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Who's afraid of the big bad wolf : examining attacks on Canada's federal centre-right political parties in the televised negative political advertisements between 1993 and 2006 using propaganda analysis

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WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG BAD WOLF: EXAMINING ATTACKS ON CANADA'S FEDERAL CENTRE-RIGHT POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE TELEVISED NEGATIVE POLTICAL ADVERTISEMENTS BETWEEN 1993 AND 2006 USING PROPAGANDA ANALYSIS

by

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A thesis

presented to Ryerson and York Universities

in partial fulfillment of the

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Abstract:

This thesis uses a triangulated methodology of focus groups, semiotic analysis, and content analysis to categorize and analyze the televised negative political advertisements aired during the Canadian federal elections between 1993 and 2006. How these attacks made against the conservative parties during this timeframe were interpreted by mothers of adolescent children receives particular consideration. The findings demonstrate that during this period the Canadian debate between individualism and communitarianism was prevalent in these political advertisements. It is argued that propaganda methods, namely the name calling technique, were used effectively by the left-wing parties to emphasize specific ideological traditions in conservatism and to link the conservative parties to the United States of America for strategic purposes. The author contends that political advertisements are complex expressions of a party's ideology and goals, thus this campaign tool ought to be studied more by Canadian academics.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Fred Fletcher for his helpful advice and fun stories throughout this project. As well as Greg Elmer for letting me watch YouTube videos in the Infoscape Lab. I owe Anne MacLennan particular gratitude for being so helpful under the most difficult of circumstances—she is the most dedicated educator I ever have met. Most importantly, I would like to thank my family for being a constant source of encouragement and support in all areas of my life—I could not have gotten this far without you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> Stephen Harper would have sent our troops to Iraq. He'd
> spend billions on tanks and aircraft carriers, weaken our
> gun laws and scrap the Kyoto Accord. He'd sacrifice
> Canadian style healthcare for US style tax cuts. He won't
> protect a woman's right to choose and he's prepared to
> work with the Bloc Québécois. Stephen Harper says when
> he's through with Canada we won't recognize it. You know
> what, he's right.[1]

The above quotation comes from the 2004 Liberal Party of Canada television

advertisement "The Truth." Visually, the spot flashes across time and space in an

omniscient fashion, showing grim images of tanks in the Iraqi desert, a desperate

teenaged girl in a Canadian hospital, and a heavily polluting industrial area. One of the

final frames is of a Canadian flag disintegrating in the wind, leaving no doubt that this

advertisement is meant to appear as a doomsday vision of a future Canada under a

Conservative government. Michael Schudson claims that commercial television

advertising has less influence on the public than is generally believed, because

"advertising is propaganda and everyone knows it."[2] This thesis will show in its literature

review that Canadian academics have—at some level—agreed with Schudson's

statement, as seen in the very limited amount of research conducted on negative political

advertising in Canadian federal elections. Studies of commercial advertising are an

important scholarly pursuit, but it cannot be assumed that the commercial advertising

discussed by Schudson will necessarily have the same effects as political advertising. The

viability of a representative democracy rests on the quality of communication between

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[1] Liberal Party of Canada, "The Truth," 2004, The Election Broadcasting Project Archive, York University.
[2] Michael Schudson, *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society*(New
York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1984), p. 4.

This brief analysis of one advertisement alone demonstrates the complexity of ascertaining the truth in negative political advertising. Yet despite the interesting, fruitful work that could result from studying negative political advertising, there has been limited academic study of this topic in Canada. This thesis will examine the attacks on Canada's right-of-centre political parties (Progressive Conservatives, Reform, Canadian Alliance, and Conservative Party) in the televised negative political advertisements aired in the federal elections between 1993 and 2006. The central research question of this project is: how was negative political advertising used by the major federal English-speaking parties, including the Progressive Conservatives and the Reform/Alliance when attacking each other, to make the conservative parties appear unfavourable to undecided voters? This is an important question to ask, because negative political advertising has been a prominent part of Canadian federal electioneering since the 1988 election and is not likely to disappear from the federal political scene. Additionally, Canadian conservatives were stigmatized during this era, as former key Conservative organizer, Tom Flanagan, acknowledges while discussing future strategies for the Conservative Party:

> [W]e must avoid being painted as the Great Satan of Canadian politics, as happened to the Reform Party, the Canadian Alliance, and to some extent the Conservatives in 2004. If chronically fearful moderate or left-wing voters become convinced that Conservatives are a threat to civilization as they think they know it, they are likely to vote for the Liberals rather than the NDP or Greens, because they may think only a Liberal Government can keep the Conservatives out of power.[7]

Although, Flanagan is being grandiose in his description of the extent of the aversion some Canadians have towards conservatives, he does make the valid point that a right-

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[7] Tom Flanagan, *Harper's Team: Behind the Scenes in the Conservative Rise to Power* (Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), p. 275.

wing party forming a federal government in Canada has been a considerable concern for some in this country. In part, this could be because of intense and effective negative political advertising targeting the right-leaning federal parties between 1993 and 2006. Moreover, as has already been stated, there has been little academic study of Canadian negative political advertising and even less academic consultation with citizens on their interpretation of this campaigning technique. This thesis will attempt to address these weaknesses in the literature to create a more holistic understanding of the relationship between media and politics in Canada.

Politics, by its very nature, involves heated debate about which actions, decisions, and policies will best serve a country and its people. Sometimes when these debates become too emotionally charged, their participants will devolve into *ad hominem* attacks against their opponents, accusing them of a lack of patriotism or being disconnected from the key principles and values of their country. In contemporary Canadian federal politics this has been most evident with the attacks against the centre-right parties. Christopher Waddell and Christopher Dornan's contribution to the 2006 Canadian Election Study details an incident from that campaign that epitomizes this situation. They write:

> On the first day of the campaign…a reporter asked Stephen Harper 'Do you love Canada?" Charitably, one might view the question as an awkward attempt to ask what version of Canada the Conservative leader imagined for the future, but it was seen at the time as the sort of ambush antagonism that gives journalists a bad name, implying as it did that Harper's policies amounted to an attack on all that the country holds dear.[8]

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[8] Christopher Waddell and Christopher Dornan, "The Media and Campaign," *The Canadian Federal Election of 2006* (Ed.) Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2006), p. 222.

If these were the explicit opinions of some in the news media, which is meant to be the objective informer of democratic citizens, the view of the Conservative Party amongst other segments of the Canadian population must have been even more hostile. After all, in both the 2004 and 2006 elections, the tagline for Liberal advertisements was, "Choose Your Canada," implying that a Conservative government would threaten the country's cherished social values. Such an argument assumes that there is a Canadian consensus surrounding statist social welfare programs. Indeed, a compelling case could be made that Canadian values do support moderate liberal welfare programs. Although, another strong argument could be made that Canadians have many conservative values. This is because, as this thesis will describe, Canada has an unusual historical cross-influence of individualistic and communitarian social values. Nevertheless, citizens of any country do not have uniform values, as can be see in Canadian women (a group that will receive particular attention in this study), who are generally assumed to have more statist sentiments than men, as Brenda O'Neill writes:

> This evidence supports the argument that women exhibit opinions that conform to a broad-gauge humanitarianism, or 'agape ethos'. Their weaker commitment to a conservative ethos on a number of issues suggests a greater concern for the well-being of individuals than is generally true of men: women are less supportive of the capitalist system in general; they endorse a greater degree of government intervention in the economy; and they are less supportive of increasing economic ties with the United States.[9]

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[9] Brenda O'Neill, "Sugar and Spice? Political Culture and the Political Behaviour of Canadian Women," *Citizen Politics: Research and Theory in Canadian Political Behaviour* (Ed.) Joanna Everitt and Brenda O'Neill (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 47.

This thesis will argue that during the time frame studied, the negative political advertisements targeting the conservative parties asserted that the ideological right would not protect Canadian values. Serious questions must be asked as a result of such advertising rhetoric, including: how truthful are these negative advertisements; how did such serious accusations come into use; have the attacks made against conservative parties differed across Canada's recent federal elections; and, what impact do these advertisements have on the electorate?

The next chapter will provide an overview of propaganda analysis and its applicability to studying negative political advertising. While many would think propaganda analysis applies only to a wartime context, this section will demonstrate that propaganda is a powerful force in democratic elections. The theoretical writings of Edward Bernays, Jacques Ellul, and Terence H. Qualter, among others, will provide a basis for understanding propaganda's role in political advertising in Canada. An overview of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis' propaganda techniques will be provided with an emphasis on the name calling technique, which seems most useful for studying negative political advertising.

Chapter Three will review the existing literature on political advertising in the Anglo-American world. There are many shortcomings in this literature, especially from a Canadian perspective, where the academic work on negative political advertising is scarce. American scholars have produced many of the existing studies on negative political advertising, which will require this thesis to examine the applicability of this American literature to the Canadian political environment. The large gaps in the current

Canadian political advertising literature seem to necessitate some preliminary general suggestions for further academic study in the Canadian context.

The methodology of this thesis will be outlined in Chapter Four. This thesis employed a triangulated research strategy consisting of focus groups, a semiotic analysis of selected advertisements, and a content analysis of all the English-language election spots sponsored by the major federal parties between 1993 and 2006. Content analysis is the primary methodology of this thesis, while the other two methodologies support its findings by providing its direction and research categories. Focus groups consulted mothers of adolescent children primarily from the northern Greater Toronto Area (GTA) about their opinions of the negative political advertisements found in this sample group. The advertisements that were most interesting to these focus group participants were then subjected to a semiotic analysis, which was largely influenced by the work of Ronald Barthes. This semiotic analysis and the comments of focus group participants were used to develop a more nuanced, less researcher-biased study.

Chapter Five will detail the findings from the primary research and provide an analysis of the collected data and the theoretical work on this subject. It will argue that the electoral results of the centre-right parties in Canada have been impaired by the persistence of certain stereotypes that have been advanced through televised negative political advertising. Specifically, the popularity of the conservative parties has been damaged amongst this studied demographic by the inability of these parties to redirect the public's attention away from the strains of their ideology that are not well received by this group. Recommendations to address this situation will be provided, as well as suggestions for further study.

Chapter 2: Propaganda Analysis

Propaganda analysis is likely considered by many to be an odd theoretical choice for this project, but such a perception is largely due to the normatively-loaded connotations the word propaganda has in our contemporary culture. Generally, propaganda is associated with the dissemination of false information, primarily in wartime situations, in an attempt to undermine an enemy's soldiers and/or civilian population's spirit, or to motivate one's own soldiers and/or civilians. It ought to be noted that the first usage of the word propaganda came from the Roman Catholic Church's attempt to propagate their faith during the Counter-Reformation movement. As such, propaganda was a form of persuasive communication and did not have its current value-based connotations. This understanding of propaganda persists in Spanish-speaking countries today, where the word for advertising is propaganda, with positive, negative, or neutral emotions being associated on a case-by-case basis determined by what is being propagated and how.[10] Propaganda took a different meaning in the Anglo-American world after World War One and Two. These were the first large scale wartime propaganda efforts in the Western world. As a bit of propaganda itself, the Allies were very cunning in the naming of their persuasion departments, as Terence H. Qualter writes:

> Apart from a small number of little-publicised organisations such as Lord Northcliffe's Department of Propaganda in Enemy Countries, the Allies graciously gave their enemies exclusive use of the word propaganda […] It

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[10] Randal Marlin, *Propaganda & the Ethics of Persuasion* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2002), p. 175.

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became part of the propaganda tactics of the Allies to condemn propaganda as something only the enemy would stoop to.[11]

Hence, because the British had a Ministry of Information, not a Ministry of Propaganda, it gave the public the perception that propaganda does not occur in the daily lives of Commonwealth citizens, particularly when no wars were being fought.

It is necessary to provide a definition of propaganda that is relevant to contemporary Canadians, especially when examining political advertising in democratic elections. One of the earliest and most positive North American examinations of peacetime propaganda comes from Edward Bernays, who defined propaganda as, "a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group."[12] Jacques Ellul who provides one of the most well known and critical analyses of propaganda, defines the term as, "a set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its action of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulations and incorporated in an organization."[13] Qualter, a Canadian propaganda scholar, defines the term as, "The deliberate attempt by the few to influence the attitudes and behaviour of the many by the manipulation of symbolic communication [emphasis removed]."[14] Another Canadian, Randal Marlin, provides a thorough overview of the history of propaganda and its various definitions in, *Propaganda & the Ethics of Persuasion*. Marlin proposes the following definition: "The organized attempt through communication to affect belief or action or inculcate attitudes in a large audience in ways

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[11] Terence H. Qualter, *Opinion Control in the Democracies* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 108.
[12] Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (Ed.) Mark Crispin Miller (Brooklyn, NY: Ig Publishing, 2005), p. 52.
[13] Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 61.
[14] Qualter, p. 124.

that circumvent or suppress an individual's adequately informed, rational, reflective judgment."[15] There are other definitions of propaganda that could be provided, but many of these lack objectivity, influence, or are not well suited to this project because they are too heavily focused on the war context.

From these more nuanced, less normatively biased definitions, the application of propaganda to democratic elections appears to be a more responsible decision. After all, the ability to persuade others to take certain actions is at the core of democratic power. Nor is this a novel concept, as can be seen in Aristotle's, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, which is a fourth century BCE guide to gaining power in Athenian democracy through verbal persuasion.[16] Certainly, persuasion factors into every Canadian election campaign, as can be seen in opposition parties trying to convince the public that the current government is corrupt or that their opponent's proposed fiscal policy would cause economic disaster. However, the form, scope and effectiveness of propaganda are heavily influenced by the available communication technology. For instance, Abraham Lincoln co-authored a Whig Party document in 1840 that recommended:

> [E]ach county would be divided into small districts, each responsible for making 'a perfect list' of all their voters, designating which names were likely from past behavior to vote with the Whigs and which were doubtful. Committees in each district would then 'keep a *constant watch* on the *doubtful voters*, and from time to time have them *talked to* by those *in whom they have the most confidence* [original emphasis].[17]

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[15] Marlin, p. 22.
[16] George A. Kennedy, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse (Second Edition)* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. x.
[17] Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (Toronto: Simon and Schuster, 2005), p. 89.

Similarly, Jeffrey Pasley argues that up to the 1920s, political elites throughout the United States funded networks of partisan newspapers that would act as propaganda agents, by spreading the party's opinions and enforcing message discipline.[18] Paul Rutherford argues that before mass circulation publications, Canadian journalism experienced similar linkages between newspapers and political parties. On George Brown's *Globe* publishing in Toronto, Rutherford writes,

> The famed and feared *Globe* editorial, however, struck without mercy against the foes of Reform. Brown and his cohorts seemed able to draw on an inexhaustible well-spring of moral indignation in their denunciation of Tory conspiracies. Repetition and slander were favoured tools.[19]

When technological innovations created printing presses that could produce mass circulation publications, it enticed many editors to rely on advertising revenue to achieve journalistic independence rather than the editorial restrictions that accompanied partisan funding. Russell Johnston argues that with the advent of mass circulation presses, political parties began to advertise in the local newspapers with the highest circulations, regardless of their partisan affiliation.[20] When television broadcasting became more powerful than radio broadcasting, the image of politicians suddenly became important.[21] Presently the internet is becoming increasingly influential in politics and the impact this medium will have on partisan propaganda is currently being widely debated.

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[18] Jeffrey Pasley, *"Tyranny of the Printers,": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press, 2001), p. 9-15.
[19] Paul Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 41.
[20] Russell Johnston, "Partisan Politics, Market Research, and Media Buying in Canada, 1920," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (2006), p. 926.
[21] Edwin Diamond and Stephen Bates, *The Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on Television* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1984), p. 382.

Therefore, any definition of propaganda ought to consider the impact of the communication medium on the message. To avoid technological determinism, the cultural uses of the studied communication medium should also be considered. Based on these factors and the prominent definitions of propaganda provided above, Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson's definition of propaganda seems most applicable to studying televised political advertising in Canadian federal elections, as they write:

> The word propaganda has since evolved to mean mass "suggestion" or "influence" through the manipulation of symbols and the psychology of the individual. Propaganda involves the dextrous [sic] use of images, slogans, and symbols that play on our prejudices and emotions; it is the communication of a point of view with the ultimate goal of having the recipient of the appeal come to "voluntarily" accept this position as if it were his or her own.[22]

Influential televised political spots in North America have used images and symbols to be more memorable and persuasive, such as the child in the "Daisy" advertisement from the 1964 Johnson-Goldwater American presidential election or the Liberals and Tory advertisements from the 1988 Canadian federal election that showed the Canada-U.S. border being respectively erased from and drawn onto a map to highlight their arguments about the Free Trade Agreement. These advertisements only exert suggestion on voters, since this is all that permissible under Canadian election laws. Because the parties can only influence voters, they devote significant effort to understanding the concerns, values, and opinions of segments of the population that they believe may vote for them, through various social science methods.

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[22] Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 2000), p. 11.

Two theoretical pieces on propaganda that have most influenced this topic in Western academia will provide a useful dichotomy on the effects and ethics of mass media persuasion for the rest of this project. These books are Edward Bernays's, *Propaganda*, and Jacques Ellul's, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. Both their arguments will be described below and their concepts will be returned to in the findings and analysis chapter.

Edward Bernays sees propaganda as beneficial to society, because it produces order amongst what would otherwise be chaos in the daily lives of individuals. Bernays takes an orthodox liberal capitalist understanding of Western history empowering ordinary citizens through the rise of democracy, universal enfranchisement, the expansion of education, as well as other factors.[23] While elites, like kings, can no longer practice absolute power over the common people, a small minority continues to influence the actions of average citizens. Bernays writes that this minority is able to "mold the minds of the masses that they will throw their newly gained strength in the desired direction."[24] This elite guidance extends into all areas of our lives, according to Bernays, from consumerism to arts and culture to politics. However, Bernays does not perceive there being anything necessarily unfavourable with propaganda, unless, "its authors consciously and deliberately disseminate what they know to be lies, or when they aim at effects which they know to be prejudicial to the common good."[25] In fact, Bernays believes that propaganda does a great service to society, since:

> In theory, every citizen makes up his own mind on public
> questions and matters of private conduct. In practice, if all

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[23] Bernays, p. 47.
[24] Ibid, p. 47.
[25] Ibid, p. 49.

men had to study for themselves the abstruse economic, political, and ethical data involved in every question, they would find it impossible to come to a conclusion without anything. We have voluntarily agreed to let an invisible government sift the data and high-spot the outstanding issue so that our field of choice shall be narrowed to practical proportions.[26]

Such enthusiasm for propaganda extends into politics for Bernays, as he writes, "Present-day politics places emphasis on personality. An entire party, a platform, an international policy is sold to the public, or is not sold, on the basis of the intangible element of personality."[27] This is because, "The public instinctively demands personality to typify a conspicuous corporation or enterprise."[28] Bernays can support such propaganda, because he believes that individuals maintain agency and the ability to independently reason, even while exposed to propaganda.[29] He writes, "The public is not an amorphous mass which can be molded at will, or dictated to."[30] Thus, Bernays's argument on propaganda can be understood as similar to John Dewey's in the Lippmann-Dewey debate on the capabilities of democratic citizens.[31]

In contrast, Jacques Ellul places more emphasis on the role of propaganda in shaping our society and believes that individuals have less agency against propaganda than Bernays does. Ellul's understanding of propaganda is inherently negative, as he writes:

> [...] propaganda does not aim to elevate man, but to make him *serve*. It must therefore utilize the most common feelings, the most widespread ideas, the crudest patterns,

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[26] Ibid, p. 38.
[27] Ibid, p. 116-17.
[28] Ibid, p. 166.
[29] Ibid, p. 77-82.
[30] Ibid, p. 86.
[31] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Denver: Allan Swallow, 1954), p. 28-35.

and in so doing place itself on a very low level with regard to what it wants man to do and to what end. Hate, hunger, and pride make better levers of propaganda than do love or impartiality [original emphasis].[32]

Ellul distinguishes between direct propaganda, which attempts to produce short-term actions, and sociological propaganda, which creates the conditions necessary for direct propaganda to be successful through establishing an ideology.[33] Sociological propaganda, or pre-propaganda, operates partially by creating myths, "by which man will live, which will respond to his sense of the sacred...a sort of vision of desirable objectives that have lost their material, practical character..."[34] In the modern era, Ellul believes that the goal of propaganda shifted from attempting to shape opinion to attempting to provoke action.[35] In liberal democracy, Ellul believes that propaganda is meant to induce participation, through direct action or passive psychological support for the propaganda's goals.[36] Action is paramount for Ellul, because once taken it commits an individual to that propaganda.[37] For Ellul, propaganda is so pervasive, because it unconsciously short-circuits independent thought.[38] However, it should be remembered that Ellul believed that propaganda had limited effectiveness.[39]

Although Ellul thought propaganda has seriously negative implications on the will of democratic individuals, Ellul did not believe that a state could truly be governed based on public opinion. Unlike George Gallup, Ellul believed that public opinion was too fragile and fluctuating to serve as a base of legitimacy for long-term policies. Similar to

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[32] Ibid, p. 38.
[33] Ellul, p. 15.
[34] Ibid, p. 31.
[35] Ibid, p. 25.
[36] Ibid, p. 26.
[37] Ibid, p. 29.
[38] Ibid, p. 27.
[39] Ibid, p. 294-302.

Walter Lippmann, Ellul does not believe that citizens have the capabilities to make informed policy choices due to the complexities of the modern state bureaucracy.[40] Therefore, the government must convince the public that its actions are legitimate and correct.[41] Although, in situations like election campaigns, where individuals are exposed to two competing propagandas, the public will be naturally disoriented, as Ellul writes:

> It is sometimes said that two competing propagandas cancel each other out; if, however, one regards propaganda not as a debate of ideas or the promulgation of a doctrine, but as psychological manipulation designed to produce action, one understands that these two propagandas, far from canceling each other out because they are contradictory, have a cumulative effect. A boxer, groggy from a left hook, does not return to normal when he is hit with a right hook; he becomes groggier [...] The fact that this man will finally vote for anyone at all is not the important point. What counts is that his normal psychological processes are perverted and will continue to be, constantly.[42]

Ellul argues that such a situation undermines democratic ideas and democratic behaviour, since individuals who are trapped in such a "shock effect" will either become passive or unwaveringly committed to their propaganda.[43] If Ellul's assertion is correct, liberal democratic theorists should take his concern seriously, since a pivotal democratic principle is that the supporters of a losing candidate will accept the rule of their victorious opponent as legitimate, if the election was fair and lawful. Thus, Ellul warns that a democracy embroiled in propaganda can lead to an electorate that is asymmetrically attached to the political process, leading to bitter factionalism amongst political movements.

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[40] Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925), p. 28-58.
[41] Ibid, p. 124-26.
[42] Ellul, p. 181.
[43] Ibid, p. 255.

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Both Bernays and Ellul believe that propaganda cannot always determine the actions of individuals; although they seem to have differing opinions on how often propaganda will fail. Other academics have similarly grappled with the effectiveness of propaganda. As Qualter cautiously asserts, "Effective propaganda can persuade some of us, some of the time, to do things we might not otherwise have done."[44] Michael Schudson goes even further in, *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society*, claiming that advertising's power over individuals is greatly exaggerated because, "advertising is propaganda and everyone knows it."[45] Although, Schudson provides some interesting ideas on how commercial advertising may have less persuasive ability than is conventionally believed, it appears that political advertising has different effects on individuals than commercial advertising, on which Schudson admits he does not focus.[46] On commercial advertising, Schudson writes:

> There are special product situations where advertising may have a special power, a kind of monopoly of influence. With 'experience' goods rather than 'search' goods, the consumer is less able to judge a product by testing it out personally and is more dependent on second-hand evaluations. Where the product is a new one on the market, no consumer is able to rely on personal experience or the experience of friends and neighbors to evaluate the product.[47]

Political advertising is similar to the advertising of new products on the market. Leaders of political parties who are not able to procure electoral success are general pressured to resign from their posts. For example, between 1993 and 2003, the PCs were led by Kim Campbell, Jean Charest, Joe Clark, Peter MacKay, and Elsie Wayne on an interim basis.

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[44] Qualter, p. 138.
[45] Schudson, , p. 4.
[46] Ibid, p. 11.
[47] Ibid, p. 127.

In the same time period, the Reform/Alliance was led by Preston Manning, Stockwell Day, Stephen Harper, as well as Deborah Gray and John Reynolds on interim bases. Since Canadian parties are leader-focused, parties that can sometimes appear to be entirely new entities with a new leader. Also, Schudson's thoughts on the persuasiveness of advertising in relation to its perceived credibility are particularly relevant to political advertisements:

> Advertising may be more powerful the *less* people believe in it, the less it is acknowledged as a creed. This idea can be formulated in several ways. Northrop Frye has argued that advertisements, like other propaganda, "stun and demoralize the critical consciousness with statements too absurd or extreme to be dealt with seriously by it." Advertisements thus wrest from people "not necessarily acceptance, but dependence on their versions of reality."[48]

Indeed, the public's growing cynicism towards politicians and parties[49] is likely an indication of less perceived credibility of their rhetoric amongst the electorate. This idea was definitely present in the discussions of the focus group participants for this study, as will be described later.

