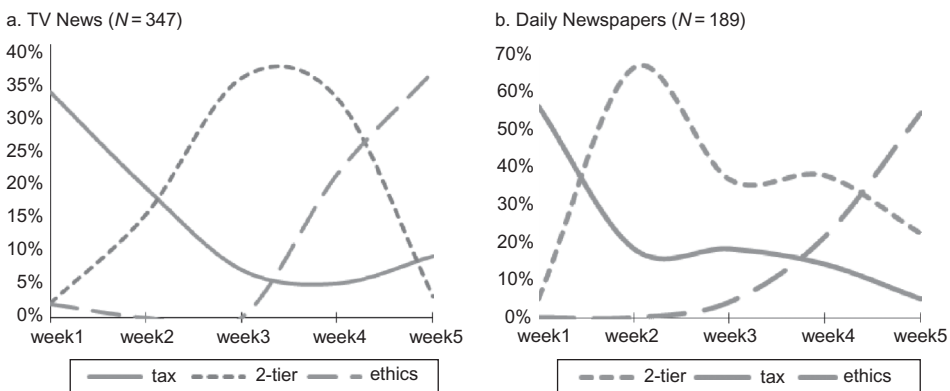

Figure 3. Weekly change in coverage of TTH, single tax, and ethics in TV news and in written media during the 2000 election campaign (in percentage of all news presenting issue frames). *Sources:* CES 2000 for TV news; authors' own calculations for the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*.

A comparison of Figures 2 and 3 shows a striking resemblance between the pattern of media coverage and that of the Liberal party campaign messages. Conversely, there is no similarity between media coverage and Alliance campaign messages, aside from an increase in coverage of the ethics issue near the end of the campaign. This suggests that the Liberals were successful in having the media publicize their TTH message, whereas the Alliance was unsuccessful in its attempts to have the media focus on the single tax message beyond the second week of the campaign (although it remains to be seen whether or not higher visibility of this message would have benefited the Alliance). The issue coverage of the media was also advantageous to the Liberals in comparison with third parties. The fact that the media did not focus on the ability of the Liberals to adequately finance health care came as a disappointment to the NDP. It was only toward the end of the campaign that the media focused on the ethics issue, which was clearly advantageous to all parties except the Liberals. But this question appeared too late in the campaign to influence citizen perceptions of the candidates or vote choice, as shown below.

Did the TTH Proposal Influence Voters?

So far this article has shown that the Liberals emphasized the TTH proposal more than any other issue position in their press releases and TV ads and that the debate around this proposal was also more widely diffused in the news media than any other policy debate during the campaign. Did the diffusion of the TTH proposal in the media reinforce voter perceptions that the Alliance favored TTH, as intended by Liberal strategists? In the affirmative, how unique was this reinforcing media effect? Was a media effect present only with TTH? Or did it also manifest itself on other issue positions?

To examine the impact of the TTH proposal on voters, we first estimated the effect of media exposure on awareness among voters of the two most publicized issue positions during the campaigns—the TTH proposal and the single tax scheme—keeping constant the usual socioeconomic indicators (age, gender, education, income), region of residence, partisan identification, and level of interest in politics among CES survey respondents (see Appendix B for a definition of the variables used in the analyses and in Tables 3 and 4). The results of these analyses support the notion that the media made voters more inclined to believe that the Alliance was favorable to the TTH system. Media exposure is statistically linked to this perception. However, media exposure has no impact on awareness among voters that the Alliance advocated a single tax scheme or on other less frequently covered proposals made by other parties during the campaign.[13]

Thus, the empirical evidence suggests that media exposure increased perceptions among voters that the Alliance favored TTH (no other perception of party issue positions was influenced in this way). The next question is whether this had any impact on voter opinions regarding Alliance leader Stockwell Day.[14] The TTH proposal was used by the Liberals to portray Stockwell Day as an extremist leader who supported policy positions that were far more conservative than the average Canadian would be comfortable with. It was also used to demonstrate that he was an unreliable leader with a "hidden agenda" about health care.[15] The TTH idea was used as well to demarcate the individualistic, market-oriented values of Stockwell Day from the Liberal vision of a more egalitarian and compassionate society.

The results reported in Table 3 (columns 1, 2, and 3) show that the TTH proposal proved to be an efficient tool for darkening the image of the Alliance leader in the mind of the public.[16] Though other policies contributed to Day's extremist image—notably abortion and the single tax scheme—the TTH proposal also had an important (and more robust)

Table 3

Perceptions and thermometer evaluation of Stockwell Day: Multivariate analyses

	Extremist		Trusted		Compassionate		Stockwell Day		Stockwell Day (low)		Stockwell Day (high)	
Constant	−2.19	(.59)**	−1.50	(.74)*	−0.90	(.78)	45.67	(5.73)**	36.90	(9.19)**	54.62	(7.34)**
Age	−0.02	(.01)**	−0.01	(.01)	0.00	(.01)	0.05	(0.06)	−0.08	(0.09)	0.05	(0.07)
Gender	0.24	(.17)	−0.06	(.22)	−0.34	(.24)	1.14	(1.62)	4.15	(2.73)	−1.03	(2.03)
Education	1.79	(.41)**	−0.32	(.52)	−2.48	(.57)**	−5.32	(4.00)	4.44	(6.78)	−10.89	(4.98)*
Income	0.32	(.26)	0.11	(.33)	0.06	(.36)	5.26	(2.55)*	8.83	(4.33)*	4.22	(3.16)
Region												
Atlantic	0.16	(.23)	0.02	(.35)	−0.36	(.38)	−0.76	(2.38)	5.16	(3.99)	−2.69	(3.00)
Prairies	0.46	(.30)	−0.23	(.39)	−0.57	(.44)	−0.99	(2.80)	4.70	(4.78)	−3.31	(3.43)
Alberta/BC	0.08	(.19)	0.20	(.24)	−0.23	(.26)	0.30	(1.85)	0.86	(3.15)	1.00	(2.30)
Party identification												
Alliance	−1.61	(.27)**	2.95	(.32)**	2.10	(.34)**	39.24	(2.55)**	42.31	(4.22)**	36.01	(3.20)**
PC	−0.31	(.29)	0.39	(.43)	−0.18	(.52)	8.85	(2.91)**	4.87	(4.92)	10.13	(3.58)**
Independent	−0.42	(.21)*	0.01	(.27)	0.11	(.28)	5.58	(1.99)**	1.47	(3.35)	6.96	(2.49)**
Liberal	0.10	(.23)	0.03	(.36)	−0.37	(.40)	1.40	(2.20)	−1.13	(3.66)	2.11	(2.75)
Issues												
Performance	0.06	(.25)	−0.37	(.32)	−0.19	(.34)	0.29	(2.49)	0.84	(4.14)	0.11	(3.16)
Single tax	0.80	(.17)**	0.28	(.22)	−0.10	(.24)	−0.83	(1.65)	−0.16	(2.80)	−1.96	(2.05)
Abortion	1.58	(.34)**	−0.01	(.45)	0.54	(.48)	−7.68	(3.45)*	−9.93	(5.61)*	−5.68	(4.36)
Two-tier system	1.24	(.19)**	−1.02	(.23)**	−0.87	(.24)**	−9.49	(1.87)**	−4.24	(3.06)	−12.80	(2.37)**
Health importance	0.21	(.17)	−0.24	(.23)	−0.22	(.25)	−1.69	(1.65)	1.15	(2.85)	−3.49	(2.03)*
N	921		1,032		1,032		987		370		603	
Pseudo/adj. R^2	.23		.35		.25		.35		.31		.39	

Note. All values are logit estimations except for the last three columns (OLS).

$*p < .05$; $**p < .01$ (one-tailed).

Source: CES 2000.

impact on the perceptions among voters that the Alliance leader was out of touch with the values of the average Canadian. Furthermore, the TTH frame is the only one that is negatively and significantly linked to perceptions that Day was a trusted and compassionate leader. Overall, the TTH proposal appears to have been a powerful determinant of many dimensions of Stockwell Day's image.