To understand the persuasiveness of propaganda it seems necessary to consider more applied theoretical studies of propaganda. The Institute for Propaganda Analysis, which operated between October 1937 and October 1941, sought to understand how propaganda techniques were used to influence public opinion in democratic countries in both international relations and domestic politics. With the commencement of the

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[48] Ibid, p. 225.
[49] Harold C. Clarke, Jane Jenson, Lawrence LeDuc, and Jon H. Pammett, *Absent Mandate: Interpreting Change in Canadian Elections (Second Edition)* (Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Company, 1991), p. 34; Neil Nevitte, Andre Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Richard Nadeau, *Unsteady State: The 1997 Canadian Federal Election* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 64-5; Elisabeth Gidengil, Andre Blais, Richard Nadeau, and Neil Nevittte, "Changes in the Party System and Anti-Party Sentiment," *Political Parties, Representation, and Electoral Democracy in Canada* (Ed.) William Cross (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 75-6.

American military involvement in World War Two, the Institute members were concerned that their critiques of propaganda would be poorly received, and suspended their studies, never to restart their work.[50] However, in this limited period of operation, the Institute was able to establish a framework for categorizing propaganda techniques that remains relevant today.

The Institute's members were worried that the radio represented a potentially undemocratic development in political communications, since in two-way, face-to-face conversations citizens could refute claims, finish quotations, and engage in a discourse that would ultimately discredit weak, distorted, or untruthful arguments. However, if a citizen hears political rhetoric on the radio that they do not agree with, their only recourse is to turn off the radio, while being aware that others are listening to these faulty arguments and being persuaded.[51] As the Institute for Propaganda Analysis wrote, "Science flourishes on criticism. Dangerous propaganda crumbles before it."[52] Although, broadcasting changed with the invention of the television, this too is a one-way communication medium and thus vulnerable to the radio's same weaknesses in terms of fostering a democratic discourse. Thus, radio and television are effective propaganda media because they limit direct criticism and scrutiny. The researchers at the Institute believed there were seven common techniques used by propagandists, including: glittering generality, transfer, testimonial, plain folks, card-stacking, band wagon, and name calling.[53] Most of these techniques are used in political advertising, but this thesis

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[50] Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion (Third Edition)* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1999), p. 231-35.
[51] Alfred McClung Lee and Elizabeth Briant Lee, *The Fine Art of Propaganda: A Study of Father Coughlin's Speeches* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), p. 7.
[52] Ibid, p. 15.
[53] Marlin, p. 102-06.

will focus on the name calling technique, because it seems to have a special importance in the negative advertisements that have targeted the Canadian conservative parties between 1993 and 2006.

In Canadian negative political advertising name calling is the propaganda technique that this most employed and seems most effective. Name calling is applying omnibus terms to an opponent that could have multiple interpretations amongst individuals, but will mainly have negative, emotional connotations.[54] Lee and Lee state that when confronted with name calling propaganda, a citizen should ask: what does the name mean; does the disputed idea have any truthful connection to the authentic meaning of the name; will accepting this bad name as truthful be contrary to the best interests of the individual and/or their society; and, without considering the name, what are the advantages of the idea in question?[55]

The danger of name calling in democracies is that democratic citizens are supposed to evaluate information and decide which candidate best represents their interests, yet name calling attempts to distort the individual's decision making process by making voting for certain candidates seem impossible.[56] Similar to Ellul's theory, Lee and Lee observe that democratic citizens must be able to, "come to conclusions, but at the same time they must recognize the right of other men to come to opposite conclusions."[57] Indeed, name calling could undermine a functioning democracy if the parties were able to successfully negatively brand each others, which could lead to high voter apathy or a corrupt government that could not be replaced, because all the partisan alternatives would

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[54] Lee and Lee, p. 27.
[55] Ibid, p. 27.
[56] Ibid, p. viii.
[57] Ibid, p. viii.

appear unfavourable. Since bad names, as well as all the other propaganda techniques, could have serious repercussions on the viability of a democracy, the Institute for Propaganda Analysis believed their role was to educate the public about the propagandists' tricks-of-the-trade so citizens would not be as manipulated by them. Parallels could be made between Jurgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere and the Institute's concept of cracker barrel politics, except Habermas's public sphere, which was more socially exclusive than cracker barrel politics, was destroyed by commercial mass publication newspapers, not the radio.

This chapter has demonstrated that propaganda analysis is a useful theory for analyzing negative political advertising in Canadian federal elections. While, relatively recent global events have caused the Anglo-American world to discuss propaganda in primarily normatively-loaded terms, if propaganda is thought of as a form of persuasion, it has been a part of democracy since the Athenian polity. Indeed, it seems questionable whether partisan politics would be able to function without some amount of propaganda, as it was defined in this chapter. Furthermore, the work of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis demonstrates how effective certain propaganda techniques, like name calling, can be. The literature on propaganda bears parallels to other theoretical frameworks in the study of political communication, as seen in this chapter's comparison between propaganda analysis and the work of Walter Lippmann, John Dewey, and Jurgen Habermas. More importantly, the writings of Edward Bernays and Jacques Ellul provide contrasting understandings of propaganda's impact on individuals, societies, and politics that will be useful when determining what the proper policy response ought to be to the findings of this project.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Reviewing the literature on televised negative political advertising is intriguing because of its internationally unbalanced development, which has generally lagged behind the practical evolutions in the field. For instance, the "Daisy" commercial from the 1964 American presidential election was North America's first televised negative political advertisement, but the academic study of this electioneering method did not begin until 1988.[58] The twenty-four year gap between the airing of the "Daisy" advertisement and the commencement of academic research on this topic is the result of the then dominant belief amongst political behaviour scholars that individual voting decisions were largely the result of sociological factors.[59] Hence, the prevailing view was that political advertising could produce greater mobilization rates of specific groups, but with already high electoral participation rates and newspaper circulation figures, political advertising appeared to be an unnecessary scholarly pursuit. However, these opinions quickly changed in both Canada and the United States in 1988 due to high profile negative advertisements in Canadian federal politics and the arguably abnormally negative Bush-Dukakis presidential race, along with larger sociological trends of decreasing voter participation rates, newspaper readership, and partisan loyalty.[60]

A fascinating disparity between Canada and the United States in the amount of research on negative political advertising has developed, leaving Canada with a large gap in its literature on this topic. However, this need not have been the case. In response to

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[58] John G. Geer, *In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 117.

[59] Gidengil et al., p. 69; Mebs Kanji and Keith Archer, "The Theories of Voting and Their Applicability in Canada," *Citizen Politics: Research and Theory in Canadian Political Behaviour*, (Ed.) Joanna Everitt and Brenda O'Neill (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 161-63.

[60] Gidengil et al., p. 69; Kanji and Archer, p. 161-67; Clarke, Jenson, LeDuc, and Pammett, p. 49-54.

the 1988 Canadian federal election, which had been an unusual campaign in many respects, the Mulroney Government established the *Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing* to investigate whether Canada's election laws ought to be revamped. This Commission conducted some of the first academic work on negative political advertising in Canada. For instance, Jean Crete produced a literature review that attempted to relate the then current international research on political advertising to the Canadian context.[61] Similarly, Stephen Kline et al. provided a history of Canadian political advertising.[62] The entire 19th volume of the Commission's report was dedicated to comparing international campaign communications to the Canadian context, included a minor focus on election advertising.[63] However, much of the Commission's work on media and politics was devoted to press coverage and journalism standards during elections, rather than negative political advertising. This was likely because the advertising genre's novelty in the Canadian context did not provide the Commission with enough data to properly examine and analyze. Nevertheless, this initial work by the Commission could have provided an excellent platform from which to launch further study on televised negative political advertising.

Curiously enough, continued Canadian research of this advertising technique did not materialize in a significant manner after the conclusion of the Commission's work, despite the federal elections in the 1990s containing many high profile negative advertisements. Jonathan W. Rose began his academic career, in 1993, with a PhD

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[61] Jean Crete, "Television Advertising and Canadian Elections," *Media and Voters in Canadian Election Campaigns*, Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Volume 18). Ed. Frederick J. Fletcher (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991).

[62] Stephen Kline et al., "Political Broadcast Advertising in Canada," *Election Broadcasting in Canada* Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Volume 21). Ed. Frederick J. Fletcher. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991).

[63] Frederick J. Fletcher (Ed.), *Election Broadcasting in Canada*, Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Volume 19) (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991).

dissertation on Canadian government advertising between elections. Possibly in defence

of a seven page literature review, Rose titled this chapter, "The Limited Literature on

Political Advertising."[64] Later, Walter I. Romanow et al. completed a study of the

political advertisements aired during the 1993 Canadian federal election, which raised

concerns about the level of negativity in that campaign.[65] Romanow et al. repeatedly

stated that there was much more research to do be done on Canadian negative political

advertising, even noting Fred Fletcher's appeals for more study in this field.[66] However,

further Canadian research on this topic has not been published. Rose has recently

demonstrated interest in partisan political advertising during elections, but this still only

represents two journal articles and a collaborated book chapter on the 2004 and 2006

federal elections.[67] The Canadian General Election Studies, which have analyzed every

federal election from 1984 to the present, are a valuable contribution to the Canadian

literature on electoral politics.[68] However, these studies have been conducted by various

research teams, at different universities, resulting in little uniformity in their studied

topics. For instance, the amount of emphasis on political advertising in these studies has

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[64] Jonathan W. Rose, *Legitimacy of Government Advertising in Canada* (Ph.D. Thesis: Department of Political Studies, Queen's University, 1993), p. 246.

[65] Walter I. Romanow et al., *Television Advertising in Canadian Elections: The Attack Mode, 1993* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1999), p. 5-9.

[66] Ibid, p. 13.

[67] Jonathan W. Rose, "Television Attack Ads: Planting the Seeds of Doubt," *Policy Options* (September, 2004); Paul Nesbitt-Larking and Jonathan Rose, "Political Advertising in Canada," *Lights, Camera, Campaign!: Media, Politics, and Political Advertising*, (Ed.) David A. Schultz (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2004); Jonathan W. Rose, "The Liberals Reap What They Sow: Why Their Negative Ads Failed," *Policy Options* (March, 2006).

[68] Alan Frizzell et al. (Ed.), *The Canadian General Election of 1988* (Ottawa, ON: Carleton University Press, 1990); Alan Frizzell et al. (Ed.), *The Canadian General Election of 1993* (Ottawa, ON: Carelton University Press, 1994); Alan Frizzell and Jon H. Pammett, *The Canadian General Election of 1997* (Toronto: Dundrun Press, 1997); Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan *The Canadian General Election of 2000* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001; John Pammett and Christopher Dornan, *The Canadian General Election of 2004* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2004).

varied amongst elections. Therefore, the Canadian literature on televised negative political advertising is currently quite underdeveloped.

There is a greater quantity of American literature on negative political advertising, but its currently studied topics demonstrate that even this corpus is in an embryonic state. Seminal accounts on how political advertising developed and what role it has played in American electoral politics have been written.[69] Other studies have attempted to understand the psychology, techniques, and effectiveness of American political advertising.[70] Comparative studies of political advertising are also beginning to emerge, largely due to the work of American Lynda Kaid and German Christina Holtz-Bacha.[71] However, the most compelling and fruitful debate in the American literature concerns the ethics of political advertising.[72] This debate was sparked by Kathleen Hall Jamieson's argument that televised negative political advertising is a unique electioneering technique that distorts facts in a manner that is more memorable for the general public than positive messages.[73] Jamieson's spirit was carried into Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar's assertion that negative political advertising increases partisan polarization and

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[69] Diamond and Bates; Darrell M. West, *Air Wars: Television Advertising in Election Campaigns, 1952-2004 (Fourth Edition)* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2005).

[70] Charles Atkins and Gary Heald, "Effects of Political Advertising," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 40, 2 (Summer, 1976); Ted Brader, *Campaigning for Hearts and Minds: How Emotional Appeals in Political Ads Work* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006); Neil Collins and Patrick Butler, "Positioning Political Parties: A Market Analysis," *Press/Politics*, 1, 2 (March, 1996); Richard R. Lau et al., "The Effects of Negative Political Advertisements: A Meta-Analytic Assessment," *The American Journal of Political Science Review*, 93, 4 (Dec., 1999); West; Michael L. Rothschild, "Political Advertising: A Neglected Policy Issue in Marketing" *Journal of Marketing Research*, 15, 1 (Feb., 1978); Xinshu Zhao, "Campaign Advertisements Versus Television News as Sources of Political Issue Information," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 59, 1 (Spring, 1995).

[71] Lynda Kaid and Christina Holtz-Bacha, *Political Advertising in Western Democracies: Candidates and Parties on Television* (Thousand Oakes, CA: SAGE Publications, 1995); Lynda Kaid and Christina Holtz-Bacha, *The SAGE Handbook of Political Advertising* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006).

[72] Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyenagr, *Going Negative: How Attack Ads Shrink and Polarize the Electorate* (Toronto: The Free Press, 1995); Geer; Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction, and Democracy* (Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press, 1992); William G. Mayer, "In Defense of Negative Campaigning," *Political Science Quarterly*, 111, 3 (Autumn, 1996); Fred Wertheimer, "TV Ad Wars: How to Cut Advertising Costs in Political Campaigns," *Press/Politics*, 2, 3 (Summer, 1997).

[73] Jamieson, p. 50-3.

the number of independents, who are then demobilized to vote. The continuation of this trend would result in political representatives being accountable only to a small number of partisans, rather than to all their constituents, in Ansolabehere and Iyengar's opinion.[74] In 2006, John G. Geer defended negative political advertising, arguing that negative rhetoric is necessary for democratic accountability and informed policy considerations.[75] Based on this quick review of the American research on televised negative political advertising there is a strong foundation in the American literature.

However, there are still numerous gaps in the literature on televised negative political advertising that must be explored. Since a meaningful defence of this advertising genre was not introduced until John Geer's, *In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns*, was published in 2006, the literature could benefit from a balanced examination of the two ethical positions. There has yet to be a study of the relationship between negative political advertising and a particular party (either as the target or disseminator of negativity) over multiple elections. In the same vein, an examination of how particular advertising themes and arguments are advanced over multiple campaigns has yet to be produced. Furthermore, there is a pronounced methodological weakness in the American studies, which have emphasized quantitative over qualitative research methods. The impact of negative political advertising on public opinion and political participation has dominated much of the current literature, but now that the research groundwork for this field has been established, academics ought to creatively expand their topics.

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[74] Ansolabehere and Iyengar, p. 10.
[75] Geer, p. 6-14.

For various reasons, Americans will likely continue to produce more research on political advertising than Canadian academics, at least for the foreseeable future. Since Americans elect their president, as well as their representatives in the Congress, the Senate, and the courts, they have much more electoral activity to analyze than Canadians, who only elect their representatives in the House of Commons. More money is invested in a greater number of election campaigns in America, which produce more political advertisements every year for scholars to examine than in Canada where continuous annual studies of political advertising would not be feasible. America also has a larger scholarly community from which to draw political communications researchers. Furthermore, the American practice of fixed election dates creates the academically appreciated election regularity that Canada's responsible government system does not allow for (yet). Hence, the Americans have—and will likely continue to have—a greater corpus on this topic, because the academic study of televised political advertising is more attractive and secure in the American context.

Nevertheless, research on televised political advertising ought to be prioritized at this time, since current technological advancements present the possibility that the television medium will soon lose its dominance as a political communications tool. Indeed, this is the contention of Joe Trippi, a key organizer of Howard Dean's failed attempt to become the Democrat's 2004 presidential candidate. To the political organizers who continue to rely on traditional mass media sources, Trippi provides the following warning:

> Now there are only two paths: Recognize this new technology as the redefining structure of our lives...or continue to believe it's just another gadget. Join our ranks

> [...] or hunker down behind the gates. And in the end, it
> doesn't really matter what you do.
> The revolution began yesterday.[76]

A full reading of Trippi's book would demonstrate his propensity to boldly and unquestioningly promote the internet's potential for political organization. While Trippi is likely correct that the internet will become the central medium for political communications, it will likely take longer for this to materialize than he suggests. Nevertheless, based on cost factors alone, the era of televised political advertising is likely coming to an end, sooner or later, which should necessitate the urgent study of this topic. As was stated in the propaganda analysis chapter, new communication technologies have the power to change political campaign techniques and partisan organization. Thus, researchers have a limited opportunity to study political advertising on television as an indispensable political communications medium before the internet changes election campaigning. In an article on web-based political advertising in the 2004 American presidential election, Lynda Lee Kaid suggests that the public may have different reactions to internet-based political advertisements than televised advertisements, including decreased cynicism and increased likeability of the sponsoring politician.[77] Thus, web-based political advertising presents many beneficial qualities for politicians, which should make televised political advertising of lesser importance in the coming years.

One of the greatest dangers that the current literature on televised political advertising presents is that unless this topic becomes more appealing, we will leave

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[76] Joe Trippi, *The Revolution Will Not be Televised: Democracy, the Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2004), p. 227.
[77] Lynda Lee Kaid, "Political Web Wars: The Use of the Internet for Political Advertising," *The Internet Election: Perspectives on the Web in Campaign 2004* (Eds.) Andrew Paul Williams and John C. Tedesco (Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), p. 76.

academia with American dominated research. There is nothing wrong with the American perspective on political advertising, but since political advertising practices will respond to the electoral laws, political culture, and governance structure of a particular country, the American studies cannot provide a proper understanding of international political advertising. Australian academics are beginning to develop a literature on political advertising, especially Sally Young, who is producing insightful studies of Australian political advertising that also corrects some of the American quantitative methodological bias noted above by employing qualitative research methods, like semiotic analysis.[78] However, Australia is far ahead of the rest of the world in this regard. Nevertheless, the Australian example should demonstrate to other countries from the Westminster parliamentary tradition that serious studies of political advertising are also possible under their governance structure.

A fundamental deficiency in the literature is the lack of a generally agreed upon definition of negative advertising, which will be discussed, but not fully addressed, in this chapter. Individuals seem to use four categories to describe political advertising in the literature and everyday conversation, which are: positive, contrast/comparison, negative, and attack. Positive political advertisements are those which detail the strengths of a policy, politician, or idea without critiquing its opponents or alternatives. Contrast advertisements are those which critique an opposition policy, party, or leader, but the sponsoring party also promotes its own strengths. Both negative and attack advertisements criticize an opponent and alternative policy without promoting the

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[78] Sally Young, *The Persuaders: Insider the Hidden Machine of Political Advertising* (North Melbourne, Victoria: Pluto Press Australia, 2004); Ibid, "Spot On: The Role of Political Advertising in Australia," *Australia Journal of Political Science*, 37, 1 (March, 2002): p. 81-97; Ibid, "Not Biting the Hand that Feeds?: Media Reporting of Government Advertising in Australia," *Journalism Studies*, 7, 4 (Aug., 2006): p. 554-574.

strengths of the sponsoring party or its policies. Some use these last two terms interchangeably, but there appears to be a distinction between them based on Christopher J. Dolan's work. Dolan argues that grouping together all advertisements that criticize others while not supporting oneself is reductionist, because it does not consider the diversity of this advertising genre.[79] However, there must be a scientific way to distinguish between a contrast and an attack advertisement. Dolan considers negative advertisements those which criticize an opponent based upon fact, while attack advertisements make unsupported or false assertions about opponents.[80] Merely determining the veracity of all the claims found in all the political advertisements in this timeframe would be far beyond the scope of this project and likely too subjective. For example, some individuals may consider the claims made in "The Truth," which was discussed in the introduction, as not negative, but literally, the truth. Paul Nesbitt-Larking and Jonathan Rose write, "Attack ads tend to be unsubstantiated, insinuating, and often resort to ad hominem arguments."[81] Indeed, the assertion that attack advertisements have an *ad hominean* rhetorical style while negative advertisements focus on policy or a candidate's record seems in line with Canadian public opinion. However, in the Canadian context there does not appear to be enough spots produced every election to warrant creating a separate research category for attack advertising. Indeed, even in America, few, if any, studies have attempted to make such a distinction in terminology then implemented this distinction in its methodology. Therefore, this project will group negative and attack advertising together under the term, negative advertising (although, in

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[79] Christopher J. Dolan, "Two Cheers for Negative Ads," *Lights, Camera, Campaign!: Media, Politics, and Political Advertising*, (Ed.) David A. Schultz (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), p. 55.
[80] Ibid, p. 55.
[81] Nesbitt-Larking and Rose, 2004, p. 286.

principle, it would be useful for other studies to make this distinction between personal and policy focused advertising attacks).

Though, this still does not define negativity and the definition of negativity will have a salient impact on the results and conclusions of this study. This can be seen in the American literature's disagreement on the amount of negativity in the 1992 presidential election. For instance, Darrell M. West states that roughly 65 per cent of the advertisements in this campaign were negative.[82] However, Geer places the number of negative advertisements in 1992 at just over 40 per cent.[83] In Canada, Romanow et al. have been accused of improperly defining negative advertising leading to skewed results.[84] This is even more problematic because communications theorist, Stuart Hall, would consider the dispute surrounding the definition of negativity to be fairly natural, since a person's definition of negativity will be based on their personal political beliefs, moral norms, and social conventions. Stuart Hall believes that all communication is encoded into language by one individual (the sender) then that message is decoded into a meaningful idea by another individual (the receiver). Individuals encode and decode messages based on their particular social, cultural, and institutional grounding. When a sender and a receiver of a message do not share these groundings, there is a possibility that there will be a misunderstanding of the message's meaning in encoding/decoding process.[85] Different groups could have different interpretations of what is negative. Thus, it is necessary to arrive at a definition of negativity that suits the understanding of the group being studied by this project, even though this group is very heterogeneous itself.

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[82] West, p. 61.

[83] Geer, p. 37.

[84] Nesbitt-Larking and Rose, p. 286.

[85] Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," *Culture, Media, Language* (London, United Kingdom: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1984), p. 128-33.

There are some interesting initial definitions of negativity found in the literature that should assist in producing a definition of negativity later. Tom Flanagan has defined negative advertising as an, "Advertisement highlighting an opponent's weakness."[86] Geer provides a definition that is similar, but more complete:

> Negativity is any criticism leveled by one candidate against another during a campaign [emphasis removed]...An appeal in a campaign either raises doubts about the opposition (i.e. negative) or states why the candidate is worthy of your vote (i.e. positive). There is no middle category. Note that this definition does not speak to whether the criticism is about policy or personal traits. Any type of criticism counts as negativity.[87]

Contrast advertisements are neglected by this definition, because Geer's coding scheme breaks every spot down into appeals, thus the overall tone of the spot was irrelevant in comparison to specific sentences in the advertisement's script. However, some believe that this categorization technique is too simplistic to be accurate. Ted Brader writes:

> In most popular usage, tone refers to the type of arguments made about the candidates: negative or "attack" ads criticize the opponent, positive or "promotion" ads praise the sponsor, and "comparison" spots contrast weaknesses of the opponent with the strengths of the sponsor. Nonetheless, the tone of an ad may come across as negative or positive for other reasons, such as the way in which current conditions are discussed or the mood suggested by the images and music.[88]

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[86] Flanagan, 2007, p. 292.
[87] Geer, p. 23.
[88] Brader, p. 21.

Thus, emotions influence the interpretation of an advertisement, so with negative advertising there is more than meets the eye. Others, like David Mark, agree with Brader's notion.[89]

This project will not be able to resolve the lack of an agreed upon definition of negativity in the literature. Glenn W. Richardson, Jr. has written an excellent overview of the definitions of negative advertising in the political communications literature and the shortcomings they possess. He argues that definitions of negativity are either: too broad; insufficiently holistic; too pejorative; do not consider emotion; do not consider the impact of the audiovisual; do not consider individual interpretation of advertisements; and other weaknesses.[90] With these different definitions of negativity noted, this project has a unique opportunity to consult with a particular demographic about their definition of negativity to determine the validity of Hall's encoding/decoding concept on negative political advertising, as will be discussed in greater detail in the methodology chapter. Therefore, the proper definition of negativity is a major consideration for this thesis. Although the rationale for selecting a particular definition of negativity will have to be explored further in the methodology and finding and analysis chapters a working definition of negative should be provided at this time. This thesis will consider a negative spot one that predominately criticizes an opponent party or candidate based on their perceived weaknesses in policies, record, and personality, while the sponsoring party largely ignores their own comparative strengths.

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[89] David Mark, *Going Dirty: The Art of Negative Campaigning* (Toronto, ON: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), p. 2.
[90] Glenn W. Richardson, Jr., "Looking for Meaning in All the Wrong Places: Why Negative Advertising Is a Suspect Category," *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 51, Issue 4 (Dec. 2001), p. 775-89.