The key question, however, is whether the overall evaluations of Stockwell Day were affected by the TTH proposal. To assess this question, we use as a dependent variable a thermometer scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means that the respondent does not like Stockwell Day at all and 100 means that the respondent likes him very much. The results, shown in column 4 of Table 3, clearly demonstrate the strength of the partisan effect on thermometer evaluations of Stockwell Day. They also highlight the impact of voter perceptions regarding the positions taken by the Alliance on issues.[17] Everything else being equal, a belief that the Alliance wishes abortion to be made difficult reduces Day's thermometer score by almost 8 points. A belief that the Alliance favors TTH reduces Day's thermometer score by an even larger percentage (almost 10 points).[18] Voter perceptions of Liberal health performance, of the Alliance's position on single tax, and of the importance of health all have smaller and statistically nonsignificant effects on Stockwell Day's thermometer score.

As previously noted, the media form a crucial interface between parties and voters in the course of framing campaign battles. Accordingly, we should expect the impact of the well-covered TTH proposal to be stronger among those voters who were more exposed to the media during the campaign. The results in columns 5 and 6 of Table 3 correspond to the equation in column 4 for voters with low and high exposure to the media, respectively. The differences between the two groups are striking. In the low-exposure group, the impact of the TTH proposal is not significant. While this is likely due to the relatively low number of cases, note that the impact is also not very high (-4 points). Conversely, in the high-exposure group the impact of the same proposal is significant and reaches almost 13 points.[19] This could be a side effect of the fact that highly exposed voters were the only ones who used issues in constructing their perceptions of Stockwell Day. However, this scenario can be ruled out in part by the negative coefficient for abortion—an issue that received limited coverage during the campaign.

The ultimate objective of the Liberal strategy was to influence vote choice. Did the TTH proposal alter vote choice either directly or indirectly through voter opinions of Stockwell Day? A multinomial probit regression analysis makes it possible to measure the impact of the health issue on the vote by taking into account all of the party choices available to the voters (see Alvarez & Nagler, 1998; Greene, 2000). Table 4 presents the results. The coefficients indicate the likelihood of voting for a given party versus the likelihood of voting for the Alliance, given the effect of the independent variable.[20] The coefficients associated with the control variables reveal the underlying regional tensions in Canadian federal elections. Moreover, the coefficients for party identification reflect the conventional interpretation of the position of the parties on the ideological spectrum, with the Alliance on the right and the NDP on the left.

Looking at the issue variables included in the model, we see first that voter satisfaction with regard to government performance in health had no statistically significant effect. This clearly suggests that the Liberal government successfully managed to frame the health debate in such a way that it would skirt their poor record in office. Also noteworthy is the fact that the perceived importance attached to the health care issue did not influence vote choice. By contrast, the coefficients for the TTH variable are all significant, confirming that the incumbent Liberals were successful in linking this perception to voter support (or lack thereof) for the Alliance.

Table 4
Determinants of the vote for the Alliance: Multinomial probit regression analysis

	Liberal vs. Alliance		PC vs. Alliance		NDP vs. Alliance	
Constant	2.530	(1.160)	−0.030	(1.190)	2.290	(1.370)
Age	−0.000	(0.010)	0.000	(0.010)	−0.010	(0.010)
Gender	−0.080	(0.270)	0.010	(0.290)	0.120	(0.350)
Education	−0.470	(0.660)	0.920	(0.690)	1.640	(0.850)*
Income	0.360	(0.410)	0.590	(0.430)	−0.010	(0.540)
Region						
Atlantic	0.560	(0.400)	1.710	(0.400)**	1.650	(0.480)**
Prairies	0.020	(0.500)	0.650	(0.480)	1.470	(0.550)**
Alberta/BC	−0.670	(0.290)*	−0.700	(0.310)*	−0.630	(0.390)
Party identification						
Alliance	−1.660	(0.530)**	−1.600	(0.530)**	−3.530	(0.760)**
PC	−1.640	(0.530)**	−0.350	(0.510)	−3.310	(0.630)**
Independent	−1.140	(0.380)**	−0.820	(0.400)*	−2.770	(0.480)**
Liberal	0.340	(0.400)	−0.340	(0.440)	−2.560	(0.500)**
Issue						
Performance	0.360	(0.470)	−0.420	(0.460)	−0.120	(0.570)
Corruption	−0.170	(0.540)	−0.560	(0.570)	−0.260	(0.670)
Single tax	−0.210	(0.270)	−0.040	(0.280)	0.080	(0.340)
Abortion	0.770	(0.580)	1.060	(0.600)*	0.430	(0.750)
Two-tier system	0.540	(0.280)*	0.720	(0.290)**	0.770	(0.400)*
Health importance	−0.250	(0.280)	−0.450	(0.290)	−0.140	(0.340)
Leader						
Day	−0.067	(0.008)**	−0.049	(0.008)**	−0.069	(0.009)**
Clark	−0.008	(0.007)	0.024	(0.007)**	−0.014	(0.008)*
Chrétien	0.024	(0.007)**	−0.008	(0.006)	−0.006	(0.008)
McDonough	0.019	(0.007)**	0.012	(0.007)*	0.053	(0.010)**