This study will strengthen the literature on televised negative political advertising in many respects. First, any work from the Canadian perspective will be beneficial, considering the current neglect of negative political advertising research in this country. Second, the centre-right parties developed quite a negative image amongst certain segments of Canadian society during these elections (i.e. the perceived radicalism of the Reform/Alliance amongst recent immigrant communities). Understanding how such a perception of a specific party was created would be useful for political organizations around the world. Also, this study concentrates on the effects of negative advertising and contentious themes on particular parties over a series of elections, which has yet to be done by other academics in this field. It will also utilize focus groups and semiotic analysis, which will provide a rare North American methodological perspective. Finally, the Canadian federal party system, as it existed between 1993 and 2003, created strategic conditions that have not been present in the American context, since the vote-splitting amongst Canadian conservatives virtually guaranteed Liberal majority governments. Conventional political advertising wisdom holds that parties leading in the polls should not negatively advertise, because of the potential of a backlash in public opinion. However, if one party maintains an enormous structural electoral advantage that almost guarantees it will form a government in a given election campaign is there any incentive to run a positive campaign? Thus, this thesis will add original research to the corpus of televised negative political advertising in Canadian federal elections and will hopefully encourage others to undertake similar research.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This thesis employed a combination of focus groups and semiotic analysis, as well as a content analysis to arrive at its findings. Content analysis was the central methodology of this study, due to the strength of quantitative research methods at studying televised political advertisements, as will be described below. Focus groups and semiotic analysis were used, because qualitative research methods provide a context that allows the content analysis' research categories to be more insightful. Further explanation of the methodological procedures used by this thesis and justifications for making these decisions will be provided in this chapter.

Limited focus groups were used to establish research categories for the content analysis, under the belief that this would produce more a nuanced, less researcher-biased study. Three focus groups with six to seven individuals in each group were conducted. These focus groups were conducted in Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ontario on October 24 and 29, 2007 at the Bradford Public Library with each session lasting approximately one hour. This location was fascinating, because it is part of the constituency of York-Simcoe, which is one of the most northerly constituencies in the Greater Toronto Area (if the GTA is defined as the City of Toronto, Peel Region, Durham Region, Halton Region, and York Region). It was hoped that this location would result in a more balanced partisan sample group, as York-Simcoe is one of the few constituencies held by a Conservative MP (Peter Van Loan) in the largely NDP and Liberal-controlled GTA. One focus group participant described the geographical partisan divide by saying, "From here

south, everybody voted Liberal. From here north, it's all Conservative."[91] Therefore, it was hoped that there would be a greater concentration of Conservative supporters in the focus groups conducted in a location such as Bradford West Gwillimbury, which would increase the possibility that there would be a more fruitful multi-partisan dialogue of the studied advertisements than in a Liberal and/or NDP dominated riding.

The researcher targeted mothers of adolescent children (defined as children under the age of thirteen) for focus groups. This was done under the assumption that the Conservatives were attempting to target middle-class families in their 2006 election campaign. A quick content analysis of the Conservative platform seems to substantiate this assumption, since they used some variant of the word 'child' 38 times in this document, some variant of the word 'family' 34 times, and some variant of the word 'parent' 13 times. The platform itself was split into six chapters, one of which was titled "Standing up for Families." Additionally, one of the Conservative's five priorities was to provide parents with $1,200 per year for every child under the age of five.[92] This was an interesting strategic choice for the Conservatives, since logically about half of parents are women and Canadian political behaviour research concludes that women tend to be more supportive of left-leaning parties than right-leaning parties.[93] Therefore, this group presents an interesting cross-influence between their larger sociological voting patterns and the rational choice considerations that confronted them when the Conservatives targeted their interests the 2006 federal election.

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[91] P6C, Focus Group, Oct. 29, 2007.

[92] Conservative Party of Canada, *Stand up for Canada: Conservative Party of Canada Federal Election Platform 2006*, Jan. 13, 2006, <http://www.conservative.ca/media/20060113-Platform.pdf> (Oct. 18, 2007).

[93] Brenda O'Neill, p. 47.

All focus group participants were obtained through a decentralized, viral recruitment campaign. It was hoped that this viral method would able to procure volunteers with limited effort in terms of time devoted to recruiting by the researcher. Also, since this project wished to maintain an arm's length between the researcher and volunteers, it was hoped that by approaching potential focus group participants through trusted intermediaries more volunteers would be obtained than by the researcher directly approaching such individuals. The researcher produced flyers that were given to family members and friends who were then asked to further distribute these materials to individuals who fell into the targeted group. However, the focus group members had to be an arm's length from the researcher to participate. Each focus group was shown a series of political advertisements from the studied timeframe and asked to discuss their reaction to each spot.[94]

There are a few reasons why such a small number of focus groups were conducted by the researcher. First, it must be remembered that the focus group methodology was not meant to be exhaustive, but was being used to inform the content analysis, which is this thesis' central research tool. The findings from the focus groups were meant to assist in the formation of the content analysis's research categories. Second, without external funding for this project, it would have been incredibly difficult to identify enough individuals in this demographic who would be willing and able to volunteer their time with such limited benefits to themselves in order to make this the thesis' central methodology. Finally, even after only three focus groups, the comments of the

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[94] As an incentive to the participants, all focus group members were entered into a draw for a pair of free movie tickets, with one winner in each focus group. This recruitment strategy was fairly successful insofar as the researcher did not have to expend excessive amounts of time and money to obtain an adequate number of volunteers for these focus groups.

participants were becoming fairly homogeneous, so the diversity of information that could be gained from a focus group dominated methodology is questionable.

To address these issues, the comments from the focus groups were used to conduct a brief semiotic analysis of a select number of political advertisements. Six spots that the focus group participants were most eager to discuss were studied with this research method. Two of these advertisements were sponsored by each the Liberals and NDP, while another two were sponsored by the various conservative parties. The researcher's goal was to analyze one spot sponsored by each party that seemed effective for that party's cause and one that appeared to be counterproductive, based on the comments of the focus group participants.

Semiotic analysis may be unfamiliar to some disciplines in the social sciences. Semiotics literally translated from Greek means, the science of signs. Arthur Asa Berger defined semiotics simply, yet with an expansive scope by stating, "Signs are things which stand for other things or, to add a different dimension to the matter, anything that can be made to stand for something else [emphasis removed]."[95] Jonathan Rose provides a definition with more scholarly language when writing, "Semiotics is an attempt to construct the meaning from both verbal and nonverbal signs through understanding and interpretation."[96] Ultimately, Berger's description of Sherlock Holmes being a master semiotician is the most helpful for understanding this methodology, since Holmes was able to read meaning into objects that others took for granted. Finding a hat that is excessively dusty and spotted at a crime scene informs Holmes that the perpetrator's wife

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[95] Arthur Asa Berger, *Signs in Contemporary Culture: An Introduction to Semiotics* (New York: Longman Inc., 1984), p. 1.
[96] Rose, 2000, p. 5.

has stopped loving the criminal, since she has ceased to care for his things.[97] Thus, semiotics is an attempt to infer meaning from seemingly normal objects and images.

The theoretical work of Ferdinand de Saussure initiated the modern study of semiotics. In, *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure theorized that all language was arbitrary. He believed that words were merely the sound-image (signifier) of an actual object, event, or idea (signified). Thus, the word "tree" is a signifier for a tall, leafy piece of vegetation often found on the front lawn of suburban homes. The tall, lefty piece of vegetation found in front of suburban homes is the signified. Saussure referred to the combination of the signifier and signified as the sign. Although Saussure's focus was primarily linguistic some scholars such as, Roland Barthes, applied these principles to a much broader scope. In, *Mythologies*, Barthes applied semiotic analysis to photographs, national cuisine, wrestling matches, and other aspects of French culture, because he believed that these objects and events demonstrated much about a society if their meaning was identified. For instance, Barthes uses the image of a black soldier in a French military uniform saluting the French flag found in a copy of, *Paris-Match*, as an expression of the French belief in the merits of their colonial policies.[98] *Mythologies* examined the symbols of French culture, but a reading of Barthes's semiotic analysis of Japanese society, *Empire of Signs*, makes it clear that every society has different cultural traits that are represented in symbols. The essay "No Address" in, *Empire of Signs*, examines the lack of street names and house numbers in Japanese cities, which Barthes believes Europeans who value efficiency and rationality would find frustrating, but

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[97] Berger, p. 16-8.
[98] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), p. 116-17.

allows the Japanese to create ethnographic mental maps of personal discovery.[99] The

cultural differences between Japan and France are extensive and a study their symbolic

contrasts would be overwhelmingly fruitful, but cultural differences also exist between

much more similar societies and these are also expressed in their cultural symbols.

Semiotic analysis is not a new research method in the study of political

advertising, although it has been underutilized. Jonathan Rose used this methodology to

analyze government advertising in, *Making "Pictures in Our Heads": Government*

Advertising in Canada, and *The Legitimacy of Government Advertising in Canada*. An

application of this method to Canadian partisan advertising seems overdue. As in Rose's

studies, this project will use the work of Roland Barthes as its main theoretical

underpinning. There are other theorists who are used in semiotic analysis, but Barthes

seems best suited for the study political advertising. For example, the work of Umberto

Eco is becoming increasingly popular in semiotic analysis, but his work seems unhelpful

when examining political advertising. Eco writes, "Thus *semiotics is in principle the*

discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie. If something cannot be

used to tell a lie, conversely it cannot be used to tell the truth: it cannot in fact be used 'to

tell' at all [original emphasis]."[100] As was alluded to in the propaganda analysis chapter,

political advertising can be used to exaggerate and distort, but parties take severe risks

when they lie in their commercials, since the public will not accept every propaganda

piece.

The content analysis produced many challenges, especially since this is one of the

first content analyses of Canadian partisan advertising. This content analysis will

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[99] Roland Bathers, *Empire of Signs* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 33-6.
[100] Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 7.

examine all of the English-language political advertisements aired on television during the federal election campaigns between 1993 and 2006 produced by the major political parties (Alliance, Conservative, Liberal, NDP, PC, and Reform). These materials were obtained from Professor Fletcher and Professor MacDermid of the Election Broadcasting Project at York University, who have been collected these campaign materials for several elections. This archive also contained advertisements from the minor political parties, but the researcher decided not to include these spots in the sample. The reason for this was based on the assumption that the influence of these parties would be minimal on the electorate, since they generally have limited resources with which to conduct ad buys. A preparatory viewing of the political advertisement collection demonstrated that certain coding decisions would have to be made. It was important for the researcher to decide whether the various fifteen second advertisements slotted together in various combinations to create thirty and forty-five second spots ought to be recorded only once, or once for every combination in which they appeared. Furthermore, the 1997 NDP production of multiple spots with the same script, except for a different province or region being named in each spot, created a coding problem. The decision was made that every advertisement ought to be recorded, regardless of whether the script was largely repeated in another spot, or if particular 15 second clips were used in multiple advertisements. Producing television spots is not cheap, so there must have been some rationale behind the decisions made by the parties to repeat certain clips or scripts, even if this appeared redundant to the coder.

Based on the literature review, theoretical framework, as well as the focus groups and semiotic analysis findings, twelve research categories were established for the

content analysis. Six of these categories recorded fairly mundane information, including: the election when the advertisement was aired (1993, 1997, 2000, 2004, or 2006); the sponsoring party (Liberal, NDP, PC, Reform, Alliance, or Conservative); the advertising tone (positive, negative, or contrast); the issue (open-ended category); the target of advertisement (Liberal, NDP, PC, Reform, Alliance, Conservative, or N/A); and, whether an association to another political figure made (yes or no, and if yes, to whom). These categories were intended to record basic information that would assist during the analysis process. Five categories sought to identify the frequency, through word or symbol, of larger policy areas that the focus group participants identified as important, which are: immigration; the welfare state; the economy; America; and Quebec. Determining whether one of these policy areas was symbolized in an advertisement was likely the most subjective aspect of the thesis. This is again because Stuart Hall would argue that some individuals have different conceptions of what constitutes an allusion to American foreign policy, for example. However, what is shown but not verbalized in political spots can be just as salient as what is explicitly said. The semiotic analysis was a great assistance in identifying and analyzing political symbols, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter. Finally, as will also be discussed in the next chapter, there are many strains of conservative thought, so a research category recorded the specific sub-ideology of conservatism presented in an advertisement as either: Red Tory; neo-conservative; or, social conservative (which will be defined in the findings and analysis chapter). Most followers of Canadian politics would be able to intuitively understand the differences between these conservative schools of thought, even if they would find it difficult to articulate these differences. There are many other strains of conservative thought that

could be identified and recorded, but an initial viewing of the studied political spots and current events in Canadian federal politics made it appear that these would be the most interesting and fruitful conservative sub-ideologies to coded.

Distinguishing these research categories from each other was fairly simple. Some categories, such as sponsoring party and the election in which the spot was aired, were typically obvious due to election laws and the categorization done by the Election Broadcasting Project. Determining the target of attack was generally clear, but was somewhat ambiguous in a few cases. The researcher would only label a party as being attacked in a particular spot if they were explicitly mentioned or visually depicted. Thus, this study's findings in this respect are somewhat cautious, as some advertisements make veiled criticisms of their opponents. The researcher decided it would be too difficult to determine if the general public, in a particular moment in the past, would realize which party was being targeted with more ambiguous attacks, so it would be more accurate to only record explicit attacks against other parties. Strains of conservatism portrayed in a particular advertisement were usually mutually exclusive, likely due to the time constraints of television advertising. The one exception to this was the combination of social conservatism and neo-conservatism in some of the advertisements in this sample's later elections, which was recorded when it occurred and will be discussed in the findings and analysis chapter. Most of these other research categories only required a mention through word, symbol, or both word and symbol to be recorded (the way these research categories were articulated in the advertisement was also recorded). Also, there was no limit on how many of these research categories could be present in a particular advertisement. For instance, a spot could be recorded as making reference to: Canada,

Quebec, the economy, and immigration. Alternatively, there was no minimum requirement for the number of research categories present in a particular election. Thus, if none of the research categories were applicable beyond the general factors collected here, then no information was recorded.

Content analysis is an appropriate primary research method for this project, because of the lack of research on political advertising in Canada, as was discussed in the literature review chapter. The lack of research on Canadian political advertising raises questions about what has actually been broadcasted in the political advertisements during this time period. Content analysis is a strong methodology for describing what is present in a particular sample. Thus, it will provide some of the basic information that researchers of political communication need on this topic. The findings from this content analysis could also inspire research questions in other researchers that will lead to further study of this topic, which is needed in Canada. Also, the methodology of this thesis combines quantitative and qualitative research methods, because both these research traditions have certain, yet distinct strengths. The content analysis findings will assist the researcher in identifying what aspects of this sample are numerically important, so qualitative methods can be used to gain additional insights on these aspects of political advertising.

However, there are some weaknesses to this triangulated methodology, especially surrounding the focus groups, which ought to be addressed before continuing. First, there is the issue of presentism, namely the possibility that focus group participants will not be able to put themselves in the context of past federal elections and miss the point which these advertisements were meant to convey. This is especially true in the time period examined here, because of the complexity surrounding the former five-party system.

Second, since certain controversial party leaders, like Manning and Day, are no longer running from prime minister and are unable to enact their agendas, some of the emotions that these advertisements were meant to instil may no longer be relevant. Finally, now that the Conservatives have formed a government and are establishing an actual governance track-record, some individuals may have different opinions about the party than they did when these advertisements were originally aired. Therefore, asking focus groups members for their opinions on advertising that was designed for a particular context, which has now past, may result in historical revisionism by these individuals.

However, the focus groups members being somewhat removed from the original context of the studied political advertisements could also result in some considerable strengths. First, by viewing spots from multiple elections, the focus groups may be able to establish meaningful trends that they normally would not identify. This could produce a more nuanced understanding of what this segment of the electorate considers important in political advertisements. Second, by removing the focus group participants from the emotional context of an election campaign, in which these negative advertisements are aired, the groups may speak more openly and with greater detail than they would have during the campaign itself. Finally, the average citizen's competence in politics should not be underestimated. While many voters are uninterested in the complexities of partisan politics, they do understand what the government is responsible for, as well as the differences between the parties, leaders, and policies that are relevant to them.[101] Since the electorate is the ultimate determinant on what political advertisements will be

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[101] Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter, "Measuring Political Knowledge: Putting First Things First," *American Journal of Political Science* 37, 4 (November, 1993), p. 1199-1204.

considered creditable and who forms the government, their opinions should be held in high regard.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

The methodology outlined in the previous chapter produced some very fruitful results. This chapter will first provide a brief overview of the most pertinent findings from the focus groups, semiotic analysis, and content analysis. Then an analysis of these findings will apply these results to the relevant aspects of Canadian political history, culture, and media environment. Finally, this chapter will consider some possible solutions to the issues surrounding democratic viability identified by this study in a short recommendations subsection.

5.1: Focus Groups

The focus groups participants who were consulted for this project provided some valuable insights into their opinions on negative political advertising and Canadian politics. It was interesting to observe how similar their views on political advertising were. Some of the methodological literature on focus groups discusses the possibility of groups creating orthodox opinions, so as not to produce conflict or be stigmatized by one's peers.[102] However, this did not appear to be the case in the discussions conducted for this thesis, since the focus groups participants did agree on their opinions of negative political advertising, but they also at times vehemently disagreed on partisan politics.[103]

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[102] Anders Hansen, Simon Cottle, Ralph Negrine, Chris Newbold, *Mass Communication Research Methods* (New York: New York University Press), p. 263; John Pollard, "Conducting Focus Groups for Social Research" (Institute for Social Research, York University, 2007), p. 32-5; Janet Smithson, "Using and Analyzing Focus Groups: Limitations and Possibilities," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 3, 2 (2000), p. 112.

[103] P6C and P2C, Focus Group, Oct. 29, 2007.

A repeated issue that the focus group moderator raised with the participants was how should negativity be defined? The focus group participants could not arrive at specific definition of negativity, but they were always in universal agreement about what advertisements were negative. Considering the literature's debate on the definition of negativity, this seems to be a reasonable response from the focus group participants. One of the most fascinating discussions on the definition of negativity was in response to the 1997 NDP advertisement "Wrong Crowd," in which Alexa McDonough delivers the following message:

> You know what's wrong with this place? It's too one sided.
> The Liberals are running with the wrong crowd. Cutting
> health, education, and national programs just like Reform,
> the Tories, and big corporations want them to. They've
> stopped listening to ordinary people. So what can you do
> about it? Vote NDP and we'll make them listen.
> Male V.O. (voiceover): Paid by Canada's NDP.[104]

Geer's methodology, when analyzing an advertisement's tone, did not consider a spot as a single entity that was either negative, positive, or contrast, but instead dissected every advertisement into appeals that could either be positive or negative. Thus, in his study, a single advertisement could have multiple appeals that could be both positive and negative. In "Wrong Crowd" the first four sentences in the advertisement's script are negative, with one sentence of transition to one positive sentence. McDonough's positive appeal in this advertisement comes at the very end of her comments, where she states that the NDP would represent the interests of ordinary people. However, the focus group participants consulted for this study were unanimous in the opinion that "Wrong Crowd" was negative, even when the moderator presented the option that it was not. Thus, the

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[104] New Democratic Party of Canada, "Wrong Crowd," 1997, The Election Broadcasting Project Archive, York University.

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spot is mainly negative and the focus group participants identified it as such. As a result, this study's focus group participants did not support Geer's methodology, but took a more holistic, overall understanding of a commercial's tone. Also, they departed from Bader's emphasis on mood and image, as this was a very welcoming advertisement visually, as will be described below in the semiotic analysis section.

Thus, this project will consider a negative advertisement one that focuses on the perceived weaknesses of an opponent based on policy, personality traits, political record or personal background, and other factors. Positive advertisements will be considered those which focus on the sponsor's own perceived strengths, whatever those may be, while largely ignoring their opponents. Contrast advertisements will be classified as those which devote roughly equal time to presenting the weaknesses of one's opponent and the sponsor's own perceived strengths. If the majority of a spot was positive, it was recorded as having a positive tone and likewise for an advertisement that was predominantly negative. To identify an advertisement as having a contrast tone, a stopwatch method was used, which required the contrast advertisement to contain almost equal time allotments to both positive and negative appeals, with a three second buffer towards either tone for a thirty second spot. Finally, the spot's script takes precedence over its mood, as this was how the focus group participants discussed these advertisements.

On their feelings about negative political advertising, the comments of focus group participants were fairly conclusive in their dislike of the campaigning technique. As one participant said:

> They're petty, but they're almost childish. Right from the
> time that you're in school and you think about growing up,
> the person who was the popular one was always putting-

down the others and everybody would group with them, it's kind of like what they are doing in this sense. The way I see it is they're trying to get people to like them for…making others look bad and bash them. It's a total form of bullying and that's really all it is.[105]

Others believed that negative advertising was a tactic for failing politicians:

> P1B: I think, it's just, it's just a form of desperation. You kind of got to question their policies that they feel so strongly, they're so….umm….so powerful that they, like, it could sway voters, be able to, like they shouldn't attack, like…
> P3B: They shouldn't have to.
> P1B: They shouldn't have to resort to that tactic.[106]

It is possible that negative advertisements still influence the voting behaviour of these participants, even at a subconscious level. Indeed, this is why the psychological studies of political advertising conducted in the United States have been so popular. Many focus group participants acknowledged that they may be influenced by negative advertisements although they did not like them. Nevertheless, their dislike of this campaigning technique was quite strong.

Although the focus group participants also expressed significant disenchantment with politics in general. One exchange amongst the participants should be particularly worrying to politicians:

> P1A: And they all do it, that's the other thing. They all do it…
> P2A: Steal?
> P1A: Right from, you know, good old Mayor Miller right down to Stephen Harper, they're all, you know, that's how you stay in office. You won't stay in office if you're…you

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[105] P4A, Focus Group, Oct. 24, 2007, 6:00 PM.
[106] P1B and P3B, Focus Group, Oct. 24, 2007, 7:30 PM.

> won't stay in office if you don't do that, because that's how
> they stay in office: by paying people off.[107]

This surely is not a rare opinion of politicians amongst the public. The focus group participants legitimately seemed to dislike negative advertising, but their comments regarding general Canadian politics presents the possibility that political advertising was a manifestation of their disappointment with the overall political process. This likely influenced their comments about the advertisements they were shown, but the participant's comments were too conclusive to be disregarded.

The focus group participants also demonstrated a particular uneasiness towards the Canadian conservative movement in general. It was fascinating to observe some of the focus group participants who did not want to vote Conservative, but had difficulties articulating their reasons for that sentiment. One participant best described the feelings of the groups by saying, "You know that fear you can't...that people maybe want to be Conservative in some ways, but they're a little afraid of that of that fringe edge of the party that's a little you know? You know?"[108] This was an encouraging finding, as was stated in the methodology chapter, the researcher wanted to consult the citizens of York-Simcoe to include a wide array of political supporters. However, the researcher was admittedly concerned that consulting focus groups in one of the only Conservative ridings in the GTA would result in a biased focus group sample. Luckily, this does not appear to be the case.

A thought-provoking observation was that the focus group participants did not limit their comments to federal politics. Although the study was clearly defined as examining federal politics, all the displayed spots were from federal elections, and the

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[107] P1A and P2A, Focus Group, Oct. 24, 2007, 6:00 PM.
[108] P1A, Focus Group, Oct. 24, 2007, 6:00 PM.

moderator's questions were directed towards federal politics, every discussion referenced Ontario provincial politics at some point. This could be due to the fact that these discussions where held shortly after the 2007 Ontario general election and thus provincial politics could have been more present in the minds of the participants. However, knowing which level of government is responsible for a particular public policy area is a stereotypical Canadian problem, due to the large purview of the provinces in social services and dominant taxation powers of the federal government. If citizens do not readily make a distinction between the electoral strategies of political parties at different levels of government, one branch of a party may be held accountable for the political advertisements of their co-partisans. The focus groups participants probably understood that there are some distinctions between federal and provincial parties, but the extent of the organizational autonomy of different branches of a particular party would likely surprise many Canadians and is something that political organizers ought to consider when crafting their media strategies.

The one opinion that emerged from the focus groups that the researcher did not anticipate was that these women did not consider their identity to be a significant determining factor in their political decisions. For instance, when the focus group moderator asked the participants who they believed was being targeted by the Liberal advertisement "Health Agenda," which accused the Alliance of planning to undermine the Canada Health Act, the first response was the working class and it seemed to be more of a guess to please the moderator than an opinion. Later when the moderator speculated that mothers would have a particular interest in this advertisement, one participant responded:

> Yeah, it kept saying something about the health care
> system, but I don't think it was targeting a certain specific
> group, I think it was just trying to generalize anybody,
> everyone is affected by the health care system in some way,
> whether for our children or for ourselves, if the person is a
> senior and can't afford their health insurance, then yes, yes
> it targets them. So I think it targets a broader group of
> people.[109]

The researcher thought it would be reasonable to assume that a person's identity shapes their daily routine, experiences, and thus outlook on life and politics. Possibly the focus group participants took the question of whether their identity as mothers of young children influences their political decisions as offensive or possibly chauvinistic when coming from a young, male researcher.

5.2: Semiotic Analysis

Six advertisements that the focus group participants were most enthusiastic to discuss will be analyzed in this section using semiotic analysis, as was described in the methodology chapter. Two advertisements will be selected from each the Liberals, NDP, and conservative parties. All the analyzed advertisements will be negative in tone. For most of the parties, one of these analyzed advertisements was considered effective by the focus group participants and the other was not considered effective. This is an important task for two reasons. First, it will help develop a stronger content analysis, since as has already been discussed, some aspects of political advertisements are kept intentionally vague so the viewer can interpret their own meaning from the spot and the sponsoring party will not necessarily be held liable for potentially unpopular messages. Second,

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[109] P4B, Focus Group, Oct. 24, 2007, 7:30 PM.

despite the larger trends that exist in these spots, which will be measured with the content analysis, some advertisements will capture more of the public's attention than others. The advertisements which will have a greater influence on individuals will likely change amongst groups, as a reflection of their different concerns, interests, and values. Thus, this semiotic analysis will continue to use mother of young children in the Greater Toronto Area as its studied group.

The first spot to be examined is the Liberal's 2000 election spot that targeted the Alliance, titled, "Health Agenda." The spot's script is as follows:

> Male V.O.: The Reform Alliance on health care.
> Female V.O.: Their finance critic.
> Male V.O.: Quote: I do support the idea of private health care.
> Female V.O.: Their former health critic.
> Male V.O.: Quote: It may be difficult to sell politically.
> Female V.O.: The Toronto Star.
> Male V.O.: Quote: An Alliance discussion paper suggests user fees.
> Female V.O.: The National Post.
> Male V.O.: Quote: Stockwell Day is open to allowing provinces the right to levy user fees.
> Female V.O.: The Globe and Mail.
> Male V.O.: Quote: An Alliance government would support the development of a two-tier health care system.
> Male V.O.: Does Stockwell Day's Reform Alliance speak for you?[110]

The most striking aspect of this advertisement is the speed at which the information is delivered. In all, the advertisement quotes five references (all of which provide enough citation information on the screen so that an individual could easily find the original source) and the two narrators collectively speak 85 words in 30 seconds. Each quote is displayed on the screen, three of which also provide a mock newspaper clipping that

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[110] Liberal Party of Canada, "Health Agenda," 2000, The Election Broadcasting Project Archive, York University.

contains the newspaper article's actual headline. While the voiceover is being read, there is a background audio track of typing, as the quotation scrolls across the screen. The typing audio clip is obviously unable to keep pace with the text being scrolled across the screen, which is understandable, since the imaginary typists would have to type roughly 98 words a minute, not including punctuation, to meet the demands of the voiceover readers. While the quotations are being read, there is a white banner at the top of the screen with black text that reads "Stockwell Day's Hidden Agenda" with "Hidden Agenda" underlined in red, although the narrators never use the term, hidden agenda.[111]

There are two keys to understanding the meaning of this advertisement: the speed at which the information is presented and newspapers being used as sources for these quotations. Some may use speed when providing quotations to make it more difficult for a listener to realize the original quote has been distorted, but in this was not the case here. Although it requires repeated pausing of a taped copy of the advertisement, all the citation information was identified, the original newspaper articles were obtained, and the Liberals did not distort the spirit of these original sources.[112] Thus, it is more likely that the Liberals were attempting to overwhelm the viewer with evidence that supports the idea that the Alliance would endanger the principles of the Canada Health Act. The large amount of information that is presented, both visually and verbally gives the impression that the Liberals are struggling to fit these quotations into one spot. It implies that the Liberal's have much more evidence of the Alliance's lack of support for the public health

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[111] Ibid.

[112] Shelly Knapp, "Reform Picks up Health Bill Gaunlet: MPs rally behind Alberta's Controversial Plan," *Calgary Herald*, March 13, 2000, p. A1; Shawn McCarthy, "Alliance Supports Two-Tier Health Care," *The Globe and Mail*, Oct. 31, 2000, p. A1; Tim Naumetz, "For-Profit Hospitals 'Difficult to Sell Politically,'" *Ottawa Citizen*, Nov. 2, 2000, p. A5; Norm Ovenden, "Day Believes Provinces should be able to Levy User Fees, but he Refuses to Make Policy on the Fly," *National Post*, April 20, 2000, p. A6; William Walker, "Alliance Report Suggests Medical User Fees: Paper Mulls More Private Business in Health System," *Toronto Star*, Nov. 12, 2000, p. A1.

care system, which is a cherished Canadian social service. Since the quotations all come from major Canadian newspapers, it adds credibility to the Liberal's argument. The images of newspaper clippings and the newspaper names being read are meant to emphasis that these quotations come from the unbiased new media. Although newspaper circulation rates are continuing to decline, they are still an iconic source of credible current events information in Canada. Truth is an important aspect of negative political advertising, because of the public's growing mistrust of politicians. The public realizes that parties have self-interested motivations when airing their political advertisements, so these spots are grounded in facts, so they will appear more legitimate.[113] Fact-based negative advertisements are also a defence in case the press challenges the veracity or general good judgment of a particular spot.[114] The viewer is supposed to feel a sense of urgency from the speed of the advertisement, the importance of the topic, and the authoritativeness of the sources. Viewers are supposed to stop thinking about the quotations and simply understand that the Alliance is a threat to Canadian health care.

Although, the focus group members found the "Health Agenda" advertisement effective, they were much less impressed by the Liberal's 2006 "Campaign Promises" advertisement from the "Choose Your Canada" series. All the spots in this series had a similar appearance, background audio track, and narrator. Each advertisement showcased a specific aspect of Stephen Harper's purported politics, ideology, and values. These advertisements begin with an incomprehensibly fuzzy full-screen greyscale image that progressively becomes more clear and colourized, until an image of Harper in an unflattering pose is revealed. In "Campaign Promises" Harper is shown, likely during

[113] Arthur Sanders, "Creating Effective Political Ads," *Lights, Camera, Campaign! Media, Politics, and Political Advertising*, (Ed.) David A. Schultz (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), p. 5-6.
[114] West, p. 66.

Question Period, with a somewhat aggressive, opened-mouth expression on his face. The female narrator's script is scrolled through on the screen in a professional black font, which says:

> Stephen Harper has made a lot of promises to a lot of people. Apparently he's made a few too many. Now he admits he'll either raise taxes, or run a deficit to pay for them all. Wow. He's not even elected yet. And he's already running a deficit. Choose your Canada.[115]

The narrator's tone is highly sarcastic, until she delivers the "Choose your Canada" line with harsh seriousness. Her voiceover is supported by a background drum solo that is reminiscent of a military parade drum beat. Unlike, the Liberal's "Health Agenda" this advertisement is delivered at a much slower pace: the single narrator delivers 34 less words in 30 seconds than the two combined readers in "Health Agenda." Also, this advertisement does not cite any references that support it claim, likely because it was not a credible argument, based on the first two years of the Harper Government.[116]

The visual production of this advertisement is a very basic and the argument is fairly dull in comparison to some of the other scripts in the "Choose your Canada" series. It seems that the fuzzy picture of Harper that becomes increasingly sharp is meant to keep the viewer's interest despite the slow reading narrator who is discussing possible future

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[115] Liberal Party of Canada, "Campaign Promises," 2006, The Election Broadcasting Project Archive, York University.

[116] Numerous policies are proposed by parties in any election, which would result in a list too lengthy to list here, but Harper's Five Priorities at least seem to have been implemented, as can be seen in: the first GST reduction, Canada, *Budget Plan 2006: Focusing on Priorities* (Ottawa, ON: Public Works and Government Services, 2006), p. 12; the Universal Child Care Benefit, Canada, 2006, p. 15; the Federal Accountability Action Plan, Canada, 2006, p. 51-2; increased funding for the Canada Health Transfer, Canada, 2006, p. 144; and various crime-related programs, Canada, 2006, p, 18. The second GST reduction, Canada, *Strong Leadership, A Better Canada* (Ottawa, ON: Public Works and Government Services, 2007), p. 10, A summarized balance sheet of the Harper Government's third budget shows no deficit, *Budget Plan 2008: Responsible Leadership* (Ottawa, ON: Public Works and Government Services, 2008), p. 25. Finally, an overview of tax reductions implemented by the Harper Government since 2006 demonstrates that taxes were not increased, Canada, 2008, p. 38.

budgets, which would likely inspire many Canadians to change their television channel. The final shot of Harper in his aggressive pose is supposed to remind Canadians of the Liberal's message that the Conservative Party has a secret agenda and an angry leader. In essence, the advertisement is acknowledging that the Tories have outbid the Liberals in this election, but the image of the combative Harper is meant to inform Canadians that the Conservatives still have a secret agenda. It makes Harper appear to be temporarily neglecting his supposed ideological disregard for social services to win an election. This appears to be the message of a Liberal Party that realizes it is being defeated and the only argument it can produce is, do not trust Harper. Understandably, the focus group participants did not enjoy it and did not have much to say about it.

In 1997, the NDP sponsored "Wrong Crowd" which is arguably the only negative spot that the focus group participants seemed to actually support. This advertisement begins with the iconic view of Parliament Hill's Centre Block with the Peace Tower's bells ringing and some tourists roaming the grounds on a bright summer day. The camera cuts to Alexa McDonough in a feminine professional suit, along with subdued jewellery, standing in front of an entrance to what appears to be the East Block, where she presents the message listed above in the focus group section of this chapter. This advertisement demonstrates one of the reasons why it is unfortunate that there is an underdeveloped literature on Canadian political advertising. Unlike in America, Canada has experience with federal female party leaders (Kim Campbell, Alexa McDonough, and Audrey McLaughlin, not to mention the many provincial party leaders). In the United States, Hillary Clinton's current Democratic presidential nomination campaign represents the first occasion that a woman has received such comparable prominence in presidential

politics, although there have been American women who were governors and senators. The fact that McDonough is presenting the negative message herself is fascinating, since party leaders hardly ever do this in Canadian political advertising. Also, the advertisement emphasizes that McDonough is on Parliament Hill, already engaged in the political process. This could be an attempt to persuade the male chauvinistic voter that McDonough's gender does not impact her political ability. Possibly the advertisement was emphasizing the toughness and the credibility of the NDP itself, since it suffered a defeat in the 1993 election that was seconded in severity only by the PCs.

The other interesting aspect of "Wrong Crowd" is the theme of openness. The advertisement is shot outside, giving the impression that any tourist on Parliament Hill could have walked up to McDonough and had a conversation with her. Similarly, McDonough makes many obvious hand gestures to the camera, seemingly trying to pull the viewer towards her. This corresponds to the advertisement's script that claims the NDP is the only federal party that is concerned with ordinary Canadians, unlike the other parties which are elitist and unapproachable. This is the reason why the other parties support cutting social services and why the viewer ought to vote for McDonough. The other NDP advertisement examined below also presents the idea that approachability in advertising aura is politically successful.

During the 2006 federal election, the NDP released the "Bag" advertisement, which is the only spot that will be analyzed here that does not target the conservative parties. In this advertisement, a female narrator delivers the script:

> The Liberals are pretty smug. They think they've got this election in the bag. They think we'll ignore their corruption. Their favours for well-connected friends. Their

huge, wasteful corporate tax giveaways. And their endless broken promises to seniors and children, working people and families. Enough is enough. Let's send the Liberals a message. Jack Layton and the NDP: getting results for people.[117]

This advertisement opens with the image of a large bag with the Liberal Party logo printed on its side falling recklessly from the top of the screen to the floor of a completely white set. The fall causes stacks of money and coins to fall out of the bag. As the narrator lists the reasons why the Liberals cannot be trusted the words, corruption, favours, corporate tax giveaways, and broken promises, printed in a playful font float one-by-one out of the bag and hover from top-to-bottom on the screen.[118] When the narrator comes to the, "Enough is enough," line in the script, a winter boot that any middle-class Canadian parent would wear falls from the top of the screen, making the Liberal bag and their apparent transgressions disappear as it descends. The final scene is of Jack Layton wearing a white collared dress shirt with sleeves that appear to be rolled up to the elbows and a black tie that is just slightly loosened. Throughout the advertisement a playful, jingling melody that is reminiscent of Christmas music provides the background track (after all, the 2005-06 campaign did encompass Christmas).

The focus group participants did not respond well to the "Bag" advertisement. They believed that it was too folksy to be taken seriously and some participants seemed somewhat annoyed by it. Perhaps, the focus groups would have been kinder to this spot around Christmas time. Conversely, it is also possible that they would have found it less bearable during the holidays, since they would already be surrounded by such Christmas themes. Regardless, like in "Wrong Crowd" this advertisement attempts to appear

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[117] New Democratic Party of Canada, "Bag-English," 2006, The Election Broadcasting Project Archive, York University.
[118] Ibid.

approachable. From the ridiculous, inconsistent font that summarizes the NDP's grievances with the Liberal record to the jingling bells as background music to the boot that crushes the Grit's past mistakes, the overall feeling of the spot is very playful. These symbols are meant to give the impression that this is not the sort of advertisement that the governing parties would produce, because their technocratic administrators would never approve them. As such, this advertisement is designed to differentiate the NDP from the Conservatives and the Liberals, by making an advertisement that is in touch with the holiday traditions of many Canadians and that has a non-establishment aura. This was a good idea by the NDP in theory, but that actual advertisement seemed to annoy the focus group participants after only one viewing.

The advertisements of the conservative parties must be examined in a different manner than those of the Liberals and the NDP, since the focus group participants did not seem to find any of the conservative spots to be effective. Therefore, both the advertisements sponsored by the conservative parties that will be analyzed here did not seem to effectively persuade the focus group participants. The first is the 2000 PC advertisement, "Red Book Boogie." Similar to the NDP's "Bag" advertisement, this spot attempts to present a negative message in a light-hearted manner, by parodying both the Liberal timing of the election call and compilation rock CDs. The very excited narrator delivers the following script:

> Here it is Canada! Jean Chretien's greatest lies! All 101 over the last seven years on one disc! You'll hear great lies like, GST! Or the unforgettable Sea King Helicopter flip-flop! And everyone's favourite: killing Free Trade! It's the

greatest pack of lies ever sold and for the price of a $200 million election you'll get to hear more lies![119]

Through much of the advertisement there is a scrolling list of supposed Liberal lies moving from the bottom to the top of the screen, which include, in the PC's own words: the Pearson Airport Contract Scandal; killing the GST; Re-examining budget secrecy; strengthening the Young Offenders Act; protecting whistle-blowers; military helicopter flip-flop; reducing payroll taxes; stabilizing provincial transfers; cancelling Free Trade; and the list continues.[120] In all, eighteen supposedly broken promises file across the screen. This is interesting, because it appears to be another attempt at overwhelming the viewer with information as was done in the Liberal's "Health Agenda," but with a playful, albeit negative, tone.

Visually, the advertisement seems to be mimicking the as-seen-on-TV advertising style, as it begins with what seems to be a shot of the galaxy, but the stars are CDs that are rotating as they would if they were being played in a CD player, and occasionally sparklingly. The CDs have Canadian flags on them with the words, "Jean Chrétien's Greatest Lies," imposed over the flag. This scene is held for a few seconds, and then four video clips of Chrétien acting in official capacities are displayed: two of him in press scrums, one speaking at a press conference, and a final clip of Chrétien appearing to give a lecture at a formal event. While these video clips are being displayed, the list of unfulfilled Liberal promises is scrolling up the screen. In part, this production technique could be a sign that the PCs remained concerned about insulting Chrétien's facial paralysis after their infamous "Face" advertisement that was perceived to ridicule his

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[119] Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, "Red Book Boogie," 2000, The Election Broadcasting Project Archive, York University.
[120] Ibid.

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disability. The scrolling list made it more difficult to focus on the images of Chrétien, even though the images of him were fairly flattering for a negative advertisement. Certainly, Chrétien's facial features and the PC's attack on them where iconic in Canadian politics at this time. So this combination of symbols in "Red Book Boogie" was an acknowledgment (even if implicit) by the PCs that their former attack on Chrétien was unacceptable in Canadian society. However, the combination of the general irreverent tone of the advertisement, the list of broken promises, and the videos portraying Chrétien in positions of power seem to ridicule Chrétien for calling an election so early into his majority mandate when he had yet to fulfill his original commitments. Thus, this is a more cautious critique of Chrétien than what the PCs had produced in the 1993 election.

The PCs also attempted to establish a theme of Chrétien as yesterday's man in this spot. Long out-of-date rock music with a 1950s sound plays in the advertisement's background audio track. The idea of agedness is reinforced by the compilation CD concept of the advertisement; namely, one purchases such compilations of various artists, because these songs are now rarely played on the radio and the limited interest in these tracks means that artists no longer have to compete with separate albums. Finally, the fictitious CD compilation is titled "Red Book Boogie" and boogie would have been considered a dated, barely-used term in Canadian pop culture in 2000. Therefore, the combination of agedness and obsolescence in this advertisement creates the notion that Chrétien is himself obsolete and Canada ought to get-with-the-times by getting rid of the prime minister that cannot seem to get his work done by fulfilling his promises. However, the focus group participants perceived the spot as mocking the electoral process in

general, rather than specifically the 2000 federal election and they were understandably unimpressed by this.

The final advertisement that will be analyzed in this section is the Conservative's 2006 "They'll go Negative" advertisement. Visually this spot had a simple advertising concept: it continued to zoom in on a black and white picture of Paul Martin who appears unhappy, confused, and slightly flustered. The script is delivered by a male narrator, who says:

> When you've been in power for twelve long years. When your party has been named by a judicial investigation into corruption. When scandals continue to engulf your government. What message can you possibly take to the people of Canada?[121]

At this point Martin's face disappears and the quotation, "'PM Plan Negative Campaign' *Globe and Mail*, November 24th,"[122] moves towards the viewer. After the a few moments, the black background that had been present throughout the advertisement is replaced by a white screen with the slogan, "Stand up for Canada" and the Conservative logo superimposed on it, as an upbeat guitar solo begins to play as a background track. The narrator continues, "On January 23rd let's do something positive. Authorized by the registered agent for the Conservative Party of Canada."[123]

This advertisement is fascinating because of its simplicity. The previous PC advertisement also argued that the Liberal's own weaknesses meant that they had little to offer voters in an election, but "Red Book Boogie" used a comparatively intricate visual concept and parody device to make this point. Alternatively, "They'll go Negative" is

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[121] Conservative Party of Canada, "They'll go Negative," 2006, The Election Broadcasting Project Archive, York University.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.

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simple and concise. In effect, "Red Book Boogie" was arguing that the Liberals were able to stay in power without making any accomplishments due to clever marketing. Therefore, Canadians should vote PC instead because their party could also produce an impressive marketing campaign. After all, "Red Book Boogie" does not provide any policy proposals; it is just an interesting critique of the Chrétien government. Although, the focus group participants were not very supportive of "They'll go Negative," this could be due to the fact that they were already removed from the context of the 2006 election, less than two years later. After the accusations made against the Conservatives in the 2004 election, the Tories would have to explain the Liberal's motivations for making such attacks. Unlike, the PCs though, the Conservatives provided an advertisement that was almost devoid of symbols other than text and Martin's tired-looking face. It must have been an attempt at appearing genuine to the electorate with their rebuttal to the anticipated Liberal attacks by avoiding expensive marketing techniques. Also, the two-step flow of communication model must be considered in this advertisement. Namely, that the Conservatives were providing their partisans, who were more attentive to politics and political advertising, a readily available explanation for Liberal attacks against Harper when in discussion with their peers.[124] Regardless, it was thought-provoking that the focus group participants did not appreciate this simple advertisement considering their expressed dislike for money focused politics.

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[124] Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in Mass Communications* (New York: Free Press, 1955), p. 310-12

5.3: Content Analysis

As this is a pioneering study of Canadian political advertising, some basic information about the results of the content analysis ought to be provided. Between 1993 and 2006, 244 English-language political advertisements were produced by the major political parties, of which 90 (36.9 per cent) were negative, 57 (23.4 per cent) were contrast, and 97 (39.8 per cent) were positive, based on the categories established for this study as has been described above. In terms of individual campaigns, 2006 was the most negative by percentage of total advertisements produced for that election (47.1 per cent negative, 11.8 per cent contrast, and 41.2 per cent positive), followed closely by 1993 (43.2 per cent negative, 12.4 per cent contrast, and 44.4 per cent positive). Interestingly, 1993 also had the second highest percentage of positive election advertisements in this timeframe, with the 2004 election being the most positive (52.2 per cent positive, 17.4 per cent contrast, and 30.4 per cent negative). The campaign with the smallest percentage of negative advertisements was 1997 (26.4 per cent negative, 41.5 per cent contrast, and 32.1 per cent positive), followed by 2000 (27.8 per cent negative, 41.7 per cent contrast, and 30.6 per cent positive). These results are fascinating, because for instance, few Canadians would have considered 2004 to be a positive campaign, as this is when the opposing narratives of Liberal corruption and Conservative extremism began to emerge. This result occurred because this content analysis studied all the advertisements produced, not the amount of airtime each spot received, as was done by Walter I. Romanow. These different content analysis strategies will produce different findings, as can be seen in Romanow's study recording 54.1 per cent of 1993's telecast occasions on

the CBC and CTV were negative,[125] whereas this study found 43.2 per cent of the political advertisements produced in 1993 were negative. The methodology used in this study measures the type of advertising campaign each party was prepared to mount. Parties have the ability to change the overall tone of the election by heavily airing certain advertisements and reducing the airtime of others. While it is beyond the scope of this project, one could determine the frequency of broadcast of these spots by analyzing data from the CRTC or even rank these advertisements based on their Gross Rating Points.

Chart 1: Percentage of Total Ads by Tone between 1993 and 2006

Percentage of Total Ads by Tone between 1993 and 2006
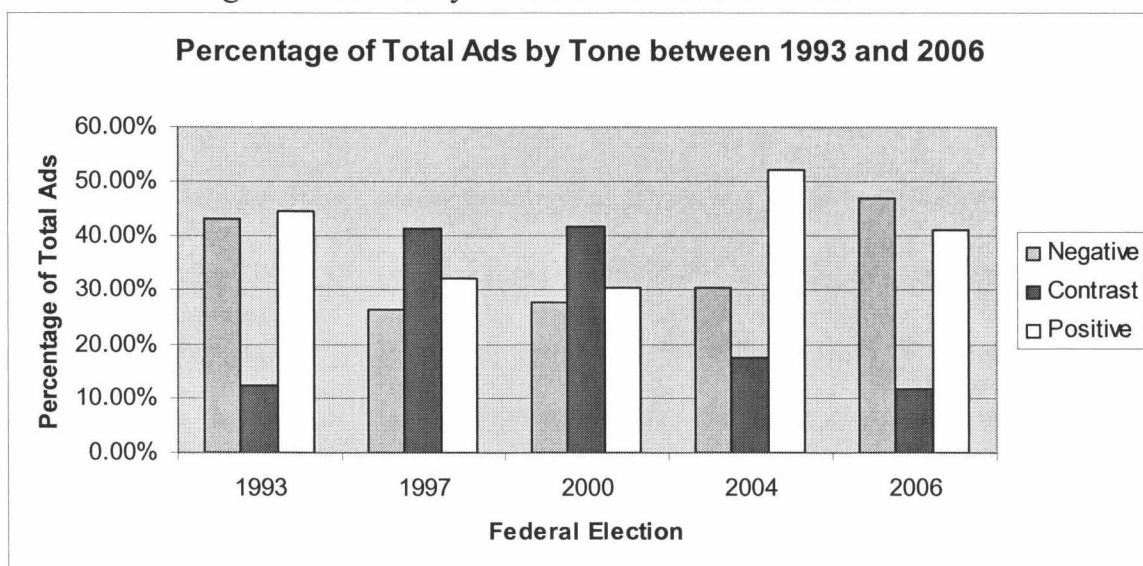
Many Canadians would be curious to know how similar the levels of election negativity are in Canada and the United States, but comparing the negativity in these two countries is not easy.[126] First, the Canadian use of the Westminster parliamentary

[125] Walter I. Romanow, "Contextual Analysis of Political Advertising: The Attack Mode on English-Language TV," *Television Advertising in Canadian Elections: The Attack Mode,* 1993, (Eds.) Walter I. Romanow et al. (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999), p. 58.
[126] As a reminder, this thesis defines a negative advertisement as one that predominately criticizes an opponent party or candidate based on their perceived weaknesses in policies, background, and personality.

tradition is very different from the American model of separated and balanced power. Based on political culture factors, it is likely that the positive-negative advertising ratio varies based on the level of the federation and the particular office being sought (i.e. MP, mayor, senator, president, and other positions). Since most English-speaking Canadians focus on federal politics and Americans are generally most interested in presidential politics, comparing these two levels of governance appears reasonable. However, American methodological debates in the political communications field have resulted in varied content analysis findings. With these factors in mind, Geer reports that America's top political communications scholars measured negativity in the 2004 presidential election at between 40 per cent and about 50 per cent, which is the most negative American election in forty-four years.[127] This would put the 2004 American presidential campaign in roughly the same negativity range as the 2006 Canadian federal election. However, the 1976 American presidential election was the most recent campaign in the United States with levels of negativity as low as Canada's 1997 and 2000 federal elections.[128] Thus, it seems difficult to compare Canadian and American negative political advertising, since there have been such large fluctuations in Canadian election negativity between 1993 and 2006. This could possibly be the result of the changes to the Canadian conservative movement over this timeframe, as the fragmented conservative parties practically ensured Liberal majority governments, making it unnecessary for the Liberals to produce negative advertisements that the public did not support. In fact, only

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Negative advertisements still can have positive appeals in their scripts according to this definition, but if the dominant tone of the spot, based on time, is negative then the advertisement is recorded as negative. Since this project is also records contrast advertisements, it should be noted that the distinction between a negative and a contrast spot is that a contrast advertisement devotes roughly equal time to positive and negative appeals.

[127] Geer, p. 36-7.
[128] Ibid, p. 37.