Note. $N = 712$; pseudo $R^2 = .59$.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$ (one-tailed).
Source: CES 2000.

The coefficients for the impact of the thermometer evaluations of the party leaders are most revealing. The Liberal strategy was to discredit Stockwell Day and to make sure that his negative image would influence the choice of all voters. Results presented in Table 4 show that this strategy was highly effective. First, a negative evaluation of Stockwell Day significantly affects the probability of voting for the Alliance relative to all other parties. Furthermore, the coefficients associated with Stockwell Day's thermometer evaluation are of systematically higher value than the thermometer coefficients for the other party leaders, including the thermometers measuring voters' attitudes toward their own party leaders. For example, the absolute weight of the coefficient for Day in the first column of Table 4, estimating the probability of supporting the Liberals over the Alliance (.067), is more than twice the weight of the coefficient for Chrétien (.024). The framing of the health issue

seems to have played a decisive role in the 2000 federal election campaign in Canada, just as the incumbent Liberals had intended.[21]

Due to its intense mediatization, we should expect that the direct effect of the TTH proposal on the vote grew with media exposure. To test this hypothesis, we estimated the models in Table 4 for the same subgroups of low and highly exposed voters previously used for analyzing the thermometer evaluation of Stockwell Day. The differences among these groups are clear. Whereas none of the coefficients for the TTH variables approach significance among the low-exposure group, all three coefficients are statistically significant and substantively meaningful in the high-exposure group.[22]

The multinomial regression also makes it possible to calculate how Alliance losses due to the framing of the health debate were distributed among the other parties. The comparison between the support actually obtained by the parties in the 2000 election and their simulated support—that they would have obtained if the impact of the TTH question on the vote had been zero—suggests that the Liberals benefited significantly from the debate on this question (they would have lost 2.6 percentage points in the popular vote without the TTH proposal), while the Alliance suffered the most (it would have gained 7.2 percentage points in the popular vote without the TTH question). The combined difference between the Liberal gains and the Alliance losses (4.6 percentage points) benefited the other parties (2.8 and 1.8 points went to the Progressive-Conservatives and the NDP, respectively). The data also show that this effect was crucial for consolidating the majority seat share of the incumbent Liberals in the 2000 election. Without the effect of the TTH proposal, the Liberal parliamentary group would have been reduced from 172 to 154 MPs (that is, just three seats over the required majority of 151), and the Alliance deputation would have increased from 66 to 92. Moreover, only 8 NDP and 9 Progressive-Conservative MPs would have been elected (instead of 13 and 12, respectively), less than the 12 members required to obtain official party status in the Canadian House of Commons.[23]

Conclusion

Rigorous assessments of the impact of issues during elections require an intensive study of the interplay between campaign strategies, media coverage, and voter behavior. Progressing toward this goal necessitates a better integration of the contributions from the various research fields that study elections. This is what we have tried to accomplish in this piece. First, we combined insights from the campaign strategies literature with previous work on media effects to show how the framing of debates about important issues can be decisive. Second, we applied this idea to the study of an exemplary case, namely the 2000 Canadian federal election.

Our work carries two broad implications. From a methodological point of view, it illustrates the benefits of case studies for getting a better understanding of the multifaceted aspects of strategic communications during electoral campaigns. From a theoretical point of view, it posits that the constraints faced by parties in selecting campaign issues create incentives to adopt mixed strategies aimed at making voters think about certain issues and/or think about them in certain ways. This suggests that an incumbent plagued by a poor record on a dominant issue can contemplate a few proven, winning strategies: The incumbent can either try to redirect voter attention toward *other* issues (Vavreck, 2009) or seek instead to "frame the debate" about the *same* issue in a favorable way.

These ideas were developed and used to understand how the incumbent Liberal government successfully "framed the debate" about the health issue that dominated the agenda

of the 2000 Canadian federal election. By following the tracks left by the communication strategies of the Liberal and Alliance parties, we were able to reconstruct the tactical agenda of the campaign and examine its effects on voter opinions and choices.

The results show that the way in which debates on important issues are framed, whether performance-based or policy-oriented for instance, can significantly change voter decision making. The essential goal of this research was to better understand the circumstances under which such framing can take place and with what effects, particularly in the realistic setting of actual electoral campaigns. Pursuing this effort, by investigating whether such strategies are commonplace under circumstances similar to those of the 2000 Canadian election analyzed here, will allow for the full development of a theory of "strategic issue framing" that will complement the well-studied notion of "strategic issue priming."[24]

Notes

1. For evidence showing that the 2000 election was more issue-oriented than other contests, see Dornan and Pyman (2001, p. 208).

2. Our study uses the 2000 CES survey conducted by the Institute for Social Research at York University and Jolicoeur & Associés. It includes a rolling cross-section survey ($n = 3,651$) and a postelection survey ($n = 2,862$). The data from content analyses of the campaign documents can be found on the CES Web site (http://ces-eec.mcgill.ca/surveys.htm#2000). The province of Quebec has been left out of this study because the 2000 election in this province was essentially fought between the Liberal party and the separatist Bloc Québécois on the issue of the future of an independent Quebec.

3. Recent empirical work also supports the view that candidates engage in dialogue about issues during campaigns. Sigelman and Buell (2004), for instance, have demonstrated that the level of issue convergence in presidential campaigns is high, slightly over 75%, and concluded that "selective emphasis, issue ownership, dominance/dispersion, and orthogonal argument . . . can only explain why so little, not so much, convergence occurs; they start at or near zero and provide no route to 75 on the convergence scale" (p. 659). Similarly, Sides (2006), drawing on a large database of candidate advertisements from the 1998 House and Senate campaigns, concluded that "party ownership's impact is demonstrated to be weak: candidates are more willing to 'trespass' or talk about the other party's issues than previous literature has found" (p. 407; for similar conclusions, see Geer, 1998; Aldrich & Griffin, 2003; Petrocik, Benoit, & Hansen, 2003; Holian, 2004; Damore, 2004, 2005).

4. There are clear reasons why the Liberals did not fight the election on the favorable issues of national unity, international relations, and the debt. International relations was not high on the voters' agenda as measured by "most important problem" surveys. No one wanted to talk about national unity so soon after the 1995 referendum on Quebec secession. Finally, the Liberal advantage over the Alliance on the debt issue was small. In addition, the debt issue was linked to the Liberal weakness on health; it was fighting the debt during the 1990s that led to the drastic drop in health spending at the root of the health problem in the first place. The Liberal strategy was thus predicated on the fact that the issues on which they were leading were not available.

5. Because of the limited importance of political advertisements in Canada, we focused on party media strategy (press releases) and media coverage (televised news and newspapers). Available evidence confirms that the televised ads aired by parties were consistent with the orientation of their press releases. Half of the English-language Liberal TV ads were attacks against the Alliance, most of which were based on TTH. The other half came in the form of promotion of universal health care, fair taxes, and education. Blais et al. (2002) noted that "the Liberals put even more emphasis on health in their ads than in their press releases, and their line of attack was much Stockwell Day and the two-tiered system" (p. 30).

6. As a matter of fact, Liberal campaign strategists apparently found the general theme of a two-tier frame so useful for attacking the Alliance that they used it five times near the end of the campaign

on a nonhealth issue to claim that the Alliance favored a two-tier old age pension system. If old age pension is added to health, the number of Liberal press releases and TV ads using the two-tier frame jumps to 30 (that is, 36% of the 83 issue-based Liberal campaign messages).