25 per cent of Liberal advertisements in 2000 were negative compared to their average of 36.5 per cent negative advertisements across these five campaigns. Also, the PCs did not produce a single truly negative advertisement in the 1997 campaign, probably due to the public outcry over their 1993 campaign spots that criticized Chrétien's facial paralysis. Therefore, it is possible that the 1997 and 2000 campaigns represent an anomaly in the data and it would seem necessary to expand the studied timeframe in Canadian federal elections to establish larger trends that could be compared to the United States, which could be an interesting topic for further research.

One of the most important findings of the content analysis is the appearance of an ideological link to negativity in Canada federal politics. When examining advertising tone by party sponsor, the NDP had the highest percentage of negative advertisements to their total advertisements produced between 1993 and 2006 (65.1 per cent), followed by the Liberals (36.5 per cent), then the Conservative Party of Canada (34.7 per cent), and finally the Reform/Alliance parties (0 per cent). The only exception to this trend is the Progressive Conservatives (46.7 per cent). While the PCs are usually, but not always, further to the right of the ideological spectrum than the Liberals, during the studied timeframe the Liberals under Finance Minister Paul Martin had swung to the right as they eliminated the deficit and started repaying the national debt. The funds for these ventures were obtained, in part, by reducing transfer payments to the provinces, which the PCs under Jean Charest and Joe Clark vehemently attacked. Thus, an argument could be made that in practical terms the PCs were further to the left than the Liberals at this time. Also the PCs were struggling for political survival after their defeat in 1993 and the rising support for the Reform/Alliance, which would make the Tories more motivated to use

negativity to demonstrate their continued purpose in federal politics vis-à-vis the other major parties. This is best seen in the 2000 election where all the PCs advertisements were of a negative tone, which led Peter Woolstencroft to describe their strategy as such: "The big challenge for Laschinger was to find some way of breaking through the clutter of television advertisements, political and non-political alike, and attract attention to the PCs."[129] Although, the erratic distribution of tone in PC advertisements between 1993 and 2000 could also indicate a large turnover in party staff, which is very possible with defections to the Reform/Alliance and the PCs having a different leader for every one of these campaigns who would probably be accompanied into power with their own entourage. An examination PC advertising tone before 1993 would be insightful in determining if there is actually a relationship between ideology and advertising tone, or if this finding was a coincidence.

There are rational reasons behind the convergence of negative advertising and ideology. For instance, the NDP are generally precluded from forming a government at the federal level, thus their rhetoric must convince voters that the performances of the established parties have been so poor that it is sensible to cast a NDP ballot, which in most of the country is a protest vote. Some could find it difficult to believe the Reform/Alliance never produced a negative advertisement. These parties did sponsor negative messages, but they relied on contrast advertisements to deliver these ideas. For instance, possibly the most notorious Reform spot comes from the 1997 election and stated:

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[129] Peter Woolstencroft, "Some Battles Won, War Lost: The Campaign of the Progressive Conservative Party," *The Canadian General Election of 2000*, (Ed.) Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan (Toronto: Dundurn Group, 2001), p. 100.

Male V.O.: Last time these men [displays pictures of Jean Chrétien and Jean Charest] almost lost our country and will do it again with distinct society when these men [displays picture of Lucien Bouchard and Gilles Duceppe] hold their next referendum. Preston Manning and the Reform Party believes [sic] there is a better way to keep our country together. Equality of all provinces, a real plan to deal with any future votes on separation, and a voice for all Canadians, not just Quebec politicians .

Female V.O.: Reform: now you have a real alternative.

Male V.O.: Paid for by the Reform Party of Canada.[130]

This was a very controversial advertisement at the time, but it is a contrast advertisement, not a negative advertisement (despite its very negative tone).[131] According to Geer's methodology there are both positive and negative appeals in this script. Almost equal time to given to the negative and positive appeals. Even based on Bader's incorporation of image and mood this is a contrast advertisement, since black and white images of the other party leaders are juxtaposed to Manning meeting happy citizens on a bright day. Possibly, Reform/Alliance organizers were concerned that the unfavourable sentiments that many members of the public felt towards their movement would be reinforced by negative advertisements. It is also possible that new political parties need to state their policies to differentiate themselves from the established parties. Regardless, it is fascinating to observe ideology influencing political advertisements.

This ideological finding is even more fascinating when applied to the American literature on political advertising. Most notably, Ansolabehere and Iyengar's found that

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[130] Reform Party of Canada. [Quebec Politicians]. 1997. The Election Broadcasting Project, York University.

[131] It is interesting to note that research released by Decima after the election found an increased number of Canadians reported that the Reform Party was the party most competent in handling national unity during the ten days after the introduction of this advertisement: Janelle Holden, *Alberta Report* Dec. 21, 1998 (Vol. 26, Iss. 1), p. 10.

negative advertising is more effective at mobilizing right-leaning voters.[132] Although Ansolabehere and Iyengar's results would have to be replicated in Canada, there is some anecdotal evidence such an effect also occurs in this country. For example, in the 1988 election, which is considered by some to be the Canadian introduction to televised negative advertising, the Progressive Conservatives retained much of their 1984 voter base.[133] This seems to somewhat support, in the Canadian context, Absolabehere and Iyengar's finding, since it could be said that the PC partisans ensured they voted in this campaign that was marked by a negative tone. Thus, some tentative remarks on this effect can be made at this time. In Canada, voter participation rates have generally been decreasing over the past few decades.[134] Under this situation, every vote becomes more valuable and some consider it to be more efficient for parties to identify and mobilize their partisans to vote, rather than attempt to gain undecided citizens' support through persuasion.[135] If these propositions are accurate, Canadian conservative parties have been engaged in a less than optimal advertising strategy by producing so few negative advertisements. It is possible that the conservative parties heavily aired their few negative advertisements, so to the electorate, the right-leaning parties appear just as negative as the left-leaning parties. However, it seems likely that the conservatives wished to distance themselves from the scary image that some segments of the Canadian public saw in the right-wing movement (as can be seen in the Reform/Alliance never producing a truly negative spot, as was categorized by this study). As such, political behaviour studies on

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[132] Ansolabehere and Iyengar, p. 92.

[133] Frizzell, 1990, p. 116.

[134] Elections Canada, "Voter Turnout at Federal Elections and Referendums, 1867-2006," March 25, 2008 <http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=pas&document=turnout&lang=e&textonly=false> (posted: Jan. 31, 2007).

[135] David Nickerson, "Volunteer Phone Calls Can Increase Turnout: Evidence from Eight Field Experiments," *American Political Research*, 34, 3 (May, 2006), p. 281-88.

the proportion of undecided voters to conservative-leaning voters would be important pieces of information when the Conservative Party plans its next electoral advertising strategy. Although, the focus groups participants consulted for this study would suggest that this may not be an effective method of obtaining the support of mothers of young children.

It should be noted that certain content analysis research categories did not return weighty results, including the immigration and Quebec categories. The researcher believed that these two issues could be used as factual examples of conservative extremism and unfitness to govern. After all, the Reform Party had adopted immigration positions that would have drastically changed the Canadian immigration experience, including restraints on immigration admission figures during periods of poor economic performance and withholding healthcare and other social services from Landed Immigrants.[136] Similarly, both the Reform/Alliance concept of equality of provinces and the PC recognition of Quebec as a nation would have, if implemented, made many Canadians nervous about future of Quebec in Canada. Also, the Reform's 1993 "Zero in Three" plan to eliminate the federal deficit called for cuts to foreign aid, as well as multiculturalism and bilingualism programs.[137] Other examples could be provided.[138] Nonetheless, there were only nine mentions of immigration amongst all the studied

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[136] Tom Flanagan, *Waiting for the Wave: The Reform Party and Preston Manning* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, 1995), p. 197.

[137] Faron Ellis and Keith Archer, "Reform: Electoral Breakthrough," *The Canadian General Election of 1993*, (Ed.) Alan Frizzell, Jon H. Pammett, and Anthony Westell (Ottawa, ON: Carleton University Press, 1994), p. 63.

[138] Other examples of potentially contentious Reform/Alliance policies relating to immigration and Quebec include: tighter rules around the family reunification program for immigrants (Flanagan, 1995, p. 194); the rejection of affirmative action (Ibid, p. 197); refusing citizenship to the children of illegal immigrants born in Canada (Ibid, p. 196-7); Manning's confrontational policy proscriptions for Quebec separatists (Ibid, p. 188-89).; the call for pre-emptive Quebec sovereignty referendums (Ibid p. 190); demanding a federal election in the case of a referendum affirming Quebec sovereignty (Ibid, p. 190).

political advertisements and eleven references to Quebec, of which six were sponsored by the Reform/Alliance themselves. Furthermore, seven of these eleven Quebec references come from the 1993 and 1997 elections. Thus, neither immigration nor Quebec played numerically important roles in these election advertisements (at least in the English-language advertisements).

Also, the research category for references to Canada in word or symbol produced less compelling results than was hoped. It was hypothesized that by using the Institute for Propaganda Analysis' glittering generality technique to associate Canada with social democracy and liberalism, the progressive parties could make their name calling association to the United States with Canadian conservatism more powerful. The technique of glittering generality is associating oneself with a virtuous word or concept, while neglecting the complexities that are inherent to that idea.[139] Based on the responses of focus group participants this would appear to be an effective strategy for illuminating the dichotomy between progressive and conservative parties. This would also be supported by the theoretical work, as the Institute for Propaganda Analysis writes, "most propagandists who make strong appeals to emotions, frequently combines the Name Calling and Glittering Generality Devices to obtain a sharp alignment of sympathies..."[140] While references to America were found predominately in advertisements with a negative in tone (65.4 per cent with a negative tone compared to 15.4 per cent with a positive tone), the tone of advertisements that reference Canada were fairly evenly distributed (36.7 per cent negative, 23.1 per cent contrast, and 40.2 per cent positive). Although, 80.8 per cent of the advertisements that mention the US also refer to

[139] Marlin, p. 102-03.
[140] Lee and Lee, p. 49-50.

Canada in some form, the number of references to Canada (169 or 69.3 per cent of all advertisements) so outnumbers the references to the US (26 or 10.3 per cent), it seems that the creation of Canada as an unquestioning virtuous concept opposed to supposedly negative US values has not fully emerged. However, some interesting results appeared when this research category was compared to others.

Chart 2: Tone of Ads Referencing the National Identity between 1993 and 2006
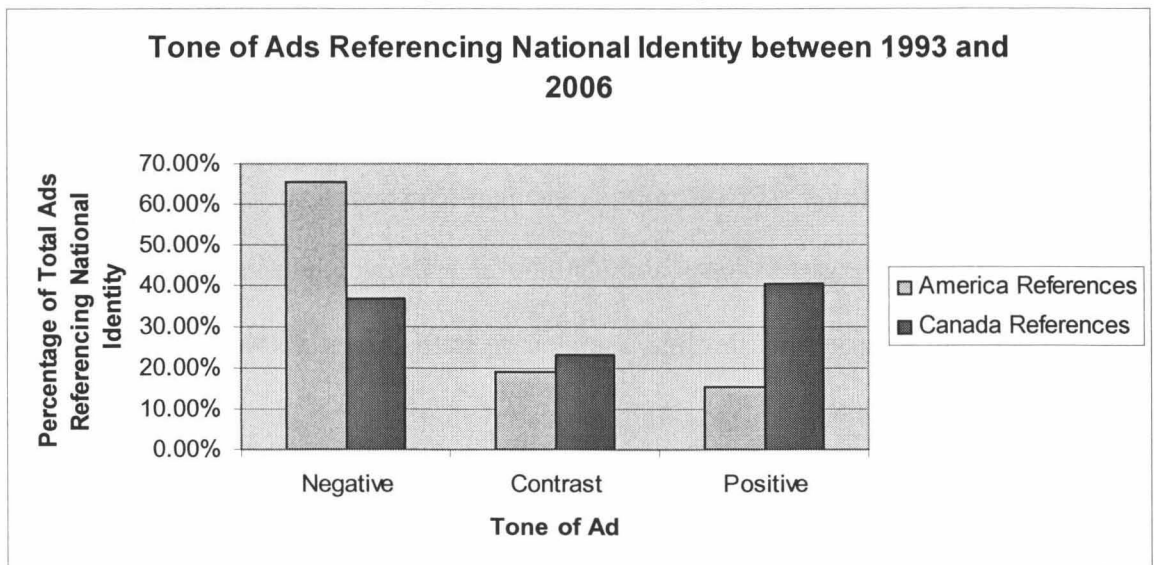
At the outset of the content analysis, the researcher was concerned about effectively identifying symbolic manifestations of ideas like Canada and the United States. However, the results of the content analysis demonstrate that the researcher should not have been so anxious about this consideration, because symbolic representations of national identities and policy areas are infrequently used in Canadian political advertising. For instance, Canada was the research category with the greatest number of instances of the symbolic representation, being present in 72 of the studied advertisements (29.5 per cent). This was followed in frequency by the symbolic

representations of the social services (27 spots or 11.1 per cent), then the economy (17 ads or 7 per cent), then immigration (5 spots or 2.1 per cent), then Quebec (2 advertisements or 0.8 per cent). Based on the theoretical work of Murray Edelman, the American political communication scholar, this is a rather odd finding. Edelman conceived of politics as being inherently ambiguous, as he wrote:

> [...] problems, aspirations, and social conditions are also subject to interpretation; they are constructions of language as well. It begins to grow clear that political language, like all texts, can be understood as creating an endless chain of ambiguous associations and constructions that offer wide potentialities for interpretation and for manipulation.[141]

Considering the ambiguity of politics, it would seem advantageous for parties to manipulate symbols as they too can be ambiguous. However, even this chapter's semiotic analysis section demonstrates that in Canadian political advertising there is a wide gamut of advertising production values from complex advertisements like, "Bag" and "Red Book Boogie," to simple advertisements like, "Campaign Promises" and "They'll go Negative." There currently appears to be a bias towards the simplistic in Canadian political advertising in these symbolic areas. This does not mean that symbolism is not important in other areas of political advertising.

5.4: Analysis

Typically academics assume that political parties do not engage in ideological arguments in their political advertisements, since this would not be politically expedient,

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[141]Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 110-11

or meaningful to the average viewer, or appropriate to the emotional television medium. Sally Young writes, "Because the major parties are both aiming at these same voters, they often head for the most crowded piece of political real estate—the middle ground. Policy details are less important than presentation and image."[142] There is an assumption amongst many political communication scholars that political advertising prize leaders and personality over ideology. Essentially, the assumption is that the content of political advertisements is simplistic and superficial. However, this assumption in the literature is incorrect. In fact, later in her book, Young describes how the Australian Labour Party tends to present itself as the party of social welfare and the Liberals tend to present themselves as the party of economic competence.[143] It seems likely that political parties provide voters with ideological contrasts between themselves and their opponents in their political advertisements, but these appeals are provided in a simplified format and made more tangible through the use of emotions and association. Individual party leaders and personalities are undoubtedly important in political advertisements, but the existence of larger political ideas cannot be discounted from this field of political communications. Perhaps, this technique will be more apparent in the Canadian context.

Due to Canada's strong relationship with both the United States and Europe, which is unusual compared to most of the world, Canada has long experienced ideological cross-influences that are more obvious than in other English-speaking countries. Academics have long debated the strange Canadian dichotomy between individualism and communitarianism. One of the foundational theoretical manifestations of this debate is found in Gad Horowitz's seminal account, *Canadian Labour in Politics*.

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[142] Young, 2004, p. 48.
[143] Ibid, p. 150.

Horowitz argues that Canadian immigrants maintain certain salient ingrained values from the political culture of their home country. Despite Canada's proximity to America, the French immigrants' arrival to Canada pre-dated the liberal revolution in their homeland and the United Empire Loyalists were escaping from the American liberal revolution, making both of these influential peoples Tory-touched groups in an increasingly liberal Canada. These contrasting influences are the reason why Canada has an odd balance of individualism, as seen in a robust capitalist economy, and communitarianism, as seen in generous social services, like public health care.[144] The content analysis attempted to measure this conflict between individualism and communitarianism in one of its simplest forms, by recording references to the economy and social services. This is a good test of values, because maintaining a robust economy and an accessible social safety net are both part of the Canadian consensus, as well as an effective means for individualists and communitarians to distinguish themselves by placing an emphasis on one over the other. Individualists are best represented by the Canadian conservative parties and are defenders of a strong capitalist economy as a means of achieving classical liberal ideals. Whereas, the Liberals and the NDP are aligned with communitarian ideals, to varying extents, which would make them support a well-funded welfare state for the greater good of society. Again, this is an interesting experiment in Canada since none of the major parties would claim to be against effective social services or a strong capitalist economy, but this will help determine which values they prize more highly.

The results of the content analysis in measuring references to the economy and social services were illuminating. All mentions to the economy and social services, in word or symbol, were recorded whether this included mentions of jobs, health care, tax

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[144] Gad Horowitz, *Canadian Labour in Politics* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p. 3-30.

cuts, childcare programs, and other possible representations of these broad policy areas. At first, there was concern that these categories were too broadly established, since without referring to the economy or social services, what could the parties possibly discuss? Nevertheless, these research categories had powerful results. Between 1993 and 2006, the NDP referred to social services the most often in their advertisements (social services were mentioned in 87 per cent of all their spots), followed by the Liberals (67.9 per cent), then the PCs (53.1 per cent), then by the Reform/Alliance (39.3 per cent), and finally the Conservatives (27.3 per cent). In contrast, the PCs were the most likely to refer to the economy in their advertisements (mentioned in 70.3 per cent of all their advertisements), followed by the Reform/Alliance (64.3 per cent), then the Liberals (52.4 per cent), the N.D.P. (47.8 per cent), and finally the Conservatives referred to the economy the least often (31.8 per cent). Thus, the connection between a party's ideological position on the individualism-communitarianism spectrum and their advertising emphasis on either the economy or social services is fairly uniform, with a few exceptions.

As was proposed in the above discussion on the relationship between ideology and advertising tone, the PCs during this time could be seen as temporarily residing to the left of the Liberals. Although it may seem counterintuitive, this could explain why the PCs surpassed the Reform/Alliance in number of references to the economy. If the PCs were attempting to portray themselves as the defenders of the Canadian health care system (a communitarian institution), there would be an impetus placed on strategists to demonstrate their continued support for traditional liberal individualism, and by extension, the economy, to maintain the support of their conservative base. An alternative

explanation for why the PCs made more references to the economy than the Reform/Alliance, despite the PCs residing further to the left of the ideological spectrum than the Reform/Alliance, could simply be the result of smaller size of the Reform/Alliance sample, as it was a new political movement. After all, the Reform Party only produced four advertisements in 1993, which devoted much effort to craving out a policy niche in intergovernmental relations. Such a limited number of Reform Party advertisements in 1993 is likely the result of election advertising regulations and a lack of resources. This could also explain the other noticeable departure from the traditional left-right ideological commitment to individualism versus communitarianism that is observable in the Conservative Party's advertising. For instance, the NDP, the most left-wing major party, referred to the economy more often than the Conservatives and despite the Conservatives moving to the left of the Reform/Alliance, these two parties referenced social services more than the Conservatives. However, the Conservative Party has only contested two federal elections, so a new trend may emerge in time.

Horowitz's theoretical work on Canadian political culture and the above findings on the relationship between a party's ideology and their references to the economy and social services could provide compelling associations and symbolism in Canadian political advertisements. There appears to be a distinction in the content of advertisements produced by conservative and progressive parties, which relates to the traditional cleavage in Canadian politics between individualism and communitarianism. This situation is advantageous for progressive/communitarian parties, since the United States represents a very apparent example of traditional liberalism/individualism, as well as a salient influence on the Canadian identity. If propaganda is meant to produce an

emotional response from the receiver, there are few greater igniters of Canadian nationalist sentiment than the American influence on Canada. Also, considering television's mass audience, using nationalistic appeals is a wise strategy, since as Rokeach writes, "A grown person probably has tens of thousands of beliefs, hundreds of attitudes, but only dozens of values."[145] Therefore, when a party argues that one of their opponents is deficient in unifying national values, or covets the values of another country, it will likely have a greater impact on a larger number of potential voters than by attacking a specific policy of an opponent. Therefore, Canada's progressive parties could possibly use the United States as a simplified representation of what their ideologies opposes in a manner that would have an emotional impact on many Canadians. This situation is even more enticing for left-leaning parties, since Canadian conservatives do not have a relevant rival country with a communitarian ideology from which they could draw associations.

The content analysis attempted to measure the frequency of appeals to Canadian patriotism and anti-Americanism in the studied political advertisements. A surprising finding was the limited number of American references in this dataset, since as one focus group participant noted, "Canadians love to hate Americans."[146] Only 26 advertisements, or 10.7 per cent of all the commercials, discussed the United States, but some of the details surrounding these references to America were quite telling. First, almost two-thirds (65.4 per cent) of the spots that mentioned the United States had a negative tone and a further 19.2 per cent were contrast advertisements. The Liberals were by far the most frequent user of the America analogy, sponsoring 61.5 per cent of the spots that

[145] Qualter, p. 44.
[146] P1A, Focus Group, Oct. 24, 6:00 PM.

referenced the United States, followed by the N.D.P. with 26.9 per cent. Since 88.4 per cent of advertisements mentioning the United States were sponsored by the progressive parties, and these spots were overwhelmingly negative or contrast in tone, it confirms the hypothesis that the progressives are best positioned to link Canadian conservatism to American political culture in order to highlight the left-right ideological distinction. Interestingly, these references to American political culture are most often made in federal elections where a change in government occurs (53.6 per cent of references to America occurred in the 1993 and 2006 elections). Likely, this strategy of creating oppositions between Canada and the United States is saved for difficult electoral circumstances, because prolonged attacks against the Americans would make relations with them more difficult if that sponsoring party formed a government. Indeed, this was apparent in the 2006 federal election.

Chart 3: References to National Identity between 1993 and 2006 by Party
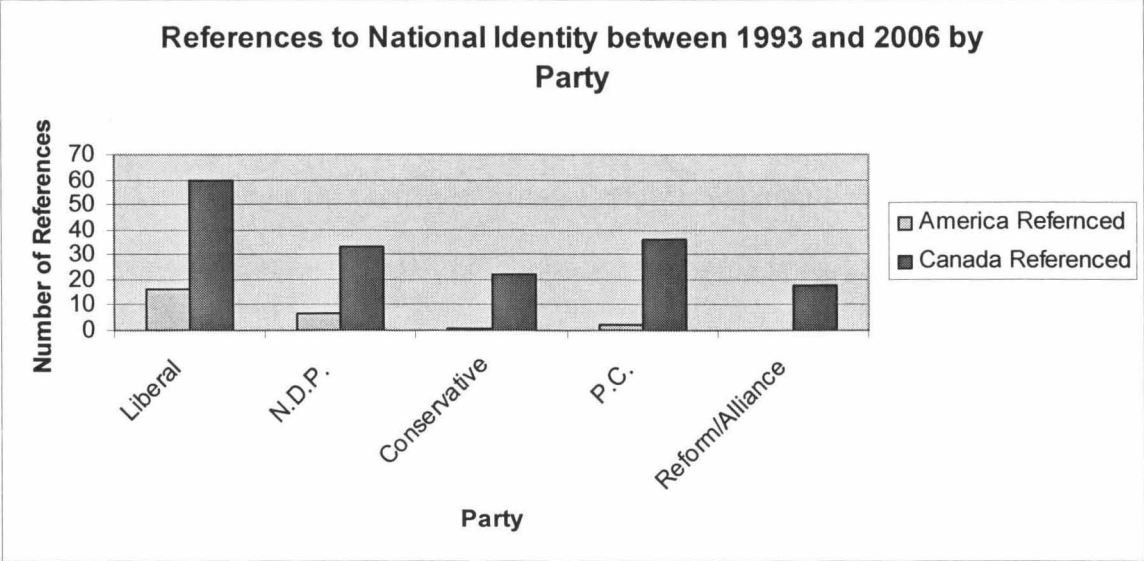
When the basic ideological indicators of the distinction between individualism and communitarianism are examined in the advertisements that reference Canada and the United States, a couple important trends are visible. First, 22 of the 26 (84.6 per cent) advertisements that reference America also mention social services in some form, but only 7 of the 26 (26.9 per cent) these mention the economy. Of the advertisements that reference Canada, 105 of the 169 (62.1 per cent) mention social services and 89 of the 169 (52.7 per cent) refer to the economy. Clearly, the important factor in references to Canada and America is social services. Although, considering that in political advertising the word, Canada, is used as an omnibus term, the importance of the relationship between references to social services and Canada is likely underestimated by the above figures. Thus, a better indication of the connection between Canada and social services is to examine the advertisements that reference both Canada and America, of which 18 of 21 (85.7 per cent) mentioned social services and only 5 of 21 (23.8 per cent) mention the economy. Since according to almost every indicator the American economy is usually stronger than the Canadian economy, the progressive parties would not be well advised to link their opponents to the American economy, as is reflected in the content analysis results. However, few Canadians envy the United States in terms of their social services. This was clearly demonstrated in the focus group discussions with comments like, "And what catches your ear mostly is, two-tier health system, and that's a four letter word in Canada."[147] The demographic consulted for this project would be even more concerned with the state of social services since the welfare state provides not only for themselves but for their children as well.

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[147] P4B, Focus Group, Oct. 24, 2007, 7:30 PM.

The Institute for Propaganda Analysis suggested that when citizens witness the name calling propaganda device in use, they ought to ask if the name in question authentically represents the idea being portrayed. As was demonstrated above, the left-leaning parties associate the conservative parties with the United States in their political advertisements, which is a salient personification of classical liberalism for Canadians. The tone of these advertisements is overwhelmingly negative and concerned with Canadian social services. These progressive parties also emphasis their own communitarian ideological background by emphasizing social services in their advertisements in general. In effect, the progressive parties are calling the conservative parties American so as to dissuade Canadians from voting for the right-wing parties, lest American individualism thrives at the expense of Canadian communitarian social programs. To a certain extent this is an accurate portrayal, as was demonstrated in the content analysis findings that demonstrate the right-leaning parties have a greater focus on the economy than social services. However, this neglects the fact that conservatism is a diverse ideology from country to country and is even remarkably eclectic amongst Canadian conservatives. To reduce Canadian conservatism to its simplest form, that being small government, one cannot claim that there is a practical consensus amongst conservative Canadians on the proper division between the purview of the state and the market, let alone amongst North American conservatives. Thus, the accuracy of the Liberal and NDP name calling strategy of associating Canadian conservatives with America ought to be called into question.

Many of the great works of Canadian political science examined the rich variety of thought within Canada's conservative tradition, including: Charles Taylor's, *Radical*

Tories: The Conservative Tradition in Canada; George Perlin, *The Tory Syndrome: Leadership Politics in the Progressive Conservative Party*; and again, Gad Horowitz's, *Canadian Labour in Politics*. Similarly, compare foundational Canadian conservative texts like, George Grant's, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*, to Preston Manning's, *The New Canada*. After all, Hugh Segal's, *Beyond Greed: A Traditional Conservative Confronts Neo-Conservative Excess*, was a response by a Red Tory to the radicalism he perceived in the Reform Party which has been documented in another foundational conservative text, Tom Flanagan's, *Waiting for the Wave: The Reform Party and Preston Manning*. An outsider without any knowledge of Canadian politics may well assume that these authors belonged to different political parties. Indeed, if not for Canada's single member plurality system that rewards large parties that incorporate a vast range of political ideas these authors may have belonged to different, smaller political parties. This historically evident in George C. Perlin's, *The Tory Syndrome*, where he wrote:

> A majority of the delegates were prepared to identify themselves as belonging to either a left or right wing in the party—43 percent on the right and 19 percent on the left. And nearly half of the delegates said there are big differences between the party's left and right wings.[148]

To determine the veracity of the name calling of conservatives by progressives, this project sought to categorize the different traditions of conservatism that are being portrayed by both the left-wing and right-wing parties. First, it is necessary to identify three strains of Canadian conservative thought that were most prominent in the studied political advertisements (neo-conservative, social conservative, and Red Tory). However,

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[148] George C. Perlin, *The Tory Syndrome: Leadership Politics in the Progressive Conservative Party* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980), p. 188.

it should be noted that there are other strains of conservative thought besides the ones presented here, so these categories are not meant to be exhaustive.[149] Since there are never ideal cases of political philosophy in practice since ideologies typically change to reflect a particular context, the descriptions below ought to be considered generalizations of these schools of thought.

Neo-conservatism's primary value is liberty, and as such, it believes that individuals ought to be given the broadest agency possible, as inspired by the political philosophy of Adam Smith, John Locke, and John Stuart Mill. Although, the Libertarian Party would be the purest manifestation of their sub-ideology, many neo-conservatives have been involved in the Conservative Party. There are important distinctions between neo-conservatives and libertarians, including neo-conservatives being generally less ideologically opposed to state intervention in the private sphere and more supportive of aggressive foreign policy than libertarians. It is currently more popular for Canadian conservatives of this tradition to label themselves as libertarians rather than neo-conservatives, but the nature of television advertising is such that it is difficult to differentiate between the two in this medium. Neo-conservatives wish to limit the size of the government by reducing the state's budget, debt, and taxes. They support

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[149] Many other strains of conservative thought could be recorded. For instance, Charles Taylor's, *Radical Tories*, examined individuals who represented various strains of conservatism, which were: Donald Creighton and the conservative allegiance to Britain; W.L. Morton, a liberal Conservative who saw the party as being without ideology; Al Purdy and rural conservatism with Burkean underpinnings; Eugene Forsey and socialist conservatism, or Red Toryism; and George Grant and Canadian nationalism. Brian Mulroney's introduction of Free Trade changed most Tories' position on Grant, except notably for David Orchard. Anglophile rhetoric in Canada has sharply decreased for many reasons. It seemed doubtful that Purdy would be featured in a television commercial by a major party. While Morton's liberal Conservatism is similar to current Conservatives who identify themselves as, economically conservative but socially liberal, this concept is too complex to be properly identified in a television advertisement. In a uniquely western manner, Stephen Harper and Tom Flanagan see Canadian conservatism in regional terms, with Red Tories in Ontario and the Maritimes, neo-conservatives in the West, and soft nationalists in Quebec. Since this project is not examining French-language advertisements, it is not necessary to include a soft nationalist research category.

privatization and deregulation, because they believe that the state is incapable of effectively intervening in the complexity of the marketplace, as was theorized by Frederich Hayek.[150] Ethically, they believe that individuals cannot reach their full potential with heavy state intervention. For instance, Robert Nozick wrote, "The minimal state is the most extensive state that can be justified. Any state more extensive violates people's rights."[151] In Canada, neo-conservatives are sometimes informally referred to as Blue Tories and include, Mike Harris, Ralph Klein, Maxime Bernier, and Stephen Harper. Neo-conservatives were key members of the Reform and Alliance Parties.

A strong theme in the political philosophy of social conservatives and Red Tories is social order, which intellectually derives from Edmund Burke. These conservatives believe that social stability is necessary for a functioning society, thus they advocate for gradual, incremental change. Burke is likely the Western world's most famous counter-revolutionary. On the French Revolution, he wrote:

> Were all these dreadful things necessary? were [sic] they the inevitable results of the desperate struggle of determined patriots, compelled to wade through blood and tumult, to the quiet shore of a tranquil and prosperous liberty? No! nothing [sic] like it. The fresh ruins of France, which shock our feelings whenever we can turn our eyes, are not the devastation of civil war; they are the sad but instructive monuments of rash and ignorant counsel in time of profound peace.[152]

The implication of this priority on social order is that social conservatives and Red Tories do not consider individual freedom to be paramount as neo-conservatives and libertarians do. Burke conceived of the state as a convent between its current citizens, as well as its

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[150] Johnson, 2005, p. 47.
[151] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), p. 149.
[152] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Toronto: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1986), p. 126-27.

deceased and future citizens, meaning that current problems and opinions do not necessarily take precedence over the larger continuum of the state. Therefore, change must be approached cautiously so as to avoid a Hobbesian state of nature where life would be solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. This dispute over fundamental values influences many of the differences between neo-conservative and social conservative and Red Tory thought, as described below.

Social conservatives, who are also called the religious right, place primary emphasis on social order and specifically the order established by traditional religious—usually, Christian—doctrines. Although, the Christian Heritage Party would be most aligned with this school of thought, the Conservative Party has many social conservative members. Cardinal John Henry Newman of England, in the nineteenth century, wrote that politics must look past the intellectual trends of the day and use ethical frameworks as a guide. He wrote:

> In morals, as in physics, the steam cannot rise higher than its source. Christianity raises men from earth, for it comes from heaven; but human morality creeps, struts, or frets upon the earth's level, without wings to rise. The Knowledge School does not contemplate raising man above himself; it merely aims at disposing of his existing powers and tastes, as is most convenient, or is practicable under circumstances.[153]

As such, these conservatives are concerned about the ethical slippery slope, leading them to support the pro-life movement and the traditional definition of marriage. For instance, American social conservative, Dinesh D'Souza, argues against same-sex marriage

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[153] Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Santayana* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), p. 248.

because he believes it will in turn justify polygamy, then incest, then bestiality.[154] The social conservative's concern is not really with the actions of individuals who do not conform to traditional moral codes themselves, but how their actions impact society. D'Souza writes, "The point is that love is a desirable but not sufficient condition for marriage…The reason is that marriage is the incubator of children. It is the only known arrangement for the healthy cultivation of the next generation."[155] Here the social conservative fear of societal breakdown is apparent. Many Canadians regardless of partisan affiliation, especially those born after the patriation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, would consider D'Souza's arguments offensive, but Burke and Newman demonstrate that there is an intellectual basis for social conservative thought. Influential Canadian social conservatives include, former Canadian Alliance leader Stockwell Day, Elsie Wayne, and debatably Jim Flaherty. [156]

Finally, Red Tories represent a middle-position between neo-conservatives and social conservatives, and as such, Red Tories value balance. As prominent Red Tory, Hugh Segal argues, "Moderation is not the holy grail of public policy or public life. But it is the essence of both conservative legitimacy and the legitimacy of self-government itself."[157] Like neo-conservatives, Red Tories believe a small government is desirable, but they do not necessarily see state intervention as negative. In fact, Red Tories believe that the state ought to use social programs as a method for constructing a national consciousness. Red Tories share the social conservatives' appreciation of Burkean social

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[154] Dinesh D'Souza, *Letters to a Young Conservative* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), p. 174.
[155] Ibid, p. 174.
[156] Steve Paikin, *The Dark Side: The Personal Price of a Political Life* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2003), p. 254-55.
[157] Hugh Segal, *Beyond Greed: A Traditional Conservative Confronts Neoconservative Excess* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, 1997), p. 156.

order, but they view class conflict as a greater danger to social stability than liberal social values. Thus, Red Tories, in the tradition of British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, share the socialist assumptions that human society is collectivist and the state ought to use its resources to bind the classes together. Segal writes, "No society can be stronger than its weakest link. No society premised on Nation and Enterprise can be complacent about undue constraints on enterprise. Nor can it be complacent about unfairness or insensitivity in its midst."[158] Therefore, the Red Tories are a multifarious group whose political philosophy can be difficult to predict. This sub-ideology's influence in Canadian political history has been pronounced, as they traditionally dominated the federal Progressive Conservative Party, which in part caused the conservative schism. Canadian Red Tories include, Sir John A. Macdonald, John Diefenbaker, Robert Standfield, and Dalton Camp. The Progressive Canadian Party best embodies Red Tory thought today, but due to the eclectic nature of this sub-ideology, all the major parties have been competing for Red Tory support since the PC-CA merger, in 2003.

As was mentioned above, Canadian brokerage parties lead to a wide array of views in all parties. There are also competing and apparently inconsistent strains of thought in the Liberal Party and the NDP, but Perlin's work shows that Canadian conservatives seem to be more antagonistic and less co-operative amongst themselves than the other major parties. For example, Tasha Kheiriddin and Adam Daifallah's argue that Canada has been devoid of conservative policy even while conservatives were in power, because of the Red Tory influence.[159] Political columnist, Andrew Coyne, writes:

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[158] Ibid, p. 150.
[159] Tasha Kheiriddin and Adam Daifallah, *Rescuing Canada's Right: Blueprint for a Conservative Revolution* (Mississauga, ON: John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd., 2005), p. 3-12.

The Red Tory, as the name implies, does not go in much for logical coherence or philosophical frameworks; indeed he prides himself on it. He is guided, rather, by sentiment, and nostalgia, and an unshakeable conviction that everything can be resolved through "dialogue."…He has a quite mystic regard for notions like "community," though he does not know what he means by it, or how it conflicts with the "individualism" he despises. He is also against "socialism," though again he can't say why. Above all, he believes in civility—unlike his political opponents, whom he curses in the most strident terms.[160]

Thus, some neo-conservatives and libertarians believe that the Red Tory is not a real conservative and is intellectually weak. However, some Red Tories express similar contempt when discussing neo-conservatives. Hugh Segal has argued that, "it is absolutely clear that people like Buchanan, Gramm, Podhoretz, Manning, or Perot are not conservatives at all. They are simply radicals engaged in the polemics and rhetoric all radicals have always engaged in."[161] Thus, some of the Red Tories question the neo-conservative's and libertarian's place in Canadian governance. Finally, individuals who do not share the social conservative ideology, regardless of their partisan affiliation, find their political objectives unusual and will have difficulties supporting them. Although these three strains of thought currently co-exist within a single party, they can have bitter cleavages amongst themselves and insist that their co-partisans do not represent their politics. After all, this is what produced PC-Reform schism.

The results of the content analysis for referenced conservative strain of thought fairly conclusively showed that the progressive parties were attempting to portray the right-leaning parties as neo-conservatives. During the timeframe, the NDP portrayed the conservative parties as neo-conservatives most often (an average of 41.8 per cent of all

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[160] Andrew Coyne, "Anatomy of a Red Tory," *National Post*, May 15, 2000, A17.
[161] Segal, p. 166.

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their advertisements, 50 per cent of all their contrast advertisements, and 56.7 per cent of all their negative advertisements), which was followed in frequency by the Liberals (33.9 per cent of all advertisements, 75 per cent of all contrast advertisements, and 40.6 per cent of all negative advertisements), and even the PCs accused the Reform/Alliance of being neo-conservatives in 4.4 per cent of all their spots, 11.1 per cent of all their contrast spots, and 23.8 per cent of all their negative spots. The sheer frequency of references to neo-conservatism across all these advertisements is striking in itself, but once the spots that targeted the conservative parties are separated, the effect is even more apparent. In NDP contrast advertisements that targeted the conservative parties, the right-wing parties were referred to exclusively as neo-conservatives in 80 per cent these advertisements, as well as in 75 per cent of the Liberal contrast advertisements targeting conservatives and in 11.1 per cent of the PC contrast advertisements targeting the Reform/Alliance. Neo-conservatism was exclusively used to describe the conservative parties in 62.5 per cent of all the NDP's negative advertisements targeting conservatives, 40.6 per cent of Liberal negative advertisements did the same, and 100 per cent of the PC's targeted negative advertisements referred to the Reform as neo-conservatives. The frequency of references to the other strains of conservative thought is comparatively minuscule. However, the conservatives were accused of being both neo-conservatives and social conservatives in 6.4 per cent of all Liberal spots (0 per cent of conservative targeted contrast advertisements, 18.8 per cent of conservative targeted negative advertisements) and in 8.6 per cent of NDP spots (20 per cent of targeted contrast advertisements, 5.3 per cent of targeted negative advertisements). These accusations that the conservative parties are

both neo-conservative and social conservative are not included in the exclusively neo-conservative figures found above.

Despite the large number of attempts to characterize the right-wing parties' brand of conservatism by the NDP, it is interesting to note the strategic nature NDP advertising. During the 1993, 1997, and 2004 campaigns the New Democrats focused on branding the right-leaning parties as neo-conservatives (as was the case in 75 per cent, 64.3 per cent, and 57.1 per cent of all their advertisements in these individual campaigns, respectively). The NDP did not reference the right-wing parties as social conservatives at all during this timeframe, except in 2004, where 42.9 per cent of their advertisements made this claim. This was likely due to lingering concerns amongst the public about social conservatives in the right-wing movement after Stockwell Day's leadership of the Alliance Party, in 2000. However, in the 2000 election, the NDP did not attack the conservatives at all, but saved all their attacks for the Liberals. The obvious difference between the 2000 and 2004 elections was that in 2000 there was little chance of a conservative government, but in 2004 this was conceivable. Finally, in the 2006 campaign, the NDP again focused their attacks on the Liberals and only characterized the Tories as neo-conservatives in 12.5 per cent of their advertisements. Alan Whitehorn explains the NDP's decision to not to vigorously attack the Conservatives in 2006, as follows:

> NDP planners had to find a way to counteract Liberal Party appeals to NDP voters to engage in strategic voting...To accomplish this, NDP ads targeted the Liberals and were more negative. The other side of the strategy was to lessen the fear of the Conservative Party and its Alberta-based leader. In order to achieve this, the NDP had to resist the inevitable temptation to portray the Conservatives as extremely right-wing and their leader as a scary man with a hidden agenda. Instead, the Conservative Party would be

characterized as simply being wrong on policies and not congruent with most Canadian values.[162]

Thus, the NDP will heavily target and attempt to characterize the conservative parties in their advertisements, but only when doing so is strategically useful, as can be seen in the very unbalanced nature of Chart 4 below, which details their attacks on the conservatives in this timeframe.

Chart 4: N.D.P. Attacks on Conservatives between 1993 and 2006
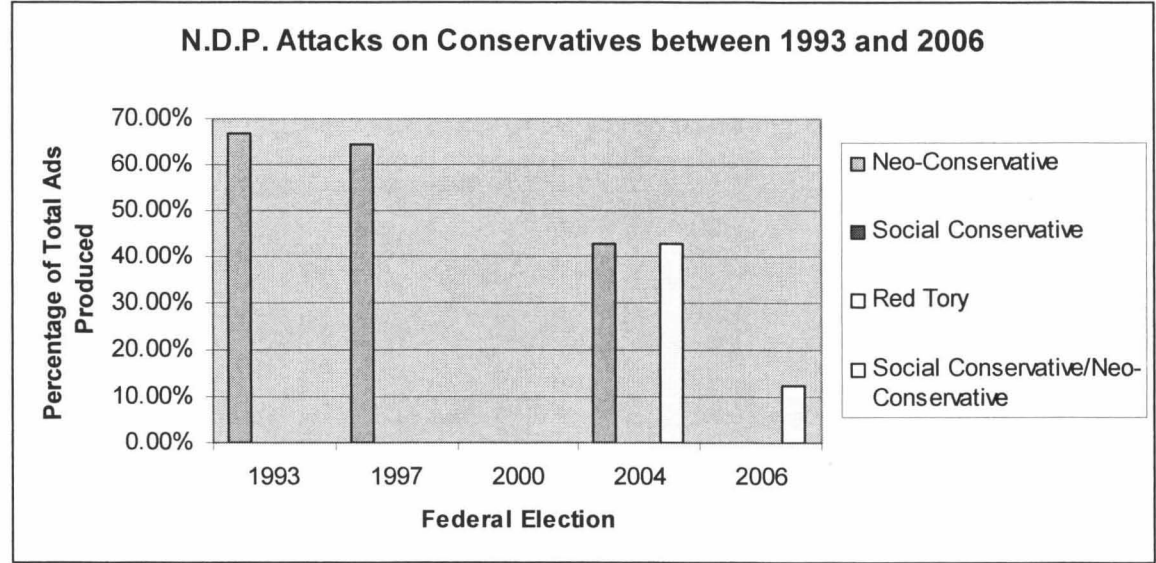
Unlike the NDP, the Liberals maintained a narrative of what the right-wing parties stood for throughout this timeframe. Liberal characterizations of the right-leaning parties as neo-conservatives reached peaks of 63.6 per cent of all their advertisements in 1997 and 56.3 per cent of all their advertisements in 2000. The social conservative characterization of the right-wing parties did not enter the Liberal attacks against the conservatives in a meaningful way until the 2004 federal election, but in that election every Liberal spot that referred to the Conservative Party as neo-conservative also

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[162] Alan Whitehorn, "The NDP and the Enigma of Strategic Voting," *The Canadian Federal Election of 2006* (Ed.) Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2006), p. 96-7.

accused the Tories of being socially conservative. This is again due to Stockwell Day's leadership of the Canadian Alliance, where his evangelical Christianity captured national attention and ridicule. Although the Liberals attacked Day's social conservatism in only one spot, in 2000, it was arguably one of the most controversial claims made in these studied political spots. The script for the spot, "Qualify/Health Care," reads:

> As an Alberta cabinet minister Stockwell Day said women who become pregnant through rape or incest should not qualify for government-funded abortions unless their pregnancy is considered life threatening.
> Does Stockwell Day's Reform Alliance speak for you?
> The Globe and Mail: quote, an Alliance government would support the development of a two-tier health care system, unquote.
> In Alberta, Stockwell Day helped impose a law that opens the door for U.S. style private health care.
> Does Stockwell Day's Reform Alliance speak for you?[163]

Again, in this case, the Liberal's claims do mostly represent the newspaper articles cited as evidence. Although, Day's comments on abortion were made in a partisan policy meeting, not in the Alberta Legislature, as could be assumed.[164] Also the script jumps from quoting the *Globe and Mail* article to describing Alberta's Bill 11 in a manner that could lead the viewer to assume that both opinions are from that newspaper. Finally, the quote from the *Globe and Mail* is actually attributed to Jason Kenny, not Stockwell Day.[165] However, these points are mainly trivial in comparison to the arguments being made. The Liberals must have seen an advantage in transplanting the social conservative/neo-conservative narrative developed in 2000 for Day onto Harper and the Conservative Party. Finally, the Liberals infrequently characterize the conservative

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[163] Liberal Party of Canada, "Qualify/Health Care," 2000, The Election Broadcasting Project Archive, York University.
[164] Tom Arnold, "De-Insure Abortions for Rape Victims—Day," *Edmonton Journal* (June 9, 1995), p. A7.
[165] McCarthy, p. A1.

parties as Red Tories (9.1 per cent of all their advertisements in 1997, 9.1 per cent in 2004, and 3.9 per cent in 2006). This appears to be the Liberal strategy when the conservatives out-bid them in funding social services, as was the case in these three elections. The Red Tory characterization is used to instil fear of deficits and to highlight the conservatives' inexperienced in governance. Therefore, unlike the NDP, the Liberals made a sustained attempt to characterize the conservative ideology.

Chart 5: Liberal Attacks on Conservatives between 1993 and 2006
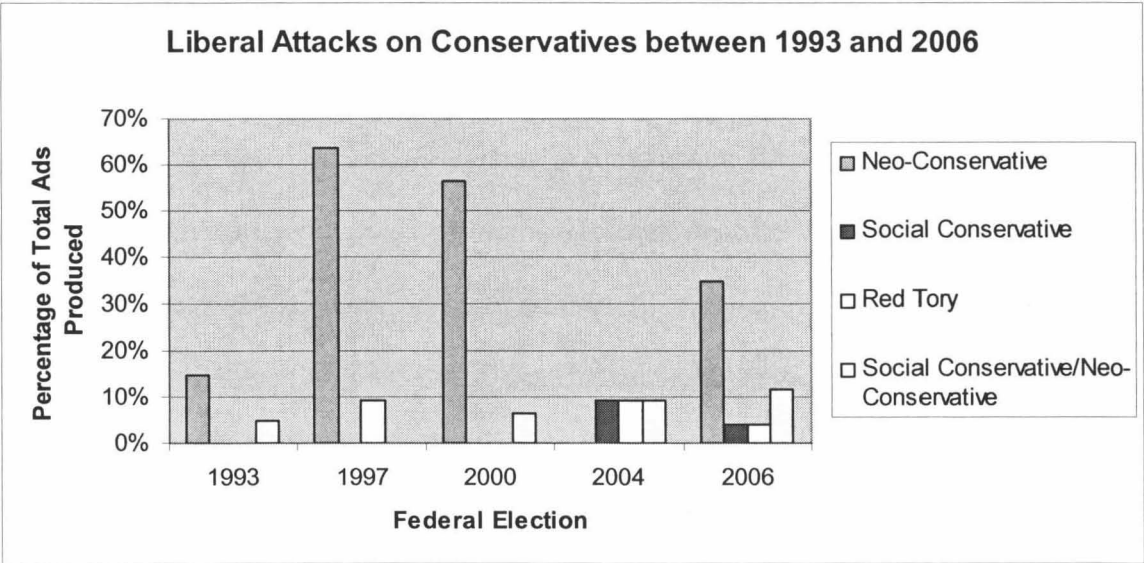
So what do the Liberals, and periodically the NDP, have to gain from making such characterization against the conservative parties? Based on the statements of this project's focus group participants, it appears that the Liberals and the NDP have astutely identified and concentrated on strains of conservative thought that the demographic consulted for this study finds unfavourable. When discussing the effectiveness of the Liberal's 2006 advertisement titled, "Washington Post," from the, "Choose Your Canada," series, one focus group participant said:

That's the thing about Harper, everyone was worried that he was too conservative…that, that, you know, that they were such conservative that they had people in their party that were kind of, you know, ultra-conservative: you know, anti-abortion, anti-…you know what I mean. That there, there was talk about people who were kind of, you know, racist. I think that, that really appealed to that fear in people. They don't want to vote Conservative because they're afraid of that…[166]

The other participants agreed that these social conservative values, like being pro-life, were represented in the Conservative Party, ran counter to Canada's national culture, and were ideas that they could not support.

Academic public opinions research confirms that the focus group members' opinions are consistent with mainstream Canadian public opinion. For instance, Neil Nevitte and Christopher Cochrane have examined the changing values of Canadians and how this relates to partisan politics. They found that while Canadians are becoming less partisan in general, their support for moral traditionalism, traditional family values, and free markets has all declined between 1981 and 2000.[167] This should be worrisome for some conservative ideologues. The ideological positions of the federal parties have correspondingly shifted to the left in all these areas over the same time period, according to the researchers.[168] Nevitte and Cochrane's most interesting finding was that, "there is virtually no overlap between what people's views are about free markets and their family or moral values."[169] In fact, the researchers found in 2000 only 34 per cent of PC supporters and 38 per cent of Alliance supporters held both moral and economic right-

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[166] P2A, Focus Group, Oct. 24, 6:00 PM.
[167] Neil Nevitte and Christopher Cochrane, "Value Change and the Dynamics of the Canadian Partisan Landscape," *Canadian Parties in Transition (Third Edition)*, (Ed.) Alan-G. Gagnon and A. Brian Tanquay (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2007), p. 259.
[168] Ibid, p. 261.
[169] Ibid, p. 263.

wing values, and fully 61 per cent of PC supporters and 50 per cent of Alliance supporters had mixed values in the economic and social spheres.[170] Based on this finding, Nevitte and Cochrane provide a hypothesis for the Alliance's failure to expand its appeal in the 2000 federal election: "Voters who were the most enthusiastic about free market values were repelled by the Alliance's moral outlook…Morally traditional Canadians, by contrast, were driven away from the Alliance, it seems, by their market outlooks…"[171] Nevitte and Cochrane's hypothesis becomes interesting in the political advertising targeting the Conservative Party, as was listed above, 18.8 per cent of the Liberal's and 5.3 per cent of the NDP's conservative targeted negative advertisements portrayed the right as both neo-conservatives and social conservatives. Indeed, this was the tactic used in the Liberal's "Qualify/Health Care" spot which referred to very right-wing funding proposals for both abortions and health care.