7. Personal interview, December 2006.

8. Personal interview, December 2006.

9. Liberal attacks against the Alliance on TTH were also consistent with attacks from the Progressive-Conservative party. The NDP, on the other hand, reserved its attacks on health for the Liberals, accusing them of not having spent enough on health.

10. According to our sources, Stockwell Day made the decision to address the TTH question during the leaders' debate entirely on his own and against the counsel of some of his advisers. Aside from Day's intervention during the televised debate, there were only limited attempts by the Alliance to counter Liberal allegations of a hidden two-tier health agenda. The Alliance campaign co-chair conceded in an interview that these initiatives were "probably counterproductive." Far from improving the Alliance's image in the eyes of the voters, they attracted additional public attention to the TTH topic from which the Alliance "had tried hard to distance itself" (personal interviews, December 2006).

11. Other factors may explain why the impact of the battle over the tax cuts issue has been limited. First, the issue was not as important to voters as health care. Second, neither party promoted this issue consistently during the campaign and, as a result, its visibility in the media was limited, especially at the end of the campaign (see Figures 2 and 3). Furthermore, universal health care is a more powerful symbol of what it is to be Canadian than a fair tax system. Finally, the privatization of health care had much less popular appeal than tax cuts, and the Liberals could not claim that the Alliance had a hidden agenda on taxation (contrary to health care) because the Alliance's election platform did contain a single tax pledge.

12. Traces that show that the Liberals successfully "reframed" the debate about health care during the 2000 campaign can be found in the media. An online search of the use of the term "health care funding" in articles by the *Globe and Mail* for the year 2000 gave 77 monthly mentions on average from January to August, 95 mentions in September, 101 in October, 187 in November, and 79 in December. The campaign started in late October and lasted throughout November. The increase in November was expected and is easily explained by the election campaign. A similar online search of the term "two-tier health" gave a sudden and unexpected increase from less than 3 monthly mentions from January to September to 12 in October and 149 in November, and down again to only 4 mentions in December. This finding and the data in Figures 2 and 3 suggest that the Liberals were relatively successful at getting their message across in the media. The reasons why it happened are unclear. Among possible explanations are the facts that the TTH proposal was quite unpopular among the public and that the Alliance's position on this question was somewhat ambiguous. Putting the TTH story in the public domain allowed the media to position themselves as guardians of the public's interest, which may explain their willingness to cover this topic extensively. Further work is required to arrive at a satisfactory account of the media's motivations during the 2000 election.

13. The coefficients for the media exposure variable are .54 (.29) ($p < .05$) for TTH and .24 (.18) for the single tax scheme. Complete results for these equations as well as other results showing that media exposure did not increase voter knowledge of other issue positions are available upon request.

14. The TTH proposal has also influenced the image of the parties. The proportion of respondents selecting the Alliance as the "best party to improve health care" between the first and the last week of the campaign decreased significantly (-6.0 points) at the benefit of its three main rivals, the Liberals ($+1.6$), the NDP ($+4.3$), and the Progressive-Conservatives ($+3.3$). Also revealing is the fact that voter evaluations of the Liberal record on health care remained essentially the same. Both results are consistent with our argument. Since the government's record was barely discussed during the campaign, it is not surprising that voter assessments about it did not change. On the contrary, the widely covered debate about the two-tier system contributed to a change in party reputations regarding health care.

15. According to our interviewees, the Liberal strategy was devised to provoke specific thoughts about Stockwell Day, such as "this guy is scary, he has a hidden agenda" (personal interview, October 2006).

16. The high proportion of voters who believed that Day was an extremist (47%), as compared to those believing that he was inspiring confidence (14%) or was a compassionate leader (10%), is telling in itself.

17. The argument that voters' evaluations of party leaders are conditioned by their reaction to policy issues was presented by Miller and Shanks (1996) and was applied to the Canadian case by Blais et al. (2002).