Thus, how conservative thought is presented to the public through negative advertisements can have serious implications on the electability of conservatives. Considering that the first accusation of both social conservatism and neo-conservatism in a negative advertisement did not occur until the 2000 election, and it only occurred once in this campaign, the impact of this rhetorical technique has likely been more pronounced in the elections that have followed it due to a greater frequency of use. In the 2004 and 2006 election, 33.3 per cent of NDP negative advertisements, as well as 33.3 per cent of their contrast advertisements targeting the Conservative Party claimed that the Tories were both social conservatives and neo-conservatives. The Liberals during these same elections claimed the Conservative Party was both social conservative and neo-

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[170] Ibid, p. 265.
[171] Ibid, p. 267.

conservative in 25 per cent of their Tory targeted negative advertisements, although this rhetorical technique was not present in any of their contrast advertisements. Therefore, the centre-left parties have recently begun to exploit the divisions in conservative thought to make the party appear less ideologically appealing to the general public. These ideological cleavages also influence conservative partisans, according to Nevitte and Cochrane's research into the PC and Alliance member's value balance in the social and economic spheres. The progressive parties were probably attempting to weaken the new Conservative Party's base in the 2004 and 2006 elections by portraying the Tories as both social conservatives and neo-conservatives in order to make its supporters question the values of the new party.

From the above research it is clear that the Liberals, and the NDP in some elections, attempt to portray conservative thought in a way that is strategically unfavourable to the centre-right parties. Essentially, the centre-left parties are attempting to brand conservatism itself as a bad name, according to the name calling technique, similar to how the term liberal has been negatively branded in the United States. The Institute for Propaganda Analysis advises that when confronted with propaganda, one ought to determine the factual validity of the rhetoric in question. As with effective name calling words, conservatism is an omnibus term, as was demonstrated in the examination of conservative thought provided here. The portrayal of conservatism found in the advertisements of the Liberals and the NDP are not misrepresentations of conservative thought itself, since there are Canadians conservatives who are neo-conservative, social conservative, and both neo-conservative and socially conservative. However, it has also been demonstrated that the various strains of conservative thought can be inconsistent

amongst themselves and the adherents of these various sub-ideologies can be dismissive of their co-partisans. Therefore, to understand the veracity of these advertising claims it is important to determine which strain of conservative thought actually guided the conservative parties, especially in the timeframe studied by this project. This will be determined through two strategies. A historical overview of the conservative movement during this time will be provided, and then the results of the content analysis' research category on conservative advertising portrayals of their own ideological will be analyzed.

The content analysis demonstrates that a popular advertising tactic used when attacking the conservative parties is to emphasis their neo-conservatism. Although Preston Manning hoped to construct a party that transcended the left-right ideological dynamic, the Reform was genuinely influenced by neo-conservatism. For instance, the Reform's fiscal platform proposed eliminating the federal deficit of $34.6 billion dollars in three years (known as, "The Zero in Three" plan) by making $19 billion in cuts in areas such as provincial transfer payments, corporate subsidies, budget reductions in the House of Commons, Senate, and other state expenditures.[172] While the Liberals opposed neo-conservatism in the 1993 campaign, once elected they eliminated the deficit in four years, or one year later than the Reform and one year earlier than the PCs had promised.[173] The Reform had promised not to reduce funding to healthcare in their 1993 platform.[174] Whereas, Chrétien's first government integrated the Established Programs Financing and the Canada Assistance Program into the Canada Health and Social Transfer, which provided the provinces with about 33 per cent less funding than the

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[172] Ellis and Archer, 1994, p. 63.
[173] Nevitte, Blais, Gidengil, and Nadeau, p. 70.
[174] Elli and Archer, 1994, p. 63.

former two programs combined.[175] Liberal policies on budget reduction and deficit elimination during the 1990s had some neo-conservative influences, but this does not make the Liberals neo-conservative ideologues. Indeed, the Liberal attempt to conceal their reduced transfers to the provinces for social services demonstrates that they wanted to avoid being seen as neo-conservatives. The Liberal fiscal record is an indication that neo-conservatism, which was demonized in the negative advertising of the 1993 election, was a quick and effective method for correcting the federal government's fiscal situation that beginning to appear worrisome after years of financial imprudence by both the Liberals and PCs.

Nevertheless, the elimination of the deficit did not end the debate on the appropriateness of neo-conservatism in Canada's fiscal portfolio. For instance, in the 2000 election the proper balance between debt repayment and funding for social services became an issue, which was odd considering that in the 1999-2000 fiscal year the federal government produced a surplus of $12.3 billion,[176] meaning that Canadians did not have to choose between the debt and the welfare state. The Liberals and the NDP argued that social services embodied Canadian values and had to be prioritized over debt repayment, thus Liberals committed to lower the debt-to-GDP ratio to 40 per cent by 2004-05. By contrast, the PCs promised to enact a law that would mandate eliminating the federal debt by 2025 and the Alliance promised to direct 75 per cent of the surplus to debt repayment.[177] With partisanship and ideology discarded, then Liberal Finance Minister

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[175] Gerald Baier, "Judicial Review and Canadian Federalism," *Canadian Federalism: Performance, Effectiveness, and Legitimacy*, (Ed.) Herman Bakvis and Grace Skogstad (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University, 2002), p. 36.
[176] Canada, *Annual Financial Report of the Government of Canada: Fiscal Year 1999-2000* (Ottawa, ON: Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2000), p. 1.
[177] Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau, and Nevitte, p. 22.

Ralph Goodale in the Fiscal Report for 2004-05 provided the best justification for debt repayment: "The reduction in the debt since 1997-98 has resulted in interest savings of over $3 billion annually. This money can now be used to fund valued programs and services."[178] Although the debates surrounding the true intentions of John Maynard Keynes' work are notorious, one interpretation would argue that reducing the state's debt during economically prosperous times is consistent with Keynesian theory which contributed to at least some of Canada's federal debt. Reducing government spending through debt repayment is also a more compassionate neo-conservative policy than reducing funding to the social services, since it reduces state spending through spending less on the debt's interest payments rather than providing less funding to necessary social services (like health care).

Tax reductions also became a prominent issue in the 2000 campaign. The conservative parties are typically considered the most committed to tax cuts, but the CA limited this advantage by proposing a 17 per cent flat tax for those who earn less than $100,000 per annum, resulting in a total tax reduction of $134 billion over five years.[179] Some flat taxes exist in Canada, most notably in property taxes, but Canadians generally consider flat taxes to benefit the rich and appearing to cater to the rich is not a successful campaign tactic in Canada. By contrast, the Liberal tax reduction proposal was going to save taxpayers $100 billion over five years, but the tax break would focus on those earning between $60,000 and $100,000 per year, who are not considered needy in Canada.[180] In fairness, any income tax reduction is not going to help those Canadians in

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[178] Canada, *Annual Financial Report of the Government of Canada: Fiscal Year 2004-05* (Ottawa, ON: Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2005), p. 2.
[179] Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau, and Nevitte, p. 22.
[180] Ibid, p. 22.

the lowest income bracket, because they do not pay income taxes at all, which would become the Conservatives' argument for cutting the GST instead of income taxes in the 2006 election.[181] Thus, if one's goal is to limit the tax burden on low-income Canadians both the Alliance and the Liberal tax proposals were not ideal, but the Liberal proposal was much more politically marketable. The point is that both parties were discussing tax cuts.

It is fascinating that social conservatism did not become a prominent topic in the negative advertisements attacking the conservative parties until the 2004 federal election, since issues of moral traditionalism would have been a much better indicator of the divisions between these political movements than neo-conservatism. The Liberals do have social conservatives amongst their ranks, but since Liberals pride themselves on being the creators of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the party of Pierre Trudeau, the influence of the religious right in their organization can be presented as minimal. In the 2000 federal election the Canadian Alliance was lead by Canada's most prominent contemporary social conservative politician, Stockwell Day. There had been past concern that Reformers were not socially liberal enough for mainstream Canadian preferences, but the Alliance's 2000 campaign under Day brought these issues to the forefront more so than under Manning's leadership. Surprisingly though, the Liberals and the NDP did not focus on this matter in their 2000 advertising. They seemed to have relied on earned-media from the press to spread the message that the Alliance was socially conservative. Many incidents in the 2000 campaign advanced the socially conservative Alliance theme, including: Warren Kinsella appearing on "Mike Duffy

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[181] Lowest income bracket here references those who do not pay income tax. Based on various specialized income tax credits this figure can fluctuate amongst individuals. However, in 2008 the basic personal income tax deduction was $9,600.

Live" with a Barney the Dinosaur doll to ridicule Day's creationist beliefs; the CBC's special report "Fundamental Day," which examined Day's evangelical Christian values;[182] Day's refusal to campaign on Sundays; and other episodes. It is even more fascinating that the progressive parties (except for the NDP in the 2006 election) attempted to transplant Day's social conservatism onto Stephen Harper and the new Conservative Party in their subsequent negative advertisements.

The events after the 2000 federal election in the conservative movement exemplifies the relationship between paid media (advertising) and earned media (news media) in political campaigning. After the 2000 election, Stockwell Day was not able to control the Alliance Party and there were many highly publicized examples of rebellion in the party. As a result, Day was forced to call a leadership review which primarily pitted him against Stephen Harper. Day represented social conservatism and populism, while Harper represented political professionalism and an economic conservatism with moderately liberal social values.[183] Harper defeated Day to become the Alliance leader, then proceeded to work towards the merger of the Alliance and PCs, which was quickly realized and Harper became the leader of the new Conservative Party. Some were concerned that the PCs, who appeared to be the conservatives most in touch with the Canadian mainstream values, especially after the Alliance's performance in 2000, were silently being taken-over by the CA. This opinion seemed to be justified when socially liberal PCs like, Joe Clark, Scott Brison, and John Crosbie, publicly refused to support the merger. The actual details surrounding the merger seem to refute the Alliance

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[182] Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau and Nevitte, p. 73.

[183] Faron Ellis and Peter Woolstencroft, "New Conservatives, Old Realities: The 2004 Election Campaign," *The Canadian General Election of 2004*, (Ed.) Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan (Toronto, ON: Dundurn Group, 2004), p. 77.

takeover theory, though. Faron Ellis and Peter Woolstencroft's account of these events is so apt that it seems appropriate to quote them at length:

> The 2003 agreement between then Alliance leader Harper and PC leader Peter MacKay identified nineteen founding principles. These were phrased exactly as they had been in the "Aims" and "Principles" sections of the last constitution of the federal PC Party. When combined with the adoption of the PC method of leadership selection and convention delegate entitlements, as well as the Conservative brand name, the leaders' agreement demonstrated that, at least in these important respects, the merger was dominated by PC norms and values [...] taking Reform's stated principles as a baseline, over time there has been a clear moderation in principles, attempted first by the Canadian Alliance and significantly furthered by the new Conservatives, with the latter reflecting much more the PC rather than the Reform-Alliance side of its past.[184]

Canadian political parties are large, diverse organizations that are in constant debate amongst themselves about what values and ideologies their policies ought to represent, but in Canadian federal conservatism after 2000, it appeared that the social conservatives were becoming less influential. Harper's focus on organization and message discipline further appeared reduce the possibility of social conservatives making ad hoc statements to the media that would then be applied to the party as a whole.

The Conservatives' 2004 election campaign generally diminished the social conservative presence of the Alliance, with a few exceptions. In the Conservative's 2004 platform there was no mention of abortion, euthanasia, stem-cell research, family values, or multiculturalism.[185] However, Martin was clever enough to call an election before the Conservatives could convene a national convention to express their official policy

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[184] Faron Ellis and Peter Woolstencroft, "A Change of Government, Not a Change of Country," *The Canadian Federal Election of 2006* (Ed.) Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2006), p. 64.
[185] Ellis and Woolstencroft, 2004, p. 91.

positions, which created speculation on whether PC or Day-era Alliance social policies would be adopted at a later date. Notable examples of the continuing social conservative presence in the 2004 Conservative campaign included: Cheryl Gallant comparing abortion to the decapitation of Americans in Iraq; Liberals musing about the results of Conservative free votes and private members bills;[186] and the Conservative press release that accused Martin of supporting child pornography. Despite these lapses in the Conservative's message discipline, the 2004 election represented a significantly more moderate campaign than that of the Alliance in 2000, although 2004 still left much to be desired in terms of building a professional organization with moderate policies. During the 2004 election campaign, the Liberals characterized the Tories as social conservatives in 2 of their 11 advertisements (or 18.2 per cent).

In 2005, the Conservatives held their first policy convention, which resulted in a noticeable departure from social conservative policy proposals (except for their opposition to same sex marriage). The Conservatives then ran a more disciplined campaign in 2005-06, which produced very few gaffes capable of making the party appear removed from dominant Canadian social values, except for Harper's discussion of Liberal judges, senators, and civil servants being able to hold a Conservative majority government in check. Ellis and Woolstencroft are correct in writing that during this campaign, journalists, "tended to soften their often harsh coverage of Harper."[187] Correspondingly, Liberal advertising in the 2006 election accused the Tories of being social conservatives in 4 of their 29 advertisements (13.8 per cent). Due to the Liberals releasing many more advertisements in the 2006 election than in 2004, the percentage of

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[186] Ibid, p. 91-5.
[187] Ellis and Woolstencroft, 2006, p. 73.

advertisements that referred to the Tories as social conservatives decreased in 2006, even though the raw figure increased. It should be noted that the Liberal produced many province-focused positive spots in 2006 that never referred to the Conservatives and thus diluted these results. Therefore, the more the Conservative Party has attempted to distance itself from the social conservatism of Day's Alliance, the more the Liberals have attacked the Tories for being social conservatives in their political advertisements. The consensus of focus group participants was that they disliked negative campaigning and those parties which engaged it. Thus, the Liberals were astute enough to limit their negative advertising in elections when the press would criticize the conservatives for being socially illiberal anyway, but the Liberals were willing to sponsor negative advertisements when the press had softened to the new Conservatives. This can also be seen in the sheer number of negative spots sponsored by the Liberals across these three elections: 4 negative advertisements (25 per cent of their total advertisements produced) in 2000, 3 (27.3 per cent) in 2004, and 13 (50 per cent) in 2006. This media tactic could be frustrating for Conservative partisans who seem unable to escape the social conservative label regardless of their actions. However, the fact that the Liberals realized that they could not rely on Canada's news media to continue the theme of right-winged social conservatism without evidence should make some Conservatives reconsider their concept of liberal media bias and continue to abide by Harper's message discipline.

However, if televised political advertising is meant to reach more unengaged citizens, then the above described history of Canadian conservatism since 2000 likely was not apparent to individuals who do not actively consume the news media. Thus, this content analysis also recorded the strains of conservatism the right-leaning parties

portrayed when referring to themselves. It seems commonsensical to believe that the public's conception of a party would be influenced by both the attacks of their opponents and by the image a party presents of itself in its advertising. Jamieson argue that negative advertisements are more psychologically significant to viewers,[188] but a party's positive portrayal of their own organization must have some influence on the public, especially over a longer time period than a single election campaign. Theoretical work of Bernays and Ellul argues that the public will not believe just any argument, rather there must be some perceived factual basis to the rhetorical claim being made. The opposing claims being made in political advertisements will likely influence a citizen's perception of the validity of a negative advertisement's argument to some degree. Amongst the Reform/Alliance advertisements there was a heavy neo-conservative slant in their self-portrayals. Between 1993 and 1997, an average of 47.2 per cent of the advertisements sponsored by the Reform/Alliance portrayed their own ideology as neo-conservative (reaching a high of 58.3 per cent in both 1997 and 2000). Social conservatism was the next most frequent ideological self-portrayal by the Reform/Alliance, which averaged 11.1 per cent of their advertisements in these three elections. It was not possible to determine the strain of conservatism endorsed in an average of 27.78 per cent of the Reform/Alliance advertisements, which was greatest in 1993 with 50 per cent and the least in 2000 where all the Alliance advertisements clearly demonstrated some strain of conservative thought.

The PC portrayal of their conservatism was erratic during this period, as would be expected based on the results of the other already examined PC research categories. In 2000, none of the PC advertisements referred to their own policies or ideology; rather

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[188] Jamieson, p. 41.

they simply attacked the Liberals. By contrast, in 1997, 62.5 per cent of PC advertisements portrayed the party as Red Tories, compared to 31.3 per cent advertisements that demonstrated neo-conservative thought, and 6.3 per cent that were not identifiable. By contrast, in 1993, only 13.3 per cent of the PC sponsored spots had a neo-conservative blend, 33.3 per cent demonstrated Red Toryism, and 53.3 per cent of the advertisements had no discernable school of conservatism. These findings are likely an indication of the anxiety within the PC Party during this time period, as their organizational debts continued to mount and their ideological ground was being encroached upon by the Liberals on the left and the Reform/Alliance on the right.

Chart 6: P.C. Portrayals of their Ideology between 1993 and 2000
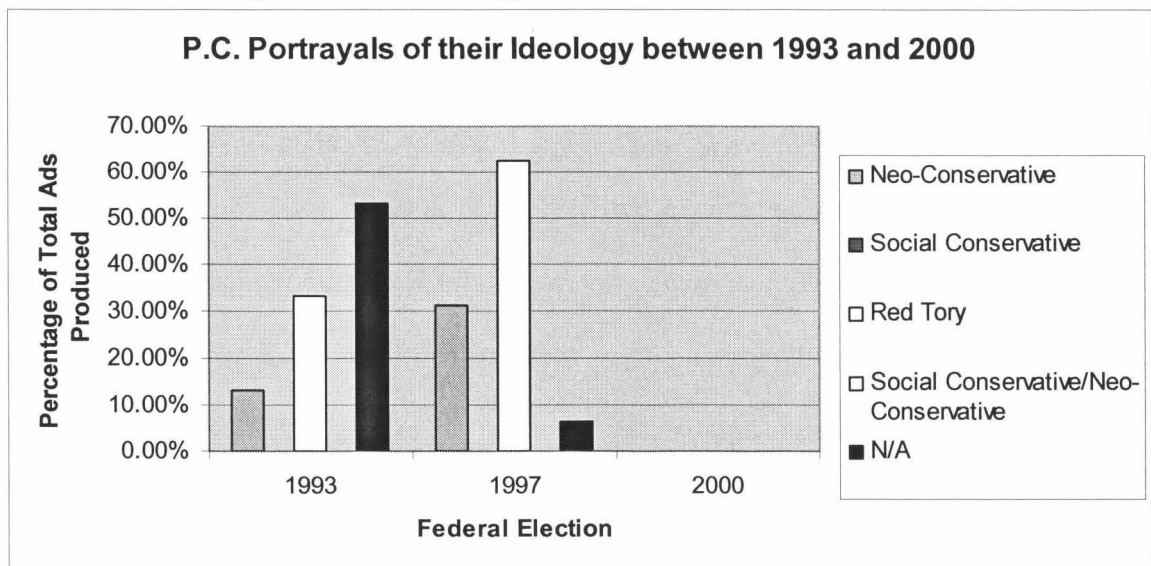
The Conservative Party's self-portrayals provide the most interesting finding from this research category. In both their contested elections it was difficult to identify a particular strain of conservatism being endorsed in an overwhelming number of their advertisements (this was the case in 80 per cent of their 2004 advertisements and 70.6 per

cent of their 2006 advertisements, for an average of 75.3 per cent). There are multiple possible reasons for this finding, including: the Conservatives believed that emphasizing Liberal corruption and introducing Harper would be politically successful (which is fairly ideological neutral); the sample group may be too small to identify the future trend of Conservative Party advertising (these findings do only represent two elections and twenty-two advertisements in an early stage of the party's history); or, it may have been considered wise to avoid the specifics of the new party's ideology, because of the already mentioned anxieties surrounding the PC-Alliance merger. It is fascinating to contrast the erratic nature of ideology represented in PC advertising to the fairly stable and pronounced neo-conservatism in Reform/Alliance advertising to the staggering ambiguity of espoused conservatism in Conservative Party advertising.

Chart 7: Reform/Alliance Portrayals of their Ideology between 1993 and 2000
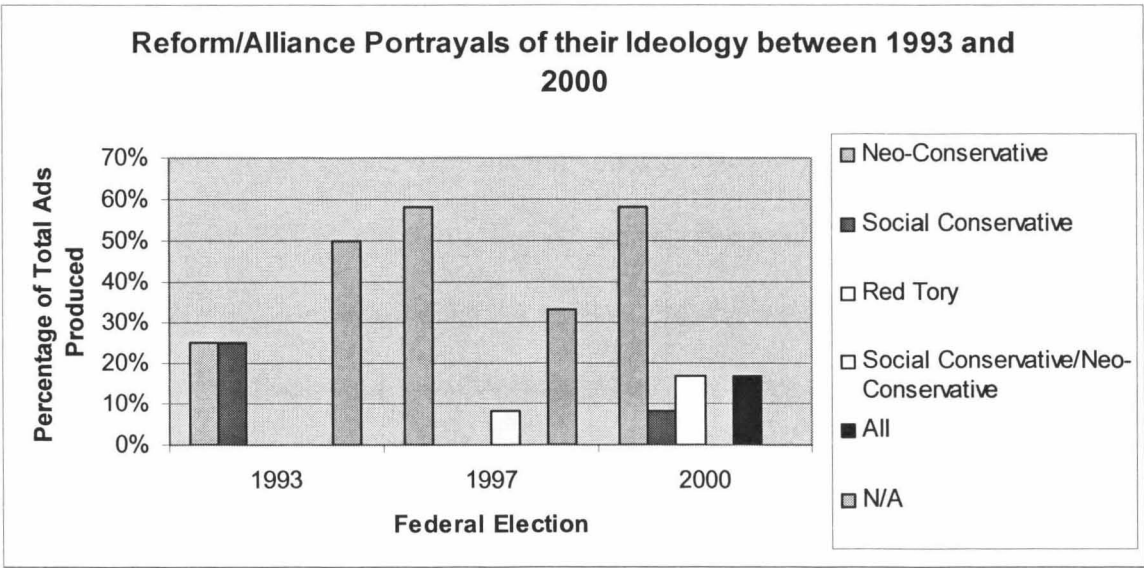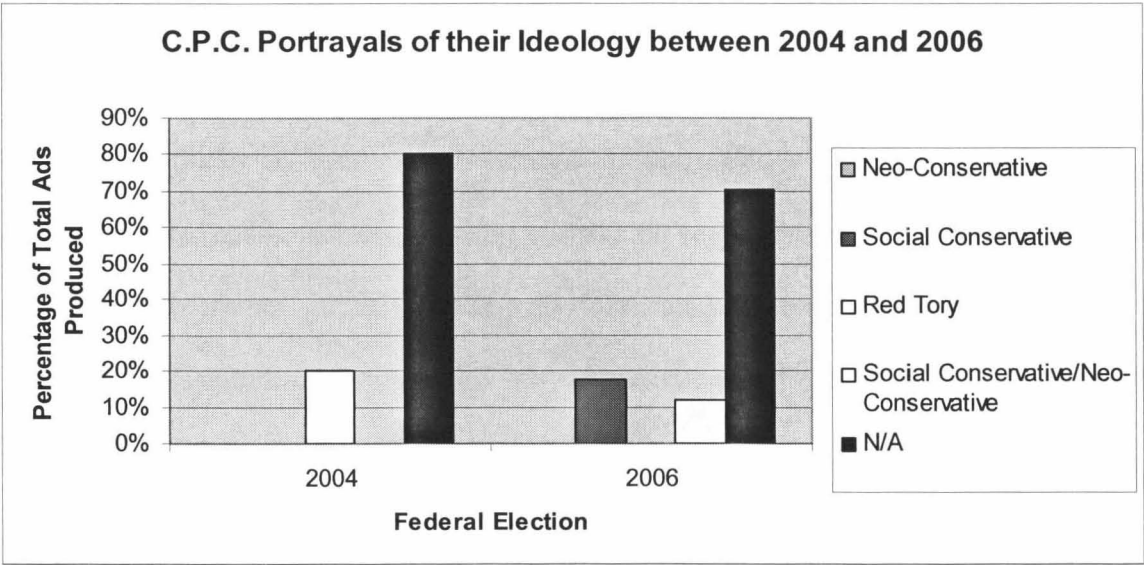

If the Conservatives were intentionally being ideologically ambiguous in their advertising it would be wise for them to continue this practice to diminish the perceived veracity of attacks from their opponents. In 2000, 58.3 per cent of Alliance

advertisements took a neo-conservative position when describing their politics, which should have only reinforced the Liberal argument that the Alliance was neo-conservative (a claim made in 56.3 per cent of Liberal advertisements in that election). The Alliance did have many neo-conservative policies and there is nothing inherently wrong with neo-conservatism. However, there are weaknesses in every ideology. When the Alliance's portrayal of their own ideology matched the Liberals, it removed the question of whether the Alliance was neo-conservative and allowed the Liberals to simply emphasize the weaknesses of this ideology to the public with negative advertisements—including its disconnect with Canadian communitarian values. It could be said, that despite Bernays's desire for a more manageable democratic discourse through propaganda, ambiguity may be vital for successful political communications. Although, ideological ambiguity does not necessarily require advertisements be devoid of policy substance. More than half of the 1993 PC advertisements presented no clear strain of conservatism, but these advertisements also did not really discuss anything substantive. For instance, in one spot Kim Campbell stated that she was against bureaucrats writing manuals on proper elevator use or box packing.[189] These are glaring examples of technocratic excess, which would be opposed by every party, but they neither present an overarching vision nor inspire confidence in Campbell's leadership. By contrast, the Conservatives' 2004 and 2006 advertisements attacked Liberal corruption and introduced Harper, which is ideologically ambiguous yet more substantive than the PC's advertising in 1993 and better received by the public. Therefore, ideological ambiguity in political advertising can be beneficial for the conservative parties, but lacking substance is not.

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[189] Progressive Conservative of Canada, [Wasteful Government Publications], 1993, The Election Broadcasting Project Archive, York University.

Chart 8: C.P.C. Portrayals of their Ideology between 2004 and 2006

C.P.C. Portrayals of their Ideology between 2004 and 2006

Legend:
- Neo-Conservative
- Social Conservative
- Red Tory
- Social Conservative/Neo-Conservative
- N/A

Y-axis: Percentage of Total Ads Produced
X-axis: Federal Election

5.5: Recommendations

Negative political advertising clearly influenced public perception of the Canadian federal conservative parties between 1993 and 2006, but what ought to be done about this matter? There are numerous practical policy options that have been suggested by academics, but a more useful theoretical backdrop is provided by Fred Fletcher who divided campaign regulation schemes into the egalitarian and the libertarian models. According to Fletcher:

> The egalitarian regimes stress measures that promote the equality of the various participants in election campaigns, measured particularly in terms of their capacity to participate in electoral debate. The libertarian regimes stress the freedom of the participants to use their own resources to influence the contest for power and influence.[190]

Applying this theoretical structure to negative political advertising, it seems that two interests must be considered when deciding which model is best suited for Canada: citizens and political parties.

The most pertinent issue from the literature regarding the relationship between citizens and political advertising is the impact negative political advertising has on voter participation. Some advocate a ban on negative advertising on the grounds that it suppresses voter turnout, based mainly on the findings of Absolabehere and Iyengar. While voter turnout figures in Canada and the United States are unacceptably low, it is somewhat reductionist to blame negative political advertising for this situation. Certainly work like Neil Nevitte's, *The Decline of Deference: Canadian Value Change in Cross-National Perspective*, demonstrates that Canadians decreased interest in formal politics is the result of multiple factors. Contemporary citizens are busy individuals who will not necessarily take the time to vote if their preferred candidate is sure to lose the election or if they are not inspired by any of the candidates, or by the political system as a whole. The numerous factors that can influence electoral activity means that explaining voter participation rates based on the amount of negative advertising in a particular campaign alone seems fairly short-sighted.

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[190] Fred Fletcher, "Free and Fair Elections: Regulations that Ensure a 'Fair Go,'" *Australia Policy Online*, June 20, 2007, <http://www.apo.org.au/linkboard/results.chtml?filename_num=154464> (posted on: June 19, 2007), p. 3.

Also from the citizen's perspective, it is important to contemplate the influence negative political advertising has on the quality of ideas delivered to the electorate. Jamieson argues that a problem with election advertisements is that their brevity is not conducive to successfully introducing new policy ideas.[191] However, this is more of an argument against televised political advertising generally, rather than against negative political advertising itself. In fact, there is American evidence that suggests negative advertisements are more policy focused and provide more supporting evidence for their claims than positive advertising.[192] Nevertheless, Jamieson is correct in stating that it is difficult to discuss substantial concepts in television advertisements, but Canadian federal election campaigns themselves (which are a minimum of 36 days long) are not conducive to introducing new ideas. Especially since many believe the electorate is not interested in a campaign until its final weeks. For example, Jamieson is interested in American racial politics, but the civil rights movement in the United States was created over a long timeframe, not in the span of an election campaign. Political advertising is a powerful communications tool, but it can only do so much. It would seem more fruitful for the traditional political community to engage the electorate in politics and governance between election cycles, which would increase the average citizen's political knowledge and interest in election campaigns.

Finally, from the citizen's perspective, the kind of democratic discourse that is created by political advertising must be considered. The focus groups confirmed that Canadians do not like negative political advertising and that was expected by the researcher. However, an important question to ask is, how would the tone of political

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[191] Jamieson, p. 100-01.
[192] West, p. 66.

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communications change without televised negative political advertising? It seems naïve to believe that with restrictions on televised negative advertising, civility would exist in Canadian politics. Noting the American historical context of political negativity, Edwin Diamond and Stephen Bates write, "Washington was called a 'whore master' and would-be monarch; Jefferson, a coward and atheist; Lincoln, a 'rail-splitting baboon.'"[193] Thus, the medium of communication does not appear to be the cause of electoral negativity, but a vehicle for negative messages that would certainly be replaced by another medium if necessary. Considering Diamond and Bates' accounts of attacks from the newspaper era and some statements made about politicians on the internet, television advertising appears to be a comparatively tame political communications medium. Based on this, it is possible that negativity contributes to democratic discourse. As Geer writes, "Without negativity, no nation can credibly think of itself as democratic...Attacks may be painful to some, but they are essential for change to take place and for any nation to prosper."[194] Indeed, hearing about the failings of the government can be frustrating, but some citizens need reasons to vote for an opposition party after years of voting for the governing party. Additionally, the Liberal's "Qualify/Health Care" advertisement is uncomfortable to watch, but considering that its arguments are supported by credible newspaper sources, it was information that the public likely should have known.

The interests of political parties in favouring either an egalitarian or libertarian campaign regulation model will realistically be most strongly influenced by their perceived ability to gain power under either of these models. Partisan political advertising is currently fairly mixed between the two models in Canada. Parties are limited in their

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[193] Diamond and Bates, p. 327.
[194] Geer, p. 10.

advertising spending insofar as total campaign spending is capped, but the percentage of campaign funding allocated to advertising is a decision solely for that party and the specifics of partisan ad buys are not regulated. Also, there are no restrictions on what parties can say in their advertisements outside of Canada's normal broadcast codes. Under this system, the conservative parties were effectively demonized by the advertising of their opponents. However, this in no way means that the current Conservative Party will support more egalitarian political advertising regulations.

What is fascinating about negative political advertising in Canadian politics is that the ideological tradition that has been most damaged by these attacks is also the least likely to support the egalitarian regulation model, since it opposes government intervention. Thus, conservatives would be unlikely to support a state agency or civil servants monitoring proposed election advertisements before they are aired. Additionally, a foundational thinker in the conservative intellectual tradition is John Locke, who in, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, argues that it is dangerous to silence public discourse because humanity's cognitive fallibility results in abstractness about what is actually true.[195] It seems consistent with the philosophical traditions of current Canadian conservatives to advocate for a public debate of ideas during election campaigns, using televised political advertisements as a medium for this exchange. However, the Conservatives will have to become more effective communicators in order to be successful in this campaigning medium.

The Liberals are unlikely to be any more supportive than the Conservatives of a more egalitarian regulation model for political advertising. Although the current Liberal

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[195] John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), p. 47-50.

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leader, Stephane Dion, has had his credibility damaged by Conservative pre-campaign negative advertising, the Liberals would be foolish to part with a campaigning technique that has worked so effectively for them in the past. The Conservatives have recently produced some negative advertisements which suggest a developing media management expertise. However, the Liberals have traditionally been the most effective users of television media and the party could certainly call upon the firms that comprise their Red Leaf advertising consortium again in the future. Thus, there is little chance of election advertising regulation incorporating a more egalitarian orientation in the foreseen future, because both governing parties view negative advertising as an effective method of opinion formation. It appears that Canada is moving into an era of more competitive and negative federal air wars.

Fletcher's distinction between egalitarian and libertarian regulation models, as it relates to political advertising, can also be understood through the dichotomy between Edward Bernays and Jacques Ellul's conceptions of propaganda's influences on society. Although both these thinkers believe that individuals retain a certain degree of agency when exposed to propaganda, Bernays believes that individuals are more able to critically analyze propaganda than Ellul. Despite all the negative propaganda levelled against the conservative parties in this studied timeframe, in 2006 the Conservative Party was able to form a government. When writing on the 2006 Canadian federal election, Jonathan W. Rose concluded that the Liberal attacks advertisements were less effective in this campaign, because Harper's public behaviour did not correspond with his portrayal in these advertisements. Rose writes, effective, "negative ads do not persuade as much as they are able to reinforce existing opinion and translate that into sowing seeds of doubt

about one's opponent."[196] Therefore, in Rose's opinion, negative advertising is only effective when the electorate believes its arguments, which seems remarkably similar to Bernays advice that companies cannot sell the public something they absolutely do not want. There were many reasons besides political advertising that explains the Liberal defeat in 2006, but their poor advertising certainly influenced this loss. Unlike "Qualify/Health Care" only 1 of 12 advertisements in the "Choose your Canada" series referenced a newspaper ("Washington Times" being the only exception). Although many "Choose your Canada" advertisements quoted past statements by or about Harper, their credibility was diminished by the Liberals not disclosing where these quotes came from and the accusations becoming too grandiose. These faults became unavoidably apparent when the "Soldiers" spot was accidentally released, resulting in the entire series becoming suspect to many Canadians. The public opinion research of Nevitte and Cochrane demonstrates that the Conservatives would not have formed a government in 2006 if citizens were unable to independently decide that the Liberal's "Choose Your Canada" campaign was inaccurate.

Ellul claims that individuals who are exposed to two competing propagandas are left disoriented like a battered boxer. However, this opinion did not seem to be substantiated by the focus group participants. Some participants did agree that they had been influenced by negative advertising, insofar as the criticisms of many politicians were easier to recall than their strengths. As one participant noted about former NDP leader, Ed Broadbent:

> I remember when I was growing up as a kid when Ed
> Broadbent was the head of the NDP. I remember hearing

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196 Rose, 2004, p. 96.

people—and I wasn't very old *coughs* *laughter*—um, that if Ed Broadbent, was ever elected his wife would be running the country and that's one thing that has always stuck out in my mind and I don't know why...but what does that tell me about whatever party said that? That's just ridiculous, as far as I'm concerned to say something like that [...] I didn't remember it because I liked it. I remembered it because it's negative and I don't even know which party said that now...[197]

However, the focus groups came to a consensus that they did not trust negative political advertising and they were unprepared to accept the claims made in these commercials without further information. One exchange stated the following:

P1C: Where did the quotes come from?
P4C: Yeah.
P2C: Are they actually from someone who doesn't like Stockwell Day, maybe?
Participants speaking over each other.
Moderator: Right...
Participants speaking over each other.
Moderator: Right...
P2C: They're just taking someone else's opinion and try to make yours. Was it an editorial from a reporter? Like, there's not enough...facts...for me, anyways, to be able to say, "Yeah, I could agree with that," because I have no idea where's that coming from.[198]

This was particularly interesting because this was in response to the Liberal's "Health Agenda" advertisement which the semiotic analysis showed was designed to overload the viewer with information. Further research with these focus group participants could confirm Schudson's thesis that individuals are more influenced by advertising than they are aware. However, this does not appear to be the case. The focus groups participants appeared to be intelligent citizens who were humble enough to admit where they had gaps in their own knowledge and experiences when their political decisions were not

[197] P1C, Focus Group, Oct. 29, 2007.
[198] P1C, P2C, P4C, and Moderator, Focus Group, Oct. 29, 2007.

necessarily rational or the most effective at securing their desired ends. Thus, their opinions ought to be trusted. As such, these individuals did not appear to be dazed by negative political advertising as Ellul suggested, but frustrated and sceptical. However, scepticism from citizens could be considered beneficial for a democracy if it leads them to critically evaluate the claims made by opposing parties.

Therefore, it appears that Canada's current status quo on political advertising ought to be upheld. As Richardson writes, "No theory of electoral democracy actually underpins the disdain for negative campaigning. In short, so what if negative advertising is more powerful or persuasive than positive advertising? The notion of negativity may carry considerable psychological currency, but it is not a concept particularly useful in political terms."[199] Although the conservative parties were demonized by their opponent's political advertisements throughout most of this period, these failings were largely due to their own inability to run disciplined campaigns, understand the public mood, and create effective media strategies. Political scientists often debate whether campaigns matter; meaning do campaigns have the ability to influence an election's results? Campaigns should matter to citizens, because they are an indication of the strength of a party's organization, which is a demonstration of the quality of government that party could form. This is a common argument from political scientists. I go further and suggest that advertisements help voters discern the core values and priorities of the parties (along with other information). Through much of this studied period the conservative parties did not run effective campaigns, and with hindsight, few objective observers would argue that they would have formed effective governments between 1993

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[199] Richardson, p. 792.

and 2004. In this sense, the federal advertising battles were beneficial for Canadian politics.

The focus group participants uniformly expressed exasperation towards negative political advertising, but this seemed to be more deeply rooted in a disappointment with Canada's political system writ large. Although if negative political advertising is the real cause of the focus group participants' expressed frustration, it does not need to remain the case. Sally Young is trying to alert Australians to their power in the political air war when writing "while American spending makes Australian politicians look restrained, there is one distinctive feature of the Australian political system which means that Australian citizens have a greater stake in political advertising—we pay for it."[200] With the changes in Canada's electoral finance laws under the Chrétien Government's Bill C-24, Canadians now share the Australians' stake in partisan political advertising. On this note, Tom Flanagan's description of the Conservative Party's financial assumptions for the 2004 federal election campaign deserves to be quoted at length:

> One could argue that the campaign was paid for wholly by the provisions of Bill C-24. At the beginning of the campaign, we received our annual subsidy of over $7 million, calculated as $1.75 times the number of votes received by the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservatives in the 2000 election. For this election, we could also count on receiving from Elections Canada a rebate of 60 percent (50 percent in future elections) of the amount expended by the national campaign. If we spent the legal limit of $17.5 million, the rebate would be over $10 million. Hence the sum of the annual subsidy plus the rebate was enough to pay for the whole national campaign, so the only real problem was managing cash flow.[201]

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[200] Young, 2004, p. 115.
[201] Flanagan, 2007, p. 149-50.

Canadian taxpayers are financing the advertising campaigns that the focus group participants so disapproved of. Since it is unlikely that either of Canada's governing parties will regulate campaign advertising towards a more egalitarian model, it seems necessary for the public to demand electoral reform if they truly believe that negative political advertising is harming their democracy. It is after all their democracy.

5.6: Future Study

As the literature review stated, the Canadian study of political communications is quite underdeveloped in comparison to that in the United States. As a result, any study of Canadian political communications ought to be encouraged. Canadian politics and American politics have an unusual relationship in that despite the many similarities between these countries there are also striking differences in how their politics is conducted. Researchers ought to be reviewing the methodologies and findings from American studies and applying them to the Canadian context. For instance, it would be fascinating to test in Canada Absolabehere and Iyengar's finding that voters of different ideological backgrounds have different reactions to negative advertising.[202] Certainly, Canadian psychology based political advertising studies are needed.

However, there are some issues arising from this thesis that deserve particular attention in the future, including methodological items. First, this project conducted focus groups, because it is believed there is much to be gained from listening to the opinions of citizens. Other studies should pursue this research method, but other social groups ought

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[202] Absolabehere and Iyengar, p. 92.

to be consulted to determine if there are any variances in opinions, beliefs, and values on political advertising amongst these social segments. Consulting more individuals with these focus groups would also be advisable for researchers with the necessary resources. Finally, it would be fascinating to conduct focus groups during an election campaign with current advertisements to examine if the calm, rationality that characterized this project's focus groups persisted in the midst of a campaign.

Developing a more robust understanding of Canadian political advertising would also be helpful. Additional studies should examine the negative advertisements that target other federal and provincial parties and ideologies. Since focus groups participants did not distinguish between federal and provincial politics when discussing political advertising, it would be valuable for federal political parties to understand how the messages of their provincial counterparts influence the public's reaction to their rhetoric and vice-versa. However, these focus groups were completed after a fairly bitter Ontario provincial election, so it is possible that the focus group responses that blurred federal-provincial partisanship were the result of this campaign being fresh in the minds of the participants. It would also be beneficial to study pre-campaign advertising, which is emerging in Canada. Many Canadians expressed anger over the Conservative's pre-campaign negative advertisements against newly elected Liberal leader, Stephane Dion, in 2007. Although, most Canadians also forget that the Liberals launched a series of pre-campaign negative advertisements against then newly elected Conservative leader, Stephen Harper, in 2004, which heavily influenced the "Choose Your Canada" series.[203] This is a novel campaigning development and there has yet to be research conducted on it. Unfortunately, this thesis was unable to study French-language political advertising,

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[203] Anne Dawson, "Liberals go on Attack Prior to Election Call," *CanWest News* (May 17, 2004), p. 1.

but other researchers would be well advised to catalogue Quebec's recent election advertisements. It would also be wise for a future study to undertake a content analysis of political advertising using Romanow's methodology, in order to determine which advertisements gain prominence in a particular election and at what point this occurs.

Canadians researchers should also attempt to contribute to the international political advertising literature. As this study demonstrated, one of the greatest weakness in the current political advertising literature is the lack of a generally agreed upon definition of negativity. American researchers have devoted significant effort in an attempt to reach an acceptable definition, but as Richardson's article shows, the debate appears to moving away from a consensus, rather than toward one. Fresh opinions from Canadians who are removed from the current American debate could be helpful. Also, the relationship between paid and earned media that was suggested by this thesis in the election campaigns between 2000 and 2006 should be investigated in greater detail by undertaking a content analysis of the news media's reporting in these campaigns. Many political communications researchers from around the world would be interested in the findings of such a study. Finally, the insights of Canadian researchers could help develop the comparative study of political advertising. As has been stated in this thesis, Canadians have unique connections to both the United States and Europe, and this could provide valuable insights into the political communications of the Western world.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Campaign slogans and advertising taglines demonstrate much about a party's psychology, goals, and morale in a particular election. In both 2004 and 2006 the Liberals ended their negative advertisements with the slogan, "Choose your Canada." The ominous tone of the female narrator left no doubt that the consequences of a Conservative government would be dire. In 2006, the militancy of the Conservative's campaign slogan, "Stand up for Canada," was easily lost in the female narrator's perky tone of voice. Perhaps, the Conservative strategists themselves did not realize the statement they were making with this slogan. People stand up when challenging a local bully, enlisting for military service, or just voicing an opinion at a public meeting. The slogan's imaginary is clear: voting Conservative in 2006 was going to be difficult and uncomfortable, but the results of the Gomery Inquiry proved that it had to be done for the well being of the country. This may seem like an exaggeration in a country that uses secret ballots, but this examination of the negative political advertising targeting the conservative parties shows the awkward situation that Canadians would have to confront when voting for a party that may not represent their national values.

For the most part, between 1993 and 2006 the conservative parties were outclassed in their advertising strategies, most notably by the Liberal Party. The Liberals were savvy enough to allow the news media to criticize the political right for being radical social conservatives, while their political advertisements avoided the topic until the conservatives' actions no longer reinforced this narrative. Liberals knew that Canadian public opinion is suspicious of neo-conservatism, so they overwhelmingly emphasized this aspect of the right-wing movement, while pursuing neo-conservative

fiscal policies themselves once in office. Finally, the Liberals used emotional appeals by making associations between ideology and nationalism to sway swing voters. This thesis has pointed out that the Canadian federal conservative parties between 1993 and 2006 were soundly defeated in most of these political advertising campaigns and they had represented their own ideology in an ineffective manner for obtaining electoral success.

There appears to be growing interest in the academic study of propaganda analysis. Indeed, this theoretical perspective assisted this thesis in understanding and evaluating Canadian negative political advertising. The brevity of television advertising makes exploiting omnibus terms like, conservatism, Canada, and the United States appealing and effective. Clearly, these three omnibus terms were utilized in the negative political advertisements targeting the conservative parties. However, what is the validity of these omnibus terms when applied to Canadian conservatism? The conservative parties do have ideological linkages to the individualist principles that are personified by the United States. Currently, making associations between the United States and Canadian conservatism is attractive, because the Republicans hold the presidency, giving a personal depiction of this political philosophy. However, it would require debate to determine if George W. Bush is a neo-conservative, a social conservative, a moderate conservative (the Red Tory label does not exist in America), or some combination of these. Furthermore, this thesis has demonstrated the divisive heterogeneity of Canadian conservative thought, which makes characterizing the right-wing movement as any one strain of conservatism problematic. Even if American and Canadian conservatism could be identified as uniformly belonging to a certain strain of thought, this would not necessarily prove that the ideology was contrary to Canadian values. The communitarian-

individualist dichotomy remains salient in Canadian politics today precisely because there is no Canadian consensus on which best represents the country's character. In fact, diversity and an uncertainty of one's identity are arguably the only areas where Canadians have a consensus today. Thus, the omnibus propaganda terms used in the political advertising from this period are questionable in their veracity.

This thesis employed a triangulated research methodology of focus groups, semiotic analysis, and content analysis. The conducted focus groups suggest that mothers of children under the age of thirteen years old have serious reservations about neo-conservative and social conservative policies. By examining the characterizations of conservative thought promulgated by the Liberals and the NDP in the content analysis, it is clear that these parties were aware of this aspect of public opinion and were willing to exploit it. Furthermore, the content analysis demonstrated that the conservative parties typically portrayed themselves as neo-conservatives and social conservatives before their more moderate Red Tory school of thought and thus reinforced the Liberal and occasional NDP emphasis on the negative aspects of these strains of conservatism. Finally, the semiotic analysis demonstrated that the progressive parties are much better at crafting messages and symbols that effectively mobilize this study's targeted group in a desired direction.

It has been shown here—against conventional thinking—that ideology plays a considerable role in partisan advertising. Although these presentations of ideology are dramatically simplified, the content analysis demonstrated that a party's preference for individualism or communitarianism is reflected in the frequency of presentations of the economy or social services in their advertisements. Additionally, a party's place on the

ideological spectrum will influence the number of negative advertisements that party will produce. This is an important finding for the study of political advertising. As was shown in this thesis, the literature on negative political advertising is underdeveloped. In part, this situation must be due to the belief that political advertising is an unsubstantial manifestation of Canadian politics. This thesis has demonstrated that understanding political advertising is a fruitful area of investigation that requires an interdisciplinary approach encompassing at least mass communications theory, political theory and more applied political science, as well as sociology. Hopefully, more studies of Canadian political advertising will be undertaken in the near future.

The findings of this thesis, as well as the work of Nevitte and Cochrane, should be a cause for concern amongst some conservatives. W.L. Morton described the Progressive Conservatives as a party without ideology, which he thought was advantageous for the organization.[204] Certainly when the Red Tories were perceived to dominant the PC Party it caused the alienation of neo-conservatives and social conservatives, which led to the rise of the Reform/Alliance, creating a weak, divided conservative movement. Similarly, when Stockwell Day emphasized both neo-conservatism and social conservatism, it stopped the Alliance's base from expanding. The new Conservative Party currently has a unique chance to shape its political ideology and advertising. The influential social group consulted by this thesis was not enthusiastic about certain strains of conservatism. Although, this group also seemed uncertain about what conservatism actually was and why they were opposed to it. Therefore, the Conservatives could sway this group in their favour by producing advertisements that focused on specific targeted policy proposals

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[204] Charles Taylor, *Radical Tories: The Conservative Tradition in Canada* (Toronto, ON: House of Anansi Inc., 2006), p. 73.

that would be appealing to this demographic, while avoiding the grander narrative of the party's ideology (this, to a certain extent, was the Tories' 2006 strategy with the five priorities). Indeed, the 2004 and 2006 Conservative campaigns seemed to reflect the ideological ambiguity that Morton valued. This thesis has demonstrated that Harper's Tories would be well advised to continue to remain ambiguous about what strain of conservatism they most support, at least from a political communications perspective. However, the poor advertising undertaken by the Campbell PCs that lacked substance should not be repeated. Therefore, avoiding ideology, but stressing policy maybe a good strategy for the Conservatives in the future.

Despite the frustration surrounding negative political advertising, there seem to be few, if any, viable options to counteract it, since some degree of negativity seems to be ingrained in democracy, it will surely manifest itself in whatever communication medium is most expedient. The real danger of televised political advertising lays in its ability to simplify partisan stances, thus polarizing the positions between the parties and reducing the internal debate on which Canadian political parties have flourished since Sir John A. Macdonald cobbled together a governing coalition of Reformers, Conservatives, and members of the Parti Bleu. Without diversity of opinions there cannot be the debates that lead to new ideas that make the great political parties admirable.

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