18. The absence of the TTH variable in the pre-election questionnaire made it impossible to directly examine whether the impact of this variable grew over time. Given the impact of the TTH variable on Day's evaluations, we turned to an indirect test and checked if the effect of these perceptions on the vote increased as polling day drew near. The results confirmed our hypothesis. The magnitude of the thermometer variable's coefficient for the Liberal/Alliance contrast almost doubled between the first and the last day of the campaign.

19. Other group splits produced similar results. With the sample divided into three groups, low, medium, and heavily exposed, the coefficients for the TTH variable are -4.4 (3.4), -9.5 (3.3) ($p < .01$), and -14.9 (2.6) ($p < .01$), respectively. We also estimated models including interactive terms for all of the issues in the equations, using the continuous measure for media exposure from Table 2, with and without additional multiplicative terms between health importance and the health frames. In both models, the only additional variable that is significant is the multiplicative term between media exposure and the TTH variable, -25.8 (8.3) ($p < .01$).

20. With a dependent variable of multiple categories, analysis may be carried out with multinomial logit (MNL) or multinomial probit (MNP). Here we report the MNP results, which in fact turn out to be the same (in terms of substantive and statistical significance). This outcome is not especially surprising given that the two approaches differ mainly regarding the distributional assumption surrounding the error term. (MNL assumes a logistic distribution, while MNP assumes a normal one. As Greene [2000] notes, "it is difficult to justify the choice of one distribution over the other . . . in most applications it seems not to make much difference" [p. 815].) MNP is sometimes used, in preference to MNL, because it does not directly invoke the irrelevance of independent alternatives (IIA) assumption. If the IIA assumption is not valid, then MNP might be preferred; however, this then poses the practical problem of imposing enough restrictions on the covariance matrix that identification, and hence estimation, is achieved (Greene, 2000, p. 865). However, if the IIA assumption is not violated, as appears to be the case here, then the IIA restrictions are appropriate, and estimation can go forward.

21. Additional analyses show that the TTH frame also had a small but significant impact on the evaluations of Jean Chrétien ($+3.5$) and Joe Clark ($+4.1$). These effects increase the impact of the TTH variable on the Alliance vote from 6.6 to 7.1 points (which would have reduced the number of elected MPs to 148 for the Liberals and deprived them of their majority status in Parliament; see Note 23). Although these effects reinforce our point that the Liberal TTH strategy has been successfully implemented in a multiparty perspective, we choose to stick with the more conservative estimate of the impact of TTH on vote choice.

22. The coefficients and standard errors for the TTH variable are $-.34$ (.85), .80 (.88), and $-.51$ (1.31) for the low-exposure group and 1.54 (.54) ($p < .01$), 1.05 (.54) ($p < .01$), and 1.94 (.78) ($p < .01$) for the high-exposure group, respectively. Interactive models reveal significant multiplicative terms (Media Exposure $\times$ TTH) for the Liberals and the NDP equations (at the 99% level) and a correctly signed, though not significant, coefficient for the Conservative equation. None of the interactive terms between media exposure and the other issues approach significance.

23. There were 301 contested seats across Canada in the 2000 election (75 in Quebec). The required number of MPs was therefore 151 to form a majority government. The composition of Parliament after the election was as follows: Liberals, 172 (including 36 from Quebec); Alliance, 66; Progressive-Conservatives, 12 (including one from Quebec); New Democrats, 13; and Bloc, 38 (all from Quebec). The simulated results are as follows: 154 seats for the Liberals (-18), 92 for the Alliance ($+26$), 9 for the Progressive-Conservatives (-3), 8 for the New Democrats (-5), and 38 for

the Bloc Québécois (with no change, since Quebec is excluded from the analysis). These results are significant given the context of the 2000 election. Pre-election polls indicated that the Liberals would emerge as the winner. The question was not whether the Liberals would win the election, but whether they would win with a majority of seats and whether the NDP and the Progressive-Conservatives would hold enough seats to maintain official party status in Parliament.

24. The theoretical underpinnings for the elaboration of such a theory can be found in the pioneering work of Iyengar (1991), Nelson et al. (1997), and Druckman (2001; see also Chong & Druckman, 2007).

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Appendix A: Content Analysis Methodology

Each party press release and TV ad constitutes a case. Individual releases and ads served as the unit of analysis. The method of data classification follows the one used in the press releases and TV ads content analyses parts of the 2000 Canadian Election Study, except that we are coding frames (i.e., particular ways to discuss issues), not issues. Each press release and TV ad is classified in the frame category that is profiled mainly in the document. Messages that do not profile an issue frame are classified in the "not an issue frame" category. We identified 117 Liberal and Alliance messages each focusing on one of 14 distinct frames. The 14 frames are as follows, in decreasing order of frequency: two-tier health (prospective), single tax (prospective), state of public finances (retrospective), access to abortion (prospective), ethics (retrospective), two-tier old age pension (prospective), tougher sentencing (prospective), state of health (retrospective), research (prospective), state of crime (retrospective), education (retrospective), referendums on social issues (prospective), constitution (prospective), and civil rights (prospective). Figures 1, 2, and 3 report the frames in the issues at the top of the campaign agenda. Numbers in the other issue frames are too small to report.

Coding the data for Figure 1 sometimes involved subjective judgment. To ensure a degree of reliability and to control any bias in the kind of judgmental coding involved here, each case was coded independently by two research assistants. Intercoder reliability tests produced agreement measures of 93% on average using the percentage agreement method and 77% using the more conservative Krippendorff alpha. Disagreements between the coders were then submitted to an expert arbiter to identify possible coding errors and to reconcile differences when they occurred. The same issue frame classification and intercoding reliability methodology was used to analyze the contents of TV nightly news and newspaper articles reported in Figures 2 and 3. The TV news data were obtained by reclassifying the CES data.

Appendix B: Definitions of Variables From the CES Survey

Sociodemographics: age = age in years; gender = 1 for female, 0 for male; education = 11 categories rescaled from 0 to 1; income = 10 categories rescaled from 0 to 1.

Region: Atlantic = 1 if Atlantic province, 0 otherwise; Prairies = 1 if Manitoba or Saskatchewan, 0 otherwise; Alberta/BC = 1 if Alberta or British Columbia, 0 otherwise (Ontario = reference category).

Party identification: Alliance = 1 if Alliance partisan or leaner, 0 otherwise; PC = 1 if Progressive-Conservative partisan or leaner, 0 otherwise; independent = 1 if independent, 0 otherwise; Liberal = 1 if Liberal partisan or leaner, 0 otherwise (New Democrat = reference category).

Media: an index including answers to questions on attention to news about the elections on TV over the last few days (from 0 to 10), news on the radio (from 0 to 10), and news in the newspapers (from 0 to 10), rescaled from 0 to 1.

Interest: an index including answers to questions on campaign interest (from 0 to 10), political interest in general (from 0 to 10), and how often the respondent discusses politics (not at all = 0, occasionally = 5, often = 10), rescaled from 0 to 1.

Issue: performance = 1 if respondent thinks Liberals did quite or a very good job improving health care, .5 if not a very good job, 0 if not a good job at all; corruption = 1 if respondent thinks that there has been a lot of corruption under the Liberal government, .75 if some, .5 if don't know, .25 if a little, 0 if respondent thinks that there has been none; single tax = 1 if respondent mentions Alliance as the party that promised a single tax rate, .5 if Alliance and any other mention, 0 if other answers or don't know; abortion = 1 if respondent thinks Alliance wants abortion to be very difficult, .67 if somewhat difficult, .33 if somewhat easy, 0 if very easy; two-tier system = 1 if respondent thinks Alliance favors two-tier health care system, .5 if don't know, 0 if opposes; health importance = 1 if respondent identifies health as the most important issue (response categories provided by the interviewer), 0 otherwise.

Leader: Day = feeling thermometer of Stockwell Day from 0 to 100; Clark = feeling thermometer of Joe Clark from 0 to 100; Chrétien = feeling thermometer of Jean Chrétien from 0 to 100; McDonough = feeling thermometer of Alexa McDonough from 0 to 100.

Traits: extremist = 1 if respondent identified Stockwell Day as an extremist leader, 0 otherwise; trusted = 1 if respondent identified Stockwell Day as a trustworthy leader, 0 otherwise; compassionate = 1 if respondent identified Stockwell Day as a compassionate leader, 0 otherwise.